

Negative Vasanas: What to Do About Them?

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Inquirer: I have one more question; I have a strong negative *vasana* troubling me. I seem to get free from it for long periods and I return to it; and when it returns I feel guilt and shame. I try my best to get free from it, but instead I seem to be stuck with it. What do you suggest for me to do?

Arlindo: I vaguely remember that we talked about this some years back. Anyway, in a few words *vasanas* are traces or impressions left in the causal body (subconscious mind) every time we respond to the field with our actions. In this context, we can classify *vasanas* as “positive” *vasanas* and “negative” *vasanas*. Positive *vasanas* are the fructification of positive past actions. They are the ones conducive to spiritual growth and the development of purity of mind. Negative *vasanas* are the fructification of negative past actions. They prevent spiritual development. They are going to keep you stuck and guilty. But the good news is that however strong and deeply rooted a negative *vasana* may be, it can always be obstructed, reduced to a manageable proportion and, with the *karma yoga* spirit, gradually transformed into good, positive actions.

Positive actions are *sattvic* actions – actions done with the spirit of contribution to the field. Your main motivation is to act in harmony with *dharma*, regardless of your self-centered desires, which are meant to be sacrificed on the altar of *dharma*. *Sattvic* actions aim first to fulfill the needs of the total, and your personal needs secondly. It is conducive to the development of good *vasanas* – *vasanas* which will cause your rapid spiritual growth.

A *rajasic* action is the one aiming to fulfill one’s personal needs only. They are the ones producing *rajasic vasanas*, *vasanas* responsible for personal material gains. They are conducive to prosperity and the development of a positive self-image. They do not trouble the mind to the extent that one feels compelled to break the rules, to violate *dharma*. Pure *rajasic vasanas* do not produce spiritual advancement, but at least they do not bring you down; you remain stagnated, with neither growth nor decline.

A *tamasic vasana* is the real problem. It is conducive to *tamasic* actions – actions that are not only self-centered but also in violation of *dharma*. People under the predominance of *tamasic vasanas* are usually lazy, but laziness does not entirely take care of nagging, binding desires. As a result, a *tamasic* person is inclined to do stupid things in order to get what it wants. Lazy people are not much inclined to do many actions, but those few actions tend to break the rules. They are usually not motivated enough to develop the necessary skills to play by the rules.

How to obstruct and transform those negative *vasanas*? A *vasana* is only a *vasana* in the causal body. Once it appears in the subtle body, it is a “*vritti*,” a thought. You can only work on such *vasanas* in your conscious mind (subtle body). How? By (1) applying the opposite thought with reference to the *vasana*-thought; (2) denying its expression, mental, verbal and physical; (3) developing the religious attitude known as *karma-dharma yoga*.

Will power is very important at this level, but not enough. You need knowledge of the three bodies, the nature of desire, the nature of the field, the nature of objects, *Isvara's* natural laws (*dharma*), etc. Knowledge, together with will power: this is the only way to burn away hardwired *vasanas*; and again, patience is a "must" because binding negative *vasanas* are deeply rooted tendencies, habits – they are developed in time, therefore they die in time too, and gradually.

Good luck again, my friend.