



**By: Sadhvi Parananda**

## “LIVE IN THE LIGHT”

I have been asked, more than a few times, over last year about my feelings regarding teaching in Swamiji’s shadow. My response is this:

***I don’t teach in Swamiji’s shadow...  
I teach in his light!***

I am amused that people willingly accept fitness gurus, food gurus, sports gurus and money gurus. What raise eyebrows and suspicion are spiritual gurus. All of those non-spiritual gurus are well paid for their expertise. Because we are a monetized culture, the more we pay, the more valuable the teaching, **NOT**.

In most ancient traditions, teachers (gurus) are essential to spiritual growth. Guru is as much a concept as it is a person. Guru means “dispeller of darkness.” When we speak of teachers or gurus in yoga and meditation communities, we refer to amazing beings who have mastered themselves and are willing to transmit their energy and wisdom to students.

When growing spiritually, it is the quality of the student that is crucial. If we really want to

grow, we need to be the most capable, disciplined consistent practitioner possible – *We have to be the best student in the history of students!*

***We have to live in the light.***

So many times we see people who have participated in any number of endeavors for a weekend, a month, three months, and they start talking about teaching. The truth is that we can’t have it as our goal to teach if we really want to grow. Spiritual teachers don’t “study” to become gurus --they cultivate unconditional love. Then, at some point, their teacher may ask them to teach.



We can learn the information and the technique quickly, but it takes time to absorb the intellectual

knowledge and to practice it thoroughly. And we need time to make the mistakes from which we truly learn. The master has made more mistakes than the student has even attempted.

We learn from our mistakes—Lord knows I have made and continue to make them every day! But we learn from them. We seldom learn from

what we did right. We learn from our mistakes how to better align our mind with our heart. To paraphrase Swamiji,

*It takes time for the fruit to ripen. If it is eaten too soon, it is sour. It takes time to ripen in your practice.*

Then, life becomes so amazingly sweet.

So, to grow, to gain self-mastery, we must take the time to be the best student *E-V-E-R*; we need to understand that often we learn the info, but it takes time to integrate it completely. At first we might wrongly understand the information because of our filters and tensions. We need to practice and practice and practice. And (no comma) we must cultivate unconditional love.

**Here are a few small strategies you might consider including in your daily practice to spur your growth and to cultivate unconditional love.**

1. Every morning take the time to thank and honor your teacher(s). And do the same for their lineage. Precious few attain mastery on their own. (That is called ego for 99.9% of the people). Place a flower in front of your teacher, wave some incense, and/or light a candle. Offer a cookie. Do "something." We cannot grow without devotion.

2. If you do some puja or ritual each day, in closing, ask the Goddess (or the subject deity of your puja) for her blessing, understanding that one word from her will greatly grace and bless your life. Then ask for forgiveness for any mistakes you have made in the puja (acknowledging that you may not have it exactly right but that you sincerely are trying to do better).

3. Stand at the end of your meditation and circle (in place) three times to the right acknowledging all of the directions.

4. Bow to your cushion.

These simple acts of devotion, feeling gratitude and asking have an amazingly powerful effect.

As we gain some mastery and begin truly to paint our own canvas we understand who we REALLY are and why we are in this world (to grow). As we do, we begin to inspire those around us (with no title necessary). We inspire through our Presence in a way that is appropriate to our circumstance (as a boss, parent, team leader, community member, etc.)

We appreciate the value of the teacher/guru – the dispeller of darkness. We luxuriate in their light – their radiance. And we paint the canvas of our life in our own unique way. At all stages of growth, from day one to year forty-five, if we are smart, we understand that we could use some further training and guidance from that teacher to become even more refined.

For me, my devotion to Swamiji grows more deeply every day. This amazing human being gives freely and completely, practicing unconditional love and actively working NOT to keep anyone in his shadow. His presence lights up the space and provides the arena for all to shine.

*...From this light I strive to serve others as I pursue being the best student in the history of students.*

Namaste! ॐ

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