

## A Letter to Myself (After Walking 900 Kilometers) by Guri Mehta

Taking the first step with full conviction almost guarantees that the destination will be reached, granted you persevere through the middle part with full sincerity.

After the longest day of the entire walk -- 38 kilometers -- my feet finally touch what the Romans thought was the end of the world. It's been a long and interesting journey from St. Jean Pied de Port in France to Cape Finisterre, the western-most tip of Spain.

One can never imagine the impact of such pilgrimages on our lives. Sitting on a rock by the lighthouse watching the most glorious sunset of my life, it seems like a perfect ending to a journey of 900 kilometers.

There's so much that I've learned from walking the thirty-seven days. I've learned that if you take the first step, and keep going no matter how slowly you go, limping or crawling, rain or shine, sick or healthy, happy or sad-- you will get there. The distance might seem long and wide at first, but step-by-step, day-by-day, you slowly bridge the gap between the beginning and end.

I've learned that you need to have clarity about where you are going. There should be no doubt in your mind, so when you meet distractions on the path, they won't last for long because you know exactly where you need to go. You are grounded on your path.

Once you have the clarity of vision: enjoy the journey. The destination can never be as sweet as the journey. The focus always has to be on each day, each moment. There's no improving tomorrow, it's all in the now. Life is taking birth right now.

And if you wander off the path, don't ignore the signs. Don't try to take the easy way out, don't look for shortcuts. You will have to face the path at some point. There's no difference between uphill and downhill. They're both critical to the journey, two identical wings of the same bird.

Remember that sometimes the path will be full of beauty, nature, and rivers that flow effortlessly. And sometimes you will find yourself walking on the highway going against traffic; trying not to get run-over and just hoping to make it through the day. It's all the same, neither roads are permanent - the terrain will keep changing. The most important thing is to keep going in the same direction.

Each day has its surprises; remember to embrace the good and the bad. Take moments to enjoy the beauty around you. And always stop and lend a helping hand. It's more important to arrive in good spirits than to arrive on time.

Be good to your body and mind. You will get from it what you put into it. Don't

over-indulge in food, but make sure you nurture the body enough. Never underestimate the power of a good nights' sleep. And for the mind - don't hang around the naysayers and the gossipers long. Don't let the mind get habituated to that. It's much better to be silent and alone.

Don't try to walk at the speed of others; if you walk faster than your legs can go, you'll quickly burn out. If you walk slower, you will tire of that too. Find your own pace in life. And walk to the rhythm that allows you to hear the beat of your own heart, and keep yourself tuned into the quiet songs coming from your soul.

Have focus, but be flexible. Being rigid can make you brittle. Flexibility in the mind makes life more durable. Let the negative things pass through you quickly and be grateful for all the good in life -- for that is the magic formula to multiply it. Try to remember that when you have blisters on your feet, pain in your knees, and an ache in your back -- your lips still hold the capacity to turn into a smile.

Above all, the answer is always -- love. Always.