



THE FACULTY OF DISCRIMINATION

There is a small amount of freedom given to human beings. It is known as the faculty of discrimination. In Sanskrit and Hindi it is known as *vivek* - the faculty of judging, seeing right and wrong, and deciding between the two.



He who is able to control his mind by his intellect-that is, control his desires by his faculty of making decisions and discrimination, progresses towards his goal.



The major conflict in human life is primarily between two things: on the one hand is the pull or the attraction of all those enjoyments the person had in this or in past lives. On the other hand there is the growing faculty of reasoning and discrimination that shows again and again the worthlessness of sensual pleasure.



Desire is the bondage. Desire has to be replaced by discrimination. Desire motivates towards degradation, but discrimination shows one what is good and what is bad.



The mind, the instrument of thinking (and desiring) is very powerful. Even stronger than this is the faculty of discrimination, judgement and decision, that shapes crucial moments in life. The more competent a person is in taking decisions, the more competent he usually is in everyday life. The faculty of making correct decisions belongs to the intellect. Most events in our lives are influenced by our judgement and the way we take decisions. So the decision-making faculty, the intellect, is even more important and stronger than the mind, the desiring and thinking centre.



The faculty of discrimination is not the product of the intellect but it flows through the intellect. The intellect becomes its instrument but it is not the product of the intellect. From where does it come? It comes from God. It is God who gives the faculty of discrimination. God is the source of all virtues and God is the infinite Truth. From the infinite Truth discrimination comes to human beings like a ray from the sun. God is an ocean of infinite wisdom and compassion from which comes the sun's ray.



In Divine love the important element is discrimination. In discrimination you do not lose vision. Your awareness remains intact in Divine love. But in worldly attachment, the faculty of discrimination is overpowered by the element of attachment.



The faculty of discrimination, that great power in life, does not develop in one without having Satsang. But *Satsang* is never available without God's grace. God showers His grace only when human beings assemble in Satsang for having the highest aim in life which is Self-realisation.



Not everyone can come to a real *Satsang*. One of the greatest men in Indian culture (Goswami Tulsidas) has said about Satsang: "*Bin satsang vivek na hoi ram kripa bin sulabh na soi.*" The faculty of discrimination gives human life real dignity, but does not develop without Satsang, and Satsang is not available without God's grace.



Remember one thing. The faculty of differentiating right from wrong, moral from immoral, Truth from untruth - this faculty of discrimination is not the product of the intellect. There are very intelligent people in the world who do not have this discriminative faculty. Thieves, smugglers and swindlers are not less intelligent people, but they lack discrimination.



One should keep one's door open for knowledge to enter from any direction. I believe that you should not close your doors to new knowledge, but you should also keep your discriminative faculties open and alert to discover what may be useful for you. What may be useful for you may not be useful for others. The sort of guidance and instruments that are required for evolution vary from individual to individual.



The senses should be controlled by discrimination and intellect. But from where does discrimination come? Discrimination means the faculty to decide what is right or wrong. It comes through the intellect, but discrimination is not a product of intellect, because through the intellect people develop many bad traits. The intellect becomes the instrument but discrimination comes from God, the Divine. So we should remember God, and, if we use our mind and our senses properly, then life will be successful in every way.



In the process of the evolution of the soul it is only in human life that a little freedom is given. In no other life is there any element of freedom. In human life also most things happen according to one's destiny. This destiny is fixed, but a little freedom is also there for the discriminatory faculty to function. This is a very odd situation. This freedom is not available to any other creature, because the lives of all animals are guided by the laws of nature which are fixed laws. So all animals have a fixed situation. They behave in a definite pattern in those situations. In human life only, when the intellect develops beyond a certain stage, the element of discrimination appears. That is the most valuable element given to human beings by God for judging right and wrong, vice and virtue, good and bad. This is found nowhere else except in human life.



There are two selves – one, the lower self and the other, the higher Self. The higher Self possess wisdom, having the faculty of discrimination in it. The higher Self gives the light to do the right action, and avoid the wrong action. The lower self wants to do the wrong action. The lower self consists of the mind, senses and body.



There is a battle always going on between the lower self and the higher Self. Let the lower self be conquered by the higher Self, that is, let the faculty of discrimination – choosing the right, avoiding the wrong, let it develop, let it conquer the lower self. If you have conquered the lower self you have become your own friend. Why a friend? It is because the conflict between the two has gone away. If you are unable to conquer the lower self and you are overpowered by it, then you have become your own enemy. How? It is because the conflict remains there. The conflict comes to end only when your life is dominated by the higher Self. In Enlightenment, this higher Self becomes in a way the king of this whole empire of existence.



The faculty of discrimination is not a product of intellect. Intellect is the means through which it flows. It is felt, it is there, but it does not grow out of intellect. Criminals and thieves have very sharp intellects but they have no discrimination. There is not that element in them which distinguishes between right and wrong. Discrimination means the faculty to distinguish right from wrong. This inner faculty is not with them. Important state officials, even ministers, sometimes take bribes and break the law. They have very sharp intellects but they have no discrimination. If the discriminative faculty was there, how could they do all those bad things?



The faculty of discrimination between right and wrong is given to us by God. Now the freedom lies in whether we use it or misuse it. Those who put their energy into using it, and try to live their life according to their inner voice of righteousness, start going nearer to the experience of ultimate Truth.



There are four instincts which are common to both animals and human beings: eating, sleeping, procreation and self-defence. In this respect there is no difference between animals and human beings. All eat, all sleep, all have sexual activity, all fight to survive. Nature has a purpose that as human beings we must evolve beyond these instincts. What is that dimension beyond these four instincts? It is the dimension of discrimination - the moral concept of right and wrong. There is no concept of morality or immorality in the animal world. Animals live by instinct. Everything is decided by nature. Therefore, they are neither moral or immoral - they are as they are. Their way of life is decided by nature. Human beings have been given freedom in most respects - they can take a left turn or a right turn.



One of the functions of the Supreme in us is of the true guide. It is He who guides you through discrimination - the faculty of reason and knowing the difference between right and wrong. He gives advice and permission for the performance of actions.



Deciding what commitments are avoidable and which are not will always remain an individual matter. You have to exercise your own discrimination and reasoning. The remarkable result of this use of discrimination and reasoning is that you will achieve inner improvement, because one of the most important means that God has given to you for your internal improvement is your discriminative faculty. When you use this faculty for this purpose, it will become sharpened.



Whenever we do not use our reason and faculty of discrimination, and cannot distinguish right from wrong, we are no longer human beings!



The important faculty of discrimination does not develop by reading books or even by listening to discourses. Some help is available, some concepts are formed and some understanding happens, but what I am talking about is development. Discrimination develops when the seeker is faced with his or her practical problems and makes efforts to overcome them. At this time mistakes are definitely and frequently made, but those mistakes teach one what is the best.



Our five sense organs have their purpose, but they should be controlled by discrimination. If the senses are given freedom then the end is nothing but misery.



Various people have different addictions, some to opium, some to alcohol, or these days to those drugs which eventually kill young people throughout the world. Reasoning, the greatest faculty given to human beings, is destroyed during these activities in the beginning as well as in the end. Discrimination disappears! There is no reasoning, no rationality and no discrimination. After that they fall asleep and drift into laziness and lethargy. But even then they say that it is the greatest joy! This is *tamas*!



Drinking of alcohol is a very bad habit. Those who drink cannot evolve spiritually. All spiritual development requires a *sattvic* brain. All our efforts on the spiritual path are directed towards becoming more *sattvic* and pure in every way. What happens when a person drinks is that his capacity for discrimination is overpowered by the alcohol. The capacity for discrimination is the real key for knowing or experiencing Truth. Discrimination means knowing the difference between what is right and what is wrong, and the capacity to take the right decisions. A person who drinks heavily is unable to decide what is right and what is wrong.



The process of awakening is incompatible with drinking because drinking overshadows the capacity for discrimination. Awakening ultimately happens through this capacity of discrimination, of distinguishing between what is right and what is wrong. Drinking obstructs the process of progressing towards the goal of Self-realisation. It takes a long time to rejuvenate the damaged cells of the body and mind, and to regain a sound thinking capability.



When there is lust and passion, mind in a way stops working. The faculty of discrimination is over-clouded by passion. The person behaves as if in a state of stupor and unconsciousness, and rational thinking stops.



God has given us a human body and the faculty for thought and discrimination, so those who do not use them cannot blame God for the miseries that they have. One has to take the responsibility.

The high technology, that we have created for our own pleasure and comfort, will destroy us if we are not spiritually capable of handling it with discrimination.



Only human beings are faced, in all situations, with alternatives for action. They have the freedom to choose which way they should go. They have the freedom to go to the left or to the right. It is through their faculty of discrimination that they can decide what is right and which way they should go.



Sometimes a question is asked: what is the yardstick for progress in human life? People have different answers to this question. Many thinkers maintain that one's material circumstances are the yardstick. They quote money or possessions at the disposal of humans for their enjoyment. They categorise nations and people by the yardstick of material prosperity. According to this they group various nations as being 'developed', 'developing' or 'undeveloped'. In my opinion the progress in human life should not be judged from the degree of comfort that it enjoys, but how great its faculty of discrimination is.



The human beings are superior to animals only because of the faculty of discrimination - the faculty which decides what is right and what is wrong.



Through the faculty of discrimination we have to arise above bad tendencies and develop in us the finer virtues of life. These virtues develop not so much by reading books or even by listening to spiritual sermons as by having them in practice. Even a little practice is better than intensive study.



Conquering senses means making them slaves to our faculty of discrimination. The senses should go where we want them to go. They have to be brought under control according to our decision: "I must not be taken prisoner by them, they must become my servants and I must become their master."



The faculty of discrimination is just like the sun. The sun is the higher Self and a ray from the sun is discrimination. If you go on following the ray of discrimination, you reach and realise the sun of the higher Self. If you go on following your discrimination - that inner prompting - that inner indication - which tells you what is right and what is wrong, you will realise your own Self and you will find God.



Faith, love and the faculty of discrimination - these are the three main elements, through which the eternal connection with God is experienced.



How does the faculty of discrimination arise? This faculty is given by God through Divine prayer. Pray to Him. You cannot win this battle between right and wrong simply through your own intelligence and effort. Again and again remember God.



We may ask whether there is anything better than the faculty of discrimination? The answer is, yes! God is better than the faculty of discrimination, which itself is simply the conduit for reaching and experiencing Him.
