

Part 6 (Chapter III continues...)

1. Beyond conditioning

Conditioning disallows seeing things as they are by substituting what is preferred—positively or negatively so that even while seeing, we are seeing conditioning only. Spiritual discipline is the fuel required for the lamp of vigilance. Relentless empowered inner vigilance is required for one to stay free of conditioning. Vigilance without empowerment is useless. That which sees must be able to also do and steer clear of what is not good. This initial empowering may not feel natural at first and this is due to many factors including: *not clearly seeing* the harm of conditioning's play, *lack of will-power* and just the force of habit trying to fight aspiration.

The effort needed to correct this or to free the mind off its habitual ways and rest in itself, is directly proportional to the sincerity of the seeker's aspiration.

One has to stay continually awake so that the habitual mind sees that things go on much better, without agitation, and in peace by the inner intelligence—for it to cease its agitation and gradually fall back into its source. When we remain inwardly steady and unagitated as a natural state for a long time, the inner intelligence is fully awakened and the habitual mind significantly weakened.

It is by non-agitation that peace of mind is intensified; the conquest of the three worlds is nothing compared to the conquest of the mind.

2. Purification

Purification is the adjustments needed to steady one's sense of being in the self instead of the personality, in the waking state.

This steadying may seem like it involves some doing at first but all the doing is only to strengthen the sense of being and leave the shore of habit permanently. All that one does to bring about inner purification, involves a wide variety of practices for the different inner conditions and temperaments.

Among the many practices recommended by Vāsiṣṭha, is the practice of *fixing your attention within*, in the 'space in the heart', which weakens the habitual mind tremendously.

Fixing your attention within, is the practice of staying vigilant till it becomes natural and ongoing. The mantra repeated mentally, continually, to the rhythm of one's natural breathing, is of

tremendous help towards fixing the attention within. Inner intelligence empowered, you will still be able to do what needs to be done very well but without any personal motive or gain.

This is inner purification and you will know when the grip of habit has weakened when objects are divested of the likes and dislikes and are seen just as they are. Objects include people, conditions and things—anything considered external or objective to the sense of self.

The mind is nothing more than the concepts 'I am this' and 'This is mine': when these concepts do not arise, the mind vanishes. The non-arising of these concepts purifies the mind. Then even the greatest calamity is not experienced as a loss.

3. Staying undistracted

Purification we discussed earlier, requires you to stay vigilant continually. This vigilance includes the inner and outer in the same field of view. This may seem difficult at first, but with sincerity and diligence—it is possible to be completely free of distraction. There is no harm in the rising of notions in the mind, they will do so till they have residual momentum or energy.

The problem occurs when arising concepts start illumining diverse objects within—which are also concepts.

This fall can only be prevented leading an orderly and disciplined life, which is doing what needs to be done because it needs to be done, one thing at one time, wholeheartedly, and by eternal vigilance at the same time. There is no suppression involved, just wholeheartedness in effort, better choices at each step and relentless vigilance.

In the non-arising of concepts lies perfection. You are conquered by the mind when a concept arises in it and illumines diverse objects. You will conquer the mind if you rest content in the self, undistracted by the concepts.

4. Beyond restlessness

Ongoing vigilance drains the mind of sense of objectivity and the energy that made the objects seem so real, begins to melt and return to subjectivity.

The same energy which illuminated the objects so to say, has to now illuminate the self. This cannot happen selectively, as and when it is convenient to one—it is an all or nothing just as a boat cannot be tied to the dock and sail out on the ocean's expanse at the same time.

The habitual mind is restless and this restlessness is steadied by being steady. This requires one to lead a simple, orderly and disciplined life of inner purification. When restlessness melts down, it itself melts into its source it becomes restful. It is a struggle at best to try to meditate till some level of inner purification or steadiness has been attained through disciplined living, which is avoiding distracted and careless living and at the same time, other practices such as asanas, pranayama, japa, kirtan and some daily study.

Most important is that you have to want to bring some order in the mind and first stop stirring the mind. The emphasis on 'always connected, everything now, all the time' leads to inner degradation and collapse.

The mind's restlessness must be curbed by bringing some order into our lives. There is no such thing as 'quality of life'—only quality of the liver, the one who lives life. The mind's restlessness is brought under control and thinned by order and some discipline. The order is tied to what is important and the discipline is the enforcing arm of order. This may sound punitive but just think about it – how can it be punitive when you are going from worse to better? It is not punitive—only positive and the gains are soon noticed in all aspects of one's life including ones over health and sense of well-being.

It is the power of restlessness of the mind that creates this world-illusion. The mind that is freed of restlessness is itself known as liberation or immortality.



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