

Part 13 (Chapter V begins...)

The last time...

The last time, we 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.

Today’s focus...

Having discussed cultivating satva (natural goodness), and also, transforming existing rajas (dynamism, passion) and tamas (lethargy, dullness) into satva; let us turn our attention to cultivating the larger mind in which these gunas or qualities operate. The mind has to be cultivated by the mind itself.

Today, we begin with the important teachings of the fifth chapter. We will look into the seeds of samsara and the mind and conclude with some practical ways to unbind the mind.

1. Seed for samsara

The seed for this samsara or world-appearance is the body. If we were not born, samsara would not be an issue. We will discuss samsara a little later again because just as it is part of the problem, it must also be part of the solution. You may have good conditions in this life but there is no telling what conditions you may have undergone in the past or may be faced with in the future. This is not a negative view of things but very practical thinking.

We are not here as either a challenge or a punishment of any sort, but to work out the obstacles in the direct realization of our true nature. These obstacles have not been placed in our lives by

others or other forces, but, are within and have been placed there by ourselves. We have made them and fortified them in the erroneous hope that they will help us, but, they restrict, limit and eclipse the grandeur of our true nature. We have become preoccupied with harnessing what we call 'potential' but in this unexamined outrush, forget that we are already far more than can be harnessed by all – collectively, over all of time to come. The realization of our true nature is by far infinitely greater than the harnessing of potential as all potential flows from our true nature only.

Sharpening the focus, the seeds for samsara are also the seeds of the mind: the movement of the prana or life-force, and vasana or deep-rooted mental conditioning. To put it in a simpler way, when energy moves over latent impressions – they are animated within. Since this animation happens within, in the same consciousness of 'being' or our self – it all appears so very real and the conditioned mind reacts.

If life is lived wisely, we will use the outer to work out these inner self-imposed limitations. For this, the mind has to be watched relentlessly and without remission. As, the mind, dominated by hopes, desires and fruits from the past is the seed for the body and our journey through samsara.

If life is lived with any lesser goal, the root of all sorrow which disallows lasting inner joy is strengthened. But, if life is lived with self-realization as the goal, each life would progressively exhaust experience while lessening conditioning and increasing our spiritual ascent. This choice along lies before us beneath the veneer of different appearances – however they appear to be.

A great one once said, "The only choice we have is to face the light or darkness". If the goal of self-realization is not embraced in the heart early on, other goals firm themselves and it becomes difficult to bring real change in the heart which is essential for peace, joy and real fulfilment that endures.

2. Seeds for the mind

Prana or life force: When the life-force moves along the subtle channels of the psychic force, awareness and experience arise and mental activity commences. Though this awareness exists everywhere, it is activated by the movement of the life-force. It is the extension of experience that leads to countless experiences and to great sorrow. If this awareness rests in itself *as if asleep*, one attains the supreme state.

Restraining the movement of prana, prevents the expansion of the field of objective experience which results from the movement of the mental conditioning, and one goes beyond samsara. Just as seeds do not generate in dry soil, so also, latent impressions do not gain strength till without an unrestricted link to prana. Prana or life force makes the vasana or impressions come alive and seem so very real. The practice pranayama is among other things the practice of letting the energy flow where it is essential and not to these vasana. The practice of regular pranayama

enables one to attain peace of mind, supreme equanimity, happiness or blessedness, and healthy experience or awareness by conservation of energy and weakening conditioning.

Control of prana, will lead to control of mind by depleting it of its existing energy. But, you cannot just drain the mind from the energy angle as the energy channels or habit pathways will continue to replenish and augment them. A two-pronged approach is necessary; you have to deplete existing residual energy and you have to cut new grooves in the mind which are conducive to your aspiration.

Lack of focus on cutting new pathways leads to habitual pathways getting stronger. Just as water seeks the path of least resistance, the mind's energy will also flow to our likes and dislikes and rouse them into vehemence. If you do not at the same time rewire the mind, the flow of energy in existing pathways will strengthen. For meaningful change, there must a real change of heart—this is necessary and essential.

Vasana or mental conditioning: The mind arises from the seed of vasana or mental conditioning. Vasana develops or strengthens, when one perceives an object on the basis of one's conviction, without inquiring into it at all. When the firmness of notions are held in one's consciousness with great intensity—it all appears very real. Notions are thus seen as reality and one gets deluded, abandons his own unconditioned nature and one's vision is perverted.

That is known as the mind in which such perverse vision creates confusion between what is, and, what appears to be. When such perverse vision gains firm ground, the restless mind comes into being, bringing in its train the cycle of birth and death.

Vasana has gained strength by repeated use, it will weaken by disuse. Awakened living is living consciously, not by habit and at each step of the way. As the inner intelligence or pure awareness is brought into play consciously, and the habitual mind weakens in proportion to its disuse and the use instead of the inner intelligence.

All sorrow and suffering is the result of unawakened living or living habitually – no matter the allure, acceptance and encouragement by all as 'normal living'. True normal living is to live from the 'norm of our true nature'.

2. Unminding the mind

Spiritual Discipline: Contrary to some misconceptions, the disciplined mind is not a stressed mind or a mind that is denied anything good. The mind is just offered what is good, wholesome and conducive to its aspiration and it thus learns better choices instead of taking the path of least resistance.

This spirit is sustained by one's aspiration and self-discipline. Spiritual discipline is the fire which forges potential into ability and with this gain, it is never a loss but movement from gain to gain.

The undisciplined mind is the mind that is allowed and perhaps, even encouraged to seek the path of least resistance. The undisciplined mind causes sorrow, and its cessation gives rise to joy immediately. Happiness and joy are your true nature, the undisciplined mind disallows this by vehemently suggesting this, that and the other. This inner discipline works hand in hand with outer discipline – the battle cannot be fought on one dimension. Let us see how the mind become undisciplined, its effects and need to bring order to the mind.

Carelessness: The mind, when tied to the ego – leads to carelessness and culminates in callousness with time. This is a great loss indeed as when the outer takes center stage – the inner promptings are not heard anymore and one’s ability to discern what is good for one’s true development is impaired. We do not have to choose between the outer and the inner as they are both known in the same plane.

Carelessness is rooted in subtle feelings of possessiveness such as ‘this is mine’ or ‘this I prefer’ and these are the front end of the huge train of sorrow which is hard to stop. I understand that we have to live in life and there are some aspirations but everything has to be given gravity against any resulting inner turmoil or degradation.

The faulty wiring of ‘what’s in it for me?’ must be abandoned and with this, we are able to do our best and not nourish the ego which thwarts performance and is never satisfied with result. This results in inner restlessness, constant turmoil and disallows the simple joys of life and inner peace. This carelessness is the rope that ties the mind to the ego and it all starts with seemingly innocent notions like ‘this is mine’ and soon, one experiences the roaring rapids that follow.

We are asked, even implored to do our best in all that we undertake but to keep an eye on other things such as greed and ambition that contrary to popular belief – do not support doing or achieving the best. Selfish inner urges disallow doing one’s best as potential is thwarted when some of the mind dwells on ‘what’s in it for me’. What does ‘what’s in it for me’ do with doing one’s best? All things come when we do our very best – sooner or later. Why let thoughts of ‘what’s in it for me’ even come into the equation of ‘doing one’s best’? Focus on ‘what’s in it for me’, is a call to carelessness as the little ‘me’ becomes the target of fulfilment.

Samsara: We touched on this lightly earlier, let us go a little deeper. When the mind is tied to the ego-sense and notions of pleasure and pain – this, is the seed for this samsara or world-illusion. The formula is simple: ego-sense + notions of pleasure and pain = samsara or world illusion.

Living an awakened life, stops watering samsara’s roots and meditation uproots existing roots. Challenge habit by asking yourself, “Just why do I need these notions about anything or anyone at all? Am I not capable of living better without them?” If you sincerely keep these questions in your heart and try to go about your life without them consciously at first – you will soon see that life is better lived without them and earlier, you carried their weight unnecessarily by habit.

Equanimity: The mind that is not swayed by pleasure, pain, honor and even great calamities experiences equanimity. This does not mean one does not care but to realize that caring and being compassionate can happen in their true sense when one is not swayed. This ‘swaying’ is an effect that is not at all part situations, but habitual reactions of the mind. They are not part of the fabric of life – they are the mind’s reaction to events that occur naturally.

The non-recognition of things as they are – is ignorance or foolishness. The destruction of ignorance is the destruction of the mind.

The destruction of the mind is not a gain and not a loss as we are talking about the destruction of likes, dislikes and other such conditioning that has nothing to do with things as they are. Relentless vigilance enables awakened living as the outer and inner are seen the same field of view. One does what needs to be done while being aware of habitual surges but not being swayed by them. These inner urges or impulses are vasana or mental conditioning which weaken by disuse.

As vasana weaken, there is a proportional increase in satva or natural goodness and at the same time, in noble qualities like friendliness. We will talk about vasanas a little later. One naturally does what needs to be done, when it needs to be done and in the manner it needs to be done only when the mind is in equanimity or not swayed by the rise and fall of conditioning.

Summary

Today we have discussed...

1. Two seeds for the mind: prana or life force where the movement of energy enlivens latent impressions, and, vasana or mental conditioning which has gained strength by use and will weaken by disuse.
2. Unminding the mind: spiritual discipline, avoiding carelessness, samsara, and, equanimity.



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