

Satsang with Om Baba

(23 January 2017)

Shiva and Shakti

Welcome everybody to the Satsang.

What about can we speak today?

Question: You've spoken quite a bit about Shiva consciousness and the Self. Could you speak about the Divine Mother, Shakti, and her relationship with Shiva?

I'll repeat the question. We've talked so much about the Self, too much about Vedanta and the Self and Shiva and his essence, so something is missing. We should speak also about the Shakti, the female aspect of the manifestation. And how these two are connected to each other and complement each other.

If someone is interested philosophically in this subject and decides to go and study about it, he would get rather confused. We have in India six main schools of philosophy. One of them is Vedanta. The others are Buddhism, Jainism, etc., etc. Now, in Vedanta there are five different branches. In the essence they agree. The difference between them is the different idea of how Shiva and Shakti are connected to each other. So I would like us to examine it, without referring to the philosophies of the past. Just examine it with our common sense.

Shiva and Shakti. Beautiful. Let's start from zero. No one of us can deny his own Self. Nobody can deny that "I exist". Because if you did not exist, you would not be able to deny it. So, nobody can deny, "I am. I exist."

Now whatever experiences we have, can either accept them or deny them or interpret them somehow. But no one can deny his own presence within these experiences. Whatever I am is surrounded by a very wide gourmet of experiences. A spectrum of experiences.

We can somehow divide all of what is into me, myself, the subject and whatever I experience, that is the object. We can say that I am something that is unmanifested while everything else is manifested. Let's say it's something different from me. In this case, we have a certain duality. I am one thing and whatever manifests is something separate from me.

Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita, He says the same thing. He says there is the field and the knower of the field. He describes all this amazing manifestation as a field. It's an amazing illustration because it is in fact like a field. It grows all kinds of different experiences. Different sensations, different emotions, different thoughts. Just like an ordinary field can grow all kinds of different vegetables and fruits and herbs depending on the seed that we plant. But the field itself is completely neutral. Depending on what we plant in it, that will grow. We can clearly see that the Self is not a part of the field. It stands apart. It isn't a part, it stands apart.

Technically speaking in the Bhagavad Gita, He's described as the knower of the field. Because somehow He knows, He's aware of all these experiences taking place – all these experiences growing, like sprouting from the field and undergoing changes, reaching a certain climax, and then disappearing. All experiences belong to this category including this body as well as all emotions and thoughts we have.

Somehow they grow on the field of Mahamaya and somehow they disappear.

So according to this point of view, we can say that the Mahamaya is something very neutral. It's like a field. Very-very neutral. It's like a white canvas and the Self is the great artist, the painter. Or it's like an instrument and the Self is like the musician. Or it is like a field and the Self is like a gardener. This is one way to see it and it's a very beautiful way. And it is a correct way.

So as we said, there are five different branches in Vedanta. Some say the Shiva and the Shakti are two different things. Some say it is one and the same thing. Some say sometimes it's different, sometimes the same. Sometimes they're different but they try to come together. The more we study, the more we get confused.

The great father of Vedanta though, who was Sri Shankaracharya, he said something extraordinary. He described the Mahamaya in the most extraordinary way. This is the best definition you can get.

He said this:

“It is neither real, nor is it unreal.

It is neither one and the same with the Self, nor is it different.

It is neither one complete whole, nor is it divided into parts.

It is most extraordinary and cannot be described in words.”

Let the philosophers argue with each other and debate with each other what is real and what is not. I think this is the ultimate definition. Shiva and Shakti neither are one and the same thing, nor are they two different things. That is something that somehow brings harmony, brings everything together.

I will explain with a practical example and I ask you, everybody, to give an answer. A person, an ordinary human being and his imagination, are they one and the same thing or are they two different things? Is the imagination that we're having, is it something real or is it something unreal? We can very quickly say that it is unreal but I will say, “You are experiencing it.” It's causing emotions, it brings joy to you, it brings sorrow to you. It brings confusion to you, it brings hope to you. We are very very much experiencing it. So is it real or is it unreal? I would not be too quick to answer.

And tell me again, the imaginations that we have – all of us have imaginations, we all have dreams – are they one integrated whole or is it something that is divided into parts? Who can answer this? People can debate about this, take one position and start debating with each other, but what's the meaning of that? It's only a point of view; it's not the Truth. Whatever side we take, it will be only a point of view. It will not be the Truth.

Question: For the one who experiences, this is real. For the one who doesn't experience it, it's unreal...

Yes and no, Even for the one who experiences it, it's not necessarily real. You can experience it in your imagination and be fully conscious that it's not real. Some people, they imagine that “I fight with the dragon. I fight with the Dracula.” They can enjoy it very much because they know it's not real. If it was real, they would not enjoy. So even for the person that experiences, it can be something unreal. Or it can be something very real.

What Sri Shankaracharya said, is that both of these are true and also untrue. To give you a very straightforward answer to the question, what is the relation of Shiva, to the Self, and Mahamaya? It is exactly the same relationship that an ordinary man has with his own imagination.

It might get a little bit deeper than that, since an ordinary human being can somehow question his imagination while Shiva enjoys supremely His imagination. He has no reason to make it stop. It is supremely dear to Him. What process does He make to produce this imagination? It is a natural quality. Just like the sun shines naturally. The creative aspect, the Shakti, of Lord Shiva is something natural to Him. It's a part of Him. But it's not Him. In the same way that our imagination is a natural quality in us. We don't really do some effort to make it. We can try to direct it or maybe it happens mechanically. But somehow it flows automatically out of us. In the same way that Mahamaya flows naturally out of Lord Shiva.

And to be able to look from the eyes of Lord Shiva – this is perhaps the whole aim of spiritual practice...to look from the eyes of Lord Shiva, to look from the eyes of the Self. And many times I have told you that when we look from the eyes of the Self, the Mahamaya, the worldly experience is something supremely beautiful, supremely beloved as well. In this way, you can understand what a supreme love Lord Shiva has for the Shakti – His creative aspect or His manifested aspect.

And at the same time, what a supreme devotion Mother Shakti has for Shiva. Sometimes She's the perfect beloved, and sometimes, when Lord Shiva becomes playful and He identifies himself with a character of the illusion, She becomes the perfect Mother. I will repeat it.

When Lord Shiva stands as the Self, whatever manifests around Him, which is the Mahamaya, She's the perfect beloved to Him. When Shiva stands as the Self, the one Self, the one independent Self, the one self-dependent Self, the Lord of all that exists, the Mahamaya is His perfect Queen, His perfect beloved.

First because She's so beautiful.

Second, she's so devoted to Him; She serves Him in the best possible way, taking the most beautiful forms to entertain Him, to please Him, and to serve Him. This is from the eyes of the Self.

Now when Lord Shiva playfully, to enjoy even more His beloved, He takes one form, one limited form, one character – when He identifies himself with one character inside Mahamaya just for the sake of playing, Mahamaya changes Her role and She becomes a loving mother. She takes care of Him lifetime after lifetime. Embodiment after embodiment. As Lord Shiva plays innocently sometimes taking the form of a man, sometimes the form of a woman, sometimes the form of a King, sometimes the form of a slave, sometimes the form of a wise man, sometimes the form of a fool, sometimes the form of an animal...so many different forms, we cannot even describe. She is always there surrounding Him, protecting Him, nourishing Him, supporting Him, guiding Him. Just like a loving mother. When Lord Shiva wants to enter fully into the game and enjoy it, She takes the form of prosperity, of wealth, of abundance, of beauty surrounding Him, of success, of recognition. When Lord Shiva begins to get tired of the game, She begins to take things away from Him so that His attention will turn towards His own Self and He will start to remember who He truly is. It is She who can fully delude him with Her beauty and it is She again who will ultimately guide Him back to his self-knowledge by inspiring Him, motivating Him to turn His eyes away from Her and turn His eyes toward Himself.

For this reason, in my lineage, we have always been worshipping the Divine Mother. Because we know very well that by Her power, we can remain deluded forever. And it is by Her power that we can become liberated. Depending on what we truly wish.

What we wish... do we wish for success, for abundance, for all the glory of the world? Maybe, and this is bondage. This is exactly what bondage is. Out of success comes arrogance. The ego gets stronger. The identification with a certain character grows stronger. The identification with a limited character grows much stronger. We go away from self-knowledge.

If, on the other hand, Lord Shiva wishes for self-knowledge, He wishes to remember who He is, the way to do it is very easy. And there's no other way.

The Divine Mother has to somehow turn His eyes away from Her. She has to take away these beautiful things He's so much captivated by. If She remains supremely beautiful, He will ever stay in delusion. So She starts to remove all His attachments. Maybe to take away His wealth, take away His job, maybe to take away His beautiful house or His beautiful car, to take away all the things that bind Him and don't let Him go. So that He can turn His attention towards Himself and remember who He is.

This is called Grace. That is why we said that Vedanta, it starts with praying. All the Upanishads start with a prayer. And what is that prayer? May I realize who I am. May I know who I am. That's why we start every Satsang with Prabhu Aap Jago. It means "Lord, wake up! My True Self, wake up!" This is what I want. This is why I'm here.

If this prayer is sincere, if this determination is sincere, then the Mahamaya will support this. By what way? By taking away the distractions, removing the distractions, removing the attachments, removing whatever takes your attention away from the Truth. Until the attention has nowhere else to go but to the Truth. Or until the awareness becomes so dispassionate, it is not interested in anything else. And stays in itself.

Do you understand how it works? That is a very interesting fact in the Vedas. I've said the Vedas are like this, eighty five percent rituals, rituals for what reason? How to attain heaven. How to attain paradise. After all these rituals, there comes Vedanta, five percent and says, "You fool, why you want to go to heaven? What will you do in heaven? You will be even more deluded than you are now!"

If now in this miserable human life, you cannot turn your eyes towards yourself, how will you turn your eyes toward yourself in the Supreme Paradise? If now you're surrounded by insignificant things and you're so much attached to them, how you will be detached when you are in heaven and surrounded by perfect beauty? That's why the rishis say, "Oh fool, don't desire for heaven. Here is the perfect place for the Truth. And this is the perfect time for the Truth."

Planet Earth, Kali Yuga, the perfect place and time for the Truth. Now is a Golden Opportunity. Now is the Gate. Now is the chance... last call. Don't lose it! Don't lose it, it's so precious. If you want to realize yourself, it's so precious, it's unique. If you don't want to realize yourself and you just want to enjoy, it's not a good place for you. You should do some nice ritual and go to heaven.

So, initially, the Divine Mother, the Mahamaya is a servant, a beloved and a servant to the Self. A beloved and a servant to Lord Shiva. So whatever Lord Shiva desires, She will give that to Him. So what does Lord Shiva desire now? Because He will get that very thing. What we desire in the very center of our being? If we desire for self-realization, we will get it, if we desire for roaming about and fooling around, we will get it. She will not deny it from us.

This is one beautiful, integrated way to see the Divine dance of the Divine Mother and the Self.

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti