

# Prejudice

-Sri.Prasanna Chimata

## Synopsys:

Prejudice is pre-judgment. Our spiritual Master has quoted prejudice as the greatest evil to a just and balanced living. Prejudice is one of the major impediments for our progress even in the higher realms of spirituality.

An effort is made in the below article to discuss about what is prejudice, what causes it, how it affects us and how a sadhaka of PAM can work towards getting over this negative thought pattern.

## Article:

When we are not at ease with ourselves, that state is a disease. This term is used primarily with reference to our physical ailments or ill-health. In these cases, our physical body is not in its normal healthy state and hence is not at ease, referring to a state of disease. Majority of

the individuals in this world identify themselves with their body. Hence, when one has a physical disease, the ailing individual himself or a doctor can diagnose it and there can be a medical help along with empathy and sympathy from all around to assist the individual. Majority of population in the world pays no heed to diseases at the emotional or vital plane, which are a result of spoiling of one's heart (through negative feelings) and mind (subsequent negative thoughts). Just as body has its state of disease, an uncultivated or unbalanced individual who is not at ease and is struggling with any negative emotional state is suffering with a spiritual disease. Such a person's heart and mind are at dis ease compared its original state of happiness. Few such spiritual diseases are expressing anger, hatred; experiencing sadness, shame, fear, anxiety, anguish; showing prejudice, disgust and the list is endless with many hues and shades. Unfortunately, it's not easy or simple to identify and acknowledge any spiritual disease, leave aside finding the right help. If only such a disease (excluding deeper mental disorders, such as depression and etc) is easily identifiable and acceptable, perhaps the entire world might have turned in hordes towards spirituality proper by now.

With this preamble, let us focus our attention on topic of this article, prejudice; which is one of the spiritual

diseases, causing disharmony and unhappiness to one and around. Let us first understand what prejudice is.

What is prejudice?

The word prejudice refers to prejudgment, or forming an opinion before becoming aware of the relevant facts of a case. The word is often used to refer to preconceived, usually unfavorable, judgments toward people or a person because of gender, social class, age, disability, religion, sexuality, race/ethnicity, language, nationality or other personal characteristics. Prejudice can also refer to unfounded beliefs and may include "any unreasonable attitude that is unusually resistant to rational influence." [1]

As stated above, a prejudiced person judges others or situations with preconceived or biased notions. Based on his prejudiced heart and mind, he will react to situations and other individuals without rationally understanding the circumstances. The actual facts about the person or situation may have little or no relevance in his/ her judgments about the person or the situation. It may be that even if the facts are presented, the stronghold of preconceived notions will prevent the person from seeing

the truth. Basically, a prejudiced person's responses and reactions to others and situations tend to be more or less fixed based on his prejudiced feelings. Openness to understand and empathize is lost to a prejudiced person. Above all, a prejudiced heart is 'unusually resistant to rational influence', thus creating a barrier for any advice or help to heal it. The broader spectrum of prejudice covers probably all the issues of the world. Following are some examples to give us better clarity on this subject;

Caste prejudice: An individual or a group of people belonging to a particular caste are treated as inferior vs. superior, based on their caste alone.

Prejudice against the skin color: White, black, brown, etc. The color of an individual's skin merits the treatment meted to him, in the first look. It's a common prejudice in western countries.

Most common prejudice from times immemorial and which only further escalated globally nowadays, all in the name of God is the religious prejudices of people who practice Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and all such religions, against each other. Sub-religions and sects are prejudiced against each other within the same

religion. One has to only look within oneself to see how deep rooted it is within each of us. As an example, a Muslim name triggers more searches and delays at airports in west and our media plays no small part in glorifying these to further the animosity and emotions across the globe.

Association with an institute (be it spiritual or otherwise) prompting us to group all those belonging to it in a particular way, based on our preconceived notions and treat them based on these, rather than on the individual merit.

Prejudiced against an individual based on his external behavior or talk. Irrespective of no known wrong doing or behavior, we can be prejudiced against friends and family of the individual whom we don't like. We avoid them or treat them differently, irrespective of no harm done to us in action or thought by them.

If we are prejudiced about a person, even if there is an important message for us from that person, we won't be open to receive it. We may not be interested in listening to that individual's talks or read his/ her writings. We have a biased notion on what we expect

from that person and hence we won't be receptive to the message, even if we listen or happen to come across his/her writings. Who knows this might be the answer for a problem we are struggling for a long time, only to miss it due to our prejudice about the individual.

Prejudiced about the expected results of a spiritual path. We expect our progress to be in a certain way without verifying the results with an open mind. This is an unfortunate problem for those who come into our system with the knowledge of scriptures or having practiced other systems. As our revered guide stated, they “interpret the works and messages of the Master according to their prejudice and trying to fit the thesis of the Master with what they consider as scriptural authority”. [2]

Prejudiced about our own strengths and weaknesses, preventing help from others including the spiritual help from trainers.

The worst form of prejudice would be having notions about the people who are seeking spiritual help from us. Vice versa is also true, which is those who are seeking spiritual help are being prejudiced about the

people who can offer the help. In either case, the damage is severe.

Etc (endless such examples).

As can be seen from the above examples, prejudice is typically an opinion formed beforehand without adequate evidence. Let us first try to understand, what causes prejudice, before we discuss about how to address it in PAM.

What causes prejudice?

Prejudice is an impression and hence all factors that cause impressions in us, play a role in creating and enhancing prejudices in us. While that is true, to have a focused discussion, we will try to look at the works in the field of psychology, sociology and spirituality to analyze and understand the causes of prejudice.

1. Authoritarian personality: German Sociologist, Theodor Adorno contended that, people are prejudiced because of certain inherent needs associated with their personality. People do not become prejudiced simply

based on negative encounters with others. His research shows that many prejudiced people have a distinct set of personality traits centered on conformity, intolerance and insecurity. He states that these tendencies to be prejudiced are associated with a particular personality type, namely the 'authoritarian personality'.[3]

Adorno, borrowing from Freud, argues that people with authoritarian personalities have an unusually strong need to scapegoat and to project. These are the key reasons for their prejudice.

Scapegoating can be referred as displaced aggression. Tendency of this person is to blame one's troubles on someone else.

Projection is a similar concept where the individual denies particular characteristics in him/her self but notices them in others.

These behaviors are the result of unique childhood experiences involving repressed drives. The authoritarian personality results from family environment. Parents are themselves "cold, aloof, disciplinarian and themselves bigots". A bigot is a person who is intolerant of any ideas

other than his or her own, esp on religion, politics, or race.

2. Social learning: Adoption of prejudiced attitudes can occur throughout one's life-cycle. Attitudes and behaviors are learned within a social context. Family, School, Peer Groups, Work Environment and etc can be the training ground for creating prejudiced attitudes. Media plays a huge role in this. By constant exposure to a media source (TV, News media, Movies or Social Networks), the individual might receive stereotyped information, which can lead to prejudices on countries, states, groups, people and etc.[3]

3. Socioeconomic Status and Education: Prof. John Farley contends that there is a relatively strong relationship between ones social class and the level of prejudice. Higher levels of prejudice are seen in people of lower Socioeconomic Status. One argument suggests that people with lower socio-economic backgrounds are more rigid thinkers. People of higher socio-economic strata are often better educated and education is often seen as a way to breaking down oversimplified, stereotypical thinking. As we become better educated, we become better able to understand complex ideas and situations. Farley however concludes that our ability to

handle complex thought is affected by other conditions besides educational levels. He notes that we tend to rely on stereotypes more when we are busy, overwhelmed, or even functioning at a non-optimal time.[3] This tends to point out that for a modern man, who is ever busy; the education by itself is not a safeguard against prejudice.

4. Coverings (Avarana): This aspect is not in the scope of psychology. For spiritual seekers who accept that consciousness is eternal, the coverings (avaranas) of the consciousness that are carried into the current life from prior births can cause an individual to develop prejudiced personality. This individual can be predisposed to have unreal projections of his / her mind.

For many in this world, these prejudiced thought patterns might not matter much, as that's how their minds have been trained so far and they continue to live with these streams of thoughts. These become relevant only for an individual, who is seeking to transform his inner apparatus of thoughts to higher level of thoughts. In our spiritual system, the goal is to be a real man, which means to be just and balanced under all circumstances. One can't reach this goal, without getting rid of prejudiced thoughts and feelings.

Why should we get rid of prejudice?

Rev Babuji emphatically stated that, “Prejudice is the greatest evil, rather the deadliest poison to spiritual life. It keeps one confined to oneself, losing all access to a broader vision. It creates narrow-mindedness and all prospects of development and progress are lost to those who pin their souls to it. Prejudice breeds hatred towards others and it is nothing but a feeling of false self-superiority in a disguised form. If you nurture this evil, you thereby add one more link to the existing chain of egoism. Consequently you remain farther away from reality. The realization of the Limitless thus becomes impossibility.”[4] Master stated it and we should simply accept it to be the EVIL and do everything possible to get rid of this disease. There are many mental diseases out there and some were listed at the beginning of this article. Of all these and many more that were not listed, Master called out prejudice to be the greatest evil and deadliest poison for spiritual path. We will use our Master’s statement as the basis to further understand about prejudice and the harm it causes to one’s spiritual pursuit.

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A prejudiced man is self centered, in the areas he is prejudiced about. For example, those who are prejudiced about a religion can't accept people of that religion with openness. This might not affect his acceptance of his own religion people. However, his broader acceptance is hindered as he can't accept people of all religions. Religious person or an atheist, going by the basic premise of our Master's system, each individual has the same 'original source or divinity' in them and not able to accept anyone only means, to that extent we are still hindered in our acceptance of the Master in all. This impacts our ability to follow commandments of Rev Sriramchandra and we are not able to change our attitudes to live a balanced life.

When we judge, we are in the realm self centeredness. All judgments are in the rational plane, either favoring or disapproving. Spiritual or divine plane is supra rational. Only when we let go our capacity to judge, we can get access to the Master's plane, which is the Ocean of Bliss Waves or everlasting happiness. This is the broader vision we need to crave for and this is only possible if we let go judgmental nature and surrender to

the Master. There is no great development or progress in Spirituality without surrendering to the Master. Prejudice (pre-judgment) is worse than judgment and a prejudiced person struggles in his surrender to Master's will.

The essence of Universal (9 PM) prayer is lost to a prejudiced person. Would it be possible to merely recite this prayer without feeling one being connected to all humans? If we are prejudiced and can't accept or tolerate a part of the humanity mentally, our prayer can't be inclusive of ALL and to that extent it is limited.

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By being prejudiced towards an individual or a group of people, for his or their perceived actions or non-actions, we create negative impressions in our psyche. Our notions about him, either true or untrue will lead us to brooding negative thoughts about him. Even if that person has changed and is different than what we knew him to be, still our mind works with a predefined structure of thoughts and feelings, preventing us from understanding him. The offspring of this is hatred

towards him. The mere name of that person can cause negative thought patterns in us and we are chained by these thoughts. A time may come, when these negative thoughts are all cooked to a boiling pot, when they burst out into action, causing harm to the individual and people around him. If seen from this perspective, it's easy to appreciate all the unnatural fights, events and perhaps even deaths that have occurred due to the uncontrolled hatred and anger in the heat of the moment, which to some extent have prejudiced notions in their back drop.

Many are the shades of the ego and prejudice is another disguised form of 'ahamkar'. In Silence Speaks, Master states that, "As I could discover after a life's experience, the greatest obstruction on the path of spirituality is offered by our feelings of partiality and prejudice, which may be roughly assumed as a type of ahamkara." [5] Why is it so? When we judge, we are internally feeling we have a 'better capacity' to either understand the situation or the individual in the situation. Internal feeling is, either I know more (intelligent) or I am enabled better (skilled) or I am spiritually more capable (pure) or similar such endless self admiring feelings. It may be true that we are endowed by God with a better capacity to handle the situation, but the moment we have any of these self superiority feelings we are into judgmental realm. It's akin to what Master says, 'If a

tiger feels he is a tiger, he will pounce upon his own cubs. If a man thinks himself to be a man he will torment others like a demon'.[6] Instead of an empathetic approach to the situation, we are lost into handling the situation from 'one above' status. In empathetic handling, there is love and concern to see the other person gets benefited. In judgment we see the person and look down upon him and address the situation. There is a huge difference. This is the reason Master states that prejudice is a disguised form of self-superiority. It is disguised and we are not even aware that we are forming judgments about individuals due to our thoughts and actions. This wisdom is a tough one to get and even hard to retain.

“When we get into this aspect that one is superior and other is inferior, then there is Vivakshatha”.[7] This is cell #13 in 'Game of Life' published by Imperience. This is one of the cells to cross while traversing knot 1. It would a very tough one to cross for a prejudiced person.

If we are prejudiced about someone and breeding negative thoughts about that person or a group of people, then at thought level we are causing harm to them. If we understand thought power is superior to physical prowess, then we see what harm we are doing in here to

others through thought. No physical harm being done by us, but worse is the harm we are doing at the thought level by brooding negative thoughts. Indirectly we are hurting our own consciousness, as it gets clouded with darkness.

“If you nurture this evil, you thereby add one more link to the existing chain of egoism. Consequently you remain farther away from reality. The realization of the Limitless thus becomes impossibility”

To comprehend about ‘realization of limitless’, one should read from the Imperience compilation of ‘Basic writings of Sri Ramachandra’ and derive the real essence of it. In more practical terms, we have defined real man as, ‘the one who is just and balanced under all circumstances’. If we allow prejudiced thought patterns to seep into our consciousness and if we allow them to be nurtured in the nursery of our brain, we can’t be balanced in our thoughts and subsequent actions. The resulting problem is that we can’t follow Master’s commandments. A prejudiced person can’t be plain and simple. It’s even possible that a prejudiced heart know not how to repent, as the negative brooding could cloud the heart, adding to egoistic feelings. All these will cause the prejudiced person to remain farther away from realization of the

Masterliness within himself.

We can't enter into the divine realm with our prejudiced heart and mind. A prejudiced person will have difficulty waiting on the Divine Master during meditations. 'Expectation of the meditative experience' dominates his meditations and all experiences are judged from preconceived expectations. These expectations are formed either hearing from others, through study of religious literature or previous religious / spiritual practices. This causes him to miss out on the divine company, which is nothing but a plain and simple state, more commonly imperienced as silence. Our beloved guide Rev Sri KCN expresses his anguish on this aspect by stating, "The malady of the modern man is his habit of perennially polluting Silence with thoughts just as we pollute the world's great rivers with the vile waste of humankind. Many aspirants somehow think they can enter silence taking their prejudices with them and they cling to these preconceived ideas of what Silence is. As a result, they do not truly dive deep into the Silence. The reason is that to let go of such ideas is to let go of the sense of oneself, to let go of identity, and that is death to the ego." [8] This profound statement calls for sincere introspection and one should make a firm determination to get rid of all our prejudices, be it in material plane or spiritual plane.

## How to get over prejudice in PAM?

First and foremost we need to be aware of an issue to resolve it. We need to be aware that we encourage prejudiced thoughts in our thought patterns. To get this awareness is the biggest challenge. Our mind has been habituated to generate many thought patterns for a very very long time and most of the time we are not even aware what thoughts get generated in our mind. The stream of thoughts is so polluted that we can't decipher good thought from bad one and we carry on with our life being unaware of our thoughts and feelings. This is the reason many of us have difficulty noticing prejudiced thoughts, leave aside getting rid of them.

Mind is a mere tool, is only known to a fortunate few and we the aspirants of PAM are blessed in this regard with the possibility of this awareness. Master has graciously provided meditational practices, which when diligently practiced along with the help of Pranahuti, our mental faculties or anthahkarana (manas, chit, buddhi and ahankar) will start getting cleansed. This cleaning of anthahkarana starts happening from day one of being introduced into the system. This improves discriminative intelligence (viveka) in us, which enables us to discern

our thought patterns. Even when Master grants us the Viveka in this regard, to hold on to this and imbibe this as wisdom requires significant contemplation and untiring self monitoring on the part of an abhyasi. As purity of these faculties increases, we can peep into our thought patterns, with courage and confidence.

Meditational practices are the ‘ways’ to know of our prejudiced thought patterns and also the ‘means’ to get rid of our prejudiced thought patterns. When we go deep in our meditations, waiting on the great Master, our conscious and subconscious thoughts float up. Depending on how deep this impression is, it leaves a sort of reminder ‘to deal with it’. If this thought is of repetitive nature and we get it frequently in our meditations, then it’s an important impression that we can’t just ignore it. The important aspect to note is, immediately after mediation if we remember any of the thoughts from meditation, then we shouldn’t simply brush aside these. We need to make a mental note of these and contemplate what’s causing these impressions to settle in our consciousness. We all know this process and we are not discussing anything new in here. We should contemplate on these and identify what is the basic nature and root cause of these thoughts. When these thoughts are of lower nature, we should see if we can categorize them into the types of thoughts, such as

despair, guilt, fear, anger, judgmental and etc. When these judgmental thoughts are getting generated due to preconceived notions, then they are based on our prejudices. We need to see what activities in us are resulting in these thoughts and work towards improving in those areas. This is the essence of moulding our being to cooperate with the Master's work. After a period of sincere practice in PAM, we will start having an awareness of our thoughts in our daily life. We should contemplate on the nature of such thoughts and address them diligently; similar to how we discussed about handling thoughts remembered after meditations.

It would be pertinent to note that, even when we become aware of the fact that we entertain prejudiced or judgemental thoughts, we might be not inclined to get rid of these. This is a strange state due to one's own ahamkara. A stage would come for many abhyasis, wherein they are aware of their judgemental nature, but due to their unwillingness to let go their self importance, they wouldn't be willing to yield to the Great Master during meditations to let go these thoughts. As letting go of these thoughts is akin to losing control of the circumstances or people around, unfortunately the abhyasi, even after having sufficient Viveka, would instead encourage these thoughts, spoiling the heart and mind. It's in here, the determination to reach the goal

should be firmed up, to let go these prejudiced thoughts. Reading the works of the Masters of the Order, especially Sriramchandra's commandments with sincere prayerful heart could help in this regard. The challenge might be that, the goal itself is not clearly understood. The abstract notions about Master or Nothingness at the intellectual level may prevent the individual to peep into the real essence. It perhaps would be better to understand the goal in more practical terms, as a just and balanced living under all circumstances. If an individual can deeply contemplate this and when it truly seeps into the consciousness then it becomes easy to realize that prejudiced notions or feelings coupled with self importance will wreck havoc to a peaceful environment in and around. What good is it, if one is not happy and folks around that one is not happy either? What kind of saintliness are we preaching, when it can't be practiced? All this seems easy to accept when read, but to practice, as Sir Francis Bacon quoted, one has to read, chew and digest. Till then, the dramas of the intellect and superiority have their own play. To quote William James, considered the Father of US Psychology, "A great many people think they are thinking when they are merely rearranging their prejudices." [9] This calls for serious introspection. The abhyasi has to contemplate deeply and firm up his / her resolve to live a harmonious life by getting rid of all prejudiced thought patterns, so that he /

she is not forming a curvature in our spiritual path.

It's important to note that, it's not that all the prejudiced impressions will lead to strong negative patterns. Majority of us carry prejudiced impressions, based on some small incidents or events which though are not strong impressions, they are still impressions we allowed to settle in our psyche. They keep raising their ugly head once in awhile. If not completely extinguished from our inner apparatus, they can sprout into saplings and grow in strength at an opportune time. This is why Master says, we shouldn't nurture this evil. The only way to get over this evil is strictly adhering to the meditational practices of the Master, abiding by His commandments and take regular assistance of Pranahuti. No amount of crooning over constant remembrance alone can help us eradicate this evil from our being. We have to practice the system with sincerity.

The purification process has to be followed assiduously and no negative thought should be entertained during the duration of the cleaning. One can be effective in this practice, if one understands that prejudice is a spiritual disease and in our purification process, we are explicitly maintaining a thought or feeling that we are 'removing dirt and disease'. The

intellectual appreciation of the words dirt and disease would make our task more effective. During purification we remove the dirt we gathered in our inner system through our sensory inputs. Over a period of time, if not regularly cleansed, this dirt gets accumulated. This dirt along with our existing unrefined inner apparatus, form a fertile ground for spiritual diseases. During our purification, we are making a firm will to clean all such dirt and disease. All thoughts and feelings should be cleansed without paying undue attention to them.

When we judge, we see people and not the Master in them. When we judge we are comparing and contrasting the individual merits and demerits, and in the process we lose our ability to empathize with them. A mellowed heart only can accept others lapses without any judgment. Heart is only mellowed, by “knowing one’s own fallacies” and submitting these to the Great Master seeking forgiveness. Bedtime prayer has to be assiduously attended by the sadhaka to get over prejudices. Our prayer at bedtime is superior to all the known prayers, as we are asked to seek forgiveness for the mistakes committed ‘unknowingly’ and not just for the mistakes committed and known to us. If we are conscious that we committed a mistake either in thought, action and deed; then it becomes all the more important to pray and seek forgiveness. This is the surest way to

guard us against the prejudiced feelings.

Prejudice is an unreal projection (Vikshepa) of our mind and Pranahuti assistance is a vital necessity to get rid of it. Trainers attend to our cleaning on regular basis, but without our co-operation the resulting benefits are limited. If we don't have awareness that our mind is prone to prejudiced thoughts, then even after the trainers work, we easily succumb back to these. This is why we started this discussion by saying that we first need to be aware of a problem to resolve it. Once we are aware of our prejudiced thought patterns and sincerely attend to our meditation practices and submit these as our lapses to the Great Master in our prayers, then we 'co-operate' with our trainer in getting rid of these over a period of time.

An individual can be aptly called as a sadhaka- when he follows a particular sādhanā, or a way of life designed to realize the goal of his ultimate ideal. When we, as sadhaka's of PAM, assiduously seek Master in the core of our heart, by diligently attending to our individual practices and regularly taking the assistance of the Pranahuti, our progress is assured in the system of natural path. By Master's grace, as we move into higher conditions the tight grip of prejudice from our

consciousness will start loosening and it's bound to fall off from our consciousness. As we progress in the pind-desh and attain higher levels of balance, it becomes easier to get over this. As discussed in the Path of Grace, "The 5th knot is a state of balance which on maturity gives to the craving of going beyond the limitations of the body. Body awareness is totally lost and one finds himself expanding. Prejudices and conflicts die down." [10] As we reach this condition, there is an aspiration to remain balanced and maintain harmony in and around. This aspiration will not allow any kind of prejudice to take shape in our being. We will understand that any negative thought, be it prejudice or other such, will only affect our own consciousness. At this stage the practicant's only motivation is to be in synch with Master's Consciousness. The practicant would like to do all possible to remain in His Consciousness. Openness which is typically lost to a prejudiced person is now within the reach of the sadhaka and it will sprout with Master's blessings and with practicant's untiring self scrutiny and submission of lapses to the Great Master in his prayers.

As one moves and stabilizes in higher regions our nearness with the Master increases further. As the nearness to the Lord increases, Rev Sri KCN Sir assures us that, "So far the condition of the aspirant is such that

he was carefully guarding his lapses and putting it before the Master but at the same time was never hesitant to point out the lapses on the part of others. As the Lord Buddha said ‘a man winnows his neighbours’ faults like chaff, but his own faults he hides, as a cheat hides the false die from the gambler.’ It is so far the habit of talking ‘truths’ about others or what their Ahankara suggests to them as ‘truths’ about others and always placing themselves at the level of a judge. This is one of the worst Ahankaric coverings that is got rid off by the grace of the Master before entering the realm of piety which is a very high condition.”[11] This assures us that, on our march towards freedom, we are sure to get rid of all these negative thought patterns. One has to have firm confidence in one’s own ability to get rid of these and unwavering faith on the Master’s assistance through Pranahuti to remove these from our consciousness. This is the only way to a happy living.

Let us end this article with Rev Babuji’s concluding statements from his message ‘Path of Righteousness’, “I earnestly pray that all of us, leaving our prejudices, may come to the path of righteousness which promises Liberation.” Let us all hope and pray we will take His advice to the heart, leaving aside all our prejudiced notions, habits, patterns; live in happiness and harmony with all, enriching every second of our life with a sense

of freedom living, moving and abiding in HIM.

Pranams.

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