

21. Importance of discipline

While uneducated birds and beasts

Know how to lead regulated lives,

Alas! Man endowed with intelligence

Does not lead a disciplined life.

EMBODIMENTS of love! Discipline is vital to every living being. For man it is even more important like the spinal column. Without discipline mankind will be ruined.

Discipline means the observance of certain well-defined rules. Without such regulation it is not possible to maintain humanness. Such regulation contributes to the glory of human existence.

Discipline cannot be acquired from books. Nor can it be learnt from teachers. It has to be as natural component of one's daily life in the discharge of one's duties. Discipline is essential from the moment of waking to the time of going to sleep.

Discipline is essential in everyday life

Discipline is essential for every group, for every society and for every political institution. Without discipline there can be no society or Government. No nation can exist without discipline. It is discipline that unites man to man, and one society to another. Hence discipline is one of the basic insignia of social life.

Discipline has to be observed in speech, in sport and in every kind of relationship. For instance, during bhajans, all those singing in chorus have to maintain the same tune. Discordant singing will jar on the ears. Singing in unison in bhajans is a form of discipline.

In games, you have an umpire to enforce the rules of the game. Every player has to observe the rules strictly. Sometimes while playing, in their enthusiasm, the players fall to observe the rules. The umpire, however, sees to it that the rules are enforced and the players have to obey him implicitly. Any player who does not obey will be violating the rules of the game.

Today it is because people do not observe the rules, whether in sports or elsewhere, life has become intolerable. Some persons hold positions of authority in business, in administration or in other institutions. Here also discipline is essential, just because one holds an office, he cannot behave as he likes. He cannot be free with his tongue. In his words and his writings he should observe restraint. In the use of words, whether in speech or writing, care should be observed regarding their future implications. Your discipline will protect you in whatever you do. Even in a simple matter like walking on the road, many do not observe the rules. They choose to walk on the middle of the road instead of using the pavement. Jaywalking on the road is not only harmful to oneself but is a hindrance to others. Your motto in life should be: Help ever; hurt never.

Discipline must start from the early years, But it is needed not only by students but by elders and all persons in authority.

Students should learn the right way of doing things even in ordinary actions like sitting or reading. They should sit erect and keep the spinal column straight. This enables the *Kundalini shakthi* (coiled energy) to move up from the base of the *spine--Muulaadhaara--* to the top of the head. *Sahasraara---through* the vertebral column. This movement takes place during *the yogic*

exercise known as *Praanaayaama* (breath control). This exercise is also useful for improving one's memory and powers of concentration.

Important elements of discipline

One of the important elements of discipline is physical purity. This does not merely mean keeping the body clean by a good bath. Real bodily purity calls for involvement in good actions. Good actions and good thoughts lead to purity of mind and the intellect.

Another important aspect of discipline is keeping one's plighted word. The importance of this is illustrated by an incident in the life of Shirdi Baba. There was a *sheristadhaar* by name Tharkad. His wife and 16-year-old son were ardent devotees of Shirdi Baba. Tharkad did not object to their worship of Baba. One day when they wanted to go to Shirdi, he gave them his consent. But Tharkad himself did not go to any shrine as he was a *Brahmo Samajist*. He did not go to Shirdi despite many appeals from his wife.

Tharkad's son told his father that he would not go to Shirdi because he was performing regular worship to Shirdi Baba in their house. This worship would be affected if he went to Shirdi. The lad told his father that every day he was making an offering of sugar candy to Baba and he was partaking part of the candy as *prasaadh* (blessed offering) out of the conviction that Baba was receiving the candy. He declared: "I do not want any break in this practice. Hence I do not want to go to Shirdi." The father had great affection for the son. He told the son: "Babu, I shall perform that duty. You better go to Shirdi." The boy wanted an assurance from the father that he would carry out the promise. "Will you offer worship to Baba as I have been doing? Will you offer candy to him and later eat part of it as *prasaadh*?" The father was moved by his son's determination and gave him the promise to carry on the worship during his absence. The mother and son left for Shirdi.

The father's lapse

The father kept the word given to his son and performed the worship in the manner of the son for a few days. Offering candy to Baba, he took a part of it after the worship before taking his meal. On a Thursday, Tharkad had some urgent business in the court and left the house in a hurry after performing *pooja* (worship). Returning for his meal, he asked the cook to bring the *prasaadh*. The cook informed him that he had not offered any offering of candy that day. Tharkad felt very sad over his lapse in failing to keep the promise he had given to his son. He was sorry that he had failed to make the offering to Baba.

At Shirdi, when the mother and son went to see Baba on the following Friday, Baba told the son: "Babu, yesterday I had been to Bangra, but no one gave me any food. Even the candy which you used to offer daily was not available. I have come back very hungry. Will you give me something to eat?" The boy was shocked on listening to Baba's words. He returned home and wept over his mother's lap. "Father gave me a promise, but he has not kept it and Baba was disappointed. I cannot stay here any longer. I must adhere to my daily routine. I shall go back to our place." At that time, Baba sent a chit to the boy through one dog. In his message, Baba said: "There is no need for you to go now. Your father failed to keep his word, but you have not failed in your duty. You have all my Grace. You can stay here as long as you wish." The boy stayed on for a few more days feeling very depressed and frustrated.

Truth is one. You must adhere to Truth

When the boy returned home, the father rushed towards him and begged his pardon. He said, "You. are young and I am old. But I am seeking your pardon because I failed to keep my promise." The boy said: "You must seek pardon not from me but from Baba. Whatever the Samaaj (society) to which you may belong, whatever your beliefs, the promised word must be kept. Truth is one. You must adhere to truth. This is your duty as a lawyer. You have studied the law. You know very well how Emperor Manu upheld *Dharma*. If you do not adhere to Truth, you are violating the law."

If discipline is observed in this manner, one can experience the Divine directly. The first requisite is purity of the body.

What is it you gain, oh man,

From waking to sleeping

If you seek only bodily comforts,

Forgetting God? (Telugu poem)

Restraint has to be observed even with regard to eating. Excessive eating is the cause of many ailments. One fourth of the stomach should remain empty.

Discipline should govern every action of yours all through the day. Then it becomes *Karma Yoga--the Yoga of Action*. You must be the master of *Karma* and act according to Divine commands. This is the way to make education fruitful.

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Be silent yourself; that will induce silence in others. Do not fall into the habit of shouting, talking long and loud. Reduce contacts to the minimum. Carry with you an atmosphere of quiet contemplation, wherever you happen to be.

Baba