

Confidence in self

- Sri Vidyadhar Joshi

Dear Beloved Brothers and Sisters,

Hearty Pranaams on the 7th Prabhu, 139 Lalaji Era, when we have gathered to celebrate the Birthday of Beloved Master Pujya Sri Ramchandraji Maharaj.

I seek to share with you some thoughts on the subject of confidence in self as it relates to our sadhana with respect to the Goal, Goal Clarity and the attitudes that it relates to, viz. determination, perseverance and courage.

Pujya Babuji Maharaj has stated many a times, in different ways, why one must never lose confidence in self. It is the basis on which we build determination and will power. It would be apt to go through some of His messages that shatter the myth that anyone can be weak at all in reaching the Goal of oneness. The messages essentially give us tremendous confidence and hope because we intuitively feel the force, the Truth in His exhortation and that keeps us well steered on the path. I seek your attention now as we go through some of His

messages that have repeatedly stressed the need to have Courage, Faith and above all Confidence in one's own self as the most preliminary requirement to tread the path as also to avoid being despondent.

Master states 'Nervousness, you should remove yourself. A warrior is never nervous on the field, because he has some aim before him. The courage starts when confidence is there; and confidence is there when you have willed to reach the destination. We should try only to build the future and not waste our time in thinking of the past. When we run forward, we do not look behind. (SDG, Simplified System of spirituality).

As we can see in the above message that confidence in the capacity of self to realize the Goal is subsequent to this thing that you should have willed for reaching the destination. This particular part of "willing to reach the destination", is the beginning of confidence that we talk about in spirituality. Once we say, yes, I will reach the Goal, confidence builds and when confidence builds, courage is there, because now there is a Goal in front of us. I don't see that He has put any pre-requisites for being eligible for this act of willing. Of course, it is our conditioning of the past if we feel that we are in anyway unfit for seeking oneness with God.

Pujya Sri Ramchandrajaji Maharaj has stated that there are three main obstacles in the path of Realization. (Reference: Spirituality, page 96 2009 edition)

- We try but there is no attempt
- There are too many things we try at the same time
- We do not have confidence in our self.

It is quite commonly held and also evident that all great people of fabulous achievements had tremendous belief in their capacity to succeed. This is generally speaking of diverse goals like political freedom movements, scientific discoveries and breakthroughs, sports, technology or any other fields related to human endowments which many individuals choose to take in their life. We read the life of such people and sometimes get inspired by them. However, many state that great people are great and hence they did what they could do. This attitude is not warranted in spirituality. If any one says, that he or she cannot reach the Goal because they are not endowed with the necessary capacity, therein lies

either an excuse out of laziness or a conceited lack of self belief to fulfill the aspiration. Laziness of course has to be squarely shunned altogether in the spiritual pursuit. Lack of belief in one's own capacity however is addressable, by educating our self properly in the method given by Pujya Sri Ramchandraji Maharaj, its practice itself and His support that is felt through the intuition we develop as we practice the method.

Why is that we need to have confidence in our self first? It is so, because if we have this, everything else that is needed can always be regained. If self confidence is lost, it is very difficult to gain anything back. Here, I am referring to the confidence that we must have in our effort to reach the Goal. That is the preliminary aspect which leads to the act of "willing to reach the Destination". This seed, in form of a will, is there in all of us. To say, I am not confident, is denying that this seed exists at all. Not only does this seed need to be accepted, it also needs to be nourished. This happens with proper practice of the System. With confidence in our own capacity, we develop determination and courage, with courage we develop character, and with character we are firm footed on the path. Confidence in self also precedes confidence in Master, though with gratitude I must mention here that in this method, with the support of Pranahuti, it is the Master who helps restore our

confidence in our own self by giving us a taste of our real nature. Our job is to not lose it but use it the right way to build important traits of perseverance, courage and determination leading to character.

There is the story of Prahlad which depicts this. It is adapted to suit our point. As a result of his meritorious deeds, Prahlad drove away Indra and became the king of gods. Indra approached Brihaspati and said, "Sir, you know my pitiable plight. What shall I do to regain my throne?" Brihaspati said, "Dress yourself as an ordinary mendicant, go to the durbar of Prahlad at the hour of Ichhadan, i.e., when he gives away whatever the beggars ask, and ask for his character." Indra obeyed. He went to Prahlad as a beggar and asked him his character.

Prahlad said, "Why are you satisfied with only my character?" "That is sufficient for me," replied the mendicant. "You can have it", said Prahlad. Immediately after he said this, an effulgent being came out of his body and entered the body of the mendicant. "Who are you? Why are you entering the body of the mendicant leaving my body?" asked Prahlad. "I am your character, as you have given me away to him, I have to enter his body now", the effulgent spirit replied. In a fraction of second another effulgent form came out. Once again Prahlad

asked "Who are you? Why are you leaving my body?" I am your shaurya (prowess). I am only a servant of character. So long as you had character I served you. Now that character has gone away, I am also following character." So saying, it also entered the body of the mendicant. Like this a few more effulgent forms left Prahlad's body. Lastly, a brilliant shining form starts to leave him. This is his self confidence leaving him. Prahlad pleads and prays, "I can afford lose everything, but not this." The moment, self confidence stays with Prahlad, all the effulgent forms that had left him including prowess and character, one by one slowly return back and he regains all that he had lost.

This story serves the point that everything else can be regained, even character, if confidence in self is there. A person who loses confidence in self would eventually lose everything else. Absence of self belief creates a fertile ground in the mind for other negative emotions to flourish. Doubt, diffidence, fear, guilt, despondency, self pity etc. are indications of absence of self belief.

Confidence in our own capacity, that we can tread the path and reach the Goal, is a preliminary aspect of following Commandment 3 as it leads to an important trait, viz determination. For this, Master, has asked us to

fix the goal as Oneness with God. It would not be out of place here, to go through the commentary on this commandment given by the Master.

“It is very essential for everyone to fix his thought, at the very outset, upon the goal which he has to attain so that his thought and will may pave his way upto it. It has been observed that those on the path of spirituality who did not fix that final state for their goal have definitely remained short of the mark, because, before arriving at the final point, they mistook one or the other of the intermediate states to be the final point or the Reality, and stopped there. Thus they suffered merely for not having fixed their goal. Even in worldly matters so long as a person does not keep his object in view his efforts are never so intensified as to ensure success. It is an admitted fact that a boat cannot ply direct to the destination unless the helm is applied to it. Treating this human form as a boat and the space it is plying in as the ocean of spirituality, it is but essential to put up the helm in order to be able to ply through the vast ocean successfully. In the spiritual field the helm is our strong determination which helps us to steer on to the destination. There may certainly be countless whirls at places, but the strength of our will and confidence helps us to overcome all of them and proceed on straight to the destination. Now since our eye is fixed upon spirituality,

we take up the ideal which is the highest and which can be nothing but that associated directly with the Absolute. Thus to reach the Infinite Absolute is one of the primary duties of man. But so long as the goal is not fixed in one's thought it is very difficult to complete the journey successfully. Divine help does come, no doubt, but only when the Supreme is convinced of devotee's earnestness of purpose. When the reaction creates a stir in the Infinite it indicates that he has concentrated his thought in the Great Being. (This brings to our view the example of the lover and the Beloved). It means that the distance between the devotee and the Lord is reduced, and the idea of remoteness begins to fade away. Our nearness goes on increasing upto the final limit where the very feeling of aloofness, having merged in the Reality, becomes completely extinct and assumes the form of the Latent Motion that existed at the time of creation. In this way our merging in the state becomes permanent and lasting. Our swimming in the Infinite Ocean now starts, which brings us to the real life, which comprises the influences of the ocean we are now swimming in. It is thus clear that the firmness of will and determination to reach the goal helped us to arrive at the destination, with the result that we got firmly established in the final state. How this most difficult problem was so easily solved by virtue of the correctness of our goal and the firmness of determination may not now be difficult to understand.

Our intention to reach the goal promoted our efforts, and since the Ideal was the noblest, the interest for it went on increasing till it developed into a strong craving. Then we began to feel impatient for it. When we get into this habit, the tendencies of the mind are diverted towards it with full vigour. Thus we come to the conclusion that for the attainment of the objective we have to create in us intense longing or extreme impatience, which forces our passage on to it, just as the Latent Motion did at the time of creation.”

As I understand, we are fully competent to attempt this since our Ideal is the noblest as the Master says. So the seed of self confidence and determination in us is already there in us for this noblest Ideal. It need not be cultivated so to say. It just is waiting for our attention to germinate, blossom and bloom.

Master says regarding self confidence:

He alone is weak who lacks self-confidence. (SS-361)

Everyone praises men of wisdom and I too do so. At some place I have also humourously remarked that even God does not help the weak persons. (SS-361)

The most important factor in realization is self-confidence in our own capacity and power to achieve success. It is absurd to think, even for a moment, that we are in any way too weak or deficient to acquire the highest state of perfection ever attained so far even by the greatest sages of the past. (DR-39, 40)

Feel the strong forcefulness in the expression of the Master.-“Absurd to think even for a moment that we are in any way weak or deficient”. This should cut through any doubts one may have regarding their own capacity.

He further says at various places to bolster our self confidence.

I have never seen one who, having firmly resolved to reach the ocean of bliss, might have remained short of it. When you have the proper means at your disposal, there is no reason why you cannot win. (SS-336)

I may assure you that you can win laurels in the spiritual field if only you turn your attention towards God and proceed with will, faith, and confidence, no matter how adversely you may be placed in, surrounded by all the worries and miseries of a house-hold life. (SS)

A powerful will made at the very first step, and maintained all through, shall never fail to achieve complete success. Difficulties and dejections will melt away at a mere glance and the path of success will be made smooth. Our firm will enable us, automatically, to draw in power from unknown sources for the accomplishment of the task.

The opposite of self confidence is despondency against which he has warned at several places. In the article on Meditation is the foundation of spirituality, He writes:

“The next thing for him to cultivate is that he should always look to the bright side of the picture and should not, at any rate, submit himself to the feeling that he cannot attain the goal. Iron will is essential for the purpose. He should not be led to the feeling of despondency which is a great obstacle on the path.

The cause of despondency in the spiritual field seems to be that people generally think it to be the most difficult and intricate thing. What we have to gain is really a very simple thing within our easy reach. The difficult methods, so far applied for attaining this simple thing,

have really made it complicated and intricate. An example will make the proposition clear. Suppose a needle falls on the ground and you want to pick it up,. It will be very easy to do so with the help of your fingers. If however a crane (a machine used for lifting heavy weights) or some other complicated machinery is used for picking up the needle, it will be difficult to do so, and it is quite possible you may fail in your attempt. Exactly the same thing happens when you think of difficult and complicated methods for attaining the Reality which is very simple. People are really trying to pick up the needle with the help of a crane in the spiritual field. It is merely a misconception which, if wiped off, will remove despondency altogether.”

Reality is simple and it is we who have become complex, our mind being conditioned by so many beliefs of the past. Master seeks to impress upon us the futility of our past notions and ideas that keeps us bogged down in our pursuit. He says that we should come with faith and confidence in the spiritual field and be prepared for the practice, throwing off self-conceited ideas. Yet we know that ideas come again and again to haunt us. Diffidence or despondency is an outcome of self conceited ideas. Meditation on Divine Light is simple, yet we know how thoughts come and we get either disturbed by them or find it hard to ignore them. We need the help of a master

who keeps reminding us of our real nature that eventually we learn to ignore such thought content which is not in the interest of our goal. The problem is, we tend to identify more with clamor of lower level thoughts that our mind throws than identifying with our real nature. It takes courage and confidence to face those thoughts and say squarely to them, I am not you as you seem to bully about. Past conditioning of the mind will not go off in an instant. However, the confidence that we can and we will undo that conditioning can be had instantaneously by those who practice the system of Natural Path.

The other reasons for diffidence on the path are trials and tribulations of the daily life of a Grihastha. However, note that the system shatters the biggest myth of all times that people engaged with the world cannot take up the Goal of realization. As a matter of fact our system beautifully teaches us to convert all actions to penances and worship. This is what Pujya Babuji Maharaj says that we should succeed in converting the whole of material force into spiritual force. “The wisdom of man is that he should make the unfavourable things favourable. In other words, we should try to succeed in converting the whole of the material force into spirituality: and it so happens in Natural Path system, if we get a competent Master.” (Craving of the Soul –SDG)

It is the commandments of the Master that we have to apply in our daily life that teach us how to convert every action to penance and worship. Specifically, when we feel despondent for any reason, if we analyze the cause, we will find that there is some discrepancy that is arising in following commandments. The solution to come out of the feeling of despondency is the courage to implement the commandments. One may ask when I am in a down state or feeling despondent, how is it that I can reverse my feeling. It is like already being in a pit and someone advising us to get out of the pit without any tools in our hands. Despondency starts to erode our confidence and feeling of helplessness sets in. In my humble opinion, I can share few ideas that help us come out of despondency and not have our self confidence get affected.

- Resort to sincere Prayer at bed time, placing before Master whatever problem we perceive as affecting our sadhana. As Revered Sir has put it, courage is not the absence of fear but fear that has said its prayer.

- Get involved in studying His works or listen to His audio messages. Try to feel the message of the Master in the heart.

· Go through the diary to read again the positive feelings and changes we have felt as part of our sadhana. Recall to memory, the imperience we have had. Confidence in self does not come out of ego or a misplaced belief in capacities of self. It comes out of the precious imperience we get by the Grace of the Master of our true nature. Having faith in the imperience cannot be a misplaced belief at all. It is this that makes us feel confident in our capacity to reach the goal.

· Confide in your trainer the problem that is bogging you down

· Just as we are asked to ignore the thoughts during meditation, learn to ignore the troubled state of mind for whatever reason it may be. This requires some practice and faith in the Master. It has been my experience that I used to think that I have so and so problem and that my sadhana is getting affected. I used to make a mental note of problems I must tell my trainer. However, the moment I start for sitting, the intensity of the problems reduces and by the time I am there in front of him, I have even forgotten about the problems. I have always been at awe at this phenomenon. In an instant, when determine to be in company of the master, the howling voices within start

to get quiet and disappear when in company of the master, just like cockroaches disappear when light is thrown at them. I understand, that the lower mind conjures perceptions which need not be true at all or worthy of looking. Yet it howls and demands attention. A consistent refusal to entertain lower states of mind alone is the way to open ourselves more and more and embrace our real nature. Problems are perceptions most of the time and Master seems to be saying - never mind, they will come and go. The mind plays a big role in creating doubts but the heart is the one we should listen to.

· Persevere to do the right things. Just because we have failed in some things in the past, does not mean that we will continue to do so. I may not have written diary for the last one week, should not mean that I cannot write the diary this week. Confidence in self leads us to perseverance. We should resolutely refuse to let our past actions, inactions, failures to influence our present. To attempt repeatedly, as if there was no past, is to persevere. This is one of the great lessons we learn in spirituality. We do have this wisdom when we were all small children. While learning to walk, no fall was strong enough to prevent us from getting up and walking again, till we mastered that skill. The same wisdom needs to be revived in the spiritual pursuit.

· The imperience of Pranahuti is pure and unmediated by sensory knowledge and is the one that makes us believe that yes, we can. That is why it is so important to reflect on the periods of silence, simplicity and plainness we feel after satsangs, sittings and meditations. It is not of ordinary nature. In that pure state of mind when we reflect and resolve, our self confidence grows further. I find it amusing that many say they have felt nothing but calmness as though it is of no value. Self confidence is intuitional in nature and this I feel develops by believing totally from the heart the imperience we get.

He further writes in the same message. “The beauty of the training of my Master is that spiritual life runs parallel to the life in the world, with ever increasing efficiency. Once you have decided to attach yourself with a system, where regulation of mind is the responsibility of the Master, please give a fair trial, and have your own experience after sometime. There cannot be any breakdown in spirituality, if faith and desire for the Ultimate is there. Physical or mental troubles do not tell upon spirituality. My Master unequivocally declares: 'Spirituality is my responsibility, as practice is your responsibility'.”

One thing we must note here that most of the difficult things we undergo in life that we think affect our sadhana, He squarely dismisses our misconception with this one statement: “Physical or mental troubles do not tell upon spirituality.”

These are unprecedented times when ordinary people have a chance to participate in the greatest endeavour of Divine work. The new Spiritual Era demands that we think differently now and rise above our petty thinking which has been conditioned by several years of lack of self belief. Lalaji Era, the new Spiritual Era, demands Spiritual Activism by which I mean our actions must reflect meditative wisdom for individual and universal good. This journey starts with a self belief that yes we can. I conclude, with a few more messages of the Master that will boost our faith and confidence.

If you want to taste the real nectar of life, come forward into the field with undaunted courage, not minding the ups and downs of fortune. That is the thing needed for our life, not charity and alms. (SS-329, 330)

Firm resolve and dauntless courage are the essential features of a manly character. That is what is required for

the final success. My advice in this respect usually goes unheeded. It may perhaps be because of my insufficiency in literary knowledge which people generally value most in an accomplished soul. (SS-264)

What is the call of the present day? Nothing but the energy issuing forth from the centre. Either it should burn us or it should embrace us. That should be our thought if we really want our transformation, for which we should come forward like a warrior in the field to test our own bravery for the task. (SDG- 112)

Pranams