
Week 2: Misunderstanding discipline

Discipline! What is discipline but a way of life? Discipline is not something which is enforced upon you. You see, there are two ways of discipline. One is regulatory, official discipline. "Drive on the right. Follow the speed limit. Don't enter, and no entry etc." These are regulatory, imposed restrictions which you have to, willy-nilly obey. You have no choice. People confuse this with a different sort of obedience which must come from inside, out of recognition that, if I do not follow this discipline, I shall lose my way. Very much like if you don't follow the road signs you are losing your way. There have been occasions in the dark when we have lost our way and we have to circle for forty miles before you find the way again – fifty miles, sixty miles, who knows? So, discipline says, "Stick to the way. Follow the rules." For whose benefit? For your benefit.

Now, what are the disciplines we have to follow? There are, of course, physical disciplines, there are mental disciplines, there are moral disciplines. Now the moment we talk of discipline, people say, "Aha, Christianity all over again, the church all over again." That all religions talk of discipline, doesn't make discipline a religion. That everybody eats bread, doesn't make everybody a white man! Though originally, the white man may have eaten bread. Today everybody eats bread. Isn't it?

We must understand that real discipline comes from an inner recognition of the need to affirm in myself a particular code for myself, established by myself, for myself. It is not an imposition – we only suggest. You have to make this discipline possible within yourself, by yourself, for yourself.

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I don't think you people are stupid, that you don't want to follow discipline, because even to get here from New York or Boston, or wherever, you need guidance. "Take 85 North, take Exit 21, get into 17 North, take Exit 17, get into 36 north." What is but discipline when you obey this? When you have these beautiful road networks as you have in the US – superb roads, superbly marked, nowhere else in the world will you find such wonderful road signs – you are obeying something to get somewhere. That is discipline. Now if you are not going anywhere you won't have a map, you won't ask for instructions, you don't care where 85 goes or 95 goes or US-10 goes; where it goes, I couldn't care less.

So, discipline is for somebody who wants to get someplace from where he is. I don't know if you had the experience of somebody telephoning you at night and saying, "Hey, how do I get to your place?" The first question you ask him is, "Where are you?" because unless you know where he is, you can't give him guidance about how to get to where he has to go. Obviously, you see. There is always a beginning to a journey and an end to a journey, because if he is to the north of you, he must come south to come to you. Suppose there is a child there, and he says, "Papa, the other guy called and you said 'Come South', and this fellow calls and you say 'Come North. What is this nonsense? We are in the same place, and you are telling two different friends of yours two different directions. How is it possible?" Then you have to explain to that child of yours, "My son, suppose you are here; he is here, he is there. How would he come to us?" That is teaching, you see, so that he may later on understand and discipline himself to take the right path for his own benefit. So we have to know where we are at, where we are, we have to know where to go, and we have to know the road.

So you see, spirituality is nothing but being taught the road – which road to take, where to exit, and if you don't know to read, if you don't know the north from the south, just follow. Obedience means following. It does not mean lack of freedom or giving up your freedom, it does not mean selling yourself into bondage or slavery. It only means, "I suspend my power of judgment, hand it over to this guy who says he can lead me, and when I am there – salute! I don't need the fellow any more." What on earth for? I mean, I wouldn't go on following a Cadillac just because it's a Cadillac, would I? "No, no it's a lovely car to follow." But I want to go to Boston, and this guy's going to New York. "So what does it matter? It's a beautiful car, Chari!"

So, we follow things which are taking us in the wrong way, because they are enticing, because they are attractive, because they lead us on. You don't want to be lead on and on in the wrong direction by enticements. Now, the difficulty in avoiding enticement is, precisely as Patrick said, desire. Desire leads us in one way, the goal is the other way. The whole effort of spirituality is to choose that which I must choose, avoiding that which I must avoid, in my interest. If any of you are asked to obey, or follow, or abide by certain regulations, principles, it is for your benefit. The first understanding that you need discipline is that it is for your benefit.

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If I use the word 'obedience', you may not like it, but to be guided by, you see, there's nothing wrong. I see all over America tourist information bureaus, and when you go there the guy says, "Take this route and take exit number so-and-so, and get to this place. Flint River – beautiful site!" You are being guided by him. Now, if you don't follow his guidance, you are not going to get anywhere. Obedience is nothing more than following the advice of somebody who is well intentioned towards you. Unfortunately, there is mix-up between military type of obedience, government obedience where the obedience is impressed by force of authority – here you have to obey for your sake, because the guidance is good for you and following the guidance will enhance your capacities and the possibility of your evolution. So, this is not a slavish obedience to authority, but is a wise acceptance of a guidance, given by someone who is put in a position of guiding you. So, I don't see the difficulty.

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Whatever you are, the goal is the same, and for that goal, the Master knows the way. All that you have to do is to be willing to go with him hand in hand to the destination. The only discipline that we ask for, we seek from you, is this co-operation of taking hold of his hand and walking side by side with him. Not behind him, because behind him means below him. So you see, we walk side by side, head erect, chest thrown out, proud as swans.

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Thus, if you go in conformity with the laws of nature, in obedience to your Master's work and principles, you get what you need – By being disciplined. One who aspires to the highest must be prepared for the highest discipline. Not because the discipline will lead him to the goal, but because the goal sets these limits without which you can't achieve. It is like this – you know you can travel in a bus without your windows open, but you can't fly in a plane with your windows open. You may say, "I want air. I would like to wave to my wife who is standing outside." So this restriction, rather these restrictions, seem to narrow the way a little, and put in a little squeezing pressure from behind, so that that we have only

one way in which we can possibly walk, and that is to the destination. What I have been trying to tell you is: discipline does not lead automatically to achievement, but achievement is not possible without discipline. Now, this rather paradoxical statement, I would think, some of you would be able to work out, remembering that, for petty trivial things you don't need much discipline. That is why I think people who have lesser aims are so indisciplined. Because they don't need discipline for those achievements. And it is possible precisely because, their aims are so petty that even with corruption they can achieve that.

But can you educate yourself without discipline? That only means, something worthwhile achieving, something worthwhile striving for, has to be a disciplined activity. I can become a millionaire by doing something (kooky-cooky) in a hanky-panky way. According to the Vedas, you can have a 'pisacha' marriage by doing anything you like. But a Vedic marriage should have the sanction of society, the sanction of parents, the sanction of Divinity itself. So, there is a tradition in everything, you see. One can get away at the lowest level with no discipline at all. At the highest level, lack of discipline means probably death.

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So, you see discipline is all very good. I like discipline, I am a disciplinarian myself. But discipline should not remove the son from the father. See, it is like – suppose in the army, the fauj (soldiers) does not respect the Genela, but only respect the Captain! The General comes and gives an order, they don't obey it. They say, "I want my Captain's confirmation that you are the General." What is the army worth? Or the Prime Minister of India gives a government law, and you say, "No, no, my Tahsildar must confirm it," you see. Vuyyuru we only obey our Tahsildar. We are very disciplined. If he says, 'Get up,' we will get up. If he says, 'Sit down,' we will sit down. But government, we shall not obey!" Even children will laugh at this, you see. But unfortunately, this is the situation in the Mission.

I have always told Babuji, that it is better to have capable crooks rather than foolish good men. That is why Vivekananda was called Vivekananda! He had 'Vivekam' you see. We must all develop viveka (discrimination). Because in spirituality, Reality is what we perceive individually.

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So, brothers and sisters, let us start with obedience. Obedience is the fundamental virtue in the disciple, because Babuji has said, "One who is disciplined is a disciple," and discipline means obedience. Now there will be many people who will equate obedience with loss of freedom. It doesn't mean anything like that. I cannot possibly obey unless I am free to obey. So only a free man obeys. One who is a slave doesn't obey. He only performs. Obedience means I am free to obey out of my own free will, out of my love for the Master, anything and everything that he tells me to do. So, obedience is a sign of freedom.

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Obedience can come only in two ways. By being enforced upon, as you have experienced at times. Out of fear you obey. Here, out of love you must obey. If we love, we obey. When we love absolutely, we obey absolutely. Obedience is a reflection of love. When you obey with love there is no revolution, there is no opposite course. Therefore, the love goes deeper and deeper into it.

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