

Gaining Confidence in the Self

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Vincent: *Hari om*, Ram. I hope this email finds you in good health and cheer. This is a sincere and serious doubt raised by the mind. I am still “a mind,” Ram. So it’s better that I accept it for some time till the complete understanding arises in it.

Ram: There is nothing “wrong” with seeing oneself as limited, being “a mind,” as you say, as long as you accept the limitations. Accepting limitations is a sign of wisdom.

Vincent: Now that I have you to talk to there is nothing for the mind to fear, and in fact I have allowed it ask anything of which it is not clear instead of suppressing it and pushing it out of existence by denying whatever the mind spawns as false.

Ram: Good idea. Denial is useless. The mind is something to be investigated, not to be suppressed. It is not the problem. It becomes a problem when you refuse to investigate it. There are good reasons why it is unreliable and misguided, so it is nothing to be ashamed of.

Vincent: “I” don’t seem to operate from the self. “I” always take me as an object in consciousness, as some thing among other things present in the world. “I” had to constantly hammer the fact of “who I really am” into this mind in order to clarify myself about the unreality of the world and its ways (and, of course, that includes the thoughts spawned by the mind too). “I” still am a doer. Without “him” the world doesn’t seem to exist.

Ram: It takes time to develop confidence in the self. When the mind proposes a course of action or interprets things in a questionable way one needs to think things through from the self’s perspective. Ask if what you are thinking/feeling is actually true. Ask a second time, is it really true? The idea here is to compare the mind’s stuff with what is eternal. Even if the mind forces you to accept a half-truth or a falsehood know that you are accepting it. Ask yourself who you would be without believing in the mind’s statements and interpretations.

When you say that you had to “constantly hammer the fact of who I really am” into this mind, is that hammering based on a belief in who you really are or is it based on a direct and intuitive understanding of who you really are? Is it an experience-based conviction that there really is nothing in this world that can make you happy or do you secretly long for something in this world like love, money, success, fame, etc? It is quite possible for a young person to become completely fed up with this world and his or her mind. I was completely finished with the idea that the world had anything important to offer me when I was twenty-six. But usually dispassion doesn’t come until middle age after you have tried many things and found them wanting. On the other hand, many young people get fed up without having properly tried and failed – or without having succeeded and discovered that success as hollow. It is important to understand why one

is dissatisfied with life and the mind.

Mind you, there is nothing wrong with being a “doer,” particularly if you have the *karma yoga* attitude. The *karma yoga* attitude is an understanding that the results of the doer’s actions are not up to the doer and it is also a glad acceptance of those results. We are not trying to get rid of “the doer.” We are just trying to understand what the doer is and why one believes that it is the only self. When you say above that you “always take me as an object in consciousness” think of it differently. See the “me” as an object in the real you, consciousness. If you take Vincent as an object that means that you are not Vincent. Vincent is you but you are not Vincent. How can you be what you see? You are the subject, what you see is an object. Contemplate this. You are free of Vincent. Vincent is just an idea, a name, a memory, that has been abstracted from various experiences. Where are those experiences now? They are all gone. The problem comes when you believe that you have to get rid of this Vincent, this mind-entity. It is only a problem because you take it to be real. Treat it like you would a mirage. You see it and enjoy it – but you know it is not real.

When you say that the world doesn’t exist without the doer what “world” do you mean? Obviously, the external world exists without the doer. If you mean Vincent’s world, his thoughts and feelings, etc. then you are correct. But this does not have to be a problem because you do quite well without Vincent and his world for eight hours out of every twenty-four – when you sleep. What a spiritual person is aiming for is an attitude of acceptance of his or her subjective world. When you have the idea that your world, your mind/ego, etc. is unspiritual and want to be free of it you are making an additional problem. Yes, there are perhaps things that you picked up over the years that are not particularly wonderful – negative, selfish ideas, etc. – but this is not your fault. Whatever is in you, you came by honestly – you just weren’t aware that you were ignorant. To get rid of this desire to be different, to be pure, etc. – you need to know that it is not your fault. And even if it is your fault – if you really did consciously make some mistakes – you are always completely free to say “I messed up. So what?” This is called forgiveness. Guilt is a sign that you made some mistakes but once you have acknowledged them it is foolish to let guilt work on you. You should dismiss it.

Vincent: I don’t know to convince the mind from here onwards. Waiting for comments from you. But still, I am not a thing among other things. Whatever happens, I watch. But this sort of pull happens once in a while. I still mis-take myself. Is it a matter of practice for the mind? Only time can heal it? (I personally don’t think so. ☺) Clarity will break this immediately. Mind is like a puzzle. I feel like announcing a contest: “Use the right words of wisdom to unscramble the world that mind created!!!”

Ram: See, here you answer your questions. You say, “Whatever happens, I watch.” It seems that you are in the “firefly” stage. By that I mean that sometimes the light is on and you watch, and everything is clear and sometimes the light goes off and “I still mis-take myself.” Look at who you were when you wrote this email. Think about this: you must have been something other than the watcher and the mis-taker – because you witness both of them. Practice is good but you need to have the *karma yoga* attitude because the results sometimes take a long time to manifest although there are always immediate benefits from staying vigilant. Clarity will break up anything immediately. But what is clarity? How to get clarity? You get clarity by paying attention to your mind. I’d say from reading this letter that you are definitely on the right track. You are aware of the

mind and you are not completely under its influence. In a way you are both right and wrong about the time business. Clarity can happen at any moment. On the other hand, "healing" does take time. All these spiritual processes are taking place in time. I like your statement "Mind is like a puzzle." This is an excellent attitude. It is just something to be figured out. You are a scientist from outer space and you want to know how this funny creature of a human mind works. You don't want it to be different or better. You just want to understand. Freedom is understanding what is. I hope this has been helpful.

~ *Om* and *prem*, Ram