

# From darkness to light

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In the previous chapter Krishna spoke about Prakriti (or Maya), in the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter he elaborates on that.

The final aim, however, is not being Sattvic. You have to see yourself as independent of the three qualities, as the one who is aware of the three, as the pure Purusha....

He says that I am nothing but Brahman manifest through Maya. All that is there is because I am manifest through Maya. What exactly is Maya?. Krishna says, 'Look at all this' (what is presupposed as a creation). Creation has knowledge and all things noble, which come under the name 'Sattva'. Creation also has activity and all activities fall under the term 'Rajas'. Inert matter, laziness, indolence, etc., fall under 'Tamas'. Based on these three classifications, he lists a few qualities of Sattva, Rajas, Tamas as they are manifest in a human being. There is no human being who does not have these qualities. In fact, there is no living being without these qualities, and some may have more of one and less of the other.

All things bright and beautiful come under Sattva. You know that you are predominantly sattvic when you are bright, alert and awareful, drawn to knowledge, loving, intellectual, etc. The flip side of this is that Sattva can bind you to knowledge and happy situations in life. Rajas is all about activity, passion, desires, greed, unrest, and Rajas binds you to your over-commitment to action which causes one to run around like a headless chicken. Tamas is manifest in your mind as darkness, meaning ignorance, lack of concern, a not-caring attitude towards everything including things that deserve attention. You make errors when Tamas is active. Everyone manifests through Sattva, Rajas, and tamas in different permutations and combinations.

The idea behind trying to understand all this is to be preodominantly Sattvic, because from Sattva arises wisdom. Greed rises from Rajas and from Tamas come error and ignorance. Therefore, you have a chance of discovering this knowledge if your mind is predominantly Sattvic. The final aim, however, is not being Sattvic. You have to see yourself as independent of the three qualities, as the one who is aware of the three, as the pure Purusha which is nothing but existence-awareness-limitlessness. When you recognize that, then you are free.

One of the questions asked by Arjuna is, 'How do you recognize a person who is beyond Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas?'. Krishna has a beautiful answer to this. He says, 'That person doesn't bother if Sattva, Rajas, Tamas is manifest in his mind, because he is not affected by the three'. Like the master who was asked, 'What is the miracle you can perform?' To which the master replied, 'I eat when I am hungry, I rest when I am tired'. In other words, he leads a natural life. He is not bothered about what is manifest and what is not manifest, he doesn't over-emphasize his mind. For him, the mind is only an instrument, Sattva, Rajas, Tamas are only instruments for him to deal with the world. There is a time for learning, there is a time for action, and there is a time to sleep, and the master functions accordingly.

Krishna also elaborates on what he had declared earlier (in the second chapter) as the characteristics of a wise man. One who is not affected by pain and pleasure and is not bothered by it, says Krishna, one who does not depend on anything for his happiness because he has discovered he is ananda is a person who has gone beyond the three gunas. He adds to this and says, 'One who is not bothered by honour or disgrace, whether people are friendly to him or inimical to him, by success or failure....these are the external signs. Ultimately, knowledge alone is a mark of a person who has gone beyond the three gunas.' Even a Tamasic person may not be bothered by heat and cold, by the extremes, but this person should not be mistaken for a wise man. The difference between this sort of person and the wise man is knowledge.

Swamiji, what is the journey for a person who is predominantly Rajasic or Tamasic?

A person who is predominantly Tamasic can't jump into Sattva. Such a person needs to be stimulated with goals, ambitions, etc. to overcome Tamas and become predominantly Rajasic. The same Rajasic mind has to be introduced to karma-yoga to raise the level to Sattva. A karma-yogi in the process of fulfilling his desires (which is Rajas) dedicates all his actions to the Lord and the results of these are accepted as prasada (grace or gift from the Lord). This helps the person to grow beyond his desires, to grow bigger than his desires. In this process, the mind becomes more and more Sattvic. Then, of course, one moves from mere action to reflection. Reflecting on all that I do, building up self-awareness and the contemplative mind, doing some meditation, some awareness practices like yoga, etc., I become Sattvic but also have enough Rajas and Tamas in me to use when necessary. Then being exposed to Vedanta *pramana* (a means of knowing) I know who I really am—*Sat Chit Ananda(Existence-Awareness-Limitless)*.

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