

Part 23 Conclusion

Last time...

We discussed the many lessons in the short story: The Dreadful Elephant in The Forest of Saṃsāra. We also discussed the major agitations that we have to avoid: (1) vāsanā or mental conditioning, (2) saṅkalpa or concepts and mental images, (3) mōhā or attachment, (4) bhāvanā or mental attitude or feeling, and, (5) the mind itself as it is the mind is not only a receptacle of notions but has energy on which it acts.

Today...

We will conclude this series with focus on: (1) what liberated sages conclude, (2) attitudes conducive to liberation, (3) overcoming saṃsāra and some sorrow, (4) a noble person, and, (5) Vāsiṣṭha's concluding instructions.

Before we begin: I am not going to try to convince anyone about anything, only summarize the important teachings of the great sage Vāsiṣṭha. Sincere seekers, will be eager to meditate relentlessly and validate the teachings for themselves. Let us then just review some important teachings and go into them a little.

Conclusion

What liberated sages conclude...

There is no such thing as ignorance or māyā as reality. Whatever is seen in front of you is the pure ever-peaceful omnipotent Brahman. —Yoga Vāsiṣṭha

For there to be something called 'reality', there must be some sort of 'unreality'. There must also be something that knows reality and unreality and the difference. The knowable and knower, both arise in knowingness—the substratum which is all there is. This substratum is the pure ever-peaceful Brahman or Absolute.

Attitudes conducive to liberation...

Inwardly, remain at peace in the self but outwardly, as if you are deaf, dumb and blind. Live an active life, but remain as if in deep sleep. Inwardly renounce everything; outwardly do what is necessary. The existence of the mind is sorrow; the absence of mental activity is bliss. —Yoga Vāsiṣṭha

Peace is experienced when the urge to react does not surge within. This state does not come easily because we are so used to reacting that we call it normal and human. But, we are not human, there is a human condition that we are passing through to discover our true nature.

First, stop reacting to what is generally considered external or outside. Ask yourself, “Is it necessary to react to this, that and the other to live in peace and experience joy?” If we rewire the mind to equate satisfaction with ‘effort’ instead of ‘result’—reactions to ‘things outside’ will gradually stop.

Second, when the outer battle dims, one becomes aware of the inner battle. This comes as a shock to most just because they have not been aware of inner turmoil. If one is established in the habit of relentless vigilance—one is able to not react to inner surges of conditioning and they gradually weaken by disuse. This is why it is so important not to have any missteps in the spiritual path. The practice of aligning the silent repetition of the mantra with one’s natural breathing is a sure way to prevent consciousness from getting entangled with surges of conditioning by abiding in witness consciousness. I have covered this practice in detail in the series on Raja Yoga while discussing meditation.

Letting go of all these surges by not reacting to them leads to inner renunciation or inner disentanglement. With this inner freedom, one is able to do what needs to be done, when it needs to be done and in the best way possible. So, things still get done but without the chaos of mind’s turmoil. The mind is gradually drained of its turmoil and it rests in itself as consciousness. The existence of conditioning is sorrow; the absence of conditioning is itself bliss.

Overcoming saṃsāra and some sorrow...

Withdraw yourself from objective experience. Remain unmoved by the pleasant or unpleasant like a rock. Remain silent, without thinking but established in nirvāṇa. —Yoga Vāsiṣṭha

As long as we are involved in ‘objective experience’, we will not experience our subjective nature. Vigilance is the crystal of awareness turned on itself and held on itself steadily. This is achieved by diligence and sincere practice—on the mat and in life.

We can still do what needs to be done while inner steadiness increases and the joy of one’s true nature surges naturally. Unless you see the worthlessness of trivial pursuit and at the same time, see the joy of noble pursuit—this threshold seems distant and difficult. Withdrawing yourself from objective experience is necessary for subjective experience to blossom.

A noble person...

These four points come towards the end of the scripture and form a blueprint for spiritual living.

1. Does what should be done.

We have discussed this many times before: do what needs to be done, because it needs to be done or on its own merit. This drains the ego by eliminating the ‘what’s in it for me’ and thus the ‘little me’. In standing with the situation, one learns to stand with the larger and one gradually feels oneself not apart from the wider fabric of all life. This is a very important milestone in our spiritual journey as the pivot within happens only when one is not riveted on the outer or things outside.

2. Refrains from doing what should not be done.

This goes along with the first but inner derailment can block this. If one does not while doing what needs to be done—refrain from what should not be done—a fall is inevitable. There will be backsliding and a downward spiral. Both doing what needs to be done and refraining from doing what should not be done must happen together.

Swami Sivananda has a wonderful three prong approach called ‘Sivananda’s Trishul’ (*trishul is a three-pronged spear*) towards preventing backsliding or a fall: A resolve form in writing, a well thought out play for all activities in the form of a spiritual diary, and, an effective system of self accountability and intelligent self-punishment.

3. Lives a simple and natural life.

A simple life has one focus that threads all activities. Though one has different activities, they can be done in a way and makes all activity an offering a sacrifice by sacrificing the ego and all personal gain out of the equation. When selfishness is squeezed out of the equation, one leads a natural life which is one stands with the wider fabric of nature—not apart from it.

4. Accept whatever happens but lives in accordance with the scriptures—while engaging yourself in appropriate activity.

Do your best and accept the rest—this is a good maxim to live by. Many who have achieved the goal before us, have left their writings for us. To live in accordance with their teachings and the teachings of the scriptures is essential when treading the spiritual path.

Society changes with time and with this, all that is considered ‘proper’ also seems to change. What is considered ‘proper’ may not be what is right spiritually. Sages have mentioned this as three different kinds of truth: a behavioral truth which changes with time, a perceptual truth which is what our senses and mind tell us, and, an absolute truth which is experienced by the seeker who is resolute and unrelenting.

Society will be what it is from time to time—let it be as it may. When you take to the spiritual path, you are in a different flow and should not get caught up in conflict with society’s flow. This is why many seek the shelter of a monastery or spiritual company in the form of satsang etc. One learns to let the outer be as it may by being anchored to one’s spiritual ideal in the heart. One does not reject life but treads carefully, never losing sight of the goal in one’s heart.

Vāsiṣṭha's concluding instructions...

All this creation is peace, infinite and eternal. Behold all this as the infinite consciousness and rest in peace.

True abandonment of all actions is constant awareness that, "All this is the Lord who is omnipresent, unborn and infinite consciousness".

Yoga is the cessation of experience of objects, rest in yoga and live, then you will be free from the painful feelings of 'I' and 'mine'.

Be freed from the experience of objects and do what you needs to be done.

Next...

Soon, the text with the main points covered in this series will be compiled into an eBook and be on the website in print and reader versions.

On another note, I have started working on a short series of 4 – 5 videos with the essential teachings of the Yoga Vāsiṣṭha. The verses will be chanted in Sanskrit and followed by a translation in English. Some verses will have slightly modified translation to be relevant today. The video and audio will be succinct, with the verse in Sanskrit and the fluid translation in English. The text will be also be on the website in print and reader versions and have some footnotes that may be helpful.



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