

I started to put this talk together a couple of weeks ago, and when I ran it by Swami she told me I had completely the wrong approach. I didn't question that or argue the point; rather I listened to her suggestions and pursued them.

In 1998, when I asked to do Diksha, I had no idea what I was doing or where I was going. I was so lost I didn't even know I was lost. I thought... you know.... I imagined...you know what? I didn't have a clue – not one clue.

It is undeniable that the spiritual journey is an arduous one, but how many of us are prepared to put in the footwork necessary to move forward on the path. Choosing a guru is not getting a free ride; it's having a guide.

When you climb a mountain, you have to plot a course; you use a map and try to figure out the best route. If you have no knowledge of the terrain, or the best approach to take, you will use a lot of energy back tracking to find the right way. This is why we need a guide, and all of us who have taken Diksha have chosen Swami to be our guide, because she knows the way.

We have her footsteps to follow as she has the footsteps of Maharaj and Sat Guru Dev to follow. We belong to a lineage yoga with a living guru, and I don't think many of us appreciate how extraordinary that is. There were certain promises and actions and endeavours we agreed to when we took Diksha. One of them, was to keep the company of the teacher and likeminded with an open mind and an open heart.

I took Diksha over twenty years ago, and I suggested, for the first time, a couple of weeks ago, that I visit Swami and do something for her. She has committed her life one hundred percent to my well being and spiritual education, and it's taken me twenty years to initiate spending one-on-one time with her. No wonder she said it brought tears to her eyes. In the Diksha handbook, it states that 'there are many more seekers waiting for help and the teacher must never waste time. 'And neither must the seeker.

I am the spiritual aspirant, and I must do the legwork. When you are the one following on a steep rocky path, it is easy to stare at your shoelaces and trudge glumly behind them. You glance up occasionally to notice an interesting rock or a colourful bird, but you have your course set and you have no decisions to make. While you are catching your breath in the shade, Swami is travelling back down the slope to help another chela, she overtakes and assists yet another further up the slope. Her time and energy is an outpouring of love and patience, and she thinks only of our wellbeing. Yet, we continue to disregard our part. We didn't bring a hat, we're getting sunburnt, we see a friend on another

outcrop and think that it looks like more fun, we chatter constantly and distract ourselves with pretty objects on the path. We wonder perpetually when we are going to eat and how long 'till we stop for a rest.

It was important for me when I was writing this talk, to be faithful to the teachings of our lineage. It is all too easy to follow the ego and think that you know a better way. I am reminded that 'the seeker who guides themselves has a fool for a guru.' There are a few FAQs that may help you to forge a closer connection to your guru – your chosen guide.

Q What is the best time for meditation?

Q How should I sit?

Q When should I repeat my mantra?

Q Can I meditate after dinner?

Q Can I meditate in my bedroom?

Q Do I have to meditate alone?

Q If I am upset, can I meditate to get rid of the problems?

I hope this gives us all something to consider in relation to our practice and what efforts we are making to forge a closer relationship with our guru. Are we offering all the food we ingest? Are we utilising the Ekadashi Fast days to observe ourselves more profoundly and be mindful of the manifestation of nature surrounding us?

I will leave you with a little reminder.

Do you promise to observe Mouna, the code of silence, for at least 2 hours each day?

Do you promise to observe the rules of Mitahara, to eat moderately and simply, foods which have been offered to the Godhead?

Do you promise that you will follow, to the best of your ability, the Ekadashi fast days; the fast of Vishnu?

Do you promise to nurture the vibration of your mantra?

Do you promise to observe the rules of Brahmacharya, to be truthful in thought, word and deed, to be honourable and to practice integrity, love, truth and faithfulness?

Do you promise to be helpful at all times to others, but not seek the rewards of your charitable behaviour?