

An Open Letter to a Sadhak

By Swami Shantananda Puri Maharaj, 01 June 2007

This is a letter written by Swamiji to a Sadhak regarding progress in sadhana. Swamiji says the problem is a common one faced by many of the Sadhaks and the answer given by Swamiji is of universal appeal. Swamiji made certain additions to this letter in December 2009 and gave his consent to publish the letter for the benefit of all Sadhaks.



SWAMI SHANTANANDA



C/o Sri Ramansramam
Tiruvannamalai
01.06.2007

My dear -----,

HARI OM. ALL BLESSINGS!

Your malady is the malady of all Sadhaks. To get an M.D. Degree it takes 12 years of school and 8 years of college and internships. We want to get God realization in 3 to 5 years, failing which a progress report from time to time. In this path, there is neither progress nor regression. You are always the SELF- Para Brahman and hence you have chosen to enact a drama as if you are anajani called 'X'. It is ego (where we think we are individuals attached to specific bodies) which wants a progress report to satisfy itself that it has made a good progress- "Ah 80% - very good". When once we have not passed the examination, what is the purpose of knowing as to whether you failed by getting 10% or by getting 20%? Either you realize that you are the SELF or remain suppressed by ignorance? Ignorance means NOT getting convinced that you are the SELF and considering body- mind complex as the self. Where is the question of progress either in Jnana or in removal of the ignorance? People, who get visions of dazzling lights, remain unconscious for hours in Jada Samadhi, who gets visions of Gods, Ramana and other Gurus, continue to remain in ignorance. What all you see or divine sounds you hear are all false. This is not progress. These are obstacles on the way to progress.

The question of progress arises in one linear plane, where an object which is goal is considered separate from us. If I, a multimillionaire see myself a beggar in the dream with fifty lakhs of rupees kept in my pant pocket before sleeping, am I really a beggar or a multimillionaire during the dream? I saw myself as a beggar due to a false imagination; I continue to remain multimillionaire only. When I woke up from the dream nobody can say that I progressed from the status of a beggar to the status of a multimillionaire. The entire Sadhana amounts to removal of an illusion, that I am an individual with a body. It is not that I progressed from an ignorant individual to the status of the all knowing Brahman. I was only the Brahman at all times, including the waking state, when I imagined myself to an individual in a phenomenal world, which was also created out of imagination. Hence to speak of progress in spirituality is an absurdity. But in the ignorant state when I am not aware that I am Brahman, I may assess my progress with reference to the degree of peace and composure reached by me due to Sadhana.

Continue with Japa. Japa will lead to Meditation and Samadhi if done for 10 to 12 hours a day continuously. Partly you can do Atma Vichara- a direct path. Without any other thought remain merged in the thought "I AM" or "I AM THE SELF". Just let your attention be finally and continuously fixed on "Being the ATMAN" or "ATMAN". If this is continuously done for all the day, it can result in Jnana/ Mukti. For those who find this difficult on account of other thoughts intervening in between, partly Japa and partly this attention to SELF is very good. Never bother about the inordinate delay and lack of progress. You do your job of Japa or Atma Vichara and leave the rest to the God. Let Him give self realization when He wants. Can't we surrender ourselves to Him even in this simple matter of doing our duty and leaving the reward to God? When you are striving for God realization you are not rendering any service to God. You are correcting a situation where you have forgotten God for births and fallen into ignorance. It is God who is helping you to do your Sadhana. All great Mahatmas did not get self – realization by their effort alone. It is only the Grace of God which finished 80% of the task.

So long as you think that you are an individual Sadhak struggling to get Jnana, that very thought is due to ignorance. You are a radical and integral part of the Lord who is doing His LILA through the various bodies and minds. You are the Director of the Drama and not a mere actor. Enjoy the Drama. The Drama has to end and the so called MOKSHA is a must. It is a "fait accompli"! YOU WILL REACH YOUR GOAL IN THIS BIRTH. NEVER WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING – SPIRITUAL OR WORLDLY.

WITH ALL MY LOVE & OM

SWAMI SHANTANANDA