

We are going to discuss the form & formless state of the mind. In Sanskrit it is referred as mano layam / mano laya nasam.

- Manas means - the mind.
- Laya means - to make contact; or synchronize.
- Nasa means - destruction ; disengage

So if i were to literally translate these terminologies, then

Mano Laya means - Mind synchronizing or engaging with something. It is equivalent to the mind taking the form of the object that it has perceived.

Mano Laya Nasa means - Mind disengaging from what it has just perceived and not taking any form. It is the formless state of the mind.

Knowing about this helps us understand how our mind works.

How does cognition happen

1. Our senses reflect the outside world onto us and the reflection is collectively observed by the mind. These signals are then processed by our intellect. In the first place, for us to understand anything, **our mind has to synchronize with what is perceived.**
2. When we **observe a scenery, say for example a falls by the mountain**, there are lots that an observer could connect with. Say there are few tourists around, few of them can observe the falls, some can observe the flora and fauna near the falls, some can just enjoy the sound of the falls, others can notice the sound of the birds, some can see the mountain, some can see both the mountain and the falls, some can see the mountain, falls, sound of birds and the blue sky. In all these cases, there is something that we are connecting to when we observe something. Here the outside world is reflected onto us and we sense the vibration that these signals cause in our internal field. This change in vibration is what we can notice. In other words we can sense ourselves only.
3. Let us see an example to get a clear picture of this. **I request , All of you watching this video to close your eyes.** Once you close your eyes, do you still get to see me? You get to see me only when you watch me on the screen right. So if we extrapolate this fact, we would notice that we don't get to see anything in the outside world directly. We just get to see the reflection of the external world as projected by our senses.
4. It is here that the mind takes the form of the object that it has come in contact with. This is what we call the form that the mind has connected with. Only when the mind connects with something, the rest of the process, like recognizing , comparing , analyzing etc happens. If this contact or synchronization with the reflection does not happen, then we cannot understand anything. That way synchronization of the mind with the reflection or in other words, **the mind taking the form of the reflected object is very important for us to cognize or understand anything.**

5. This process of **synchronization is happening continuously**. Mind connects with one signal and to another every moment , and every moment is new. You can compare it to how the **mirror reflects the external surroundings**. For example, one gets to see a bird as long as it is on a branch, the minute the bird flies away, we see it happening in our reflection as well. The mind took the form of the bird sitting on the branch, next second it recognized it flying in the sky. This way the mind is continuously making contact with something and immediately dis-engages to make another new contact. **This process of dis-engaging is the gap where the mind is formless**. This state is called mano laya nasa.
6. Although Mano Laya/ Form state of the mind is necessary for us to understand anything, the Mano Laya Nasa is very much essential for us to understand the “ISness” or the actuality of the external situation. Otherwise our mind would be perceiving some stale data.
7. So throughout the process of cognition, the mind is continuously engaging with new signals that have been reflected onto the internal self. **This process is dynamic and continuous, even when you are watching a static screen or a photo.**
8. This is the case even when we are in a **dream**. With the difference that when we are conscious, we are in touch with the signals reflected by our senses. In our dream state, we see the projections of our past memories that are cast randomly by the mind.
9. This process of continuously flowing with the flow of the external signals or the projections of the memory is the natural state of the mind. In this state the mind is in continuous change and there is no permanent form of the mind. Mind is very much in its natural fluid state free to take any form.

Where does the mind get into problem

1. Now this **free flow of the mind is sometimes disturbed by our emotions**. For every signal reflected in our mind field, we respond back to the signal by our emotions. These emotions can develop a like/dislike/neutral feeling.
2. The observer might want to retain any experience or **get rid of any experience which causes resistance**. Let say we have some good experience and we want to continue being in it, then we are stuck in Mano Laya, or in a specific form that the mind has taken shape, not willing to change to the next actuality of the external environment.
3. This feeling sets an internal conflict with the actuality of a given situation. So if we take a very close look at this situation, we get to see that the self is in conflict with its own self. **Not willing to see the ISness of any situation.**

Liberation

1. Enlightenment / Liberation is a process of getting relieved from this internal conflict and to just flow with the flow. One is allowing / giving space to all happenings and not wanting only a preferred set of happenings.
2. Here the importance is given to free flow state and not being rigid internally. How important is Mano Laya/ Form state of the mind, equally important is the ability to disengage from a particular form , so that mind is free to connect with the next new signal.
3. To understand this concept we need our mind to engage with this content, so Mano Laya is very important. But to ensure a lively flow of fresh signals, Mano Laya Nasa is even more essential.

Solution

1. But is there anything that we need to do here? We understand the Form/Formless state of the mind. This is the mind's natural state, we just need to know that we need not try to retain the mind in any specific form and actively engage with the external world by responding back with values.
2. We can get an emotion to retain or resist an experience. But just knowing that all experience is fleeting in nature, helps one to have unrealistic expectations.
3. Especially when one is undergoing an unpleasant experience, one naturally seeks for relief. The primary cause of unhappiness is never the situation but our thoughts about it. It is very similar to the **candle example**.
4. That does not mean that one should always accept the external situation and not want any change. One can go ahead and change the external situation as per one's want. Just don't try to retain any good / pleasant moments. The flight to retain something is futile.
5. Similarly when one wants to change an unpleasant moment, so ahead and checkout all possible ways. But one thumb rule one should follow is to check if the action is beneficial for oneself and others, now and in future. This is just considering a few values before acting on anything.
6. Also want comes as a soothing news is that “Nothing lasts forever, however good or bad it is.”