

Fear Is Primarily Tamas

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Thomas: If fear is merely generally *tamas*, then I wonder why it is not specifically *tamas*. Also, I wonder how fear can be generally *tamas* when James also says that worry is *rajas*. It seems to me that you would need to explain the difference between fear and worry to me, and why this particular difference ends up in placing them under entirely different *gunas*. Please color me confused.

Sundari: *Rajas* and *tamas* are impossible to separate, because they always work together. In fact you could say they are two aspects of the same *guna*, projection and denial. Fear and worry are both the result of ignorance, and you will always get one with the other. The reason we say fear is primarily *tamasic* is that it dulls the mind and is also the result of a dull, ignorant mind.

Rajas is the mode of passion, of action, of doership. *Tamas* is the mode of inertia, of dullness, of denial. *Rajas* blinds the mind because desire (and/or fear/worry) extrovert it, pushing it towards or away from objects. Desire is a positive fear, and fear is a negative desire. *Tamas* covers the mind, making it incapable of seeing what is in front of it or what is required of it. *Rajasic* types are always worried they will not get what they want. *Tamasic* types are too dull to care enough or miss the boat because they don't take appropriate and timely action to get what they want.

All *jivas* are born in fear because they are born in ignorance. The ego is a fear-thought born of the belief in separation. Fear and worry are built-in for the *jiva* because the environment it lives in (including the body) is always changing and the *jiva* is not in control of the objects. Security is the primary motivation for most *jivas*, the futile attempt to shore up protection from the uncertainties of life.

Life in *samsara* is thus unpredictable and stressful. It causes fear and constant worry wrapped up together. The only solution is Self-knowledge, understanding what these forces are – the *gunas* – and how to manage them. Without Self-knowledge, most people are at the mercy of deeply rooted fear/worry *samskaras*.

Fear manifests in many variations and intensities, from mild anxiety and worry to panic attacks and free-floating anxiety, which causes a non-specific unnamed existential fear or worse, dread. It is the constant (but often unnoticed) fear of things going wrong, of the next shoe to fall, of terrible, unavoidable loss.

As an inquirer or worldly person, it might be necessary to sublimate the fear *vasana/samskara* until Self-knowledge removes the ignorance, anchoring it in the microcosmic causal body. This kind of renunciation is advisable if *moksa* is the aim and fear is a powerfully binding *vasana*. But this kind of renunciation is not denial. It is the understanding that nothing is gained by indulging this fear or worry *vasana*, so one makes a different choice every time the fear (or desire) arises, by sublimating the fear/desire/worry with the opposite thought, with the *karma yoga* attitude.

Did you read James' book on the *gunas* as I suggested? Please make sure you do. You need to do the work too. We can help you if you help yourself by doing inquiry, which requires a lot of work on your part. Read all the instructions on our home page

regarding what we need from inquirers to help them. It is for your sake, not ours, that we do what we do.

~ *Om*, Sundari