

True Aspiration

Of all the qualities required for a progressive and successful spiritual life, perhaps nothing is more important than aspiration. Indeed, the fourth Vedantic *sādhana* says it has to be a burning aspiration, *mumuksutva*. Jesus said that you must hunger and thirst after righteousness. This sort of intense aspiration can come about in many ways. It may slowly rise up within us, it may happen as a result of having an intense spiritual experience, or we may be inspired by some book, scripture or teacher.

In any case, we come to believe that spiritual aspiration is the most important thing in life, so we are prepared to express it with intense effort. Unfortunately, keeping up intense effort indefinitely is, to use one of Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī's expressions, no easy joke. Sooner or later, as Pūjya Swāmī Kṛṣṇanandajī pointed out—maybe after 10 years, 15 years, 20 years, 25 years—we will simply run out of steam. We can no longer put the same amount of effort into it.

If this happens to us, there can be one of several results. Sometimes, most tragically, the seeker can no longer do his or her spiritual practices. They are completely burned out. Sometimes they are established in a certain pattern of spiritual life, and so while the spark of flame has died out, they continue to live the life even when there is no real life in it. Other times, after perhaps some months or even years, the seeker will develop a new attitude to their spiritual life. They will continue, or revive, their spiritual practices but with a different attitude. Not an attitude of “I must achieve something,” but rather “I do it because it's the right thing to do.” As Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī said, “because that is what we were created for.”

Ultimately, while we cannot predict the results of doing our spiritual practices simply because they are the right thing to do, we will feel that somehow we are on the right path. The explanation could be that we have stopped thinking about ourselves and what the ego is going to get out of it; we have put the ego and its desires aside. We are doing things just because they are the right thing to do.

It is this that builds spiritual strength. It is this that allows the God within to take over our life. When the God within takes over our life, we are leading a spiritual life, a divine life as Gurudev expressed it. A divine life means that we keep up our enthusiasm, but our efforts are dedicated to

doing what's right, to doing God's will for us. And we leave the results to Him.