

Part 12 (...Chapter IV ends)

Simple ways for self-transformation

The last time, we discussed satva or natural goodness. Let us just refer to it as satva instead of 'natural goodness' as many translations have taken on different meanings and implications today. The focus last time was on seven simple ways to increase satva. Let us briefly review what we discussed last time but in a deeper way as we are going to build on this very theme but in a different direction.

Simple Ways to Increase satva or Natural Goodness...

- 1. Do not grieve or despair in calamities:** things happen in nature, sometimes this way and sometimes the other. What we often call calamities, are things that we feel should not happen and it is this hoping that gives rise to many other anxieties which disallows inner balance. When you do not see situations as calamities, you get a handle on the grief and despair mechanisms and tone them down, giving rise to equal vision.
- 2. Do not wish for other than what is present and what is natural:** this keeps the mind in the present and does not allow desires to surge. If other conditions come, let them come – enjoy them when they come. This keeps the mind resting in itself.
- 3. Rejoice in doing what is right and appropriate:** instead of seeking joy in the results of action, rejoice instead in the very act of 'doing' wholeheartedly and in a manner that is appropriate to the situation. Since wholehearted doing and appropriateness are within, there will always be joy and satisfaction experienced within.
- 4. Experience the fullness of bliss and satisfaction within their heart at all times:** practicing the first three, keep the mind in itself and natural fullness, bliss and satisfaction are experienced.
- 5. Be radiant with noble qualities such as friendliness:** when inner joy is experienced, it reflects in noble qualities such as friendliness. This friendliness is not an outer social crowd pleasing act but a freedom from inner opposition to any and all.
- 6. Be ever in a state of equanimity:** when inner opposition is thinned down or eliminated, inner balance is felt as one's center of gravity does not oscillate when extremes manifest. This does not mean that you agree with everything – you just don't stand opposed to things and let things be as they are.

7. Insure your conduct is always good and noble: this 'good and noble conduct', is a culmination of all of the above. Not grieving or despairing, especially in calamities; not wishing for other than what is present or natural; rejoicing in right and appropriate action; delighting in the joy of self-bliss; standing unopposed to what occurs, which is at once friendliness; and, to be ever in a state of inner balance which requires ongoing vigilance. This powerful concoction ensures good and noble conduct which is non-dependent on results or fruition.

The pivot

Having reviewed the outer court, we pivot to the inner. Along with increasing satva, we have to do something about existing rajas or the dynamic and restless temperament and also, about tamas or the lazy, dull or lethargic temperament. You may feel that rajas and tamas are not an issue with you in taking the word meaning at a glance, but some sort of percentage of rajas and tamas exists in all.

The key is in being able to recognize their surge and being able to do the activity in those periods which puts them to good use in such a manner that gives rise to satva in their place. This, is called transmutation and here lies the key in amassing spiritual fuel which is most necessary for yoga's inner rung of meditation.

If rajas and tamas are not watched and put to constructive use, they will seek their own level and rouse up passions and dullness that can set you back hard. You have to know what guna or quality is in operation and while being vigilant, do the activity that is best at that time. For instance, if there is a feeling of dullness or lethargy – get out and do some physical work for yourself or as karma yoga. These will soon transmute tamas into rajas and if done with the feeling of God's omnipresence – it can even jump a notch to satva. It all depends on the strength of the feeling you can muster and sustain when the gunas change. If there is a feeling of rajas or impulse to do something – you can channel your efforts into bhakti yoga practices like kirtan and quite soon, there may be a feeling to study or even meditate. Have an eye within at all times to discern what gunas are operating in you at all times and do that activity which will transmute them till you have an abundance of satva which is the fuel for deeper practice.

See my friends, you cannot go to the store and buy satva for meditation – you have to make the fuel you need from existing sources. Just like if oil is needed and the only source is a deep strata of rock bed - it has to be extracted from those rocks. Some careful work has to be done and those who persevere – will have fuel. It all depends on the gunas you have in you and your enthusiastic willingness to transform them for extraction.

Now, these things are not elaborated in the text of the Yoga Vasistha because Rama was Vasistha's student growing-up and it is presumed that he learnt these things at that stage. Still, I think it is important for those coming to this point to know the importance of this fourth chapter which can get overlooked as some nice but rather non-important points and be in a hurry to get

straight to meditation, only to find out that there are these surges of thought and feeling and also pockets of lethargy which one is totally unprepared to deal with. Meditation is a struggle if you have not prepared yourself just as it is a struggle to light a wet log on fire – especially if it is very cold and snowing also. Among other things, ignoring this essential preparing the instrument often leads to stagnation or a fall and hence, should be addressed at the offset.

Our focus today

The last time, we discussed ways to increase satva, today we discuss ways to change existing rajas and tamas into satva.

1. Inquire into your own true nature and of this universe - “Who am I?” and “How has this universe arisen?” —and remain indifferent to it.

The mind runs outward to know ‘who’ and ‘what’ and hence, it is important to keep the attention within. At the basic level, you will see that what you perceive is one thing and what the mind is making it out to be is another. You can now easily deal with what is perceived – without the mind’s add-on paint strokes. Keeping the outer, which is what appears and the inner which is our reactions in view at the same time, all the time – is called vigilance. As vigilance becomes natural and ongoing, you can begin inquiry without loss of perception – even while you move about.

Inquiry keeps the mind on its source and this avoids the tendency of the mind to dwell on existing conditioning which weakens by disuse. Conditioning is held together by the glue of rajas and tamas and weakening conditioning – dries up rajas and tamas. Initially, it does not matter if there is no self-inquiry as long as one is seeing things as they are and not as they are being made out to be by the mind. When the shallow layers of conditioning are dried-up, the deeper layers which are more calm will become prime for inquiry.

2. Avoid unworthy company, conduct, and inactivity.

Political correctness increases lack of clarity. The important thing about words is the intent but political correctness dwells on the word itself and has made good communication difficult. Being concerned with the points to be made, allows us to bypass this gridlock.

Unworthy is anything that does not support your aspiration – quite simple. Your aspiration is something very worthy and that does not support it or detracts from it is not worthy – hence, unworthy. This can be done without condemning or having any disdain towards company, conduct or inactivity. Merely seek that which supports your aspiration and let your conduct and activity always reflect your aspiration to a good degree. Gradually, the inner shift from all things non-conducive to all things conducive will rise.

3. Remember the all-devouring death.

This is not a doom and gloom suggestion but very important and most practical. We go around the circles of habit as if mounted on a Ferris Wheel though we have complete free will to do

otherwise. Remembering what Vasistha calls, 'all-devouring death' is necessary to rouse from the feeling of complacency *tamas* gives rise to. *Rajas* then, suggests this, that and the other and merely yawns at wisdom's call to remember that all things shall pass away as a poet has written so well. So, remembering 'all-devouring death' is not a doom and gloom thing but a wake-up call to reality once again as the illusion of time and complacency are themselves doom and gloom.

It would be useful to even write this down in a few places to remind ourselves visibly so we can avoid complacency's pull. They say time and tide wait for no one. You cannot do rigorous *sadhana* when the body has aged and the work-to-day and family life have taken their toll on you mentally. Remembering the all-devouring death is a direct blow to complacency which is not your friend at all.

4. Abandon identification of the self or the infinite consciousness with the body composed of flesh and bones.

This is very important preparation for meditation. Getting over body consciousness in meditation does not happen if you are fully rooted in it the rest of the time. Ongoing and relentless vigilance is key to being aware of all urges to think, feel and act in ways that strengthen identification with the body.

This does not mean that you ignore the body completely but being fully awake – you are aware if the urges that rise within are actual needs of the body or cravings that try to appear as such. When panning for gold, one has to sift through large amounts of dirt and rock to find a little speck of gold. Similarly, you will have to sift through the mind continually to rid it of its energy that makes conditioning so strong and vehement. The images may be there; it does not matter much. The problem is the energy and feeling that is infused with them – it is this potent mixture that makes it volatile.

5. Inwardly behold the consciousness that knits together all the beings that exist in the universe. — *The light that shines in the sun is the same that exists and illumines the smallest of insects, and that is the light of the infinite consciousness.*

Extend 'all beings' beyond its verbal implication as there is no non-being – period! In the ancient days, people would even say a little prayer before they arose from their bed in the morning as a sort of apology which formed a powerful reminder of this truth through the day, 'Mother, forgive me for I am about to put my feet on Thee but I have no place else to put them as I arise to do what needs to be done'. How wonderful!

Swami Venkatesananda has written, "The recognition of divine omnipresence is itself self-surrender".

This inner abidance has also been alluded to by western mystics. Brother Lawrence speaks about it in the little but inspiring book, "The Practice of the Presence of God".

If you are sincere, you will understand that emblazing this feeling on your heart tablet is very important and focus on it till it is felt. The constant and ongoing repetition of the mantra within along with the image of your ishta devata or chosen ideal, helps towards giving rise to this feeling. When the feeling is able to be held within, it is easy to sustain it through all activities and conditions.

6. Engage yourself in the inquiry into the nature of the reality in the company of holy ones.

Inquiry begins with first seeing things as they appear. Inquiry then turns on its source and the inquirer seeks to know one's self. To do this without wobbling too much, it is best to spend time with those who are well-rooted in it. Small hints, passive or active from those who are grounded in this can get you off to a sound footing.

Though much has been written on this and much is available on different media sources, it is one thing to read or hear about it, it is another to see one function quite normally in outer changing conditions while rooted in the unchanging inwardly. When one sees this for some time, there is an inner letting go of habit as one now feels – letting go is a gain and not a loss.

Summary

Today we have discussed six ways to change existing rajas and tamas into satva.

1. Inquire into your own true nature and of this universe - "Who am I?" and "How has this universe arisen?" —*and remain indifferent to it.*
2. Avoid unworthy company, conduct, and inactivity.
3. Remember the all-devouring death.
4. Abandon identification of the self or the infinite consciousness with the body composed of flesh and bones.
5. Inwardly behold the consciousness that knits together all the beings that exist in the universe. —*The light that shines in the sun is the same that exists and illumines the smallest of insects, and that is the light of the infinite consciousness.*
6. Engage yourself in the inquiry into the nature of the reality in the company of holy ones.



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