

No Choice but to Pacify the Wayward Mind

Dear Ram,

While I am always struck by the clarity in your replies, this one was particularly spot on, as you diagnose my problem accurately. The description you give of *matsarya*, and what I found about its meaning by quickly searching online do confirm to me that this is indeed one of the things that plagues my mind - I do have a tendency to see how my actions are judged by others. And I also have a tendency to compare my abilities etc. to that of others.

However, this tendency, I find, is purely a residual thing that operates on its own... I have nothing to do with it. I know very well that what others think of me does not change anything as far as reality for me is concerned. And I don't even have any particular conscious desire to be liked/popular etc. However, I find the tendency arising when I am with other people. And that makes plays out own its own. If I try to be very conscious about it, it will not happen.. just like one can control a bad habit if one is focused on not doing something. But, when I don't pay attention/am involved in some activity which has my focus, the unconscious tendency emerges again. And sure enough, that gets in the way of doing things as well as I could be doing, which reinforces the unconscious pattern of "what are others thinking of me". Of course, it's not that bad, because I know very well that nothing is happening, and so I don't even care much (as soon as the *rajas* subsides). It's just that it gets in the way of "effective doing".. and is a habit which just seems completely at odds with my current better understanding of the world as Maya which ultimately does not affect me in any way. Nor does it seem to be reducing with time. The *matsarya* does seem very deeply embedded in the psyche. Probably partly due to my parents who, with their best, though ultimately selfish intentions, wanted me to be "the best I could" in all spheres of life, and constantly found faults with things, thereby deeply embedding the need to impress others.

However, I am no longer around people who particularly criticize me etc, it's just that this thing seems to have embedded itself very deeply. Also, it only bothers the mind when it happens (since its already in a *rajasic* state). Now, the confusion I have is - should I just see that I am the self which is never affected by this and let things happen as they will, in which case this unconscious tendency will never reduce (or gradually will, if it has to?) or should I be more "watchful" of my mind when I feel this tendency is arising, in an attempt to arrest it? The problem with being "watchful" is that I find it makes the mind unable to operate freely.. and flow naturally in a creative and relaxed manner.

Ram: When it arises take it as an opportunity to remind yourself that you are whole and complete, that it is just residual programming that no longer applies. Turn it into an asset. See the subtopic in the Chapter on Knowledge, *Taking a Stand in Awareness*.

I do however, like everyone else, occasionally experience states of mind where it seems to in a "higher state" where it is more aware of things happening around me, thoughts arising, things being done, while also being focused and flowing (not arrested) with respect to thoughts/ideas

arising. It just seems to be a state where the mind has more "processing power". And it's quite *sattvic* as well because things are seen clearly as they are, things seem to be happening on their own without much effort, and concerns/threats are evaluated realistically for what they are. Dysfunctional tendencies don't generally arise in such a state, but when they do, they are not entertained because the mind is better able to focus on what it wants to.

Now, I do realize, that this state won't remain all the time, and the states of the mind are always transitory, but this is the state that makes most sense to be able to "cultivate", and be in whenever its possible. (Not that ultimately this state, or any other, changes the ultimately reality of existence in any way.) Hence, I was asking if there are any methods/practices (meditation/yoga/focusing exercise/physical exercise, anything else) that the scriptures prescribe for sustaining such a quality of the mind. Of course, this is the *sattvic* state itself, just that it seems to have more "processing power".

Ram: It does have more processing power. It is *sattva*. It can be cultivated to the point where it is the dominant energy in the mind. Any activity that increases *sattva* at the expense of *rajas* and *tamas* is called a *sadhana*.

I feel that my mind, while sharp and intelligent, has a less "processing power" or "working memory". I have difficulty holding too many things in my head, and, for instance, a visit to the super market with millions of things on the shelves overwhelms the mind's ability to take in information :) Its these kind of things, and the fact I fidget a lot, which make me suspect I might have mild ADHD (about which I plan to take a doctor's opinion soon). But again, I do often find myself in states of mind where it seems "bigger" and able to accommodate multiple things at once without feeling overwhelmed, and hence if there is a way, would like to be able to do sustain such states/states closer to these more of the time that I currently am able to.

Ram: Yes, this state is *rajas*. I don't recommend a doctor as he will just tell you to take some drugs that make you *tamasic*. Most substance abuse and chemical addictions, proscribed or self diagnosed and treated, start as attempts to deal with excessive *rajas*. It is the disease of the modern era.

Having said all this, I do ultimately want nothing more than to reach a point where I am (more or less) unaffected by desire/fear.. because whenever I enquire with a *sattvic* mind, I do see that there is nothing that could increase the contentment/gratitude I feel for life. And so I want to act only to reach this "*moksha*" (which seems a very simple place really, almost natural... with none of the grandeur that people generally associate with the word).

Ram: Correct. It is the natural 'state.'

Yet, the mind needs a lot of working on before that can happen. In addition, sometimes doubt arises as to the whole thing, and the mind starts questioning the whole thing - How can the whole world have missed it, if this was the truth? Isn't life ultimately going to remain the same - with lots of moments of "ups", and perhaps a slightly lesser number of "downs", whether one

lives like a *samsari* or not? Isn't a desire for "*moksha*" also just another desire? What's the point of going against the ways of society to the point where one is unable to "relate with" other people and sees only insanity/ignorance in their actions/motivations? etc. Of course, these doubts also subside on their own... just as everything changes, and one feels again, like I do now, that *moksha* is the only thing worth pursuing. So, as you can clearly see there are two issues for me 1) the mind needs to be worked on and 2) there is some doubts that occasionally arise about the whole thing.

Ram: The doubts are natural but you really have no choice because if you don't get the mind pacified you will just suffer more and more. Not doing is a doing because you will keep doing the things that reinforce the *vasanas* and they will continue unless they are worked out and transformed by *yoga*. Your best asset is your clear mind and your self honesty. You will succeed. It will take time, but it is good work. You will thank yourself for doing it one day.

As always, thank you from the bottom of my heart, for your time and effort. I certainly have my shortcomings, but I do hope that you, as a *guru*, won't give up easily on my wayward (apparent) self 😊

Love,
Harold

Ram: Sri Ram is an ocean of compassion and never abandons true seekers. 😊