

Part 7 (Chapter III continues...)

1. Restlessness

The mind has three modes: *sattvā* which is natural balance, purity etc., *rajas* which is dynamism and this includes restlessness, and, *tamas* which is dullness and lethargy. Restlessness of the mind is rajasic and mental conditioning in operation. The more conditioning acts in our life, the more restless we become as they get infused with additional energy each time and keep pushing one to act.

Mental actions are real actions as fruition follows mental action and sets the wheel of karma into action.

Taking the gist of Vāsiṣṭha's teachings on this, I would like to blend in some other practical thoughts which will make it easier to put into practice. Practical methods to overcome restlessness are...

Simple living: Swami Sivananda recommends a threefold approach; having a clear cut goal of life, a plan to accomplish the goal and a system of self-accountability that enabled what needs to be done and allows you to accomplish them. This does not allow restlessness in the form of whims and fancies to act as these are the ways conditioning strengthens and increases. It is simple living, because it streamlines one's effort towards what is best. *When you do what is best for you, the best returns as result.*

Continual vigilance: do one thing at a time and do it with all your being—*because it needs to be done*. This will enable you to focus your attention and energy and at the same time do what needs to be done on its own merit—not because of some personal purpose. You begin to stand with all things by doing what needs to be done instead of 'my interests'. Along with the 'my', this weakens the force of personality which is the front end of the ego while strengthening vigilance.

Balanced practice: Swami Sivananda calls this the 'Yoga of Little' – doing a little of different practices which keeps your heart in the practice, thus keeping it from becoming mechanical while giving you a wider base.

When this restless mind is made quiescent by true renunciation, then the supreme good is attained.

Practice in life and on the mat must be seamless as otherwise, the mind will swing between the real and the unreal, dwell on the unreal when it can and increase conditioning and its consequences. By relentless vigilance, one's understanding is purified by inner renunciation of conditioning, restlessness is curbed and the mind attains quiescence.

2. Controlling the mind

Giving the mind a positive direction or field to work in, is a practical and struggle free way to control the mind.

For this, we must have at heart a clear cut single ideal worth striving for that threads all situations. This will throw a light on the path in all conditions. Struggle and its resulting pressures are the result of conflicting priorities.

Having one single underlying purpose for doing all things cuts at the root of the mind's restlessness.

As a single purpose, it can be moral perfection, or, to see your own true nature. Having this purpose, the mind will be watched relentlessly and all promptings will be seen along with each situation and the best will be decided in each situation. The force of habit will be greatly weakened, doing what is best will become natural and you will find yourself standing with all things.

The mind alone is capable of controlling the mind. Controlling the mind by the mind involves relentless vigilance, a better choice in each situation, and wholeheartedness in doing what needs to be done.

3. Understanding renunciation

Desire or craving is a prompting by the force of habit and its cessation is liberation.

Earlier, we have talked about the need for ongoing vigilance. This takes firm resolve and inner strength as the force of habit can be quite strong.

If one has a strong urge to know one's self, it is much easier as struggle requires competing urges. Many things including good company in all conditions, simple living and leading an examined life will allow one to see through appearances and give rise to the urge to know the self. Take your mind back to the beginning, we spoke about Rāmā going out in the world to see things as they are. It was as a result of this examination, that a strong dispassion born of wisdom arose in him.

When in this ignorant state there arises the desire to know itself, then ignorance ceases to be. When the sun of self-knowledge arises, the cloud of ignorance or mental conditioning is at once dispelled.

4. Renunciation

Renunciation is a very intelligent and necessary pivot for the seeker. You cannot face the light if you do not turn your back to darkness. When you face the light, you turn away from darkness.

We just spoke about renunciation and unless you face all things with light, which means to see things as they are—you may find it hard to aspire for the better and let go of the habitual.

Take your mind back to the beginning again when Rāmā when out on a pilgrimage to see things as they were. This is very important as unless we go out of our inner habitual comfort zones by dealing with all things fresh and in the light of wisdom—habit will strengthen its grip.

When you start seeing things as they are and as they happen, the first ropes of habit are loosened which are the false infatuation we have with them which makes us run after them or reject them. This weakens pursuit and rejection which are based on rāgā-dwésha or likes and dislikes which are the dividing principles in the mind.

So where do we start? Vāsiṣṭha says:

1. First abandon the pursuit of pleasure.
2. Then, give up all ideas of other or division.
3. Then, go beyond even being and non-being and establish in the non-movement of consciousness.

Aside from being very good advice in living wisely, this is also a step by step approach in meditation for the destruction of ignorance and transcending the mind.

Clinging to hopes and desires is sorrow, their abandonment is peace. Abandonment of hopes and desires is necessary to discover your true nature. For conditioning which is ignorance, blocks self-realization by insisting on itself till one renounces them without reserve. Renunciation happens when one faces something better wholeheartedly as one's back is automatically turned on habit without struggle. Renunciation can also be thus seen as wisdom in action.



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