

A Divine way to discipline Thought and Action !

~ Saheli Sheth (Peoria, USA)

I sat in my dimly lit therapy office, a new parenting book in my hands. Chapter 1 encouraged parents to rethink the word "discipline." A powerful sentence stood out: "What *is* the goal of discipline? The word 'discipline' comes directly from the Latin word *disciplina*, which was used as far back as the eleventh century to mean teaching, learning, and giving instruction."¹

Why does this matter? "Discipline" quite literally means "to teach."

This reframing was transformative for me. Think about the image that comes to mind when you hear the word "discipline." I used to envision a parent towering over a child with an angry face. But now, I see a parent kneeling to meet their child at eye level, lovingly guiding them towards a better path.

I pensively tapped my fingers on the desk, reflecting on how Sant Bhagwant Sahebji and his Sadguru Santo have disciplined us youth through teaching, rather than through punishment. A few cherished memories danced through my mind.

At age 12, my journal was my constant companion, and all my complaints about my friends found their homes nestled within its pages. I would furiously scribble my frustrations about my friends each day.

But one day, without my mentioning the journal, Sadguru Sant P.P. Shantidada simply told me, "From now on, write about God daily." He didn't shame or rebuke me - he just taught me the right thing to do instead.

From then on, my journal entries focused on the positive, as I wrote about God's blessings each day.

¹*No-Drama Discipline: The Whole-Brain Way to Calm the Chaos and Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind* by Daniel J. Siegel MD and Tina Payne Bryson, PhD

One entry said, "Today was a bad day, but, remembering Shantidada's guidance, here are all the good things that happened today..." Looking back at that entry years later, I can't at all recall why it was a bad day, but I vividly remember the many ways that I felt God's presence that day. Through a simple, loving, shame-free instruction, Shantidada taught me a new lens through which to see the world.

Similarly, Sant Bhagwant Sahebji also taught my gossip-loving teenage self a new perspective: "If a person has 99 flaws and one virtue, then magnify that one virtue." My middle school years were filled with speaking behind my friends' backs. Never once did Sahebada criticize me, but he instead gently guided me toward a more harmonious way of living: "See the good in others." "When you hear someone gossip, leave the situation." "If you can't leave, do *dhun*."

These lessons transformed my friendships. In high school, we started a "lunch table tradition" where we'd take turns sharing what we loved about each person. Even 10 years later, my friends say those were some of the best compliments they've ever received. My drama-filled relationships were replaced with ones of deep fulfillment and meaning.

I feel I've been "disciplined" many times in satsang, not through criticism, but by being taught healthier, happier ways to live in this world. This, after all, is the true meaning of discipline - not punishment or judgment, but guidance and instruction.

I pray that when our children misstep, we may pause and remind ourselves, "**The goal of discipline is to teach. What lesson do I want to teach here?**" May we discipline them not with anger, but with the loving intention of shaping them into their best selves. ♦