

On Discipline

In the journey of Self discovery, in the journey of being free from the ego, is there anything that you consider a great obstruction?

We speak many times about these things... But is there any obstruction you feel that you cannot get over it?

Question: Discipline. I struggle with it...

Discipline... Good! Let's speak about discipline!

So, some people have a difficulty with discipline... Is there anything in which you are really well disciplined? For example, brushing your teeth, are you disciplined with this? Taking food, are you disciplined with taking food? Visiting the bathroom, taking shower?

So, maybe it's not a matter of discipline itself, it's a matter of how we utilize the discipline, how we can use the discipline for our Spiritual growth.

So, this is mostly the sense, because for simple everyday things we seem to be extremely disciplined. Like brushing the teeth for example, or other natural duties, maybe going to work... If they say to us in the work "Every day you must be here at 8 o'clock!" We will be there every day at 8 o'clock, maybe a little bit earlier. You can be very disciplined in this...

If let's say we meet a very beautiful lady or a beautiful man and we want to have an appointment with this person, and she or he tells us "I will meet you 7:30 in the evening exactly." Will anybody miss this appointment? Will we not be very, very disciplined in this? Will we not wear our best clothes? Have our body perfectly clean and be there exactly on time, even before?

Discipline is based on willpower and one thing that triggers the willpower is when we do something that we love or we consider necessary. Either something that we love very much like meeting with a beloved person, or something that we consider necessary like doing our everyday work. Right? And working on a very specific schedule, we will be very disciplined in this, supremely disciplined! If not, we might get fired, there might be consequences...unpleasant for us.

But when it comes to Spiritual practice, we cannot see these consequences. We don't understand that there are also consequences.

Let us speak about these consequences.

Usually, when we do something that we consider beneficial for us, if we do it again and again and again, it stops to be a discipline, it becomes something natural. It becomes something mechanical perhaps, it becomes something organic, like for example our heart which beats organically, we don't need to be disciplined to beat our heart, the blood flows by itself. We brush our teeth every day, is part of our everyday routine, we don't think about it, we just do it.

In the same way, discipline, whatever we do, whatever we choose to do that we recognize "This is beneficial for me", we do it a few times, 3, 4, 5, 10, 20..., depending on the person, then it becomes something organic.

Now listen to this! If we stop doing this for a few days, we stop the momentum. Many times, we need to begin again from the start. Can you follow this?

If we do a discipline every single day, we wake up every day at 5 o'clock, let's say. "This is my discipline, every day I will wake up at 5 o'clock" And wake up every day, after one week it starts to become easy, it becomes even natural. After two weeks even if you don't put the alarm you will wake up, it becomes natural...

Now, if you stop doing this for some reason. Something... You are very tired, you cannot sleep in the night, and you stop doing it for a few days, it's broken. You need again to utilize willpower to build up the discipline.

Maybe somebody of you had this experience, maybe you had some accident, let's say you broke your foot or your leg, and you cannot walk for some time. And then after one, two months, the leg is fully healed. You go to the doctor, he makes x-rays, the leg is fully healed, the bone is healed, the ligaments are healed, it's perfectly healthy and you try to walk and you cannot. This is a shocking moment! You say "What is happening? I cannot walk. I need to learn, at my 30th or 40th years old, I have to learn how to walk, which is something I was doing so easily before. Now I cannot, I need to practice to do this, I need to practice walking!" Because the muscles have grown weak, even if it is just one month that you don't use them, the muscles grow weak. Then you need again to go through the process of learning how to walk. If you begin to walk every day, it becomes very easy, very organic, you don't even think about it. You don't even think that it is a discipline to stand up and walk. It's something very natural.

The same with whatever we do! Inside of us, in Spiritual practice, meditation, anything!

Take any discipline you like. Let's say, something very simple, like fasting. The first time that anybody fasts is like a torture, is like a self-torture, is very, very difficult! If you have not fasted ever in your life and you say "I stay one day without food", consciously, is very

difficult! You will have hallucinations of food the whole day. When you do it a few times it becomes gradually more easy and after some time, if you decide to let's say fast one day per month or one day per week, it becomes simply natural, you don't even think about it, you are not even hungry these days...

That is the power of discipline, the power of adaptation, the power of expanding our limits, expanding our boundaries, of awakening our powers...

The same with the discipline of Meditation. If you decide to stay for one hour per day, every day in the morning to meditate, in the beginning you need to utilize willpower, is like pushing a ball. Just push a ball, after you push the ball you don't need to continue pushing, it rolls by itself. The initial pushing is needed, but the rolling must somehow be sustained, if you stop it, then you need to push again.

So, if you start something, a practice, let's say Meditation, and you meditate every day one hour, after a few days it becomes natural.

For some people, a practice like this can be difficult because they don't experience immediately the fruits, they don't experience immediately the sweetness of meditating. There we come to another subject. Because in order to make anything as conscious beings, to make anything in our life, we must feel something from this. We cannot just discipline and say "It's good for me to meditate" without feeling something, it will not work. We need to experience something out of it, we need to feel something.

So, that is the reason why we have so many different approaches in meditation...Because maybe one method doesn't work for you, the next method maybe works, maybe the next also doesn't work, try the third one! One of them will work, one of them will give immediate fruits, one of them will give a touch of your blissful nature, one of them will give a touch of your inner joy and of your divine peace. One of these techniques will work, guaranteed! Sometimes even a combination of techniques will work even better.

And that is the great, great advantage of the Vedic system. Because it provides so many different techniques! It doesn't say "This one meditation, that's the only way to salvation, that's the only way to Self-realization." Not at all! There are so many ways!

So, it is a secret of meditation, of the discipline in general, to experiment a little bit. Try this, try that, try to combine, try to turn them around, try to approach them in a different way. There are so many things we can experiment, our position, our breathing, our mental attitude, what food we took before the meditation, where did we take the food, what people we met during the day, what experiences we had, what impressions we

collected during the day... Because all this comes out during our meditation and influences our experience.

If we have taken wrong food, it's a problem. It will be very difficult to receive the bliss of meditation, very difficult! These are the basis, so we start with the basis. We start with some basic discipline. Let's say food, basic things! So, to remove unnecessary obstacles from our spiritual practice.

Food, associations and work. What work we are doing... If you work somewhere, in an environment that is not natural for you, an environment where you push yourself too much, to do something for the sake of money, you will have difficulty in your meditation, your meditation will be a struggle. Still is good if you meditate, I can say it is necessary, but your meditation will be a difficult process.

So, the discipline of meditation, we can say it is a subtle discipline. It's something that everybody can do, but it's subtle and it requires a lot of attention, a lot of focus, and a lot of dedication.

Let us start with gross disciplines which everybody can do. Like we said, the food. Start from this discipline. I will mention two, three things, I will not go deep into this, just two, three things.

Take food that is vegetarian. This should be clear, without vegetarian food you will have obstructions in your meditation. Take food that is vegetarian!

Second thing, avoid onion and garlic. This will block your meditation. I know it tastes good, I am from Greece and every single food has onion and garlic inside. So, I know it tastes wonderful but it's a serious blockage for meditation. Avoid onion and garlic!

Avoid non-vegetarian products. Avoid eggs, belongs to the same category!

Avoid these things!

Can you do it?

Of course, you can do it! It's so simple, it's so easy!

This is gross discipline. You can cook in so many wonderful ways, just avoid using these things. There are a million different products that you can eat, without bringing down your awareness. Just avoid these three, just these... Eat all the others. This is gross discipline.

Associations. Avoid people that bring your energy down. Don't find delight in associating with people that bring you down. If it is absolutely necessary for some reason, maybe it is Karma, maybe it is some duty, absolutely necessary and inevitable, ok! Go into this and go out as quickly as you can!

But if you have to choose between associating with people that bring you down and staying alone, choose the second! Every day, any day, stay by yourself, it's much better, your frequency will be much higher. Stay by yourself!

People that have somehow a negative energy, so to say, they can create strong impressions inside of you. All these things will come into your meditation, when you sit for meditating you will think about them all the time. You will think what they said, you will think what you should answer, you will think what you should have answered but you didn't, and what you should do next time.

So, it is best if you avoid it from the beginning. Choose good people around you, choose spiritual people, people that are in the same path with you, people that support you, people that you can support each other.

This is also a discipline and a gross discipline – that means something that you can easily do. I will say this again, it is something that you can easily do! If you want to do it or not, that is your thing... But if you can do it? You can very easily do it!

And the third gross discipline, work.

So, there is this mentality and if you don't get a work that gives you money you will die out of hunger. I don't know any person close to me that died out of hunger and most of them have given up their stupid works to do something that fulfils them more.

You will not die out of hunger, you will not die out of cold, you will not be put in a madhouse or anything, if you give up your work.

And I don't say to stop working, I just say to do a work that is natural to you. A work that you feel you contribute something, you create something beautiful, something that makes you feel wonderful, something that makes you feel good with yourself.

Work is a very big element of our life! We spend so many hours and so much energy to this...it must be correct! It must be a natural work, it must be something beautiful. In this way you will feel fulfilment!

So, is this something you can do?

You can absolutely do it! And you should absolutely do it!

Do you want to do it or not? That's a different thing!

Are you brave enough to do it or not? That's a different thing!

I hope that you are... I hope that you are brave enough to do it!

So, if you follow these three very gross and basic disciplines – food, association and work – that will give you a very great boost and support in your spiritual life, that is much more subtle.

It will permit you to have the experience of bliss during meditation, the experience of self-contentment. To have, in other words, the rewarding experience that you seek in meditation. Because without this reward you will not be encouraged to continue, you will feel discouraged. You need to have some reward, you need to have some tangible result! If you have this tangible result you will continue, by your own wish, by your own will. And the more you continue, the greater the result! The more sweet the fruit!

The deeper you go inside you, the more beautiful the discoveries, the more precious the treasures you find inside of you, the greater the contentment!

The more you understand that some things you don't need at all, like some work for the money, associations for just to speak with somebody, and to take food just to survive. You don't need these things... You can do the same things in a beautiful way! Or if you like, you can do the same things in your own way!

You can do a beautiful work, eat healthy food and associate with beautiful people.

You can live a beautiful life!

By living a beautiful life, you will become beautiful. By becoming beautiful, you will live a beautiful life.

In fact, no consciousness needs to become beautiful, it's just that the consciousness needs to discard all the covers to the beauty, needs to discard the unnecessary ugliness. And the major ugliness is the ego of course!

And this can be a very powerful discipline! But how will you do it? If you cannot stop eating onion and garlic, how will you stop having your ego?

This is very subtle work. You need tremendous willpower to do this - tremendous willpower and very great focus! And very great dedication!

How will you do this?

Start by onion and garlic! And then you continue to take out your ego...

The question of discipline is very important because it's not that we cannot get disciplined, it is that most of our life we have been forced to be disciplined in something that is not beneficial for us. So, we consider discipline to be something negative, naturally!

Most of our life we have been trained to be perfectly disciplined for something that is just nonsense. And now we want to revolt, naturally! It is a very good thing to do... We want to break down the structure and we should do break down the structure! And then slowly build up a new structure.

Utilize this natural power that we have, the discipline, in a beneficial way, in a beautiful way!

And as we said, every discipline might appear to be intimidating, it might appear to be difficult and scary and such a great sacrifice that we cannot leave without it! For example onion and garlic, "I cannot live without it!" we might think like this. Just start for a few days, you will be surprised, you will be still alive, even after one week or two weeks or one month without onion and garlic you will be alive. And your meditation will be so much better! And then by yourself, without anybody pushing, by your own free decision you will say "I won't eat this again. I prefer to have a wonderful meditation, I prefer to have a divine life then to have a stupid life with onion and garlic."

Jesus Christ was saying "If your eye creates to you trouble and brings you down is better you take it out and throw it away!" because, He said "Is better to enter Heaven with one eye then to keep both your eyes and live a miserable life."

So, if you have to choose between a divine life in Heaven without onion and garlic and a mundane life on earth with onion and garlic, what would you choose?

I know most of you choose the second, I know... But why?!

So, remember the power and the great benefit of discipline. In the beginning it sounds intimidating, after a little bit of time you feel that "What was I doing all this time?! I don't need this thing. I'm so much better without it."

Then there is no more willpower necessary and it flows by itself, effortlessly, without any effort. The channel has been opened, then the energy flows effortlessly through that channel.

Start with gross discipline! Then continue with subtle discipline, how to discipline your mind, etc. Start with the basics, start with the foundations, then continue with more subtle work.

Now, let us say that there are some people here that will say to me “I follow all these disciplines, I have mastered all these disciplines. I have mastered the food, the associations, the work... I have gone over them. Now what? What is the next step?”

Now, it’s time to discipline the mind! Now we are entering into level two. A higher level, more interesting level, more interesting “playground”...

Let us try to examine this, how we can discipline the mind.

Arjuna said to Sri Krishna, in the Bhagavad Gita: “Oh Lord, I don’t think there is any way to control the mind, to discipline it! It’s powerful and slippery like the wind. It’s impossible to control it.”

And Sri Krishna said: “Arjuna, in the correct way, with the correct method, you can discipline the mind. You can control it and use it in a beneficial way.”

So, just like the hunger is an energy that we can harness and control it and direct it. Just like the instincts are also an energy, and we can control them and direct them. In the same way the mind, it is an energy. You don’t need to subdivide the mind in many different thoughts and many different categories. You don’t need to do so. The mind is an energy!

And when you sit for meditation, you can feel this energy, this mental energy, taking different forms. And if it is not directed it will take forms according to its own likes, sometimes randomly, sometimes chaotically, sometimes according to what is more easy, sometimes according to what is more pleasant to it, it will take these forms, sometimes according to what is more base, what is more low, many times like this, it will take these forms, this energy...

But if some light is thrown on this energy, if a little bit of direction is given, if some awareness is put on this energy, that energy can take a different route, a different direction. Instead of going downwards and downwards, like a ball bouncing down the staircase, which is most of the times the case... Instead of going downwards, it can start going upwards.

The same mental energy, it can become something very beneficial, it can become a spring of benefit. A simple example is prayer. When we are praying, we utilize the mental energy in a beneficial way. In practices like Christianity there’s not so much variety, it is said to

you: “Pray! Pray all the time!” It’s ok, it’s great, it can work! Not for everybody but it can work.

So, prayer can be a way to discipline the mind. Not to eliminate it, just to direct it.

Repetition of a mantra is a way to direct the mind, a very beautiful and scientific way to direct the mind. And this is a very beautiful discipline as well. Because it starts like a discipline, then it becomes very, very natural and easy and organic and very, very pleasant!

It is the same mental energy, the same mental energy that you can use for any kind of nonsense and gossip – the very same energy becomes a sacred sound, it becomes a mantra, it becomes a source of benevolence.

A third way to discipline and direct the mind is Self-enquiry. Instead of thinking about all and everything that is external to you, you think “Who am I?” Ask yourself directly the question: “Who am I?”

You say to the mind: “Oh mind, you appear to be all-knowing, you appear to know all about everything better than anybody else, you appear to be the greatest sage! Now answer to me this: Who am I?”

The mind that by its nature is directed always externally, by this question it turns a 180-degrees towards the inside, towards its own source, and of course cannot answer this question. Thus, it stays still.

You can try any other meditation, like “Not this, not this”.

“I am not this, I am not this, I am not a man, I am not a woman, I am not a human being, I am not from Greece, from Russia, from Italy, I am not a father, I am not a mother, etc.”

Deny every label! Every single label you have attached to yourself, deny it!

Using what? The mental energy, using your mind...

This is the way to discipline the mind. This is the way to direct its energy.

Can you do this?

Of course you can!

Can we combine some of these techniques?

Of course we can combine!

That's why I say: Experiment! Play with this a little bit. Find the correct combination. Find what works better for you.

So, disciplining the mind literally it means to direct the mind. To give it a direction, not let it by itself. Just like if you have a very naughty child, 3-4 years old. You don't let him by himself in the house, he is going to make a mess! And if you come back in the house and everything is broken you cannot complain, it's the nature of the child! You cannot leave him by himself. The same with the mind, we should not leave it by itself.

So, this is the subtle discipline.

The difference between gross discipline and subtle discipline is that the gross discipline we give it an initial push and it goes by itself. You don't need to maintain it all the time. That's much more easy.

The subtle discipline, to discipline the mind, doesn't work like this. You need to constantly, all the time, pay attention to it, you cannot leave it by itself. It is much worse than a child because the child at least will grow up and can take care of himself. The mind never grows up! It's always a 4 years old menace child! You cannot leave it by itself.

Is it like a defect of our human nature?

Not at all!

Is it some defect in the cosmic design that the mind is like this?

Not at all!

It is a tool for us to grow, to grow our awareness. It's a tool for us to grow stronger. Our whole human organism, our whole human experience it's a tool for us to grow in consciousness. And in order to grow we must have something challenging. Without challenges we cannot grow...and the mind is a great challenge!

And when we ultimately find the source of the mind that is the ego, when we manage to be free from this, then the mind stays down. Then the mind loses its dominating power and assumes its position as a servant.

So, this is the way of discipline. Start by the gross things, that are tangible, that you can easily change them, manipulate them, control them, etc... And slowly continue to the more subtle. And ultimately be free from the ego!

But to do this, start with the previous ones.

And I will repeat the instruction of Maharajji that might be helpful to you. He was speaking to the Indians, who don't practice much spirituality. He was saying to them "You must meditate minimum one hour in the morning, one hour in the evening! Either you like it or not, you sit and meditate! And if you sit and do so you will grow to like it!" This was is instruction again and again.

Either you like it or not you do it, and you will grow to like it.

In the same way that you don't question brushing your teeth or not, you just do it. You don't philosophize about it. You don't have like a debate with yourself "Should I do it? Should I not do it?"...you just do it!

In the same way, the meditation which is a billion times more beneficial than brushing your teeth, just do it! Just sit down with yourself in silence. There's nothing greater that you can offer for yourself. Sit by yourself in silence. Look inside of you, see what happens. Look deeper than that, see what you will find. Experiment with your subtle energies, find out what you can make out of them. You can try to make art out of them, make some art with your subtle energies! Make some sculpturing, or some drawing, or some construction with your subtle energies. Go even deeper than that, find the source of these subtle energies. Find the conscious Being, find the substratum of all movements, find the placid Ocean, find the perfect Being that is the most subtle of the subtle.

Discover this! It's within your reach and that will be the greatest reward for your discipline. That will be the sweetest fruit of your discipline.

Just like in the sacred story of Shiva and Parvati; Parvati couldn't attract Lord Shiva. She was so beautiful, the most beautiful being, but Lord Shiva was not interested. She was the daughter of the King, extremely rich, Lord Shiva was not interested.

One day the great Rishi Narada said to her: "You go and you do tapasya, out on the top of the Himalayas." So, she went to do asceticism, the hardest possible asceticism, the hardest asceticism any human being can do. And they say that for one thousand years she was eating only the fallen leaves from the trees, she was not cutting herself, only the leaves that had fallen naturally down to the ground, she would pick them up and eat only this, for one thousand years! Practicing all the time meditation and doing japa "Om Namah Shivaya, Om Namah Shivaya, Om Namah Shivaya, Om Namah Shivaya,..." Still Lord Shiva wouldn't appear.

Then for one thousand more years she was nourishing herself only from the droplets that were falling out of the trees. She was taking only this for one thousand years. Still Lord Shiva didn't appear.

Then for one thousand years more she was breathing only once per week, all the time staying on one leg with her hands upraised and chanting the mantra “Om Namah Shivaya, Om Namah Shivaya, Om Namah Shivaya,...” So just taking one breath per week, that was her only nourishment for one thousand years!

And in the end, through her perfect devotion, that expressed itself in ascetism, she touched the Heart of Lord Shiva. He appeared to her, he accepted her as his wife. A very beautiful and happy ending...

And they say that when Lord Shiva appeared, all this austerity, all this discipline she had performed, all this pain and suffering she had for three thousand years, in an instant it all vanished forever! Only bliss remained. She couldn't even remember all the discipline and ascetism, it was not there anymore. The only thing that was there was Bliss, the blissful presence of the Lord, the blissful union with the Truth. Only this was there and nothing else.

So, this is what Mother Parvati did to unite with the Truth in the form of Lord Shiva.

And now ask yourself, are you not ready even to give up onion and garlic?

So, in two weeks about is Shivaratri, we are going to say the full story of the marriage of Shiva and Parvati.

For today, I simply wish that you embrace discipline, you utilize your energy in a beneficial way for you and for all that is. You utilize your energy to realize yourself.

That is the purpose of discipline; to direct our energy for the greatest benefit of all. That is discipline.

- Om Shanti Shanti Shanti! -