

Part 3 Summary (Chapter II continues...)

FOUR GATEKEEPERS TO THE REALM OF FREEDOM OR MOKṢA

1. Śama or self-control – is supreme happiness

Just like you cannot pull or push something when your feet have no traction on the ground, self-control is a struggle at best until one has a solid and stable platform to rest on. Grounding yourself inwardly in what you seek first, eliminate struggle completely by eliminating resistance. One will still have to work hard but there is a difference between hard work and struggle. In yoga, it is easier when the mind that is pulled in so many directions and ways is tethered to one common factor so inner conflict can gradually subside. The safest way is for the mind to rest on the eternal or God as then, all action flows in light of God's omnipresence. Self-control and resulting inner peace come naturally when one is inwardly grounded or else, it is a constant struggle at best which Vāsiṣṭha says is like sleeping in a burning house.

2. Vicāraṇa or the spirit of inquiry – is itself the greatest wisdom

Vicāraṇa or the spirit of inquiry is a mind that is observed without relentlessly or without remission. Here again, the difficulty lies in not first clearly seeing the danger of an unexamined life. When one clearly sees real danger in unexamined living – one does not trust the slippery mind, aspires for a better way to live and be, and inner vigilance is activated. As long as one sees any value at all in status quo – conditioning dominates ruthlessly. Once the status quo is wholeheartedly devalued, wisdom and the spirit of inquiry rises.

3. Santoṣa or contentment – the supreme gain

Contentment is the renunciation of all craving for what is not obtained without seeking actively and to be at the same time satisfied with what comes naturally without being elated or depressed by them. It is a state of inner satisfaction, not with things but just satisfaction. This is not an unmotivated state but rather, a highly motivated state. You can only sustain peak motivation when you take out result, what comes, or what should come out of the equation. When you are doing the right thing in the right way – which is doing what needs to be done because it needs to be done – you find tremendous strength and energy within. As long as one is not satisfied in the self, he will be subjected to sorrow. With the rise of contentment the purity of one's heart blooms. The contented man who possesses nothing is not poor but owns the world as he is not anchored to narrow ways of thinking based on selfish purposes.

4. Satsaṅga or good company – the best companion to the destination

Satsaṅga is not a mere religious program of sorts but the coming together of the self and its holy aspirations with holiness in the form of others who share the aspiration or even with teachings in order to raise one's own spiritual yearning. The heart or core of one's being has to be fully involved so there is a deepening of yearning and seeking which replaces prior urges for this, that and the other. Satsaṅga is not limited to being with others but also the thoughts and feelings that one keeps company with. It can also be with writings and works of masters who have themselves trodden the path of liberation. It does little good to 'attend religious programs' if the heart and mind do not tend to their import and stay firmly rooted in their ways. Satsaṅga is taking the hand of the good, in every way, all the time – as a companion and guide on the journey towards Self-realization.



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