

Of will power and won't power

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Tamasic pleasures...pleasures like laziness, the pleasure you get out of being indolent, sleeping the whole day are tamasic in nature.

Further, in Chapter 18, Krishna makes some more divisions. He talks about the *sattvic* intellect, meaning the power of reasoning. He says, 'That reason which knows what is action, what is inaction requires *sattvic* knowledge.' This person knows what ought to be done, what should not be done; he knows what is fear but himself lives a life of courage if not fearlessness, he knows what is bondage and also ignorance, the cause of bondage, he is very clear what liberation, *moksha* is all about. Such an intellect would be called a *sattvic* intellect. He may not have gained the full *sattvic* knowledge, but is definitely exposed to it and has some clear insights into it.

What is *rajasic* intellect? It is one which is confused about *dharma* and *adharma*. This person has understanding but there is also a lot of confusion. Life is not black and white—a lot of our life is lived in the grey areas. Should one tell a lie? No. But what if you are a doctor and your patient has just had a heart-attack? Should you tell him he also has cancer or tell him he is fine but keep the next of kin in the loop? The *rajasic* intellect is confused about the grey areas.

What is *tamasic* intellect? This person is dull, lazy, indolent, and will, in fact, mistake *dharma* for *adharma* and vice-versa.

After this, Krishna talks about *dhrti*, meaning firmness, one's ability to stick to something and get things

done. This can also be divided into *sattvic, rajasic, and tamasic*.....*Sattvic* firmness is that will which can keep you on the right track. Whatever the temptations, whatever the problems, your mind, body, etc., stay on the right track. Your will is as strong as any warrior's and you stick with it. In the *Mahabharata*, at the point when Draupadi's *swayamvara* is going on, Krishna, who is present there, is wondering where the Pandavas are, he's looking out for them. The Pandavas, disguised as priests, are sitting in the enclosure meant for the priests. Arjuna decides it's the right time to make his bid and he rises and heads towards the bow. The others try to hold him back for fear that they will be shamed and humiliated by his attempts, but an old *brahmana* speaks up for him. 'A *Brahman*,' he says, 'may live on fruits and roots, and he may be frail, but his will can be as strong as any warrior's'. This is what is meant by *sattvic* firmness.

Krishna then talks about pleasures as *sattvic, rajasic, and tamasic*. He talks about *sattvic* pleasure in terms of long-standing happiness. For this, one may initially have to do some things which are difficult. A relationship, for example.

What is *rajasic* firmness? That firmness which is *dharmic* in nature but does all that has to be done for the sake of security and pleasures and wealth is *rajasic* firmness. All of us who work to achieve our goals will have what is known as *rajasic* firmness.

What is *tamasic* firmness? One that holds on to fear, wrong ideas, sorrow...You will wonder why people hold on to these things. I'm still grieving for someone I lost ten years ago; you must have come across people like that. Why don't they go in for therapy and grow out of that grief? They don't want to do that, they had rather hold on to that grief. It's surprising but true that a lot of people hold on to all the wrong things in life. If they used that will to hold on to the good things in life, they would rise to great heights. Such a will is called *tamasic* will.

Krishna then talks about pleasures as *sattvic, rajasic, and tamasic*. He talks about *sattvic* pleasure in terms of long-standing happiness. For this, one may initially have to do some things which are difficult. A relationship, for example. To make a relationship work, you may have to change some thought patterns, etc. to accommodate the other person, you may have to accept the other person's ideas which may not be in harmony with your own. This has to be done to make it work in the long-term. It's difficult in the beginning but in the long-term it leads to a certain sense of fulfilment. Krishna calls such pleasures *sattvic* pleasures.

What are *rajasic* pleasures? Those pleasures that are born purely out of sense gratification are *rajasic* pleasures. For example, most people enjoy their drinks. This is OK, but if a person drinks everyday and all day, then he has to pay the price in terms of health. In the beginning, it seems like fun, but if it is undisciplined and not regulated then it leads to long-term problems. These are *rajasic* pleasures and one has to be careful if one is indulging in these types of pleasures. I'm not saying don't do it; do it but be careful and do it keeping the long-term in view. Never sacrifice the long-term for the short-term.

What are *tamasic* pleasures? Pleasures like laziness, the pleasure you get out of being indolent, sleeping the whole day. Eight hours of sleep is enough, but I know people who go to sleep at two in the night and don't get up before noon. That's unhealthy, but they get great pleasure from it.

Krishna says no person is free from *sattva, rajas, tamas*, but the attempt should be to make one's mind predominantly *sattvic* which can lead one to know the truth.

We must remember that all these classifications into *sattvic, rajasic, tamasic* are only to aid self-verification, and not to be judgemental of others or oneself. That's very important—not to be judgemental of oneself or others, but to understand the big picture so that one can become more *sattvic* and know the truth.

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