

Amānitvam

the absence of self-conceit

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A simple factual self-respectfulness is not a harmful quality of the mind; in fact, it is a good quality. A problem arises only when self-respectfulness is exaggerated into conceit.

When self-respect becomes self-conceit, exaggerated, it does not just undesirably affect my attitude toward myself, but it manifests in my demand upon others to show me the respect that I feel is my due.

When I demand respect from others, I invite many disturbances into my mind. I will not get or will rarely get the respect I demand and that too, on my terms. The result can be mutual hurt, friction, and troubled minds.

WHAT IS THE BASIS FOR MĀNITVA?

What makes me demand respect from others?

I have good qualifications and have a firm respect for them. However, the cause for demanding respect from others does not lie in my qualifications. The cause is found in the deep, underlying doubt in my mind about my qualifications.

When I am very certain that I have, in full measure, the qualifications that I claim, I don't have the need to demand respect from others for those qualifications.

MĀNITVA

EXAGGERATED SELF-RESPECTFULNESS OR SELF-CONCEIT

Exaggerated **self-respectfulness** or **self-conceit** arises because I am doubtful about my qualifications. I do not seem to accept myself as one who is qualified.

The demand upon others for recognition shows that I need some support so that I can feel that I am somebody. This demand comes from an inner sense of emptiness, a lack of readiness to accept myself as I am because I secretly fear that what I am is not good enough.

Although I assert my qualifications, I am really all too conscious of my limitations. I am afraid to acknowledge limitations and of others acknowledging them. I want a response from others not to my limitations but only to my qualifications. Further, I want a response to my qualifications in the glorified light in which I view them.

DEMAND FOR RESPECT LEADS TO HURT

I have good qualifications and have a firm respect for them. However, the cause for **demanding respect** from others does not lie in my qualifications. The cause is found in the deep, underlying doubt in my mind about my qualifications. When I am very certain that I have, in full measure, the qualifications that I claim, **I don't have the need to demand respect from others** for those qualifications.

People respect others for various reasons. Sometimes respect is given solely because the person is in a position of power. In such cases if the position comes to an end, so does the respect.

Other times respect is given because there is some genuine appreciation of qualities in the other person. However, what he finds convenient to give one day may be too much the next.

Also, the giver may cease his respectfulness if it is not returned to him in kind. A relationship in which there is a mutual demand for respect is likely to become a tug-of-war all the time. The result is mutual hurt.

HURT CAUSED BY AN INFLATED EGO

Hurt is possible only when there is an inflated ego, pride. Inflated ego is a disproportionate, excessive significance attached to what I know, what I feel, what I possess, what I do, how I look and so on.

With this overemphasis on a **'knower-doer-I'** comes the expectation of a certain response from others recognising my importance, seeing me, as I want to be seen. When that response does not come, I get **hurt**. Since **a proud ego picks up lot of hurts**, the list of those to be taught a lesson is likely to be long.

HURT IS ALWAYS A MONKEY'S WOUND

There is a proverb that says **a wounded heart is like a monkey's wound**. It does not heal but only gets reopened. A hurt mind may seem to be healed and then a sudden shadow crosses the face as the hurt is recalled to memory and the hurt reopens. Like clouds before the sun, gloom closes in.

There is no time for Vedanta in the mind of a person who is always nursing hurts; one who demands respect accumulates many hurts to nurse.

QUALIFICATIONS SHOULD SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

My attitude towards my accomplishments should be like a flowering bush towards its blossoms. In the city or in the wilderness, seen or unseen, blossoms or censured, the bush puts forth its blooms, colourful and fragrant. No publicity circulars are sent out to announce the blooming. The bush simply blooms because it is meant to bloom.

This is how I should be about my gifts and skills. These abilities seem to have come with me; why, I do not know. I should simply use them as well as I can because that is what I am supposed to do.

People, who have a value for these particular abilities may respect me for them if circumstances are right for them to do so. People, who have no value for these particular abilities will, no doubt, ignore them. Both these attitudes should not make any difference to me.

MĀNITVA CEASES WHEN ITS FOOLISHNESS IS SEEN

How can I obtain the attitude of **amānitva**, the absence of **mānitva**, a demand for inordinate respect from others?

Amānitva is obtained by losing **mānitva**. I do not have **amānitva** because **mānitva** has become a value for me. **Mānitva** is a value for me because I think that by receiving large amounts of respect from others I will feel good about myself. **Mānitva** will cease to be a value for me when I clearly see, for myself, that the basis is false, and moreover, that it does not work.

Not everyone will have a value for my particular qualifications. Even if one has a value for my qualifications, one need not show respect to me because of one's own ego needs. It is often not easy to decode another person's attitude from his or her manner. If I am obsessed with the amount of respect I receive from another, I can waste a lot of time trying to analyse the others person's words and gestures and still not know his or her real attitude toward me.

MĀNITVA IS NEVER JUSTIFIED BY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mānitva is born because I do not understand the nature of accomplishments. I am proud of my achievements only because I consider myself the author of the acts, the producer of the skills or gifts. It does not take much analysis to smash this illusion.

There are so many factors behind an achievement. I cannot really say I created any of them. When I look at the facts, I must see that any achievement that I claim as mine is not due to my will or skill alone but it is due to certain things and opportunities that were provided to me.

When I see the nature of accomplishment for what it is, there is no place for **mānitva**. In fact, I should be grateful for whatever abilities I seem to have. My demand for respect from others will go away when I see its foolishness.

HOW CAN I HELP MYSELF SEE THE FOOLISHNESS OF MĀNITVA ?

With practice, **mānitva** will lose its value for me. To be effective, I must analyse **mānitva** without self-condemnation or regret. I try to be objective, matter-of-fact, to see things as they are.

When someone fails to respond to me in the way I would want them to, I merely observe my reactions without further reaction. From the position of an observer I see the senselessness of my expectations in all their absurdity.

In addition, I see that what I really want is not an expression of respect from others for its own sake but because I hope that such an expression will make me feel more comfortable about myself. I see that my real problem is my basic feeling of inadequacy and self-doubt which is made worse, not better, by harbouring **mānitva**.

MĀNITVA IS MITHYĀ'S MITHYĀ

There are many things that are apparent, **mithyā**.

Mithyā is that which enjoys a dependent rather than an absolute reality. This dependent reality, called **mithyā**, which characterises creation, usually is translated into English by the word **'apparent'** by which it is meant to indicate that the reality is not absolute but is subject to negation.

All things objectified in the creation are **mithyā**; they begin and end and they can be resolved in ever finer, progressive resolutions into constituents.

However, although subject to negation, apparent things still enjoy a certain level of reality.

Mānitva, the ego, on the other hand, which manifests as pride, does not enjoy even an apparent reality.

When I see this pride itself is **mithyā**, **mānitva** loses its meaning. When **mānitva** goes away, what remains is **amānitva**. When I enjoy **amānitva** I become a simple person. A simple person is one who does not have any complexities.

Emphasis on individualism makes a person prouder and more subject to the hurts that go with pride. However, in the light of knowledge, **pride**, **mānitva**, appears silly and I will be able to keep the ego to the level necessary to conduct my affairs.

I then enjoy **amānitva**, a quality of mind conducive to the discovery of the self.