

Difficulties in Sadhana

- Sri.Puvvada Vittal

Pujya Sir,

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

On this auspicious day of Birthday Celebrations of Pujya Lalaji Maharaj on Basant Pachami, my humble pranams at your feet. I have been asked to share some thoughts on “Difficulties in Sadhana.”

1. Our story does not end by coming from various paths with varying degrees of grosser forms of worship to Natural Path. Even within Natural Path we may face difficulties in our worship for difficulties are only for those who toil. Only when one exerts himself towards any aspect of sadhana does one come across difficulties. It is important to recognize that when we say we do not face any difficulties, there is a good chance we are not endeavoring to the extent we should.

2. After introduction into Pranahuti Aided Meditation (Sahaj Marg) of Rev. Babuji Maharaj, generally most of

us find a new found habit, a hobby. There will be almost a sort of juvenile enthusiasm. We start to feel sporadic experiences of varying degrees and intensity. We are amused, enthused and propelled to seek them more. Their appeal is undeniable as they have never been experienced. Later, the initial euphoria is no longer there. While in some it transforms into sustained conviction, in some we see dilution and slowly we become aware of what we complain as difficulties.

3. Life in spirituality is not quite the same as life in regular worldly life. This is a new field for the sadhaka with its own values, feelings and methods of achievements. Master says it is a science. When we enter any new field we are bound to feel difficulties as our mind is used to the old ways of thinking.

4. Difficulties in sadhana may be classified as:

a. Implementation and Operation related (PAM practices, Ten Commandments, timing, posture etc)

b. Cognition or Understanding related (such as difficulty in understanding the goal, methods, stages of journey, identifying and reporting feelings/conditions

etc);

While for the first difficulty an ordinary intellect is required, for addressing the second difficulty a slightly cultured mind is required to practice this system efficiently. Of course, for a true seeker it does not matter much.

5. Before we discuss the difficulties subject proper we must have an idea of what we mean by sadhana. The word Sadhana has several layers of meaning and encompasses a wide gamut of aspects of Natural Path. One can safely assume that Sadhana in Natural Path refers the following activities/tasks: Goal Setting; Prejourney/preparatory activities; Starting of Journey; Journey through Pind, Brahmmand, ParaBrahmand, Prapanna, Prabhu, and Prapanna Prabhu regions; Journey through 64 Points; Journey through 7 Rings of Splendour; Layavastha in Brahm; and Swimming in the Infinite (SDG 109; See Talk on Efficacy of Pranahuti). Master and our Rev. Guide have described these regions and the journey through them. Such is the real extent of sadhana we are talking about in Sahaj Marg. I will be restricting my talk to the difficulties that abhyasis typically face in the first three of the above tasks i.e., Goal Setting through Starting Journey. Real difficulties

are when we start discussing the difficulties in the succeeding activities/tasks.

6. A general question comes up as to whether sadhana is in reality difficult. The Upanishads refer to Brahma Vidya Upasana i.e., sadhana as “Razor’s Edge”. Lord Krishna says in the Gita “After many births only a gnani (wise man) surrenders completely unto myself thinking that the Lord is all and everything, and such a great soul is difficult to find.” Master also says at one place “To be a real man is hardly available to human beings” (SDG Sensitivity & Experiences). Even in other systems of sadhana such as the Hatha Yoga, Buddhist and Sufi traditions the system of sadhana is not anything close to being easy. Difficulties in sadhana is a matter of our experience.

7. Difficulties are Nature’s way of hardening or strengthening. Whenever we overcome difficulty it gives us a bit of joy and strength. It is commonly said that nothing succeeds like success. Often in real world one’s mettle is demonstrated by how ably he functions in the face of difficulties or limitations. Only in failure our learning gets firmed up. No difficulties would mean no challenge.

8. Master says we should know how to make use of unfavorable (or difficult) things into favorable. If difficulty is there, the state of ease should also be there nearby. While we do not need to run around for difficulties, we should not let diffidence to reign in. When we solve or resolve any difficulty we need to recognize that event may even celebrate a little bit for that will serve as precedence to us when we face the same difficulty again. We can remind ourselves that if we could have done it earlier we can do it again.

9. One needs to recognize the difference between difficulty and doubt. One may assume that doubt arises due to lack of trust while difficulty is present due to insufficiency in ones capacity in spite of the efforts and endeavor. It is better to say “I have a difficulty in understanding...” rather than “I have a doubt”. Implicit faith in the Master, the system and efficacy of the system is essential in progress in sadhana.

10. Many a time when one faces difficulty, two reactions emerge: immediately seek help without exerting our mind; exert our mind towards the difficulty. While there is nothing wrong in seeking help we need to exert our mind towards addressing the issue. Unless we have practical experience of trying various ways of

resolving the difficulty we will not have full knowledge about the issue. This will be useful in our conviction and will assist others if such a need arises.

11. There is one more thing about difficulties. It has a space and time limitation. What appears difficult at one time will not be as we move on even if we postpone it for while. Eventually as we progress the difficulty no longer appears as difficulty. We should allow sufficient time for our growth and wisdom before we call something difficult and make an issue out of it. Sitting in one and the same pose was a big task for most of us as we are not used to it. The body was pampered and continuous movement is the norm. But slowly we made progress. It no longer is a matter of great difficulty.

12. Master says “We must march on the path of Realization like a brave soldier with full faith and confidence not minding the difficulties or reverses. Dejections and disappointments weaken our will and shatter our firmness.”

13. When we emphasize the goal we forget the distance and increase our attachment, remembrance, longing etc. When we emphasize the distance to be covered we

unwittingly give scope and space to difficulties to operate in our psyche. This one aspect of goal and its constant longing is one thing I realized reduces the frustrations and disappointments that arises due to difficulties in sadhana.

14. “Longing for Reality brings a person to right path (SDG 153, Longing for Reality)”. Even if perchance we may be doing incorrect way of meditation, if our longing is sincere and intense, it is my experience that somehow you enter into a discussion or a chit-chat with a co-traveler/trainer on this and all of a sudden you realize the mistake and the difficulty gets resolved. It is in this context we need to remind ourselves that Master emphasizes at several writings the importance of yearning/longing for the Divine.

15. During our school and college days while discussing difficult problems we used to hear that “the solution lies in understanding the problem correctly”. The more we talk about and understand our difficulty i.e., if we try to express it better with Master during prayer, or contemplate within ourselves or discuss with a trusted brother it generally resolves and we overcome the difficulty.

16. Just as in school, sometimes one is at ease to talk more freely about our difficulties to somebody with whom you repose your trust. He is a brother with whom you talk on first name basis on various aspects of mundane and spiritual life and seek opinions. Ideally it should be ones trainer because the trainer is already aware of his spiritual sadhana. One of the important requirements for this bond is openness.

17. Another place difficulty can arise is in sangha/institutions. “If ego is one barrier, sangha is the other. Both could be bonds for the man who seeks something more valuable than either, for example, God (Complete works of Dr. KCV Vol1, Difficulties in Yoga” It is in this context we can also understand when Master states that the biggest difficulty he finds in sadhana based on his experience is “partiality and prejudice.” We should never let our focus get away from the “Sat” and drift to “Sangha.”

18. One of the most common difficulties cited by abhyasis, myself included, in meditation is the invasion of thoughts. In this context let me share with you an insight shared by our beloved guide during an individual appointment. “Yoga – to curb chitta vrittis,” as the first yoga sutra says, is the Patanjali school of thought. “Yoga

– in spite of chitta vrittis” is our school of thought. In just one pithy statement of “ignore thoughts” our Master has diverted our attention from “chitta vrittis” to “yoga” which we are bestowed in our system. Unless we learn to divert our attention from the “chitta vrittis” to the “divinity” which is already infused in us, we will continue to treat them as a difficulty in our meditation. We can see how we can overcome this difficulty in our meditations.

19. If the burden of control and regulation of mind was left to us in the Natural Path also similar to the old systems, our difficulty would have been overwhelming. It is our fortune to be in a system, so graciously developed by our Master, which rests the control and regulation task of mind chiefly with the Master provided the seeker attends to his responsibilities.

20. Another difficulty that I often think and assume I have is to clearly identify the feelings and conditions during meditations with or without pranahuti. I often find it difficult to clearly catch and be able to narrate the feelings and conditions there in. While I did make substantial progress I feel I still have lot of difficulty in this part of sadhana. The difficulty only gets compounded when you know you are using the same old

keywords over and over when required to give a feedback. At few times out of frustration I remember having requested my trainer brother to foment me with the pind desh feelings one by one in successive sessions until I learn them thoroughly instead of the regular sittings. The request was done more out of frustration and anguish. I understood I should work on my purity, patience and perseverance, and more loving, simple and open and there are no secrets in it. The more we are open and simple like nature, the more we are able to acquire this capability.

21. We may have occasions when we miss meditational practices due to household exigencies. I used to think that I am having so many difficulties in sadhana because I could not attend to morning meditation or evening cleaning. We become restless and start to lose peace of mind. While regularity in practice is important the satisfaction one gets by daily doing one's sadhana cannot be confused with peace of mind. "Satisfaction relates to the senses of grosser type while peace is close to the soul. If this worship is neglected for a day they feel restless (SDG 115)"

22. If all the members in the family are sadhakas in Sahaj Marg there is lesser scope for relational/inter-

personal difficulties. However some of us have family members who do not practice or share our aspirations and desires. Many a time it appears that there is a clash of spiritual and family goals leading to a conflict between the two partners. There were several occasions when I overruled certain genuine errands or family exigencies in the name of sadhana or service to Master. Due to the initial juvenile enthusiasm we are obsessive in our sadhana. As wisdom dawns, we do not brood over missing a morning meditation or Sunday satsangh or any part of sadhana now and then if that is necessary to attend family exigencies.

23. Another difficulty in sadhana is related to our notion of “exceptions, free lunch” even in spiritual life. While we do not notice it as a difficulty as such it bars our progress and advancement. We can see Master’s anguish in the article “They have lost the Ocean” that we expect Pranahuti/Master to engage us in meditations, make us regular, give us improvement, progress and promotion. However much we deny, several of us nurture this thought in our mind. We may disguise it under surrender. We propagate within ourselves unknowingly many notions and myths. We need to face ourselves, gird up our loins and take the second step towards the Divine even if it forgets to take the nine steps after our first step.

24. Familiarity breeds contempt. As we do the same methods of practices day in and day out, a certain type of routine feeling can creep up. Our family also can contribute by saying like “Heaven is not going to fall if you miss””. In fact we may say this to ourselves. Whether it is because of sloth, or lifestyle we tend to lax every now and then and take rest. It is all too familiar in cold climate cities like Bangalore how easy it is to yield to sloth. We have to realize that what we are doing is pre-sadhana and the real sadhana is yet to begin. It is important to note as our Rev. Guide says the matter is constantly waiting to conquer the spirit. Any time we allow matter to conquer spirit we are into pre-sadhana phase. We need to make a very strong sadhana-samskara so that the force of it would also propel us in our sadhana.

25. The institute has been adopting several ways to address difficulties faced by abhyasis such as: Weekly individual appointments with trainers, access to our beloved Guide, Publications such as Three Truths Trillion Doubts, open forum during Bhandaras, Abhyasi Training Program etc. One must utilize these facilities and get benefited in his sadhana.

26. Dealing with difficulties in sadhana is important. When we face difficulties, we must seek ways and means to address and resolve them. Unresolved difficulties lead to brooding and consequently they weaken the will. Will, we must recognize is the chief instrument we use in the Natural Path. We must never allow opportunity to weaken our will.

27. If difficulties that arise from our sadhana lead to certain amount of helplessness and surrender, they have in a way helped us. In an article titled “ Difficulties in Yoga” Dr. KCV observes “These are certain basic difficulties on the path of yoga, much more than what usually are considered to be obstacles of human nature, weaknesses of man. In fact it is one of the most important features of spiritual life or search for yoga that it arises from conditions of deepest despair and depression, of weakness of heart (hrdya daurbalyam) and helplessness (akincnata). Surrender to the Highest Spirit or God (prapatti) is about the most important first step towards self-recovery and upliftment (ujjivana). It is because it is about the most important that Yoga itself insists that one must devote himself to the service or attainment of God, or Isvara, so that one may become like Him. Worshipping the eternally free Lord of all Nature, one grows to that state of being free and lord of all Nature, or live according to that supreme Divine

Being and His nature. To be in conformity with that supreme Being or Nature is to attain freedom which is easily available. And when one attains His condition or Him, one attains all that could be attained through freedom and naturalness.”

28. Pranams.