

Part 16 (Chapter VI)

Seven States or Planes of Wisdom

In the ninth video in this series, we briefly took up the Seven States or Planes of Wisdom. Now, as we near the end of the essential teachings of the sage Vasiṣṭha, we are once again brought back to them, but this time—with further depth.

I. Śubhecchā or a noble wish

Awakening: There are two types of awakening: one that comes about as a sort of jolt when things do not go at all as planned, and, the other that comes about by living an examined life or a series of examined lives. The first is a mere stirring and not really an awakening. It is more like a passing shower and one quickly reverts to habitual ways once the outer looks even a little favorable. The second is a lasting thunderstorm, the likes of which one has seen before and cumulatively, they form an awakening that propels one to find a better way.

This lasting awakening should not be taken lightly as it comes after many lifetimes of examined living whereby one is spiritually awakened and a wish arises in the heart: “Enough of life in this samsara which is devoid of any essence. Why do I live like a fool? Let me look into the scriptures and listen to the wise men”.

Awakening takes time only because we take time to get over the unexamined notion that our joy comes from people, circumstances or things. Joy is experienced within and its source is within only. True joy is experienced in the fullness of being. This fact resonates in one’s heart and urges one to live an examined life.

Renunciate: Awakening is a mere stirring unless it is followed through by action just as when we awaken from sleep. This action we are talking about here is to set one’s sight on the higher and this, at once, is letting go what is not conducive to one’s aspiration. This natural letting go is not a loss, nor is it repressive as the heart and mind are now intent on that which is better and lasting.

This awakened or natural letting go is also the letting go of craving that we had for this is what makes it noble. One aspires for that which is good and lasting – this, is called a noble wish. With this wish in one’s heart, letting go is not a struggle but natural. Without this wish for the noble in one’s heart – letting go is a struggle. Awakened or examined living is the way to come to a change of heart.

We have already covered that there is a big difference between simple joys that come about naturally or without any craving and joys or pleasures craved for.

Vasistha says, “When such a wish is *preceded by the absence of craving for pleasure*, it is called a noble wish or śubhecchā - he is known as a renunciate”. The giving up of craving is what makes it noble as the craving is what disallows peace, inner balance and the calm needed for self-inquiry.

Renunciation: Giving up craving, one finds the way to give up other ties of the mind and gradually, the mind attains a state of balance or equipoise. The seeker delights at the peace and calm that dawns and asks himself, “What should I do in order to cultivate dispassion and cross this mire of samsara?”

Dispassion is not disdain or hatred for things but the letting go of unexamined passion for the habitual. Contrary to common belief, dispassion is full of joy as one now has inner capital again to pursue the higher that he is not tied by habits chains. The seeker rejoices in renunciation and his attitude reflects in his behavior.

Behavior of a renunciate:

1. He avoids the snare of his own mental conditioning.
2. He delights in beneficial actions.
3. In secret he performs auspicious actions.
4. His actions are non-violent and they do not excite others.
5. He refrains from sin and from the pursuit of pleasure.
6. His speech is friendly and appropriate to the occasion.

Focus of a renunciate: One who aspires for the higher, values the higher and respects those who have trodden the path before towards its attainment. He serves holy ones with thought, word and deed. Let us start with ‘deed’ as this is what there are many misconceptions about. We are familiar with physical service but here, in ‘deed’ includes but is not limited by physical service rendered. Now, let us jump to the beginning and look at all three.

His thoughts reflect his aspiration as thought strengthens or weakens aspiration. For this, the seeker adopts a background of thought felt needed to take him to the next step from where he is. This is an evolving process and the rise of sublime thoughts reflects in word and deed. Let us get back to serving holy ones with thought, word and deed. Rendering full-hearted service is not easy as inherent selfishness interferes in many subtle ways as personal interests do come up at some point. In serving those who have trodden the path before him, he also serves his aspiration as he finds a way to serve without wholeheartedly without even a tinge or selfishness. This is surgery on the ego as finding a way to serve selflessly is finding a way to be without selfishness.

This selfless service purifies the heart and mind and the seeker diligently searches for the scriptures of self-knowledge and studies them. It is difficult to plunge yourself into meaningful study with the ego lurking in the shadows as in 'study' – we are not studying the scripture but through the scripture – we are studying our self.

Thus, study leads to inquiry naturally and the seeker enquires into the nature of samsara and the means of crossing it. Now, the seeker is said to be established in the first stage of yoga.

Summary

Today, we discussed the first of the seven stages: śubhecchā or a noble wish from the 6th chapter. Towards this, we covered...

1. Awakening
2. Renunciate
3. Renunciation
4. Behavior of a renunciate to include these important points...
 - He avoids the snare of his own mental conditioning.
 - He delights in beneficial actions.
 - In secret he performs auspicious actions.
 - His actions are non-violent and they do not excite others.
 - He refrains from sin and from the pursuit of pleasure.
 - His speech is friendly and appropriate to the occasion.
5. Focus of a renunciate

Next time: we take up the second of the seven states or planes of wisdom: vicāraṇā or direct and steady observation of the mind.



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