

Discipline, Love & Freedom: Three aspects of the same idea

Love and Discipline

Unless one's total life in existence is in discipline, we are lacking in discipline.

Hatred needs no discipline, but love must have discipline. And the more you love the Master, the more you must have discipline. Discipline, not because we are going to lock the gates or put barbed wire fences, but because there is an open door, into which I must not enter, unless I am called in. In my opinion, in my experience, open doors are the most forbidding of doors, because they invite, while saying no. It is like flashing a green and red light simultaneously at the oncoming car. He doesn't know whether to go or stop. What should tell you which light to obey? Your heart! Refer to your heart. Does it mean that the door is open for me? Where love is, there must be humility.

Everybody wants love, but they do not want the discipline. But if you think on the lines of the old Vedic instruction in India, love cannot exist without discipline. Is it possible? What is love combined with discipline? It is marriage. When you seek love outside marriage without the discipline of marriage, it is called lust, it is called vice, it is called so many things. When a child is born from love, arising out of the disciplined conduct of the love life in marriage, it is a legitimate child. But if the child is born without the benefit of marriage, without the sanction of society, without the sanction of moral laws, the child is called a bastard. So the oldest teaching of India is that love and discipline are two sides of one coin. This must be very clearly understood. Because for the ordinary human being, we all want love, but we do not want discipline.

Love and discipline go together. We have a saying in Tamil which I would like to translate in English, that "The hand that beats is the hand that hugs." Why I am saying this is, that love and discipline are really two sides of the same coin. What this saying in Tamil means, that the hand that beats is the hand that hugs, should be clear - that only one who loves will be bold enough to also discipline, correct. And in a person or in a society, when this ability to correct is lost, that means love is also lost.

Without this basic structure of love supporting discipline in guiding a new life through its course, that life is a wasted life. When the mother conceives, she has to be disciplined. She must not smoke, drink, or take drugs. Because there is a child growing up in her, a new life. If you love that child, if the child is born out of love, you will discipline yourself. After all, by your actions you are protecting the child which is growing in the womb. Is it not logical to continue that protection and guidance after the child has become independent of you physically, but not emotionally, not in a life-living way?

If you want to correct other people, the foundation of that ability to correct, that willingness to correct, the love alone that can make you correct others, is to discipline yourself first. Otherwise it will not work. Absolutely. So we come back to the purpose of Sahaj Marg: that if each one of you here is not willing to correct yourself, you have no right, no authority, to correct others. You have no moral right to correct others. You lose the ability to correct others. You lose the ability even to correct yourself - you have already lost it. He who would help others must help himself first to be strong. If I want to cure sick people, I must be able to be a doctor myself first. If I wish to give money in charity, I must earn money first. If I want to teach people, I must teach myself first. Always.

It is love alone which can give the ability to correct, the ability to teach in the right way, and the ability to discipline. And such love comes out and shines only when it is backed by self-discipline of the one who is giving this corrective discipline, because that alone gives you the moral courage, the moral faith, the moral right to discipline others. So, there is no use if there is love not backed by discipline. Authoritarian discipline is easy to enforce but difficult to uphold, whereas discipline growing out of love is self-maintained, self-created. We are not disciplined by the outside, but we become disciplined ourselves. We accept it as a necessity with which to guide our lives.

It is the love that God has for us that is transmitted, and it is that love which makes us grow. And that is why there is no compulsory discipline in Sahaj Marg; because love cannot demand or force; love must evoke. Therefore even the Ten Maxims tell us only what to do and leave it to us to do it when we have developed sufficient love for the Master and for our Goal.

Obedience is a perfect discipline towards perfection of ourselves. He who obeys perfectly is the perfect person. Obedience, in the beginning, is a very difficult thing because it means subservience of our ego, subjugation of our ego, to a superior person. Therefore the ego rebels. Disobedience always comes by a rebellion of the ego. But people forget that when you are obedient you have no more responsibility for anything that you do, or don't do, under his order. It is the *mukti* for which we are all clamoring. It is the liberation from the world. When I can live and exist, and do and not do, according to his wishes and be totally free of every atom of responsibility, what more can you expect by way of liberation? This is liberation while I am alive - I assume. And I'm convinced in myself that this is *jivan mukti*.

We obey Him, our responsibility is to Him, and for the rest, well I don't want to say it, but the devil take the rest. How am I concerned? It is his problem you see. So it becomes so utterly easy and simple. Love Him, follow Him, obey Him. The three are interrelated. We won't follow somebody we cannot love. We can obey people who force us to obey, but there is always inner rebellion. Therefore even great army commanders are subject to coups, you know, and they are removed or thrown away or killed. But in a love-oriented obedience there is no rebellion, there is no anguish, there is no subjugation of the ego because we have transferred it to him and said, "This is yours. Keep it."

So you see at one stroke: loving Him, obeying Him, following Him, our responsibility doesn't exist anymore to anybody. He looks after us as he looks after everybody else. Therefore, in expressing our limited humanity, our limitations to love, to obey, to follow, to perform, our limitations of capacities, this is a supremely simple way. Love one, obey that one, follow that one and be aquit of everything else. We go on blithely swimming in the ocean that he calls the Ocean of Bliss.

We must learn to create inner obedience from the heart, and that can happen only when we love what we do, and we do what we love. So Sahaj Marg must become something which we must love to do, and which we do because we love it so much. That is, it must become **mine**. It is no longer a system, it is my way of living. That I get up in the morning, go to the place which I have reserved for this particular activity, naturally sit in meditation, without being even aware that I am meditating, and follow the ten maxims, not as if I have to remember. But we must use the ten maxims to change our life in such a way that we follow them naturally. Telling the truth becomes natural.

Then what is the problem with obedience? Because we know that if we don't obey, there is no punishment at all, whereas obedience gives us the highest goal of human life. So, is it

not sensible to obey the Master? So, I think obedience of the Master really shows that we are very sensible and that we also love the Master. Now we are only sensible, but I am always inclined to equate obedience with love. And **increasing love must be reflected in increasing obedience. And when that is absolute, obedience must be absolute.**

So, I always judge an abhyasi's love for the Master by the degree of obedience that is visible to us. To me it is a direct relationship: obedience - love; more obedience - more love; highest obedience - highest love. And how is this possible? Because people can say, "But I have not the capacity to obey." It is a very great secret but a very small thing. Because, when you love a person totally, you are constantly remembering that person. And obedience in his remembrance, in the remembrance of the Master, gives us his powers therefore we work with his powers. Therefore, when we are loving the Master and we are remembering him all the time, we use his powers; whereas when we are not remembering him and loving him, we use our powers, and therefore we fail. And when we don't remember the Master, because we don't love him, we are dependent on our own capacities, and naturally we fail. So, this is the great secret of obedience. So you see, obedience is the first law of spirituality. I place it above love because true obedience comes only with love. We are not talking of the ritualistic, militaristic obedience where they say, 'shoot' and you shoot. They say 'sleep' and you sleep. You know that is a sort of obedience that is different. That is 'survival-oriented obedience.' To live you have to shoot. And the commander tells you, hopefully at the right moment, 'Now you shoot.' Till then you have to withhold your fire. Here, we are not for survival. In Sahaj Marg, survival in this physical world is not our aim. We have to survive so long as we don't reach our goal, the least goal being liberation.

It is not easy to love, but it's easy to obey. And it is my experience that if you just obey and go on and on, it is easier than trying to love somebody. So my advice to all abhyasis is, please become obedient, don't think of what is possible or what is impossible for us, because even in any small work, if you start with a doubt, it is impossible. As Babuji said, "Doubt poisons the will." You know, if I have to lift this chair and I say, "Oh, can I lift it?", I cannot lift it. But if you take it up with confidence then automatically your power will work, and you will be able to lift it.

We know that in a family where a father tries to control his children merely through authority or punishment, the family disintegrates very fast because, when his sons grow up and are as big as the father or bigger, they say, "O.K. let us have it out, let us see who is stronger. In fact in Tamil we have a saying that when your son grows beyond your shoulder, he is your friend, he is no longer your son! So we find that we develop from a level of obedience, a level of automatic obedience, automatic love, to a conscious level where we have now to consciously obey, consciously love, and this conscious obedience of principles of ethics, of moral ways of living can only come out of love. It cannot come out of enforcement. If the son really loves the father then he is prepared to sacrifice many things for the sake of the father. He cannot do something which the father would not approve of or tolerate. So the self is no longer the important thing, it is the other to whom we have given our heart who becomes the most important person. **Love makes this obedience possible. Love makes the achievement of our aim possible** because the son wants to achieve what his father wants him to achieve. Therefore his co-operation is available. He knows that his father would not desire for him something that is bad, something which would not satisfy him.

So it is my growing conviction that the process is given to us as a matter of discipline, to make us obedient. And as we grow more and more obedient, it shows an increasing love for the Master. Because we don't love Him or obey Him because of authoritarian domination by

Him, but because we love the man. And when we love Him absolutely, we obey Him absolutely. So one sure index of your love for the Master is the degree of your obedience, there must be absolute love behind it. With absolute love, there is absolute dependence. With absolute dependence, there is absolute surrender. Then it is His problem, you see, what to do with this guy. He won't leave him alone. When we obey Him, we work for Him, He has to love us. It is not important whether I love the Master or not. The important thing is whether my Master loves me. You see, no child, when it is born, loves the mother. Its existence is ensured because the mother loves the child. Later on, the child learns to love its mother. The mother loves naturally; the children have to learn to love by association. Similarly the Master loves us naturally; we have to learn to love the Master. And when we obey Him without question, then we find the miraculous unfoldment of His powers. Because I, being nothing, can yet do everything He says, because it is His order! You see, how being nothing, He makes us everything, by the simple act of obedience?

It is love which is praised beyond even effort, beyond even everything else, because love for the Master alone can give you obedience to the Master. One who loves, obeys. That one who obeys need not love. There are servants, policemen, there are military officers who obey rules without having to love the people who give those rules. But when you love totally, your obedience is total, that means it is surrender.

Freedom And Discipline

Children are not being trained properly by their parents in the name of freedom. Children are going to the dogs in the name of personal freedom. Love at fourteen, sex at sixteen, child at seventeen - in the name of freedom. What is this freedom where there is no discipline? So if you think you love your children, for heaven's sake, start disciplining them, so that later on the children may not say, "My parents never cared about me." At least we should be aware to this extent, that our children should not blame us later for not having cared about them. You see, care is shown - what is caring for somebody? Caring for their welfare - not caring for their freedom. Freedom, society grants, governments grant, but society doesn't care for people, governments don't care for people.

Care begins at home. Care is a sacred thing. It is not enough to breed and send them out in the name of freedom. If you care for your children, you should teach them, you should train them, you should correct them. If you are not able to do that, you are not fit to be a parent, and you cannot parade on this pretext of freedom. "My children are old enough to look after themselves." No child is old enough to look after itself. We are not fledglings in a nest, you know, that the mother can push it out and say, "Let it fly, or let the cat take it." We are supposed to be a cultured society, a human society, a caring society, a loving society. If love means care, care can come only out of discipline.

I find this even in our own relationship between the abhyasi and the spiritual trainer. Whether it is me or somebody else, it doesn't matter. That correction, or corrective advice is always resented. But what are you here for if you are not here to be corrected and to be developed into something that you can be proud of, yourself? So you see, discipline is absolutely necessary, and if we try to correct you, it should be taken as an expression of love.

I request all the preceptors to be flexible in their approach, but the abhyasis must be disciplined. You see, it is always a very strange anomaly, that discipline and freedom must go together. There cannot be freedom without discipline, and there must not be discipline without freedom. So how much of each we need depends on us. At the lowest level of our existence we totally need discipline and have a little freedom. At the highest level of existence we have absolute freedom, but have to discipline ourselves so that we may conform to social requirements, legal requirements.

So this is the strange paradox of existence, that discipline and freedom go together like everything else, like light and shadow, like darkness and light, like vice and virtue, like truth and lies. All opposites. So we begin with externally imposed discipline and rise progressively until we discipline ourselves from inside ourselves. At the first stage it is artificial, enforced from outside. At the top it is natural, my own way of existence. It is no longer a discipline I obey - I am disciplined.

You people must learn to understand that love and freedom and discipline go together. There can be no freedom unless it's a disciplined freedom. You have this on your highways: keep to the right, flick your lights when you want to overtake, or when you want to change lanes, wait and give way to the other traffic. This is all discipline, and it goes with the freedom of being able to go accident-free, on the roads.