

Troubles: their impact on Spirituality

The topic of the seminar is “Physical and mental troubles do not tell upon spirituality,” is a sentence taken from the article “Craving of the Soul” of the book Showers of Divine Grace.

I would like to quote the context in which this statement was made for completeness

“The beauty of the training of my Master is that spiritual life runs parallel to the life in the world, with ever-increasing efficiency. Once you have decided to attach yourself with a system, where regulation of mind is the responsibility of the Master, please give a fair trial, and have your own experience after sometime. There cannot be any breakdown in spirituality if faith and desire for the Ultimate is there. Physical or mental troubles do not tell upon spirituality. My Master unequivocally declares: 'Spirituality is my responsibility, as practice is your responsibility.'”

At the first instance i was not sure I am qualified to write this paper, later drew strength and courage by praying to Him and wrote this paper.

Empirical Analysis

Either due to our sanchita/prarabdha karma or a mere stroke of luck due to the blessings of the Master, we have stumbled into this system. As a consequence, we are pursuing the Natural Path as the way of life and striving to reach the Ideal (Goal of Life) as mentioned in the first sentence of our prayer “O Master though art the real goal of human life”.

Under ordinary conditions, sincere practitioners follow the prescribed disciplines to the best of their ability. Yet when circumstances become adverse—whether through physical hardship or mental disturbance—there is a tendency for practice to falter. It is precisely against such lapses that the Master cautions us, while also offering reassurance: within this system, the regulation of the mind ultimately rests with Him.

At first glance, these expectations may seem demanding. However, even in secular life, we observe numerous instances of individuals who persist in their pursuits despite severe adversity. Babur, for example, is said to have offered his own life in prayer for the recovery of his son Humayun—an act that reflects the depth of sacrifice made possible by devotion. Similarly, countless parents endure hardship, foregoing their own comfort and even basic necessities, in order to secure a better future for their children.

These examples illustrate that perseverance under difficulty is not an exceptional demand but inherently human. When individuals attribute higher value to a goal, they willingly accept suffering in its pursuit, sustained by love, devotion, and conviction. Even the principle of delayed gratification somewhat falls into this category.

In that sense, if humans can overcome difficulties in secular aspects of life, Master expecting us to practice the system without breakdown is not unreasonable as troubles are expected to be in human life whether physical or mental, big or small.

Axiomatic Analysis

I would like to approach the same topic from an axiomatic perspective based on my understanding of the system, its literature, and my practice.

The following are what I understand as axioms the Master has put forth in building this system. I refer to them as axioms not in a strict mathematical sense, but as foundational principles on which the system is built.

1. Before the world was born, a balanced state prevailed. When this balance was disturbed, we came into existence.
2. The thought for creation stirred near the Centre, and energy began to flow outward. This gave rise to the First Mind—pure and simple—which has woven all our frame and structure. It carries purity from the source, and that purity is still maintained as the substratum of existence.

3. There is a line of Divinity and a line of Humanity. The theory of parallelism states that when the line of Humanity runs parallel to or cooperates with the line of Divinity, resonance occurs and union (yoga) becomes possible. When there is discordance, there is disturbance in the human condition.
4. The theory of invertendo describes movement between grossness and subtlety in both directions. This principle explains both the stratification of consciousness into levels or knots and the mechanism by which deviation is corrected when it becomes excessive.
5. Within this system, the nature of thought is also explained. When wrong suggestions arise in the mind, the mind does not retain them, since its essential nature is pure and aligned with Divinity. To preserve this purity, it expels them. These expulsions are what we experience as thoughts. When attention is applied, the influence of these thoughts increases and begins to shape consciousness more strongly. However, when suggestions are aligned with the real nature of the mind, they are retained naturally, as they are in tune with its origin in the real Artery.

These axioms, to me, form a system with clear internal consistency. I would in a certain way equate with formal systems in mathematics or natural sciences, as I appreciate the consistency that emerges when these foundations are accepted. There is a certain intellectual beauty in how the structure unfolds from these seed ideas. In particular, the bridging of Purusha and Prakriti through Kshobh, the theory of parallelism explaining yoga, the theory of invertendo explaining movement across states, and the theory of thought formation together create a unified explanatory structure. From these, further categories such as karma—sanchita, prarabdha, kriyaman, and agami—and the framework of purusharthas—dharma, artha, kama, and moksha—naturally follow.

The purpose of this axiomatic approach is to clarify concepts such as spirituality, physical and mental troubles, and their relation to spiritual life. Let us begin with spirituality. The term “spiritual” is generally understood as concerning the spirit, which is the animating or vital principle in beings.

Without religious connotations, and in light of the Master's statement that where religion ends spirituality begins, spirit may be understood as Divinity itself. If that is accepted, spirituality becomes living in alignment with this inner essence—cooperation between the line of Humanity and the line of Divinity.

Now coming to the word trouble. Trouble is generally understood as distress, difficulty, or misfortune. I would extend this slightly: trouble may also be understood as a disturbance in a given state of consciousness, disrupting its inertia. In this sense, trouble is what compels movement in consciousness or life. We may draw an analogy from the first law of motion: a system remains in its state unless acted upon by an external force. Similarly, an individual tends to remain in a given state of consciousness unless disturbed. Trouble functions as that force. This is only an analogy, but it clarifies the role of disturbance. From this perspective, without trouble, there is a tendency for continuity in the same state of consciousness. It is only when disturbance arises that movement becomes inevitable. This movement may take the form of pravritti or nivritti depending on orientation. At the same time, I am not fully convinced that trouble is the only mechanism of movement. There may also be movement through right understanding, disciplined practice, or sustained absorption. However, in ordinary experience, trouble does appear to be a dominant catalyst for change. In our system, it is said that the troubles and miseries of grihastha life are penances and sacrifices for spiritual attainment. We are asked to lead a family life, which involves kama (desire), requiring artha (resources). Since we are on a spiritual path, artha must be earned through dharma, and all must be aligned with moksha. Thus there is a need for balance among the purusharthas. But this balance is not fixed, nor uniform across individuals or time. It is shaped by sanchita, prarabdha, kriyaman, and agami karma, which define the field of one's life. Imbalance among purusharthas naturally leads to disturbance, which is experienced as trouble—mental or physical. In this sense, trouble is not accidental. It is indicative; it reveals imbalance and compels correction. One may also cautiously observe a dynamic tendency toward balance among purusharthas which I call as ***Law of Conservation of Purusha Arthas*** that

govern moral and spiritual life like the laws of motion, thermodynamics in physical sciences

So what I conclude is this: From this axiomatic understanding, troubles arising in physical and mental life cannot be seen as distractions from spirituality. Rather, they are part of the mechanism of spiritual movement. They disturb inertia, reveal imbalance, and initiate correction. In that sense, they are not outside the path. They are part of the path itself.

Practical Aspects

Whatever I have discussed so far more or less theory which appeals to Intellect. Real life is not purely an intellectual endeavor, far from it. The bodily afflictions fall in their own category. Mind consists of Chitta, Buddhi, Manas and Ahankar and the afflictions can also be categorized along those lines and there is also layers of interplay of them. Then comes the spiritual aspect of life which can be the only savior for man provided one is earnest about giving primary importance to it (in a way constantly remembering the goal)

I would like to share here, my falterings, learnings in this journey of life so far. The journey is mostly certainly life playing Parama Padamu (Game of Life). In the initial stages, I was very naive that after joining the system, all the problems are either solved or solvable was the attitude I had whether it is physical or mental. I thought I would not falter and it would be an exponential spiritual leaps and bounds growth if not linear. I thought I got admitted in the best spiritual institute in the world, I can get away with anything. In the initial stages you make tremendous progress (atleast thought so), but later on responsibilities in life, health issues of near and dear ones, ones own health issues and everything affects and I falter at the very first small problem. Then you learn lessons and make progress and fall and get up. Sometimes the fall is so hard it takes years to recover and come to senses and sometimes you get up and run quickly.

Not going into the details, I would like to analyze my attitude when the lower mind gave directions and upper mind gave directions as described in the centenary message

Bodily Afflictions

Lower mind

Give excuse to not observing rituals and remain lazy, and also worry about future, how to take care of dependents etc. If affliction is of very transient nature like caught and cold, enjoy the laziness per se and if it is of potentially catastrophic in nature, entertain all sorts of future related thoughts and build layers of complexity in mind which percolates into other aspects of life

Upper mind

Here again I would categorize into two types of attitude. In the initial stages, tend to observe daily practices, even taking sittings, attending Satsanghs etc without accepting that there is a real physical problem and also not minding the inconvenience caused to others.

Later in more mature, accept that there are difficulties and practice constant remembrance by reading books or engaging in some other useful spiritual activity

Mental Afflictions

Lower mind

Buddhi

Viveka is gone for a toss. Miss the bigger picture. Spend time on solving trivial problems

Manas

Feelings are all geared towards lower tendencies like grief, anger, hatred, jealousy etc. Go into isolation many times thinking the troubles will go away.

Chit

Add more and more junk to the repository like watching useless movies, taking interest in things of no concern to one's own progress in spiritual life

Ahankar

Doership at its worst

Commands 4-8 are gone for a toss

Upper mind

Buddhi

Viveka at its fine. Goal clarity remains in view. All actions are geared to achieving the Goal of Life. Appreciate the facts troubles are there to teach lessons, course corrections

Manas

Feelings of love towards everyone including those who caused the troubles. Feeling that has given troubled people under our care. Trusteeship at its best

Chit

Keep life interaction with rest of the world minimal. Keep conscious of not acquiring additional samskaras and a watch on vasanas

Ahankar

Keep check of doership and participate only Master's work

But in reality there has never been these pure divisions in life, but certainly one of them would be dominating a period of time. When governed by Upper mind, troubles do not affect one that much to periods you dont accept them 100% to grudgingly accept or somewhere in between.

But when the upper mind dominates, atleast sufficient purity is there to seek help from Master, trainers and brothers and sisters.

Spiritually the saving grace

However, in periods of deep troubles, there is the inner voice, the craving of the soul, the taste of pranahuti repeatedly reminds me (us) of the Homeland (I do not know what it is). That is the center yawning towards circumference as Master puts. I have felt at time dragged to sit meditation by that super fine force and brought me back to balance. That starts the fresh move of going through ladders through His Grace or pure persistent self effort. Obviously, when everything goes good, practicing spirituality is good but not a big deal. It is when we have troubles, our faith is tested. In that sense, they are a yardstick to measure spiritual progress. When things are going good, if we dont keep check of hostile forces, again and learn the lessons the hard way. In that sense, it is prudent to listen to Master and have faith in His assertion that “Troubles physical or mental do not tell on Spirituality” and solve the problem of life once for all.

Mitigating/Avoiding troubles

Master told us, “Troubles physical or mental does not tell on spirituality”. He did not ask us to seek troubles. Though troubles (arising out of miseries or wrongful acts by external agency) are there to point of some imbalance and teach lessons, we need not actively seek them and it is prudent to mitigate them and completely avoid them if possible.

There is no way we can stop troubles arising out of the Praradha karma and Master has given us graciously Ten commandments to tackle them gainfully while performing Kriyaman Karma such that we dont form Agami Karma. Master has promised us that if we follow the system to the letter and spirit as prescribed by Him, He will free us of Sanchita Karma to attain liberation minimum and eventual realization. In my understanding, this knowledge that Sanchita Karma should also be exhausted is what made seekers like Ma Kunti, the mother of pandavas to actively court miseries. But the system of our Master is balanced existence and happiness to all. All we have to do follow the system to the spirit. Let us look into how the very aspects of system helps us to avoid/mitigate troubles

Sadhana

Prayer

Prayer is a sign of devotion. When we spark at one end, the other receives it. Only when that relationship is established, we will be guided by the Divine (Master), till then we will be either an automaton or a person with conflicting priorities, susceptible to all sorts of troubles. But if we are devoted, spiritual journey will not breakdown inspite of the troubles.

Point B

Prepares us to be centered in our meditation and helps to weaken the lower tendencies of the mind. Master clearly states in centenary article, that impurities are the result of the wrong suggestions and improper utilization of the inner environment. He also mentions that the lower part gives

direction to the higher part resulting in non-congenial vibrations as we move contrary to reality which is a recipe for inviting troubles

Meditation

Meditation after sufficient practice helps us to realize firmly that we are divinity prisoned by our tendencies and samskaras

Once this knowledge become permanent (atleast cross a minimum threshold) we will seek to go deeper in the path and there will not be breakdown in our progress

Cleaning

Without cleaning, we are not going to get rid of our daily accumulation of samskaras. Without cleaning, the inner environment will attract more and more negative/lower tendencies. We cannot over the secondary effects (mental anguish) of a trouble, leave alone the actual trouble itself. Only after a threshold in the level of purity will be in a position to even seek help from Divine to overcome difficulties in the path. In fact, in the moulding of Preceptors talk (commentary by Rev. Sir at 18.45 seconds to 22.10), there are some important statements which is not in print, but with reiterating here. I would like to write it the gist here and I request this may be added to the website as an addendum to that chapter if not in the physical copy. It is as follows

“Lack of awareness of rebirth alone leads to not following the sadhana particularly getting rid of samskaras” .

There is another talk in which Rev. Sir (which I could not locate) says you can do meditation any amount of time, without cleaning liberation is not possible impressing on the importance of cleaning in this context too where taking another birth is certainly a trouble worth avoiding

Point A

Point A meditation helps us to grow out of ourselves and helps us to practice brotherhood and also in the process view from other's point of view helping us certainly avoid troubles.

Bed Time Prayer

This is the daily opportunity we to communicate with Master to help us to develop contentment which if we do not have is an important vector for inviting troubles

Sittings & Satsangs & Bhadharas

It is in these instances we receive pranahuti (help of the Master - pure love) to get many benefits one of them is certainly overcome troubles not affecting our Spiritual Life

Ten Commandments

In my personal experience it is the fourth commandment whenever I have not followed has resulted in new set of troubles for me on top of existing ones (Prarabdha Karma) which cannot avoid.

Also Commandment 8, if followed properly will put us away from Physical ailment related troubles.

Constant Remembrance

Helps to keep the goal in view and will enable us to get away from Stimulus Response mode to Stimulus Observation Response model. Stimulus Response is one of the biggest source of trouble one can ask from in life

Sravana/Manana/Nididhasana

Gives us the conceptual framework to retain purity by constantly refining our understanding of the system and even writing these seminar papers purity our mind to a large extent. However I am aware of the fact that as long it is min knowing mind it is of almost no use other than mere theoretical exercise of our intellect and it somehow needs to percolate into

Divine knowing Divine to have the Divine Mind to help avoid/mitigate troubles

Love and Devotion

Of all the aspects we discussed, we can reduce everything to this. Only if we have love and devotion to Master, there is no trouble that can break us down in traversing spiritual path. However to get to that we determination and for that we need to gird up our loins as Master says and for that following the system in its entirety is important.

So I conclude this section with the fact that “Love and Devotion” to Master alone will help us to overcome all troubles and for that every other aspect of sadhana are important and they play their own role.

Inspiring/Clarifying quotes

I would like to mention few inspiring quotes that helped and can help us all from our literature in particular and spiritual field in general

1. I am unable to get the reference for this one. I am paraphrasing here. If you know exact quote, I would like print it and keep in big in front of me. Babuji tells/write to an abhyasi that when have a problem, you will have two benefits.

- a. The problem will be anyhow solved
- b. You will also benefit from remembering me

What an inspiring Master we have and if only we can follow this, we can move heavens.

2. Afflictions are the boons form God. There are many secrets in them adn many inner experiences can be had by undergoing sufferings (Rev. Lalaji Maharaj Truth Eternal)
3. The Master says, ‘the disease is hated by all who suffer. But basically it is very purifying. When the impure samskars come to bhog the eye of the Creator is towards us. It serves as a cradle for the rocking of the baby and we get nourished. Even when the virtuous samskars

come to bhog the eyes of God are towards us—all is the play of His love’.

4. In fact, the world has only one problem , a disorder in the minds of people that stop us from seeing reality that stops us from acting clearly (Rev. K.C.Narayana - Duty BP10)
5. There is a story where there was a period where two set of steps were there and when the discipline was through troubles, there were only one set of footprints. On enquiry and complaint from the disciple that you abandoned me at my toughest time and for that the Guru responded that they were my foot prints.

One can add many more. These are some of the things that have occurred in my mind when I was in troubles (not always, when i fairly I have developed enough purity) and helped to overcome them. I am sharing in the spirit of Bodhyanti Parasparam

Conclusion

I would like to conclude that having all these knowledge or writing paper is all good but if we don't put into practice it is all useless. The sentence from Master is our Sruti, unquestionable truth and it is for us to make to true. But for that most important thing that we should develop love and devotion to Him and practice by girding up our loins and in the process we prove to the world and to posterity the efficacy of the system.

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