

Sin Intelligently

Thank you, Ram, for your answers and encouraging words.

Regarding my mind, I don't think it's always, or even mostly *rajasic*, at least anymore. *Rajas* does occur in certain situations. But I occasionally do also feel plagued by *tamas*, and the mind seems dull and slow then. For example, like I mentioned when I go to the super market store, my mind (mostly) just feels too small to be able to notice all the things on display and also be able to keep track of what all I need to buy, etc - there doesn't seem to be much *rajas* going on there, at least to start off. In fact, sometimes in that situation I might even be feeling between the states of *rajas* and *tamas*, but I won't call it *sattva* because I find myself lacking mental processing power to deal with multiple things, in an alert/attentive manner. In fact, while you say caffeine increases *rajas*, and I agree as well, but the state I mentioned (where the mind seems to have more processing power and be more alert) seems to come by taking caffeine (especially when one is *not* already a regular tea/coffee drinker) (anyhow, I have been off caffeine for a couple of months).

What do you make of my "symptoms"? Don't you think it's possibly a case that I have a low amount of working memory/processing power/ability to be attentive and a visit to the doctor might be helpful in that they might prescribe useful medications/exercises to deal with the situation?

Thanks again,

Dave

(I don't know if this makes any sense, but I sorta "theorized" one day that perhaps, to a limited extent *rajas* leads to *tamas* (because the mind gets tired), and in some ways vice versa)

Hi Dave,

I am starting to think that everything is normal with you. If I was there and could observe you for a day or two I could tell if there actually was a problem. But the way you describe your mental states makes me think that everything is quite normal. The mind does go through all three states throughout the day. I don't think you should think of them as 'symptoms.' Are you in general able to get your work done and live a more or less normal life? I think it is just the normal action of the *gunas* that you are experiencing which you can fine tune by connecting your behavior with the states it causes. You should also carefully reread the two chapters on the *gunas*. I think you missed a bit, although you got the general idea. I say this because your 'theory' is correct. *Rajas* causes *tamas*.

Dave: Yes, I am able to lead a normal life and get work etc done OK. But I do find that I have lesser ability to hold multiple things in my head than most people.. and that I suspect also causes problems with remaining focused/attentive.

Ram: You will probably not believe this, but I have consciously created a mind that only likes to keep one or two things in it at a time. I keep a list of things to do and work down the list one thing at a time. I find that I am much more efficient when I operate this way. In my view multitasking, which is what it seems you are talking about, is the curse of the modern era.

Dave: Though I have felt this has been like this for a long time, it has never really bothered me. Its bothering me now because I feel it is coming in the way of my habits getting rectified.

Ram: I doubt it. Take it easy with your habits. Are you trying to achieve sainthood in ninety days? ☺ You are not a child molester, an ax murderer or a strong arm robber so why are a few paltry bad habits an issue? Just work patiently on them. I suspect a negative self judgment lies behind this need to get rid of your bad habits. What habits are you talking about anyway?

Dave: Because, like I said, if I am letting the body-mind system be free and do things naturally, then the dysfunctional patterns also play out, but if I want to watch out against the dysfunctional patterns, the body/mind systems in general also seems to be less able to be free/flowing. Its only in some expanded mental states when I am able to both be free/flowing by remaining focused on the things to be done, yet being watchful against the dysfunctional patterns so that they either don't arise, or are seen quickly once they have arisen to be able to not entertain them. (Having said that, I also want to say that while this is something I want to work on, it doesn't bother me excessively and I remain over all a quite happy and contented person)

Ram: The important issue is that you are 'overall' happy and contented. You don't want to get too spiritually conscientious. You are still young so you need to enjoy yourself a bit. Let the bad habits drop off on their own. No need to bird dog them.

Dave: Yes, I also had been having this feeling that *rajas* leads to *tamas*. And even *tamas* to *rajas*, in a different way (since you don't take care of things unless they become absolutely urgent or things start going really wrong, thereby leading to *rajas*). In that sense *sattva* seems to be the only state which is sustainable. Though I do understand how some degree of *rajas* and *tamas* will no doubt keep showing up. I think being able to cultivate this balance of not going into *rajas* when I am interested/excited about something.. and remaining dispassionate.. is a very important thing I have to cultivate.

Ram: Balancing the *gunas* is an art, Dave, that will go on throughout your life.

Dave: I actually have not yet read the chapters on the *gunas*. I had only scanned through a bit earlier since I accidentally opened a page it and found it interesting. But yes, I will read through the chapters properly.

Ram: Naughty boy! You will benefit greatly if you read the book as it is written, signing on to the logic as you go. I am starting to understand about the mind you are talking about. It is the 'monkey mind' that hops from one branch to another, never sticking to anything.

Dave: I agree with your assessment that getting medication is not something needed. Nor do I like the idea of any substance dependency in general. I'll still go to get myself assessed, just to find out. I am only looking for some improvements in the "mind's capacity to hold things" if it can be brought about by some mind/memory exercises or, if absolutely required, some short term medications (even those I don't see myself going for, at least for now.. the first thing will be to see what can be done by exercising the mind to remain focused and cultivating *sattva* in general).

James: I think the reason your mind does not focus is because you are not really clear about your goals. If you are clear the mind focuses automatically. When you are having sex with your girlfriend do you have to work to focus your mind? You don't. It focuses automatically because this is an activity you enjoy. If the mind is unable to focus it probably means that you are doing a lot of things that you really don't want to do out of duty or habit or guilt or obligation.

Dave: Again, thanks for your responses

It is my pleasure, Dave

Dave: By bad habits I mostly meant this one thing whereby on being engaged in some task, my attention unconsciously shifts to how it is being or will be evaluated by others. But you're right I am probably worrying too much about it. It's not something that's affecting me in a major way, and it'll probably go away on its own if it has to.

James: In addition to lack of clarity with reference to one's goals, anxiety for results also scatters the mind. You appreciate the value of the karma yoga view so I don't need to get into it further.

Dave: I found the rest of your assessment and responses quite helpful too, and with this exchange with you, I feel the right kind of motivation again - where I do things, first and foremost, in accordance with my higher goal.. instead of the mind getting tossed around by smaller motivations. For that, thank you.

James: Yes. At the outset of every action, make the action an offering, just as if you were going to temple and had an offering for the god. Life is the temple and you are the devotee and your actions are the offering. Re-dedicate yourself constantly.

Dave: And though I do enjoy myself in general, but you're right I should just let life happen and not get too obsessed with things. As you correctly point out, I do have this tendency to judge

myself and my actions more harshly some times. Though, for some of the other things I don't care as much as I ought to. I have a tendency to for perfectionism.. and trying to do things "as right as I can" especially if it's something my mind deems important. I know this is ultimately due to greed at play... whether for material things or for "*moskha*". And its most ironic because I realize fully well that neither *moksha*, nor for that matter anything else, will "give" me anything. And though I know this, it just seems that if I make the mind "motivated" to do something, the mind starts "wanting" it. The karma yoga attitude, I know is the answer, but it's hard to truly practice. But anyways, as you point out, I shouldn't be overly concerned. I am quite young, and I have a lot of time to sort things out.

James: That's right. My guru had a great teaching: "sin intelligently." We are going somewhere but we are not going anywhere so it is important to enjoy the ride. Everything is done for results...nothing wrong with it. The universe is set up in such a way that we can succeed if we understand the set up. There is no sense not enjoying the trip because you are too eager to get to the destination. This 'purity' idea can be a trap.

Dave: About reading the book and whether I have a monkey mind... I completely understand the importance of reading it in sequence, in fact I am a sucker for maintaining sequence in reading important books, and proceeding to a new topic only after properly assimilating previous ones. However I go overboard due to my perfectionism in such things (which I deem important) and hence I was reading very very slowly...writing my own thoughts in a separate book.. often re-reading what I had read, to reinforce it. So I reached only till chapter 4.. at which point I realized that my mind was getting "occupied" with the "who am I" thought almost on a continuous basis. So, I just stopped reading for a while... and that change felt a bit refreshing, and so it carried on for longer than I had initially wanted to. Again, I see my underlying pattern of "imbalance" - when things are important to me, I either go overboard or just give up.

James: Good approach. As my guru used to say, 'hasten slowly.'

Dave: I am now planning to read regularly on a planned basis, and engaging with *sadhana*/cultivating a sattvic mind in a balanced manner, without ultimately caring much for progress (while still caring!) (Aaarrgh, the fine balance one needs to be remain motivated but not let the mind get "greedy"!)

Thanks, much love,

James: Buddha called this approach, *madhyamika*, the middle way. Not too much denial of *vasanas*, not too much indulgence. It is hard when you are young. I couldn't do it. I was a total pig. But it worked out anyway.