

Spiritual Practice, Part 5

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Where we left off...

Treat hunger like a disease, eat what comes as alms or naturally, never ask for delicious food, be satisfied with what comes naturally, calmly endure all opposites like heat and cold, do not speak unnecessary words, be indifferent to all worldly affairs, and, renounce completely feelings of kindness and harshness to others. Today, we come to the concluding instructions contained in the fifth verse - let us continue...

Fifth Stage

Disengaging from habitual ways requires both simultaneously: disengaging from the elements of habit, while at the same time, giving the attention a new direction wholeheartedly. After the grip of habit has been weakened, attention becomes steady. Then, when the attention can be turned and held on itself and one becomes aware of one's true nature. If even a ray of attention continues streaming towards 'objects' (*and here we are talking about people, things or conditions*) – one's true nature cannot be known. The attention has to engage itself steadily and without remission. This requires many things besides utter sincerity and single-mindedness of purpose.

33. Rest comfortably in seclusion.

Today, in the age of technological connectivity and fast travel, seclusion seems like a form of punishment and perhaps even strange. The dictionary shows the word seclusion as: *'the state of being private and away from other people'*. Seclusion is an aloneness but it is not lonely – there is a huge difference between these. Aloneness is to be by one's self, whereas, loneliness is to feel lonely and this can be with or without people around. Loneliness is a feeling alone psychologically and is a feeling of disconnectedness from others. People can be lonely in relationships and an active social culture. Whereas aloneness on the other hand, is a state of feeling one with others that *does not require* the constant validation by phone, email, chat, visits and other superficial forms of reassurance that one is connected somehow.

Today, there are so many gadgets and ways to connect but with all that – there is no real connection. All the devices, gadgets and toys cannot connect you to others. Just because you talk or message someone, it does not mean that you have a connection. A connection is an open pathway by which one is in real contact – not just talking or sending little messages which often

mean nothing because the same message could have been sent to many or forwarded from others.

In spiritual life, we discover and kindle the real connection that we have with one and all – not just friends, kith and kin and even human beings but to all and everything. You cannot discover this while you have another pathway of connectivity such as an active social life which is based on some sort of relationship or arrangement. The old channels must be let alone for some time to discover another form of connection which is real, vital and organic.

A period of aloneness is necessary to first see, understand and exhaust the superficial connectivity and its urges. Till one sees this artificial psychological jugglery of using outer connectivity of sorts to fill an inner gap of loneliness – one will not discover how to relate to others as people just like you and me first and then, as one's own self. In this manner, selfishness is squeezed out of relationships and you fresh-start relating with others as people just like your own self. These healthy relationships are then taken a notch higher as your own spiritual practice advances to see others not just like your own self but as your own self.

To examine, understand and transcend existing relationships – you have to disengage from active social ways, discover the existing driving urges which push you to connect artificially and only then, can you start discovering that you are already connected real-time, organically and vitally.

34. Merge the mind in the Supreme in samadhi.

When one has been alone for a while, the mind stops and abandons its jugglery of trying to connect artificially through phone, chat and even social connections of sorts and finds a state of fullness through meditation in itself. This mind that was always seeking to feel fulfilled artificially – finds fullness in its source and outgoing urges are gradually abandoned for a lasting and enduring feeling of fullness within itself.

As long as the mind seeks fullness or satisfaction in others, things and even conditions – it will always be seeking as the flames of seeking, increase as they are kindled – they never decrease. When it feels difficult to fulfil – the seeds of frustration grow into the plants of anger. Ultimately, the feeling of wanting fullness has to resolve itself in the direct realization of 'fullness already is'—when the pot of the mind is not stirred rashly and unnecessarily.

The mind has to feel its natural fullness before it stops rushing outward in its quest. This still mind can be turned and held on its source and then, fullness merges in fullness and a state of perfect balance is felt.

35. Experience in full the infinite Atman.

The outer surge of the mind must stop before it can stay steady on itself – its source. When the attention is held on itself uninterruptedly for a long time, it begins to become aware of its true nature. Inner awareness or attention finds fullness in itself only.

As long as there is a finite starting point, one can only find finite ends. The starting point or seeking mode, must first be expanded significantly, before it can be held steady on its source. This is why Swami Sivananda's 'Yoga of Synthesis' is most practical and allows one to make the necessary adjustments in the means as one progresses. It is possible but extremely difficult to have one means or way to the end and this takes stoic discipline – few have this inner metal nowadays. The Yoga of Synthesis allows the necessary practices at each step of one's inner ascent as just like good medical treatment – each target a specific range of areas to be cleaned up of conditioning.

Swami Sivananda writes, *"The more the mind is fixed on God, the more strength you will acquire. More concentration means more energy. Concentration opens the inner chambers of love or the realm of eternity. Concentration is a source of spiritual strength"*.

36. The Manyess Melts into Oneness.

One needs tremendous will power and adamant resolve to see one's true nature. None of the earlier steps can be ignored and one cannot afford to be haphazard and careless on the path. This unrelenting resolve and iron will has to be built up and sustained – it is the fuel of inner strength. What is commonly known as inner strength is blind and ego based – requiring no real inner transformation. That fuel will not work. The journey is long and arduous but the sincere seeker is never alone. Invisible hands guide one along the disciplined inner path. One is tested in many different ways and there will be many moments when doubts attempt to assail. The unrelenting resolve, single minded purpose and fiery determination to stay the course no matter what – must all be unwavering.

No step can be ignored. If one does not have good health and a firm posture – one cannot sit for a long time without movement. The spiritual journey cannot be undertaken with any success in one's old age or after one is comfortable in his retirement. When you retire, you are tired: re-tire equals - *tired again*. There is no physical strength or inner strength for the task on hand. The spiritual journey must be started early on – as soon as one sees the futility of mundane living and looks beyond the temporal and fleeting.

When the play of conditioning is exhausted and the mirror of attention is turned on its source and held steadily for an extended period of time – the duality disappears and one's true nature is seen.

A little about karma

Now, we take up the issue of what happens to all our karmas when the truth is seen. Karmas are classified into three broadly speaking.

(1) Those that have accumulated in earlier lives but not fructified or gone into action—these are called sanchita karma.

(2) Those that we have accumulated in this life to date but have also not fructified and gone into action—these are called agami karmas.

(3) Those that have taken seed by bringing us here into this life and any experiences that must still come as part of its course—these are called prarabdha karmas.

37. Destruction of sanchita karmas.

Sanchita karma is the total accumulation of karma over all lives. When one attains direct Self-Realization, all one's previously accumulated karma are destroyed. Just like roasted seeds which cannot germinate – one's accumulated karmas are roasted in the fire of Self-Realization.

A loose example of this is: say you are dreaming and in that dream, you are being chased by a tiger. You run for your life and it feels like the end. Just then – you wake-up and realize it was a dream. There is no tiger and you are not being chased. You are right where you were all along – sleeping in your own home.

The destruction of sanchita karmas or all the accumulated karmas is like the waking from a long dream to your own essential nature—knowing unmistakably and irreversibly that it was a long dream.

38. Stop further accumulation of agami karmas.

Agami karmas are karmas that we create in the present lifetime that are added to the existing bucket of sanchita karmas or the total karmas. When one has attained Self-Realization, one has broken from the previously existing bonds of doer and enjoyer as an individual. Merging in the Absolute, the sage is now free and steady in his realization as the Atman. He is free of desires, aversion, likes and dislikes as all these exist in the realm of duality only. All karmas that have not fructified, are now burnt and not capable of further generation.

39. Exhaust prarabdha karmas by experiencing them.

Prarabdha karmas are all the karmas that have brought us here in this body and life. This seed has already sprouted and the body will continue till the existing karma that has propelled one into this life are exhausted. This is often seen as strange and questionable by some as they see the liberated one moving and acting quite normally. The realized sage too has to exhaust those prarabdha karmas that have brought him here by actual experience of their results in this life.

There is an often used example of arrows to illustrate this point. The stock of accumulated arrows represents our sanchita karmas; the arrow ready for discharging represents our agami karmas; and the discharged arrow which must hit the target, represents the prarabdha karmas. If you are interested in reading more about karma yoga, I recommend the book, 'The Practice of Karma Yoga' by Swami Sivananda.

40. Rest in the Brahman-Atman.

Resolving the maniness problem by the direct experience of oneness, leads to the destruction of all accumulated karma that have not yet fructified and stops the further accumulation of karma in the present life. Karma that is already in action in this birth will continue till it is exhausted.

One now rests in the supreme state, knowing one is identical with the Supreme in spite of the duality of appearance. One has a dual consciousness to behold the many while rooted unmovably in the fact that One alone Is and the maniness is an appearance that arises in the One.

Summary

Rest comfortably in seclusion, merge the mind in the Supreme in samadhi, experience in full the infinite Atman, the manyness melts into Oneness, destruction of sanchita karmas, stop further accumulation of agami karmas, exhaust prarabdha karmas by experiencing them, and, rest in the Brahman-Atman.



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