

Regulating *Rajas* and *Tamas*

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Frank: Ted, the bliss of me, awareness, in the daily life of a *jivanmukta*, is a subtle peace and contentment that MAY BE present. It is not the euphoric bliss that most people conceive it to be.

Ted: Yes, the bliss of the self, the bliss that I am, the bliss that is my true nature, is not an emotional state. The notion of bliss being an emotional state stems from the translation of the Sanskrit word *ananda*. *Ananda* does denote a state of tranquility and joy. But it is important to understand that such a state is only an experiential reflection of awareness appearing in a *sattvic* (i.e. pure, calm, peaceful) mind. In other words, the emotional state of happiness is an experiential result of the realization of one's true limitless nature. *Ananda* is a derivative of the word *ananta*, which means limitless or "unending" (i.e. not bounded by the parameters of time and space). *Ananta* is the nature of the self, pure awareness. Since all unhappiness is the consequence of feeling limited in some manner, when the apparent individual "glimpses" of his true limitless nature, even if only momentarily or for a relatively short period of time as is the case when he obtains and enjoys a desired object, he experiences a sense of freedom from all psychological agitation caused by desire and fear and this understanding manifests emotionally as joy. The bottom line is that limitless, attribute-less awareness cannot by definition be characterized by any experiential state of being. Thus the self is not joy per se, but the experience of joy is a rather prevalent symptom of self-knowledge.

Frank: What can obscure this ever-present peace and contentment, even after *moksa*? *Rajas* and *tamas*. They don't necessarily go away very quickly.

Ted: In fact *rajas* and *tamas* never completely go away. As the fundamental constituents of which everything in the manifest universe in both its gross and subtle aspects is made, *rajas* and *tamas* are necessarily ever-present phenomena. However, the influence of the energetic quality of these constituents can be tempered in a way that reduces the deleterious influence they exert over the apparent individual's mind. *Guna* management essentially boils down to reducing the excessive influence of *rajas* (i.e. desire and agitation) and *tamas* (i.e. dullness and ignorance) in order to cultivate a predominately *sattvic* (i.e. clear and intelligent) mind. For only in a pure mind will the assimilation of self-knowledge take place.

Frank: Even after *moksa*, *rajas* and *tamas* may be present to whatever degree *karma* is still fructifying in the *jivanmukta*.

Ted: *Karma* does not fructify to a particular degree. *Karma* (i.e. action) either happens or it doesn't. But I understand the point you are making, I think.

The *gunas* are the essential energetic constituents that give rise to the apparent individual's

vasana-based *raga-dveshas* (i.e. past impression-based likes and dislikes). They also characterize the quality of the *karma* that is spawned from the apparent individual's *vasanas*.

Frank: The thought may arise “I’m still missing something because I don’t feel euphoria all the time. Where is this permanent bliss everyone talks about?”

Ted: Even such a thought itself is the consequence of the influence *tamas* (in this case, uncertainty and doubt) and *rajas* (in this case, anxiety and disappointment) assert over one’s mind.

The important thing to see is that such thoughts are nothing more than objects arising out of, abiding in and subsiding back into awareness. Moreover, these subtle objects are nothing other than awareness itself. Because the nature of reality is non-dual, there is nothing other than awareness out of which anything can be essentially constituted. Thus while all objects and the *gunas*, the fundamental causal material of which they are composed, are awareness, awareness is entirely “beyond” and unblemished by whatever objects appear within the scope of its being. While all objects are dependent on awareness for their existence, awareness is ever free of all objects, for whether objects obtain or not, awareness always is.

Frank: It is always here.

Ted: Yes, awareness always is – even when it appears in the form of desire or dullness.

Frank: It can be obscured (even after *moksa*) by *rajas* and *tamas*.

Ted: It can be apparently obscured – and actually only partially so – to be precise.

Just as an eclipse doesn’t totally obscure the sun, *rajas* and *tamas* do not completely conceal awareness. The veiling power of *tamas* causes the intellect to be too dull to realize the “substanceless substance” (i.e. awareness) that comprises the entire apparent reality (i.e. manifest universe in both its subtle and gross aspects). The projecting power of *rajas* then causes pure awareness to appear to be something that it is not (i.e. makes pure awareness appear to be the myriad objects that comprise the manifest dualistic universe). Despite the limiting influence of ignorance, however, I never cease to exist nor cease to be aware that I exist. Ignorance simply causes me to apparently forget the true nature of my existence as limitless awareness.

Frank: Even when I, the *jivanmukta*, know that I’m limitless awareness, I’m not necessarily peaceful and content all the time.

Ted: From the *jiva*’s perspective, this is true. Experiential peace and contentment are simply objective phenomena arising within the scope of awareness, and as such they are impermanent. In other words, the apparent individual’s moods, which are directly influenced by the *gunas*, are

constantly fluctuating to some degree.

Frank: This is why, if the *jivanmukta* wants to experience peace and contentment, i.e. the subtle bliss of me, awareness that is always present, it must continue (or start!) to pacify the mind.

Ted: Yes, this is an important point. While it is not necessary to purify one's mind or clean up one's *karma* once one has gained self-knowledge, the quality of the apparent individual's life experience will nevertheless be the consequence of the apparent individual's *karma* (i.e. actions in the form of thoughts, words and deeds). Therefore in order to actualize the realization of one's true identity as the self within the context of the apparent individual's life, it is necessary manage the *gunas* in a way that will reduce *rajas* and *tamas* and cultivate a *sattvic* state of mind.

Frank: How does one pacify the mind? *Karma yoga* is one way but would you please describe all the ways one can get rid of *rajas* and *tamas*?

Ted: To be clear, it is impossible, not to mention undesirable, to get rid of *rajas* and *tamas*. The apparent individual needs enough *rajas* to be able to fulfill his worldly responsibilities and perhaps even pursue his creative aspirations, and he needs enough *tamas* to remain grounded and practical in his approach to life as well as to be able to get enough sleep to support his health and enable him to function proficiently.

As previously mentioned, one's approach to the *gunas* should be to reduce excessive *rajas* and *tamas*, and thereafter to regulate the relative proportions of *rajas* and *tamas* in order to cultivate a predominately *sattvic* mind.

Triguna vibhava yoga, the management of the three *gunas*, encompasses every aspect of one's life. Essentially, one has to carefully observe the post-digestive (i.e. long-term) effects of one's actions and indulgences on one's state of mind. Observe the effects of the foods you eat, the way you recreate/exercise, your personal grooming habits, the way you interact with others and the kinds of relationships you have, the way you have sex, the kind of work you do and the way you approach work, the way you keep house, the way you manage money, the way you worship God, etc. Assess whether your indulgences and activities produce *rajas* (i.e. mental and emotional agitation, anxiety, desire, stress, anger, jealousy, etc.), *tamas* (i.e. dullness, confusion, uncertainty, doubt, fear, lethargy, weariness, hopelessness, negativity, etc.) or *sattva* (i.e. clarity, discriminative insight, understanding, calm attentiveness and the ability to concentrate, peace of mind, dispassion, adaptability, compassion, contentment, kindness, gratitude, acceptance, patience, etc.). There is no recipe or formula that works for everyone. You have to be willing to take an objective and honest moral inventory and evaluate the results of your indulgences and actions in terms of the general categories just described. Moreover, as is the character of all objective phenomena, not only is the *guna* predominating in your subtle body incessantly changing, but also the effects that your various indulgences and activities have on your system changes as your sensitivity to and/or tolerance for these various stimuli increase or decrease over time. For instance, initially cutting red meat out of one's diet while continuing to eat poultry and fish may increase *sattva*. Eventually, however, one may find that eating poultry and fish have a *tamasic* effect on one's system, and so one may choose to become vegetarian. There are some general guidelines that are relatively universal, but once you have familiarized yourself with

these you must simply monitor the effect of your indulgences and activities on your state of mind and adjust your behavior according to common sense.

To reiterate, however, bear in mind that you do not have to totally eradicate all *rajas* and *tamas*. You simply have to neutralize the effects of binding *vasanas* (i.e. desires and fears that compel you to act in an effort to satiate them) that extrovert your attention and prevent you from appreciating your wholeness and abiding in the peace and happiness that are your true nature.

Frank: The *jivanmukta* is doing quite well and is starting to experience a little *sattva* here and there, but any help you can provide would be greatly appreciated.

The *jivanmukta* often finds himself thinking peacefully, “Just this.” No need to chase experience, even though desires still arise. Why feed the insatiable desire engine? I only seek to fulfill desires so that I can experience peace and contentment. Why not cut out the middleman?

This is the “work” of this *jivanmukta* now. It doesn’t matter to me, awareness, if there is agitation due to fructifying *karma* but it sure matters to the *jivanmukta*! It is cold comfort to the *jivanmukta* that awareness is ever-present bliss if this subtle bliss is obscured by *rajas* and *tamas* even after *moksa*.

~ Peace, Frank

Ted: Very true, my friend. That is why we (i.e. Vedantins) say that the price of freedom is constant vigilance.

~ *Namaste*, Ted