



INSIGHT INTO WILLPOWER

PART ONE

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In Sanskrit, willpower is called *sankalpa shakti*. It is the fragrance a blossoming personality exudes as they become highly integrated. Willpower is the guiding force behind every project, whether it relates to material achievements or a spiritual attainment. One who possesses willpower is able to keep the resolves that they make; one who lacks willpower repeatedly fails to achieve these goals.

Your soul has infinite resources, and your mind draws these resources from the soul. The mind can be either positive or negative; it can either use or misuse energy. Although everyone has the same tremendous potential, most people do not fully utilize their vast inner resources.

Many misuse their abilities because of ignorance. In other words, you create a negative or positive situation by willpower. For example, if you place yourself in a miserable situation, it is an expression of the negative power of your mind.

It is important, therefore, to understand how to develop positive willpower. This is the task for everyone to accomplish in order to feel happy, to develop a sense of dignity about oneself, and to succeed in life. Thus, see that you have the strength of will to do what is necessary in your life, and, in the process, be especially careful not to make negative resolves.

THREE TYPES OF WILLPOWER

There are three directions that your willpower can take: *satwic*, *rajasic* or *tamasic*. *Satwic* willpower is sublime, and manifests when

you assist other people by directing positive thoughts and good wishes towards them or when you develop the internal resolve: “Let me attain Enlightenment. Let me become a devotee of God.” When you develop *satwic* will, this begins to draw upon your inner mystical resources, and Divine Grace enhances it. *Satwic* will is a highly advanced function of your power, and when it is executed, your personality enjoys a spontaneous sense of peaceful relaxation.

Rajasic will is guided by your ego. At the plane of ego, you develop the idea, “If I were to succeed in a certain project, I could be happier, wealthier, and more prosperous.” You look for ways to be better than others, and become judgmental rather than helpful and compassionate.

Tamasic will is completely gross. It often expresses when a person develops the erroneous notion that someone is in their way of obtaining the focus of a desire. From a practical point of view, the person may believe he is perfectly correct in thinking that someone is trying to subvert his project, or is jealous and therefore inimical towards him. As a result, he develops a *tamasic* will to take revenge upon that person.

Tamasic will is detrimental because when it is sustained, one’s spiritual sensitivity is gradually weakened, and their life becomes shallow. Every negative thought that is directed towards others works as a boomerang and returns to the person who directed it. In fact, it harms the one who sends out the negative thoughts with double the impact.

Therefore, it is important for you to understand the immense resources that your soul has at its command and how powerful they are. Draw upon those resources with great patience to elevate your life and the lives of the people around you. There is no limit to what you can do to advance with the power of *satwic* will. The sky is the limit or, Yogically speaking, *Brahman* or God is the limit!

CONVERTING ADVERSITY INTO AUSTERITY

Negative situations create despair, frustration, worry, and anxiety. Thus, it is important to learn the art of preventing negative situations whenever possible. If they cannot be prevented, then learn the art of enduring them with patience and insight. Look for the message behind them. The secret of developing willpower lies in such spiritual austerity.

If you continue to pursue your goals in the midst of adversities, and strive on with perseverance, patience, and tenacity, you will develop amazing willpower. Understand that if things were completely comfortable, you would never develop spiritual resolve. Every great person in every walk of life has demonstrated the ability to cope with adverse situations that arise. They were able to bear insult and injury with patience, and did not become demoralized when other people criticized them.

HANDLING DISHARMONIOUS PERSONALITIES

In order to profoundly enhance your willpower, strive to become expert in handling disharmonious personalities. As long as you live in the world, you are going to have to interact with other people, and misunderstandings will naturally arise. Because of this, it is important to learn the art of handling people tactfully. This is especially so when you live with close relatives. Sometimes such a situation is worse because you are forced to interact with them in close quarters. As a result, misunderstandings become rampant.

For example, the husband comes home tired from doing a full day's work at the office. The wife has stayed at home all day, either lonely or worn out from doing household chores and taking care of the children. They approach each other with many expectations. Naturally, in such a situation, the slightest little irritant can set off an explosion. Therefore, develop great endurance and tolerance when you are in the company of people who are under stress and, as a result, difficult to get along with.

AVOID LOSING ENERGY OVER TRIVIAL PROBLEMS

In order to develop strength of will, learn to be cautious about how you interact with other people and how you respond to situations. If you are not sufficiently secure within yourself, you may develop a personality that can be easily upset or impatient with others. There are so many insignificant things that occur in a conversation or happen in life. If you are constantly too preoccupied with those little things, or hold onto exaggerated opinions, then when more important problems arise—problems that should really be of concern to you—your energy will be so diminished that you may enter into a state of shock. This is because the small problems have sapped your energy and you have nothing left to surmount the bigger problems.

Analyze your mind and become reflective. You will realize that people create their own troubles so much of the time. They are accustomed to putting themselves in situations where their nerves become jarred. Every individual has the ability to discipline their personality in such a way that they can overstep the smaller troubles so that when the more significant predicaments arise, they will be calm and balanced.

THE WORRYING HABIT

Discipline your personality so that you do not develop the habit of worrying. Worrying gives rise to a vicious cycle: the more you worry, the

weaker your will becomes; and the weaker your will becomes, the more you worry.

When this habit infests your mind, you will worry no matter what situation arises. You may be in the best of circumstances, yet still worry because this habit has been promoted day after day.

You may have thought that if you were rich, you wouldn't have to worry about a thing. And then one day you become rich, and you find that your worries have multiplied along with your money.

Anxiety and fear and other ramifying branches of worry also weaken your will. They are destructive because they cause you to view life pessimistically. The world is relative, so every situation has both positive and negative aspects. You can react to a situation either with optimism or pessimism. Seeing the positive aspects of every situation strengthens your willpower, while focusing only on the negative aspects weakens it.

Nothing in the world can remedy your worry, anxiety and fear except your own philosophical insight and spiritual upliftment. Develop the insight that you are sustained by the Divine Hand. Develop faith in God and in the Divine Plan.

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But, at the same time, never forget that you are the master of your own destiny. Handling life and its resources is perhaps the subtlest of arts. You may be an expert at handling money or managing people. You may be a great architect or engineer. You may perform your job brilliantly and be an inspiration to many people. Yet, if a stranger makes a disparaging remark that hurts your ego, you may lose your temper and hold a grudge for days, or even weeks. You may be able to handle a great many things, yet handling life itself baffles you.

So be reflective and introspective. Be open and sincere with yourself so that you can effectively observe and analyze your mind, and thus understand and correct its defects.

DISCIPLINING YOUR PERSONALITY

To spiritually develop your personality, adopt a measure of discipline according to your capacity and circumstances in life. There are various kinds of discipline that strengthen your will: getting up early in the morning, planning your day with a particular schedule, exercising, fasting or giving up some type of food or drink for a certain period of time.

But disciplines of this type, in themselves, should not become the end. Avoid going overboard. The idea behind discipline is to develop a highly elevated mind that utilizes every situation efficiently and positively.

In adopting a course of discipline, understand that the appropriateness of a certain austerity depends upon many factors: the time, the place, your associations, your stage in life, and your level of spiritual evolution, etc. As you evolve, the disciplines you adopt at a higher level will be different from those that were so meaningful at a lower level of evolution.

During this project, avoid being too extreme. For example, suppose you decide to give up protein-rich foods for a week and live only on fruits. At the end of the week you may say, "I feel as though I have so much more willpower. Think of the willpower that I'll have if I follow this diet for a month or even a year or two years." Such think-

ing may be harmful for you since dietary matters do not follow ordinary mathematics. If you ignore the laws of health, you will not get the results you expected.

Realize that there are certain defects involved in the ordinary measures of willpower. For example, you might declare, “Starting today, I’m going to give up sugar for a whole week.” Then you begin counting the days and striking each day off the calendar. On the evening of the sixth day, you say, “At last! The week is almost over. Tomorrow I can have dessert.” During the week, you became almost obsessed with imagining all the joys of eating sweets, and you could think of little else. Thus, although abstaining from sugar is undoubtedly a discipline that can give you a certain amount of willpower, your inner fancy of enjoying sweets debilitates your willpower; and as a result, after you have completed a week of restraint, you have gained very little.

Lesser disciplines can be adopted according to your needs, but they should not become a major part of your life. Rather, develop a broad understanding of how you can discipline yourself to take advantage of every situation in your life—to balance yourself in the midst of adversity and pursue your goals with long-lasting interest.

Meditation, prayer, japa, *satsanga*, balancing your life day by day, reading about the lives of Sages and Saints and following their example—all these will enable you to shake off weakness, gain inspiration, and succeed in the fascinating project of building willpower. As your determination flourishes, you evolve so effectively that you become one with God. God’s Will is your will. In that state, there is immense joy and freedom.

HANDLING FAILURE IN A MATURE WAY

When your project fails or you make a mistake, it is often because there has been some defect in your willpower. But then, how should you handle failure? If you do not know the art of handling failure properly, you set up a destructive pro-

cess within yourself. For example, suppose there was a certain task you had to perform. You were well prepared for it, but didn’t succeed. As a result, you began to fret. You went to your room, drew all the curtains, and sat down in the dark, totally depressed. As your pessimism grew, you began thinking that you are a born failure. No matter what you do, you always fail. You are not like all the other people you know who seem to always succeed in whatever they do. So, you try to find some solace in the idea that perhaps you were born at a time when the stars were not favorable.

By thinking like this, you weaken your will. If you fail at something, then a certain sense of regret is healthy as long as it helps you discover where you made the mistake. But if you simply regret, without reflecting and arriving at a meaningful understanding behind the failure, your mind will remain filled with negativity for a regrettably long time!

GROWING UP

Most people believe that as they “grow up” they will be increasingly burdened with responsibilities and anxieties: At age twenty-five, you may

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have just a few worries. At fifty, this bundle has grown ten times in size; and at seventy, it is more than fifty times larger than the bundle you had when you were twenty-five! This is not philosophically sound.

Growing up in the true sense implies that you throw off mental and emotional bundles as you advance in life. By continuing to reflect upon your concepts and connect with the Divine Self, your intellect gradually becomes free of the pressure that you have carried from past life burdens due to ignorance. The more you allow the pressure to be released, the more you “grow up.” Otherwise, you will be crushed under the load of useless concepts.

Thus, you can see that it is extremely important to know how to handle frustrations, failures, and adversities. If you can do so, you will have discovered the secret of developing willpower.

**Develop willpower
not for petty things but for
tuning yourself to God.
You will realize that
you are not a limited personality
because you have discovered
universality within yourself.
Your mind becomes a
reservoir of energy,
and your good thoughts
uplift countless people.
This is the goal of developing
willpower.**



When there is adversity, develop a spirit of austerity. Let your mind understand that if the gold within your personality is to shine forth, Nature must give you severe tests. The greater the severity of these tests, the shinier will become the metal within your personality. Spiritually weak people are not given powerful challenges.

Rather than feeling that adversity comes to you because of bad luck (“I am the most miserable person in the world. Oh, poor me!”) you must realize that you have been Divinely chosen for something great. If God takes away what your ego wants, then understand that God has a much greater interest in you than you think. He is investing deeply in your spiritual growth. Therefore, develop the strength to wait and watch.

There is a story that speaks of this theme: Once upon a time in ancient India, in the time of Krishna, there lived a brahmin. Over the years, he had lost everyone in his family and was alone. The only thing he had left was a cow that he would milk every day. This pet cow provided him with delicious milk, as well as the only companionship he had.

One day the cow became sick and died. Arjuna heard about it and asked Krishna, “Why is it, Oh Krishna, that this man, who has been such a great devotee of yours, has lost the one little thing that gave him some consolation? Why did you take away his cow?” Krishna answered, “I did it because he *is* such a great devotee of mine. He had given up everything else in his life except the cow, which happened to be the only attachment that was obstructing his spiritual movement. I didn’t want his mind to remain attached to such a small thing.”

The meaning behind this story is that there are two ways of looking at things. If you look at things from the ego’s point of view, you are bound to become miserable. If you look at things from God’s point of view, you realize you are being fashioned by His plan for greater things. The more austerity God wants you to perform, the more trouble He puts you through—the greater is His interest in you. You are being prepared for the profound joy of greater attainment.