

1. You Want to Know the Greatness of Mantra siddhi?

Once a brahmachary (bachelor) youth came to have darshan of Kanchi Mahaswami (HH Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati). He prostrated before the sage and got up. Swamiji looked at him keenly and said, "Are you not Kulitalai Sankaran? You are fine?"

"With your blessings, yes, Periyavaa", said Sankaran.

"Alright, what is your age now?"

"Thirty, Periyavaa."

Periyavaa laughed: "So you have decided to lead your life as a brahmachari, without any idea of marriage."

"Yes, Periyavaa", said Sankaran.

"Alright, anything special about your coming here now?" Periyavaa laughed. "And you wouldn't come without a reason!"

"Yes, Periyavaa. I have come to get a doubt cleared."

"Is it so? Come on, tell me" said Periyavaa. "What is that big doubt you have?"

"It is a doubt about mantra japam, Periyavaa", replied Sankaran.

Periyavaa asked quickly: "If it is about mantra japam... Are you doing any mantra japam?"

"Yes, Periyavaa".

"Oho... You have had an upadesam?"

"Yes, Periyavaa".

"Whoever is that Guru?"

"Mysore Yajna Narayana Ganapadigal", said Sankaran.

"Good, very learned; whatever the mantra?"

Before Sankaran could open his mouth, Swamiji said, "Wait, wait. You should not tell me the mantra. That should remain with you as a secret. Just tell me which devata (God) it is about."

"Hanumat upAsanA paramAna mUla mantra, Periyavaa" said Sankaran.

"Alright. What is it that you want to get clarified in this mantra japam?"

"It is like this, Periyavaa. I am performing this mantra japam since my twenty-third year which was when I got the upadesam. I am doing it for the last seven years, still I don't know anything."

"What do you mean by saying 'I don't know anything'?", asked Swamiji with surprise.

"What I mean, Periyavaa, is that I am not able to find out if I have got the siddhi of that mantra" replied Sankaran, his voice echoing his sadness.

Swamiji said without hesitation: "What are you going to do by knowing it? Anyway, are you doing the japam for AtmArtham (to know the self) or kAmyArtam (for a specific purpose)?"

Sankaran said: "I am doing it only for AtmArtham, Periyavaa. Still, I am at a loss to understand if I have got the mantra siddhi and the grace of the devata. I pray to you to kindly tell me about my progress". As Sankaran said this with all humility, tears started rolling down his eyes.

"Only the person who does the japam can understand if he has got the mantra siddhi, by personal experience. There will be a time when the person will experience it, Sankara," said Swamiji with vAtsalyam (affection).

Sankaran wasn't satisfied. "No, Periyavaa. I haven't had any personal experience so far. And I don't understand anything about it, though I continue to do the japam, as advised by my Guru, for the last seven years. Sometimes my mind becomes very tired, Periyavaa. You should kindly inform me about any way that I can know it." As he spoke this, Sankaran joined his palms in reverence and prostrated before Swamiji.

Acharyal (Swamiji) was quiet for some time. He understood Sankaran's confusion. He decided to make the disciple understand what he wanted to know. He asked Sankaran to squat on the floor near him and began talking:

Many years back, in Sringeri Sri Sarada Peetam, a mahaan named Nrusimha Bharati Swamiji was the peetadhipathi (pontiff). One day, a sishya (student) of the matam (hermitage) belonging to that region came to have a darshan of the Swamiji. He did not come for nothing. He bore the same question that you asked me now.

After prostrating, he presented the guava fruits to Swamiji.

“Come, you are fine? Tell me what you want”, said Swami Nrusimha Bharati with utmost kindness. The sishya told him politely, “Swami, I am doing japam of a mantra that was given to me by an upadesam. I am doing the japam for many years now. Still I am not able to know if I have got the mantra siddhi. How do I know it Swami?”

Swamiji said at once, in a bid to persuade him, “You continue to do the japam in an AtmArta way. That devata itself will bless you with the siddhi phala (fruits of the efforts) eventually.”

The sishya was not satisfied with this reply from the Swamiji. He persisted, “No, Swami. I need to know if I have got the siddhi of the mantra. You must tell me a way to know it, I pray to you.”

Swamiji understood the sishya's mental state. He called him near and said enthusiastically, “Don't worry, my child. There is a way!”

“Is there a way, and then kindly bless me with the knowledge, Swami” The sishya was in a hurry of excitement.

Nrusimha Bharati Swamiji said laughingly, “Every day, before you start your japam, spread paddy grains on a wooden seat, and cover it with a vastram (cloth). Sit over the grains and do the japam. Continue in this fashion day after day. On that day when the paddy grains on the seat fry and blossom into flattened rice, you will understand that you have got the mantra siddhi you have been seeking to know. You understand this?”

Even though the sishya understood it, he thought confusedly that if the Swamiji was telling him this way just to satisfy him or if this would really be possible. Suddenly

he asked an unexpected question to the Swamiji. "Gurunathar should excuse me. I pray this to you with an intention to know. I should not be mistaken for testing a sage in the guru sthAnam (the position of a guru). Spreading the paddy grains, covering them with a cloth... and they will fry..."

Before he could finish it, Swamiji laughed and said, "You want to know if I have had any such experience, right?" He asked for a wooden seat to be brought then and there and placed facing the direction of east. He asked for a lot of paddy grains to be spread over the seat. When this was done, Swamiji placed his vastram (cloth) over the grains, seated himself in padmaasana and closed his eyes. By this time a large crowd had gathered in the place.

Only a few seconds later, there was a continuous noise of the paddy grains getting fried and flattened. There was a little amount of smoke also. Swamiji got up and removed his vastram (cloth) that covered the grains. On the seat were dazzling white flowers of fried and flattened rice! The crowd was amazed.

"Nrusimha Bharati Swamiji looked at the sishya who asked the question. The sishya was standing sobbing. No one could speak anything more..."

As Kanchi Swamiji finished his narration of this episode, Sankaran was standing amazed, with tears in his eyes.

When he started to say something soon after, Swamiji interrupted him and said,

"What Sankara, are you going to ask me to demonstrate to you?" and laughed heartily.

Sankaran fell at Swamiji's feet, his eight limbs touching the floor, and said, "Enough Periyavaa! You have made me understand the mahima (greatness) of mantra siddhi. Kindly bless me, and permit me to return to my place."

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