

Spiritual Discipline Program



Spiritual Discipline of the month:

Sense Control and Dietary Discipline

June 2011



“Youth is determination to control the senses”

Dear Sai Young Adults,

Sai Ram! With humility and love, we share with you, the precious inspiring words and instructions from our dear Swami on the topic of “sense control and practice of dietary discipline.”

Increasing pressure on our schedule, easy access to fast food, incessant sensory overload from a multitude of devices, are a few things that characterize our daily lives. In such times, dietary discipline and sense control are not only relevant but also critical for our overall wellbeing. Awareness is on the rise of the relentless struggle between the external forces, of which there are many, and the solitary internal force. At this inflection point of increasing awareness, Swami's words remind us of the divine self within us and its infinite potential for self-actualization.

Several years ago in an interview with Hal Honig and General Chibber, Swami revealed a magnificent and a profound truth- “What is Youth?” "Youth is determination." "Youth is determination to control the senses."

Let us remember His words with faith and devotion. Let us enthusiastically seek the uplifting, transformative experience of putting into practice, His message. As a fellow Young Adult pilgrim so eloquently shared, “let us eliminate the negative and nourish the positive, one habit at a time.”

Jai Sai Ram!



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Sense Control and Practice of Dietary Discipline

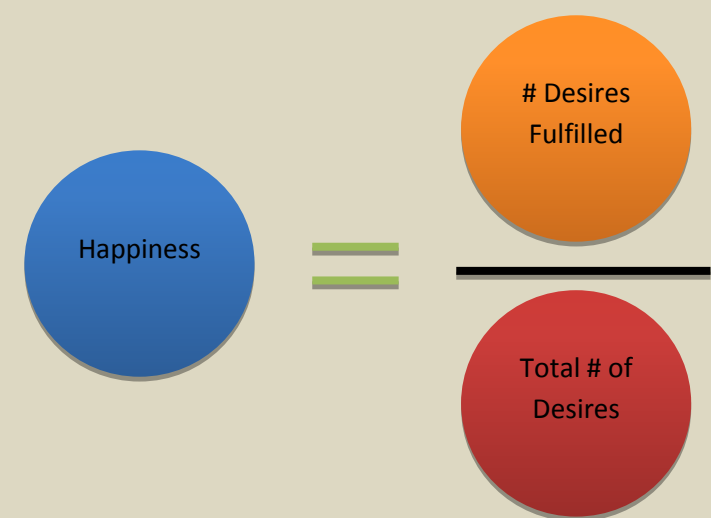
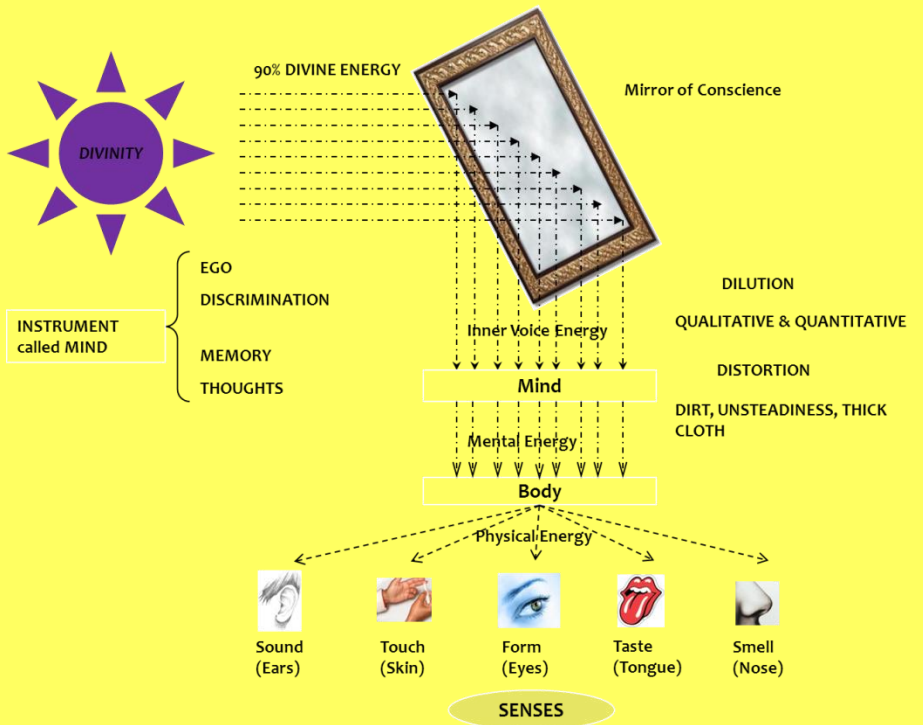
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Please send feedback to:
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What is Sense Control and Dietary Discipline?

“Sathwic diet does not mean simply the food we take through our mouth but also means the pure air we breathe through our nose, the pure vision we see through our eyes, the pure sounds we listen through our ears and the pure objects we touch through our feet. All we take in through the doors of the five sense organs may be described as the Sathwic diet. Sathwic diet means the synthesis of Sathwic food, breathing pure air, listening to good sounds, looking at good sights and touching pure objects. Only then, we may be said to be Sathwic in our habits.” ~ Discourse of Sathya Sai Baba during the Summer Course in Spirituality and Indian Culture held for College Students at Brindavan, Whitefield, Bangalore District in May 1972



“We cannot control the number of desires fulfilled but we can decrease the number of desires entertained to increase our happiness.”

From: Sai Baba's Mahavakya on Leadership, by General. Chibber, page 113 (old edition)

Why should we practice Sense Control?

"People are under the mistaken notion that they derive happiness when their desires are fulfilled. In fact, happiness results not when desires are fulfilled but when they are controlled. One can enjoy the state of bliss by controlling one's desires...You are young and yours is the right age to exercise control over the senses. You can make use of them in a sacred manner... God is here, God is there and He is everywhere. You are developing differences out of delusion, but Divinity is One and only One. It is the duty of a Guru to propagate such principle of oneness."-Guru Purnima, 5.7.2001, Prasanthi Nilayam



HOW do we practice sense control and dietary discipline?



Practical Tips!



"The eyes are given to see God...open not only the physical eyes, but the eye of wisdom."
SSS Volume 33, Chapter 18

- At the end of each day, reflect on one way you could have more fully realized that a friend, family member, or coworker is actually "God" in human form
- Search for your favorite spiritual videos on youtube



"After bhajans... there should be meditation for five to ten minutes." -Sai
Bhajana Mala, 31

- Make a playlist of songs with inspiring words on your ipod and meditate on silence afterward
- Attend group devotional singing and listen to silence afterward



"Hands that serve are holier than lips that pray." -BABA

- Feel the happiness of helping someone each day while realizing "God is the doer"
- Join a regular service project through center or other organization while offering actions to God



"The breath is always saying 'Sohum'. The practice is to say 'So' with every in-breath, and 'Hum' with the outbreath...after a while it becomes automatic. -
Conversations with Sai, part 22 "Sohum"

- Try to breathe in clean, unpolluted air while repeating So-hum during the day to keep the mind focused
- When going to sleep, offer all actions to God as the sohum naturally becomes "om" with the breathe



"Proper Balance must be maintained throughout life." -Discourse, Whitefield, June 3rd, 1995.

- Increase your intake of more "live" foods like fruits and raw nuts on a regular basis (Each week, replace 1 meal from a restaurant with a home cooked meal)
- If ordering a dessert, ask for half the amount even if you are charged the full price, or split it with a friend
- Set a quiet alarm at the times you eat your meals as a reminder to pray .



What actions please God!

We must experience only the eternal bliss with the individual soul and not the worldly things. We must perform good actions with the body and must have good promptings by the mind. It is only such things that please God and draw forth His Grace.



Here is a small example. There is a big wall-clock. There are *three hands* on it. One is a *second* hand, another is a *minute* hand and the third one is the *hour* hand. The *second* hand travels very fast, moving round the 12 numbers in 60 seconds, while, during this time, the *minute* hand moves through only the little mark or division. After the *minute* hand travels through sixty divisions, the *hour* hand moves through one hour. Sixty seconds make one minute and sixty minutes make one hour. Because the *second* hand and the *minute* hand travel relatively fast, we are able to see their motion. Because the *hour* hand travels slowly, we are not able to see its movement.

In the same way, after we perform a number of good deeds, the mind reaches a good place; when the mind thinks of a number of good thoughts, the individual soul reaches the holy place of *âtma*. We are able to see the body-acts reaching the individual soul, but not the acts of the individual soul reaching the *âtma*. Our body is like the *second* hand. Our mind is like the *minute* hand. Our life is like the *hour* hand. Therefore, we must do a number of good deeds through our body. We must contemplate over many good things with our mind. Only then, can we reach the holy place in the *jîva-tattva*. These are called the *gross*, the *subtle* and *causal* states. When we want to reach the *causal* stage, we must do many good things with this gross body and contemplate many good things with the subtle mind.



Testimonial on Mindfulness



When thinking about sense control, my experience at the Greengulch Farms Zen monastery comes to mind. I was looking for a place to seclude myself and focus inward, but I received much more than that: an experiential lesson on mindfulness. The experiences I had in those few days changed the way I lived my life when I returned to “the real world.”



The monastery was nestled in the valleys on the coast of California by Stinson Beach. After driving through the winding roads, and parking my car, I sighed as I walked up to the check in booth. If peace had a smell, that was what the air smelled like.

The concept of Mindfulness was taught by Buddha as awareness of one’s bodily functions, sensations (feelings), objects of consciousness (thoughts and perceptions), and consciousness itself. Synthesizing this concept with Swami’s teachings, to me this term means “living beautifully in the present moment.” Not thinking about the future, not thinking about the past but noticing the exquisitely beautiful details of the present moment.



Every experience I had at the farm was an example of mindfulness, and come to think of it, was almost completely contradictory to the way I had lived my life. Since speech was used when only absolutely necessary, I was again reminded that “silence” actually had a pulsating-like sound. When speech was used, it was soft and delicate. When preparing food in the farm, they lifted the produce and plants with their hands and moved blocks to define the farm premises. They mentioned that each

object deserves the same respect; regardless if the object was light or heavy, it was slowly lifted with their hands in the same way. When eating the meal prepared, I felt a bit out of place as I started to eat my food quickly and realized immediately how slowly everyone was eating. I actually had time to sense if my stomach was full so I did not eat too much. It reminded me of the light feeling Swami says we should feel after finishing a meal (as opposed to the food induced comas that previously felt almost pleasingly addictive). The way they walked was as if they floated instead of rushed. I could actually feel the ground under my feet through my shoes which I had never felt before. Saying prayers in meditation consisted of sitting silently or repeating calming low chants in waves of sound. It occurred to me that sense control and practice of dietary discipline has a lot to do with my state of mind. If my mind is in the present, and focuses on the fact



that I am love, and all things and beings are love, then naturally I would live a life of moderation.

Refreshed, I returned to my typical crazy life...and it was still a little crazy; but, each time I overate, I was reminded of the feeling of mindfulness in which they ate their food. Each time I tripped when walking, I was reminded of feeling the ground and taking the time to hear and see. When I spoke harsh words, or when harsh words were spoken around me I tried to realize that this is not my true nature, and since everyone is God I could only love the person speaking harsh words. And although I was not amidst the rolling California hills, I tried to feel that whatever was around me is truly God’s creation. This experience made me rethink my life in many ways.

-Young Adult from Medford Lakes Center



Sense Control and Practice of Dietary Discipline

Study Circle Guide

June 2011



WHAT, WHY, & HOW?

ROLE PLAY

SANDEHA NIVARINI

The objectives of the study circle are to discuss:

- 1) What is sense control and practice of dietary discipline
- 2) Why is it important to practice sense control and dietary discipline
- 3) How can we better practice Dietary Discipline and Sense Control in our lives

Feel free to modify the questions in this guide as your group feels appropriate.

Study Circle Activity:

Start the study circle by chanting 3 Oms. Recite the prayer: Ask God to THINK, FEEL, SPEAK, ACT, and LOVE through you. Review the last study circle on service and discuss any experiences with practicing Service from the last study circle.

WHAT is Sense Control and Dietary Discipline?

"As is the food, so is the mind;
As is the mind, so are the thoughts;
As are the thoughts, so is the conduct;
As is the conduct, so is the health."

- Sathya Sai Newsletter. 18:4; Summer, 1994, p. 4

Consider the following questions as a group:

- 1) What does it mean to control our senses?
- 2) Is "food" limited to only the food that we eat through the mouth?

Reflection:

- 1) In what ways does eating too much food taken through the mouth affect our Self-Confidence?
- 2) Do you feel food taken through our five senses (in addition to through the mouth) affects our ability to act true to ourselves? Share examples which support your responses.



"Consider a tiny bird which has come and landed on a branch where it continues to sit for some time afterwards. Now, suppose a wind comes up and the branch starts to move, swaying back and forth. The little bird will not get frightened by this movement of the branch. Why? Because it does not depend entirely on the branch for its support. It depends on its wings and so it has strong self-confidence that no amount of movement of the branch would disturb it. Even if the branch were to break, this would not threaten it or cause it to fall. But today's man gets easily frightened by the smallest difficulties in day-to-day life. He does not have the self-confidence which even a little bird has. What is the reason for this? The reason is too much food. He takes in food which is full of dross and which, in turn, generates feelings that are saturated with the quality of rajas, excessive nervous energy and activity, which promotes apprehension and anger. As a result, he has no chance to experience his true nature which is even-minded and pure.

-Sai Gita, Chapter VII Pg. 68



Role Play Activity:

Choose 2 people from the group to read or act out the lines from the role play below:

Young Adult Sai-Chiatric Clinic

Dr. Sai: Good morning Ram. How are you doing today?

Ram: Good morning doctor. I am doing ok. Actually, I wanted to talk to you about a problem I am having for a long time.

Dr. Sai: Oh, what is it?

Ram: Well sir, I have been on this spiritual path for a long long time. I have been practicing Namasmarana regularly, reading Sai literature, participating in study circles, going for service activities, you name it! But, I don't feel much transformation happening within myself. In spite of all these disciplines, I am not able to silence the mind and experience the divinity within! In fact, the mind is getting busier and busier, and now I am totally confused. What is my problem??!

Dr. Sai: My son, that is indeed a cause for concern. Let us look at the root of the problem. You see, the mind is nothing but a bundle of thoughts and desires. And, Sai Baba has said many times that our thoughts are directly related to the food we eat and our environment. Tell me, Ram, what kind of food do you like to eat?

Ram: Well, doctor, as you know, I don't cook much. Why cook when I have so many choices outside! – pizza, Subway, Taco Bell, noodles! But you know, I try to eat healthy food as much as I can!

Dr. Sai: Aahaa...ummm.. and what part of that is healthy??

Ram: Well, it's all vegetarian food! Beans have a lot of protein which is essential for the body.

Dr. Sai: My dear, just because the food is vegetarian does not mean it is healthy for you. We should also consider the environment that the food has been in. Swami says, *"The quality of the food is determined by the vibrations that it is charged with, through the thought processes of the persons who handle it, prepare it and serve it."* The food is exposed to all kinds of vibrations, which in turn has an impact on your mind. Beans may be good for the body, but the impact food has on the mind is far more greater.

Ram: Wow! I did not know the effect eating fast food has on our mind. I should really start cooking more!

Dr. Sai: Yes! We should also try to eat more "live foods". Did you know, that we are the only species in the entire planet that cook and alter our food before eating? All other species eat their food in their purest, raw form. But we fry, bake, boil, and microwave our food. Swami says that when the food is cooked, it partially destroys the life force in the food, which is essential to the functioning of our bodies. Some of the most common health sickness we are seeing today is a result of cooked and processed food.

Ram: This is very profound doctor. So, we should try to eat more food in its raw form like fruits.

Dr. Sai: Now, let us look at the meaning of "food" in greater detail. When Swami talks about food, He is talking about not only the food that we eat, but the food that we take in through all five of our senses – mouth, eyes, ears, nose, and skin. Tell me son, what kind of movies do you watch and what kind of music do you listen to?

Ram: Oh...I love action movies! I am looking forward to seeing the new Fast and Furious movie! My favorite type of music, other than bhajans of course, is hip-hop!

Dr. Sai: And you expect to achieve Self-Realization like this?? Dear Ram, the body is a temple in which God resides.



Whatever food we take through our senses is directly feeding the God within us, and in turn affects our spiritual progress. We should not allow anything unclean to enter our body. That is the only way we can silence the mind and experience the divinity within us constantly.

Ram: Thank you very much Dr. Sai for your thoughtful insights. But I do admit, it is very challenging giving up our old habits and lifestyle. It is nearly impossible to give up these habits!

Dr. Sai: Yes. That is why Swami advises us to practice a ceiling on our desires to ensure we have a control on our senses, instead of senses controlling us.

Ram: Yes doctor. Sense control is needed to for purity of body and mind. I shall strive to practice this discipline from now on. I have full faith that this will help me practice Silence and connecting with the Swami within.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Review the story and role play. **What are the key messages?**
- 2) Discuss your experiences in controlling the senses. Have you ever felt that the more we try to control something, the less control we have? How did you get around this problem?
- 3) We cannot always be in an environment or take in food conducive to focusing on an inward path. Does being in such an environment hinder our spiritual development or does this challenge strengthen it?

WHY practice Sense Control and dietary discipline?

"People are under the mistaken notion that they derive happiness when their desires are fulfilled. In fact, happiness results not when desires are fulfilled but when they are controlled. One can enjoy the state of bliss by controlling one's desires...You are young and yours is the right age to exercise control over the senses. You can make use of them in a sacred manner... God is here, God is there and He is everywhere. You are developing differences out of delusion, but Divinity is One and only One. It is the duty of a Guru to propagate such principle of oneness."

-Guru Purnima, 5.7.2001, Prasanthi Nilayam

Discuss the following questions as a group:

- 1) Discuss the key implications from the quotes above...what is the reason you feel we should control the senses?
- 2) What are some possible explanations for why we waver between desiring the external world and longing God (inward path)? Do you derive happiness from both the external world and inward path? Is there a difference in the happiness derived from an external focus versus inward?
- 3) What are some reasons you feel decreasing our desires bring about happiness (referring to the equation from the newsletter document)?

Swami says, "The human body has been given to you for a grand purpose, realizing the Lord within." -Voice of the Avatar, Vol. 1. 1987, pp. 46-47

HOW can sense control and dietary discipline be practiced?

Activity: Prior to the study circle, collect various illustrations or develop a power point of photos. Have individuals in the group categorize them into beautiful and those that are not beautiful.

Follow up Story: "You cannot change creation, but by changing your vision you can get a proper view of creation. Here is an illustration. Once there was a king, who developed an acute stomach trouble. All the medicines administered by his doctors were of no avail. He then approached a great yogi, who told him that for his stomach ailment he had to treat his sight. He should see nothing but green everywhere. The yogi left and the king ordered that all places in his kingdom should be painted green. Sometime later, the yogi returned and found that people were engaged in splashing green paint everywhere. When asked for the reason, they told him that they were carrying out the king's orders. The yogi then went to the king and told him that to see everything green, all that was needed was for him to wear green glasses. It was absurd to attempt to paint everything green.



Similarly if we change our vision, we will experience peace. When people view the world with the vision of love, they will have peace. All diseases will be cured. Most diseases have their origin in the mind. Everything has a psychological basis. When a person feels that something is wrong with him, he develops an illness. A healthy mind is needed for a healthy body. But it is not enough to be physically healthy. Man needs God's grace as well. To acquire God's grace you have to cultivate the love of God. Today love has become a kind of show. Genuine love should emanate from the heart. Start the day with love, spend the day with love and end the day with love, that is the way to God. If you develop love, then, disease will not come near you." -Discourse, Whitefield, June 3rd, 1995.

As a group, discuss some other practical tips regarding how YOU practice sense control and dietary discipline

Reflect on the following activities and questions as a group:

- 1) How does "Living in Sai" or "wearing the glasses of love" affect intake of all types of food? Reflect on your thoughts during the activity looking at the photos. Consider some examples from your lives when it was challenging to wear "glasses of love"?
- 2) Have a moment of silence (~1-3 minutes) to write down or contemplate the key points in this study document that apply to making a change in your life.
- 3) Going around the room, discuss the key points and practical ideas of how to implement your life regarding these points.

Sandeha Nivarini Focus Chapters: 7, 8, 9

Bhaktha: Swami, You have Yourself said that even when there is Faith and even when one has the Will, putting things into practice may be difficult for want of favorable circumstances and also because the meaning of things may not be grasped clearly.

Swami: Oh! That means that both these, want of favorable circumstances and want of understanding, are bothering you! Well if you have not understood, ask; and if you have no favorable atmosphere, tell me what is the obstacle?

Bhaktha: Doubt is the biggest obstacle. What can be bigger than that? Even after hearing so much, the demon catches hold of me off and on. I do not know why.

Swami: The first reason for that: not having faith in yourself, born out of the conviction that you are really *Atmaswaroopa* (God Himself). The second reason: taking the Divinity in humanity as humanity only and getting lost in the pursuit of sense enjoyment. These demons pounce on you for just these two reasons only. Instead, if you establish yourself in God, understanding the Divinity in man as Divinity itself, this demon of doubt will not attack you. You simply must give up this type of practice which makes you mix things up.

Chapter 7:

1. What are the selected jewels given by Swami, teachings of right conduct, to be adhered by a pilgrim on the Spiritual path? How many of these do you think about or practice in your daily living?

Chapter 8:

1. Should we ask for forgiveness after committing a wrong? What does Swami say?
2. Why do we get doubts on the spiritual path? How can we make our minds free from them?
3. What is the secret of beholding the spiritual basis (Paramathma) of this material world (Prakriti)?
4. How are the jeeva (the individual), the manas (mind), the buddhi (intelligence), the senses and the Atma all related?

Chapter 9:

1. What does Swami say about destiny? Are we completely controlled by destiny? Can we change it?
2. What does Swami say about Purusha, Prakriti and their union?
3. How does Swami explain the state of Moksha and how do we achieve it?

