

A Fly in a Web

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Questioner: Dear Ramji, this *satsang* is very poignant. I've been contemplating it since you sent it, and the power and simplicity of it has been quietly at work, transforming my relationship to thought. It struck me that a *samskara* is like a spider web. The various manifestations of this cluster of *vasanas*, i.e. believing that a particular thought is a problem or losing faith in the teachings only trap the *jiva* in ignorance like the fly stuck in the web. Any effort the fly makes to free itself only results in further entanglement and reinforcement of the the belief that the web is real. As you state so clearly, the thought "I have a problem" is deeply ingrained and is the foundation of ignorance. Inquiry into this core idea means the fly lies still and the web of the *samskara* loses its power to bind.

It strikes me that the need for "identity" is fundamental to the human condition. Animals don't have it. Lacking exposure to Vedanta, the *jiva* creates and sustains this false sense of self in order to survive, and the belief that it's imperfect gives it meaning in a twisted sort of way. This *satsang* and the teachings of Vedanta are a light that reveals the web of ignorance, the need to have a separate identity.

There is a growing sense of relaxation, of not struggling with experience. A subtle joy is beginning to emerge as these teachings do their work. I'm reminded of something I said to you early on: Vedanta is the sun and my job is to simply get out of the way.

Words cannot express my gratitude.

How Do I Resolve a Problem?

Ramji: A problem is a thought that a particular thought is a problem; for instance, the thought, "I have low self-esteem."

(1) Ask yourself what that thought is made of. It is made out of me, awareness. Why is it a problem? Because of ignorance. I'm the self, and I have no problems. I'm making that thought into a problem because I'm identifying with ignorance – that's all. Take away the ignorance and the problem resolves back into awareness. There is nothing complicated about it. It's simple. But it is subtle and goes against the grain – how we're conditioned. We are expected to have problems because we need an identity for some reason. Perhaps they buy sympathy or make us secretly feel good in some way.

(2) Thoughts and the feelings they cause are not real. They "feel" real because they appear more or less frequently, but they aren't, because they come and go. Don't implicitly trust your feelings. They are not always evidence of truth.

(3) My thoughts and feelings don't come from anyone else. It may be convenient to think that someone else is responsible for them, but they come from me alone.

(4) Discrimination is knowing that ignorance, not me or anyone else, is the cause of problems.

Negative thoughts don't point to an outside source; they point inward toward ignorance. If you want a problem-free, pure mind, examine the thoughts playing in your mind and use your discrimination to resolve the unhappy thoughts back into yourself.

(5) If you discriminate there is no lingering *karmic* rebound from any experience. Unresolved experience is like undigested food: it sits in your stomach and causes suffering. There are unresolved childhood issues you carry for 20, 30, 40, 50 years, feasting on you all the time. They leak out in unconscious ways and pollute your relationship to the world. Remove them with this simple inquiry.