

# A Tip Concerning *Tamas*

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Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/1985>

**Ferris:** Hi, Ted. Thanks for being there. What you, James, Sundari and Vishnudeva have done to make Vedanta accessible is priceless.

I have what I hope is a quick question about *tamas*. I must say that ever since self-knowledge has been working its magic, I've been sleeping better. This *jiva* has had an extremely *rajasic* life. Thanks to Vedanta, I know that I'm not this *rajasic jiva*. The *rajas* is slowly dying in the heat of the self.

QUESTION: James mentions somewhere to "save *tamas* for sleep." Would you be able to expound on this? Does he mean eat *tamasic* food at night or are there other ways to "save *tamas*"? I still have difficulty falling asleep and need all the *tamas* I can get. Would you please share any tips or tricks on saving (then using) *tamas* for falling asleep at night?

Thanks again. Your website is great. Your explanations of *vasanas*, the *gunas* and free will were particularly helpful.

~ Peace, Ferris

**Ted:** Hi, Ferris.

I think what James means when he advises that one save *tamas* for sleep is that the dense and dull quality of *tamas* is really only useful – especially for one who is pursuing self-knowledge – for the purpose of affording one the capacity to sleep soundly for the period of time necessary to rejuvenate one's system, and thus enable the apparent person to function efficiently and remain alert enough during the waking state to conduct effective self-inquiry and continuously discriminate between the self and the "not-self," the real and the apparent.

The only other useful purpose *tamas* serves in terms of one who is an inquirer is to keep one grounded enough to be able to function effectively on a practical level and take care of one's worldly responsibilities as well as maintain a rational approach to self-inquiry and spiritual "growth" rather than getting swept up in a fervor for chasing transcendental experiences and striving to become established in some eternal state of experiential bliss.

Thus we should refrain from cultivating too much *tamas* through eating *tamasic* foods, subjecting ourselves to *tamasic* forms of entertainment and other indulgences (i.e. engaging in excessive sexual activity, ingesting mind-numbing drugs, etc.) and allowing ourselves to fall into *tamasic* behavioral patterns (i.e. sleeping late, procrastinating, etc.). I don't think James was suggesting that one actively cultivate more *tamas* than naturally arises in one's psyche.

Actually, the most effective approach to take in terms of balancing the *gunas* is to cultivate as much *sattva* as possible and balance the relative proportions of *rajas* and *tamas* to the degree that one is neither compelled by desire to chase objects nor prevented by apathy, laziness or fear from taking the appropriate action in response to or called for by any particular circumstance or

simply by life in general. Acting in accordance with *dharma* rather than at the behest of one's binding *vasanas* is perhaps the best way to cultivate the *guna* balance most conducive to physical wellness, effective self-inquiry and the ultimate assimilation of self-knowledge.

I hope that helps clarify the issue.

~ All the best, Ted