

Comfortable with Doubt

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Ken: Dear Ramji and Sundari, we are sorry to hear about the debacle regarding the house, more specifically, the bureaucracy and forms. Sounds like India!! And like India, it looks like bribes are needed! Wow, *Bhagavan* sends discomfort and tests even those fully surrendered and in complete service!!

By the way, do you know about this attitude, even towards giving bribes, called “*karma yoga*”?... just kidding!!! Don’t blow your top now or “pontificate”!! Relax!!

Ramji, I really love you!!!

Here is my contemplation/understanding after your email about “doubt.”

Being Comfortable with Doubt

Doubt is an interesting consideration, i.e. how to be present with it. It is not much discussed but is another aspect of spiritual maturation I need to deal with.

On analysis there are two major categories of doubt: (1) doubts about oneself (self-doubt) and (2) doubts in the Field. Self-doubt arises from self-ignorance, an effect of *maya*, and is my automatic, default condition as a human being. Self-doubt can be destructive. But if I understand and handle it properly it can be “enlightening” and freeing. This is achieved through self-knowledge.

Doubt in the Field is an intrinsic part of creation in general and, in particular, an intrinsic part of my human psyche or subtle body. It is another aspect of *maya* and is an integral part of forms with a developed intellect. Everything in the Field is in flux, constantly changing, and nothing can be certain. Hence the need to doubt the perceptions I experience and the inferences I make. For example, I perceive a blue sky and conclude that the sky is blue. Is this really true? This is how science begins, by doubting perception and inference.

Animals have no doubts. They have a less developed intellect, are programmed forms and act strictly according to their programming. A tiger, for example, has no doubts: “Should I eat deer or human? Ah! Today is Thursday, the *guru’s* day. Perhaps I should be vegetarian and not eat a *guru* today!!!” No such doubt! A human being who is ignorant and fully identified thinks he has choice and therefore has doubt: “Should I or shouldn’t I? Am I or aren’t I?” An enlightened being has no doubts about himself but will continue to have doubts about experiences in the Field: “Will my boss pay me this week or not? Will it rain tomorrow or not? Will that officer sign the form or not?” This is because doubt is an inherent aspect of the nature of the Field and will always be so. Seekers are those who have a foot in both camps. They have some insights into enlightenment but continue to carry self-doubt plus face doubts about the Field.

I had this idea that once I recognise myself as pure awareness no more doubts will arise, that there will be continuous clarity of understanding, uninterrupted by doubt. Two examples reinforce such an expectation. When a light in a room is switched on darkness is immediately removed;

there is no fluctuation between light and dark in the room; darkness does not arise again when the light is on. In the snake-on-rope example, once the rope is recognised the snake disappears for good. Such is the limitation of examples.

With human beings there is a difference. Even when I recognise I am pure awareness in my human form self-doubt can still arise because of *vasanas* in my causal body. Such *vasanas* affect my mind and so doubt arises in my mind. By comparison, the knowledge that a fully enlightened being has is doubt-free and error-free. He is fully established as pure awareness and is never shaken, never affected by self-doubt. He may experience the discomfort of doubts in the Field but never of self-doubt. But until such firm conviction self-doubt can continue to arise.

How do I handle self-doubt? To answer that question I need to examine what doubt is. Any doubt is a thought, just a thought. Thought is a subtle object in the mind. Being a negative thought, doubt brings mental unease. Doubt is *tamasic* and the effect it produces in the mind is *rajasic* discomfort, irritation, restlessness, etc. As is usually the case, both *gunas* are involved. Doubt arises in the mind because of *vasanas*.

Being a thought it is no different from any other thought, including thoughts of self-knowledge. A thought about awareness is not awareness per se. Although such a thought is a good pointer to pure awareness, I need to have direct and immediate recognition of the pure awareness I am.

So the question reduces to: "How do I handle thought, any thought?" Answer: "I anchor myself as pure awareness and observe the thought. I am the seer of thought. I watch it arise in my mind, remain for some time and then disappear. It has nothing to do with me, pure awareness. I remain as the peace and quietness I am, my nature." By repeatedly doing this the *vasanas* producing thoughts of self-doubt gradually weaken and become non-binding and I am freed from them. Now, if ever self-doubt arises I just let it be. I realise it has nothing to do with me, pure awareness.

The mistake I made was to identify with and believe the doubt. Such a mistake arises because of the habit, however subtle, of identifying with thought. Identification easily happens, particularly with pleasant thoughts since they give pleasure and I identify with and enjoy them. I am pleasure-oriented and so the habit of identification gets reinforced each time I indulge myself. Thoughts of self-knowledge are pleasurable too, "*Brahmanandam, paramasukhadam,*" and I enjoy them. I get identified with thoughts of self-knowledge and fail to realise they are just thoughts, and different from pure awareness. Thus when a negative thought, doubt, arises my habit is to identify with it automatically and feel affected by it. I overlook the pure awareness I am, free of both pleasure and pain. It is a subtle slip. But as they say, "a miss is as good as a mile," however subtle the slip.

Such subtle identification results in self-doubt and a lack of confidence in the conviction that I am pure awareness. I need to be constantly vigilant until I am firmly established as pure awareness. To quote Ramji: "Enlightenment is the hard and fast conviction based on direct observation that I am ever-free awareness and not the body-mind." (cf. *How to Attain Enlightenment*, page 19, paragraph 3.)

With regard to doubts in the Field, I have to solve them by using my intellect and experience. They may or may not be resolved. If too difficult to resolve, I accept and be with them and understand they are an aspect of the Field and I move on. The same principle of observing them as the pure awareness I am applies here too. They have nothing to do with me.

Conclusion

Doubt is just another thought. It is an opportunity, a challenge, for me to check: "Have I identified with thought or am I anchored as pure awareness? Why should I identify with it, doubt myself and suffer? Instead, I remain fixed as pure awareness and observe the doubt. It has nothing to do with me." This is freedom from both self-knowledge and self-doubt, genuine freedom.

~ Love to you and Sundari, Ken