

## Sw. Shuddhanandji on 'Retreat'

Retreat means to go in and feel the presence of God. We may have come on a retreat for various reasons – to seek rest or to seek answers to our questions or to bring our life back on the spiritual track. (Guruji has to often correct us through pain. When we find we are not in a natural state of joy then Guruji is trying to tell us that we have made the wrong choices. We need to change the existing circumstances. Guruji tries to tell us this properly first but when we don't listen then he has no choice but to teach us through pain.) So we may have come on retreat to bring ourselves back on course.

God gives equally to all those who receive are the ones who have attuned themselves and made the effort to be receptive. It is important that we make ourselves receptive so that we can receive the vibrations of God and Guru. This place itself has such beautiful spiritual vibrations. If we are receptive as soon as we step here we will feel uplifted.

Retreat means raising our consciousness through discipline. We don't like the term 'discipline'. We want the freedom to do as we wish. Discipline to us is a harsh word. We often accept the discipline out of force with a lot of distaste and grumbling. But we need to discipline the body, the mind, the emotions and the life force. That is why we started with the chant – 'O my mind, learn thou self control'. It is necessary to accept the discipline joyfully. Then we can make ourselves more receptive. We are seeking joy.

During a retreat we have to follow the following three R's:

### **Adjustment**

### **Allignment**

### **Attunement.**

**Adjustment:** the first day is spent in physically adjusting ourselves to our surrounding and adjusting our minds to the new atmosphere.

**Allignment:** Then the next day is spent in aligning our routine to the routine outlined by the ashram. That is also a discipline. Because it is important to do all activities in group. If we are by ourselves we can follow our own schedule but when we are in a group the positive vibrations of the group help. So do the exercises in a group – not before or after the group energisation exercises. Meditate in groups, chant in groups. Don't say I am on retreat so I am chanting mentally. Chanting must be done properly like an affirmation, first loudly, then softly, then in whispers, and then mentally so that our consciousness can really go deep within.

In the Autobiography of a Yogi, Chp. 14, Guruji has said:

"That is true; but He is also near and dear. After the mind has been cleared by Kriya Yoga of sensory obstacles, meditation furnishes a twofold proof of God. Ever-new joy is evidence of His existence, convincing to our very atoms. Also, in meditation one finds His instant guidance, His adequate response to every difficulty."

"I see, Guruji; you have solved my problem." I smiled gratefully. "I do realize now that I have found God, for whenever the joy of meditation has returned subconsciously during my active hours, I have been subtly directed to adopt the right course in everything, even details."

"Human life is beset with sorrow until we know how to tune in with the Divine Will, whose 'right course' is often baffling to the egoistic intelligence. God bears the burden of the cosmos; He alone can give unerring counsel."

So also eat in groups do all the activities in groups – not alone or before or after.

**Attunement:** Then on the last day of a three day retreat practice attuning yourselves to the Guru. Become one with the divine presence.

Sw. Bhaktanandji has given a five point formula for meditation:

1. **Prayer**
2. **Chanting:** Put all your life into the chanting.
3. **Practice of the scientific techniques:** Just sitting in the silence and feeling devotion will not get you anywhere. So Guruji has given us scientific techniques.
4. **Stillness:** After the techniques, now comes the real meditation, practicing stillness. Until now we have only covered three points. Now sit and feel the stillness. All the time effort and concentration will get you to become more restless and you will not be able to go deep. You must learn the balance between effort and discipline on one hand and relaxation on the other. Just as when flying a kite we need to know when to tense and pull and when to relax and let go. So just practicing techniques with an effort does not help. We now need to let go. Feel the spiritual eye. Stillness can last for just a minute or two in the beginning. Then when you can no longer stay in stillness practicing devotion. I once asked Daya Ma: What exactly should one do after stillness? Ma said, "Follow the heart." As you sit down for meditation begin by concentrating on the spiritual eye for a period of 5 minutes doing nothing and asking the body, the mind and emotions to become still.
5. **Devotion:** Devotion means talking to God as your very own. Some days you may want to talk a lot with him and even fight with him and other days you may just want to keep silent and only say, "My God, my love, my Guru", or 'Jai Guru' because you are feeling very calm and relaxed.

Sw. Bhaktanandji says speak to the mind. Tell the mind – Be at the kutastha. Mind be relaxed, mind go deep. The mind is like a dog. The way we have to train a dog to sit, go here, go there; so also we need to train the mind to sit at the kutastha or not go away into day dreaming etc. Don't just laugh do it and you will be amazed how the mind can be controlled.

Sw. Shuddhanandji told the devotees to thoroughly read the instructions on 'retreat' provided in each room of the Sadhanalaya especially on how to prevent oneself from dozing off during meditation. He said while it is important to keep the mind relaxed, it should not be so relaxed that it falls asleep. Therefore during meditation from time to time chant to relax as we do not have the ability to go deep into silence for a very long time. But we also need to check from time to time that our eyes are at the kutastha (to keep our consciousness in the state of super consciousness and not allow it to go into the subconscious or the conscious mind), that our spine is straight and that our body is relaxed as if the body is hung at the shoulders and along the spine on a coat hanger.

Also practice stillness at all levels:

Stillness of the body,  
Stillness of the mind and thoughts,  
Stillness of emotions and  
Stillness of judgement.