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## Thinking and Kama-Manas with Special Relevance to Politics and Religion

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How do people think and make intelligent choices and decisions, and how it is that so many persons frequently fail to do so? What is the nature of mental phenomena in relation to emotion? What is happening in people's consciousness and why?

In conversing with many people about the topic of what stands in the way of clear thinking and decision making, it is rare to hear someone voice a good understanding of the ways in which human emotions affect thinking. People may refer to past conditioning or experiences in a general way or to I.Q. or brain function, or to lack of education or training in critical thinking. But the role of human emotions is rarely emphasized or appreciated.

In Eastern thought there is a special term and useful concept: kama-manas. Kama-mans is from the Sanskrit: kama, "desire" + manas, "mind." It is commonly used as fundamentally descriptive of human nature and underscores the fact people do not, as is commonly supposed, engage in pure thought but rather a fusion of thought and emotion, with emphasis on the emotion.

Edward Abdill summarized the concept: "Since kama is always associated with mind, we use the term kama-manas when referring to our thinking, feeling nature. A prominent Theosophist describes this connection between mind and emotion as 'flinking,' a combination of 'feeling' and 'thinking.'"<sup>i</sup>

"Flinking," or so-called thinking is actually mind-emotion based, and most commonly with the emphasis on the emotional. As M. Bell expressed it, "From a developmental cognitive neuroscience point of view, emotion and cognition, traditionally considered separate processes, are dynamically linked and work together to process information and execute action..."<sup>ii</sup>

K. Mukerji, address the concept in connection with the social sciences and also touches on the crucial ideal of transcending the limitations of the usual kama-manasic strata in which most humans, including scientists, function:

“...the emotional preferences of the scientist are invariably brought into the methodology of (social and) political science. These (emotional preferences) are unavoidable... This state of freedom from bias or non-attachment, however difficult, is not beyond the capacities of the human mind to attain. How to attain this non attachment in a systematic and consistent way is, I believe, not yet been tried in the West. The Yoga philosophers in India, so it seems to me, had made most interesting and successful efforts. A reliable methodology of political science, in my opinion, demands that the (social and) political scientists should undergo the discipline of yoga, which alone can rescue the human judgment from the siren-like promptings of kama-manas or lower-mind and endow it with the impartial detachment of a self-poised and self-possessed mind ever guided by the light of pure reason.”<sup>iii</sup>

It should be made clear that in most philosophic treatments of the topic of kama-manas, it is not suggested that all human emotions should be transcended. It is rather generally understood that one seeks to transcend the lower emotions which are largely fear-based. So, for instance, in psychological Yoga disciplines, emotions based in genuine love are retained.

If it is true that “emotional preferences” affect scientific endeavors where objectivity is explicitly striven for, then clearly the kama-manasic functioning must be most powerful for emotionally fraught topics like religion and politics. Indeed, it may be argued that for most people, where such topics are concerned, the mind is relative non-existent which accounts for the widespread phenomena of irrational choices in the religious and political realms. Unless and until the practices, (or something resonant with them) suggested by K. Mukerji are put into action, then much of the body of humanity must remain a prisoner of the kama-manasic nature. And, it should be added, this condition--in many cases--is a danger to other humans.

The book *Creative Thinking* describes the human kama-manasic problem:

“People who live here are the victims of their desires, fears, and resentments. They are the victims of those automatic responses built into their emotional body by the fate of their early environment and education. They can no more rise above them than they can alter what has happened in their childhood, for they are a prisoner within the boundary of emotion which does not know reason.”<sup>iv</sup>

And like K. Mukerji, *Creative Thinking* underscores the vital importance of transcending kama-manas:

“To become consciously creative, humanity must shift their polarization from their emotional feeling nature up into their mind where reason can be found and used as the springboard of action.”<sup>v</sup>

The kama-manasic nature of most of humanity--and the extreme dominance of the kama (emotional) aspect in a large portion of that total--results in a difficult communication and educational conundrum. The more mentally polarized person, in seeking to communicate with a largely emotionally polarized one, is apt to think that all that is needed is a presentation of logic and evidence. But if, as is all too common, kama dominates manas, then no amount of reason or reliable evidence will make any impression whatsoever.

Yet still, it is also true that if the mind aspect is sufficiently present, then for many humans, reason and evidence have good effect. Therefore the education of the slowly awakening mind of humanity is of crucial importance, and especially for those who are consciously or unconsciously striving to lift their consciousness from the chaos of the lower emotions into the clear light of the mind.

i *The Secret Gateway: Modern Theosophy and the Ancient Wisdom Tradition*, p. 62  
By Edward Abdill, Quest Book, 2006

ii Bell, M., & Wolfe, C. (2004). Emotion and Cognition: An Intricately Bound Developmental Process. *Child Development*, 75(2), 366370. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3696644>

iii MUKERJI, K. (1955). *SOME PROBLEMS OF METHODOLOGY IN POLITICAL SCIENCE RESEARCH*. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 16(1), 2332. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42742684>

iv *Creative Thinking*, p. 135, Lucile Cedercrans, Wisdom Impressions, 2007 (CDROM)

v *Creative Thinking*, p. 100, L. Cedercrans