

Part 19 (...Chapter VI continues) Seven States or Planes of Wisdom

Last time we discussed the third of the seven states or planes of wisdom: *tanumānasa* or the thinned and weakened mind. We also talked about the characteristics of one in this state: (1) one assimilates the teaching of the scriptures, lives with masters and listens to their teachings; (2) being indifferent to this world, one leads a very disciplined life, away from society and completely free from all contacts; (3) practice of the teachings results in right perception of what is; (4) the spirit of non-attachment of both types increases.

Before we begin...

A few thoughts before we begin. As with our previous sessions, repetition of certain teachings is necessary. Just as a doctor may prescribe medication or treatment, discontinue it, and, include it once again in the regimen once again; similarly, inclusion of certain practices is natural in spiritual ascent. Vāsiṣṭha's potent remedies include certain instructions that may have been mentioned earlier as the current step requires its inclusion.

Yoga is not a linear path, there is a lot of adjustment back and forth. Being methodical by diligently maintaining a spiritual diary is a good way to get an accurate feel for the adjustments needed as one treads.

IV. *Satvāpatti* or natural turning away from sense pleasure and dwelling in truth

When the first three states (*having a noble wish, continual direct and steady observation of the mind, and, the thinning or weakening of the mind*) are practiced together, the seeker naturally turns away from sense-pleasures and dwells in truth. Goodness sprouts and blossoms, and gradually, the seeker overcomes ignorance. Right perception arises and the vision of division ceases.

In this fourth stage, diversity is overcome and one is firmly established in unity. Diversity and conditioning are the same thing. The world which appeared so very real, is now perceived as a sort of dream, hence, the fourth stage is compared to the dream state. Without the play of conditioning, purity or *satvā* blossoms in the heart and this inner blossoming is called *satvāpatti*. The seeker now *naturally turns away* from sense pleasure and abides in truth.

Along with the three stages covered earlier, these four principles help bring about the state of *satvāpatti*.

1. Do what should be done because it needs to be done and not for any other purpose.

Action is a way to calibrate the mind and heart – no matter what the action or field of action be. In doing, we also become aware of our motivations by vicāraṇa or unrelenting observation of the mind along with all that appears outside. The ego will suggest ways that are self-serving but, the footing we have made in the spiritual journey will point to what is best – not what is best for ‘me’.

In each situation, to do what is best or what needs to be done is a way to stand with all things by dismissing the ego’s urges though being aware of them. For this, we have to look at all things, people and conditions included – afresh, without the interference of conditioning. Weakening conditioning in and through our daily lives is essential and necessary for meditation as we meditate with the same mind that leans towards the ego or universality. The mind driven by ego will always – even in the hours of meditation, be a looking glass of the ego’s agenda. The mind that through action, has calibrated itself out of self-centeredness – will be able to get past the ego’s promptings in meditation as well.

There is no inner conflict when we do what needs to be done, when it needs to be done and in the best way possible. Great satisfaction and peace is felt when selfishness is gradually purged out of the system. Selfishness does not promote inner peace and ‘taking care of me first’ is ruining all hope for peace and harmony – both for ourselves and others. This is especially relevant today as ‘individuality’, ‘me first’ and ‘whatever’ are infused into the hearts and minds of the young vigorously. These are not only major blocks in spiritual progress but in leading a sane and peaceful life.

For example, in feeling part of one family – one does what needs to be done, when it needs to be done and in the best way possible. Only when the family unit is placed ahead of individuality can there be harmony in the family. This giving up of individuality is not a loss but a gain as one gains the experience of a larger whole.

In spiritual life, universalizing one’s sense of self is *essential as the ego cannot do yoga*. Only the universal can seek the universal. In the Bhagavad Gita, we are told, “Seek the self by the Self...”. Action is a field for spiritual unfoldment and inner ascent. Action affords a view of the deeper mind that does not usually come into the field of conscious observation for many reasons. Action also is an opportunity to calibrate the mind back to its universal state by letting existing conditioning exhaust itself and the mind is gradually restored to its non-fragmented state. The only purpose of all action is to see the mind and heal the mind – all other purposes may for the moment appear to deliver more but hack away on the mind, heart and are driven by the law of diminishing returns.

2. Refrain from doing what should not be done, knowing intuitively that it should not be done.

Along with ‘doing what needs to be done’, vicāraṇa or unrelenting vigilance also lets us be aware of all the mind’s habitual promptings and avoid what should not be done by better selections instead. All action, and here we are talking about the entire spectrum: feeling, thought, communication and action – that promotes the ego, should be avoided by instead doing what needs to be done because it needs to be done.

This refraining and doing happen together – they are not two different processes. Struggle or inner conflict is a clear sign that there is lack of sincerity. There is no other reason for inner struggle in yoga. Results have no connection with doing what needs to be done – this has to be seen very clearly and accepted in the heart.

“Let things go this way or that – what does it matter if I am concerned with doing the right thing with all my heart, mind and body?” This ‘being concerned with doing the right thing...’ weakens inner struggle because you are not concerned with anything else including habit. The heart is wired to ‘doing the right thing’ and hence – it does not feel pulled towards habit even though habit may call.

When the heart and mind is rewired to see all action as a field for restoring one’s self – one gains tremendous momentum in the spiritual path. It feels like a chain or rope that tethered one to habit has just broken loose. Then, there is no concern for the shape of things – only focus on responses that are best, and that promote natural goodness and thus, avoid conditioning which weakens by disuse.

3. Live a simple and natural life.

To live a simple life means to be simple and live simply. I deliberately stated ‘be simple’ before live simply as one can live simply in outer appearances and be very complex in the mind. The appearances of ‘outer simplicity’ can have ulterior purposes which are hidden. This is why one should not jump to outer simplicity.

It is essential to simplify the heart and mind first. Threading all activities or aspects of one’s life towards one single goal is a good way to simplify. This is more important today as society places a high premium on outer correctness and conformation. Each person is in a different state of inner evolution and the push to confirm and make others confirm outwardly will take the inner rails further apart and have disastrous results.

Having a single focus of effort that threads all of life and is the foundation for a simple life. With a single focus, activity becomes a looking glass within and purposes that otherwise stay hidden, are brought into the field of view. The activity becomes second to each activity’s purpose and the wholeheartedness with which it is done.

These inner dynamics causes a change within as it is deeply felt that the inner is more important to the outer. Once this is felt in the heart, there arises a genuine want for outer simplification as well to more resemble the inner state. Outer simplification then is genuine and the reflection of real inner change which preceded it.

4. Live in accordance with the teachings, engage yourself in appropriate activity and accept whatever happens naturally.

Masters that have gone before us, have written on the path. It is very important to have a fixed time set aside for study daily. One may not have regular direct contact with a teacher but the teachings serve as indirect satsang and this is spiritual nourishment for the seeker. Initially, you may study from a few texts, but you will soon feel pulled to go deeper in the study and practice of teachings of one that you feel intuitively drawn to.

Be careful that you do not prejudge the teachings. Remember that you are not studying the scripture or teaching but through the scripture or teaching, *you are studying yourself*. When this spirit lodges in the heart, enthusiasm to actualize the teachings increases and the energy needed is released within.

The first three points we have discussed so far, lay the groundwork for ‘living the teaching, doing what needs to be done and accepting however things turn out’. Action is seen as duty and duty is based on feeling intuitively that it needs to be done. Habit surges but falls back on itself when one sees life as duty. When all action is threaded by duty, natural simplicity increases and letting go of all that is not conducive to your aspiration becomes struggle free.

Summary

Today, we discussed the fourth of the seven states or planes of wisdom: satvāpatti or natural turning away from sense pleasure and dwelling in truth. We also talked about four simple ways towards this...

1. Do what should be done because it needs to be done and not for any other purpose.
2. Refrain from doing what should not be done, knowing intuitively that it should not be done.
3. Live a simple and natural life.
4. Live in accordance with the teachings, engage yourself in appropriate activity and accept whatever happens naturally.

Next time

We take up the fifth of the seven states or planes of wisdom: asamśakti or natural and total non-attachment or freedom.

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