

In Love with Doubt

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Sandra: On to matters on Freedom. Maybe I just need to what now to see with this question. My big question of the day is: How do I know it's true I am the self? Sometimes I know - sorry - this has been the theme for a while and you keep answering it... but how DO I know? All my life I have been seeking to understand and I also sometimes think maybe I haven't done enough *sadhana* - meditated in a cave for 10 years or whatever - but I guess this is just guilt. But I am confident the doubts will clear and I feel very blessed to have your humble(!) self coming to remove the ignorance spiders soon.

Ramji: Ah, yes, the nitty-gritty: How do I know? How do you know that you have a house in Florida? How do you know that you just taught a class in church? How do you know that you exist? [Sandra thinks deeply on this profound question, is unable to answer and turns her sweet expectant face toward her beloved *guru*, the incomparably humble Ramji, who compassionately gives the following reply in answer to his own question.] It is self-evident, a matter of your own experience. "It" means you. How do you know you are true? How do you manage to become an "it"? When you think or say "I" you are not thinking you are someone else, that you are somewhere else. You are referring to someone who is conscious and present, someone who is there all the time. If you don't know that it is true that you exist as a conscious limitless being, how do you know that you are who you seem to think you are? You cannot even know the doubt unless you are something other than the doubt. The scenery changes, but the one who sees does not change. Can you find a split in your awareness? Are there two or more "yous"? No, you experience life as a simple, single conscious being. All your experiences and the equipment that makes experience possible are seamlessly integrated into you.

I am not sure - it will take more time for me to figure out how you are tricking yourself - but I think you may be in love with your own doubts. Who would you be if you just accepted the fact that you are lacking nothing, that you are not a doer, that there is no cause for fear? Do you mean to say that scripture is wrong on the topic of the self? Scripture says you are whole and complete, non-dual, ordinary, actionless awareness. It says that everything you experience is an object and that you are the ultimate subject, the seer, the witness. You have had epiphanies that confirm this fact.

When you meet people you are always expected to justify yourself in some way. For example, I have to tell people that I am a spiritual teacher, a finder of truth. It is all bullshit but it is expected, so I do my bit and cook up this story. If you could not say that you were Sandra So-and-So, ex-ballerina, now small business owner and erstwhile seeker of enlightenment, what would you say? Who would you be without this story? Would you cease to exist? So you are what is there when you subtract your story, all the ideas about what has happened to the body-mind over time. None of what has happened to you adds up to you. Nobody sees it. You don't even see it, it is just an idea.

Sandra: Thanks, Ramji, this was very helpful.

Ramji: Maybe there is no answer to your doubts. Maybe you are in love with the doubter.

Sandra: I am certainly not in love with doubt – I need to let it go. I think maybe the problem has been that I have been thinking too much – which has been useful – but I now need to “be.” Your answer reminded me of a time when I was in hospital years ago and crying to my therapist that I was no one because everything I had been (healthy person, career woman, party animal, etc.) had been taken away – all the identifications stripped back. Like you said, she also pointed out that I was still there – like I was when I was a child – still the same – the real me, which in hindsight was incredibly profound and I have often thought of that. I have been thinking about these identifications a lot over the last few weeks and your emails have helped – as you have shown your own “smoke and mirror” self also – that there’s nothing there but a collection of *vasanas* with the self underneath. I have had a lot of time to think and meditate. I was also thinking – when I meditate and then I come out and recall the silence and peace – is that enlightenment? – well, is that it then? What’s the difference between these experiences and actually being enlightened? – it’s just as we talked about a few emails back – bringing this to the foreground more, as it were, and knowing this is all that’s real? Sorry – “bringing” sounds like a “doing” word. Maybe “letting it come” is better.

I am sorry if I am asking the same questions again, but often what I have asked before is seen in a different way to me as more is revealed.

Ram: “Letting it come” is best. Anyway, you are right, take it easy and just “be” for a bit. We can resume this conversation at your convenience, probably after you have moved into your Georgia *ashram*.

Sandra: You may be pleased to know that my doubt has packed its bag and gone. When I was coming back on the airplane (funny how things seem to happen to me on planes – I don’t like flying much but I don’t “do” fear) we hit some turbulence and I started to feel a bit uncomfortable. Then I thought – I can go to the stillpoint inside me – the bit that is always constant, under the feelings and thoughts. And I did. But I think the doubt was coming in Brazil, it all seemed too simple and obvious. I mean, every time I meditate or teach or whatever – there it is – and it now seems to me that it is a matter of remembering that or going there (or being that) and not getting swept along with “stuff” like drama and things that appear to happen around me. It is just that I can’t “remember” this all the time. I remember talking to you about Brecht [Berthold Brecht, German dramatist, producer and poet] and how he used a technique called “alienation” in theatre to stop the audience getting caught in the drama. So it’s like that for me. Sometimes I get caught in the drama of Sandra’s life and apparent action – then I recall that I can detach and witness.

Ram: Perhaps the biggest obstacle for spiritual types is the belief that enlightenment is something amazing. I have in mind to write an article entitled *Enlightenment and the Language of Hyperbole*. Or for a bit more pedestrian title, *Enlightenment Hype*. It is so very simple. It is a treasure of immeasurable value hidden in plain sight.

Sandra: Your last email was very helpful – to remind me of this constant witness that has always been there. (But how do I know that my witness is your witness and everyone else’s – aka the only one self – apart from the fact that scripture tells me? Hmm.)

Ram: Pardon me, but this is a – I hesitate to say “dumb” – dumb question, Sandra. What does it matter? If the realization that you are “your” witness sets you free, which it seems to, why do you care about anyone else’s witness? In fact the proper understanding of “your” witness shows that there are no “others.” But think about it logically. You are aware and alive. I am aware and alive. What is the difference between “your” life and “my” life? Or the life in a dog or a plant? Granted, the thoughts and feelings, the experiences appearing in “your” awareness are different from mine, but there is no difference between awarenesses. The doubt is there because you take yourself to be the body. From that perspective, it is possible for such a doubt to arise. If you can’t see it, however, take scripture’s word for it until you can.

Sandra: Coming back has been good because it has been challenging – it would be easy to get caught up in the “story” again and all the myriad things that cause the old *vrittis* to chatter away, start up, as stuff needs to be organized. So I am just watching it – “I” meaning the stillpoint is just watching it all – when I remember to detach. So this is how it is for me at the moment.

Ram: You were right the first time – “I am just watching it.” The stillpoint does not watch. You watch the stillpoint. And no detachment is necessary, although as Sandra, as the doer that you think you are, this is precisely what you need to do: remind (bring back to mind) the knowledge that you are the witness. This is why a *sattvic* lifestyle is advised. It is easy to keep the discrimination going all the time and shorten the *sadhana*. The only real problem that I see spiritually is that you think the I is limited, that it is a doer, a reminder, a detacher. But this will sort out soon enough. Not to worry.

Sandra: I am also very happy and feel “solid.” A few students who hadn’t seen me for some time commented on this – as did my mentor when she came to observe my teaching. She has been saying she notices a difference in me since January. (Although she still goes tight around the mouth when I mention Vedanta. She was nagging me again – urging me to do the therapy course.) So all is good.

I am whole and complete, and need nothing external to make me happy. I know that I am not my thoughts or my feelings. I haven’t got the full understanding yet, I don’t think, as I haven’t shifted perspective – at least that is how it seems. But when I write “I,” this is sometimes confusing – who is writing the I – Awareness or the Sandra-*jiva*? But I also understand it is the same thing.

Ram: It is true. I can see the growth. Your understanding is very good but you lack confidence in it. Sandra is just a name for awareness – let’s not capitalize it any more, okay? It creates duality. The “I” is not limited, however. You consistently associate the “I” with a bunch of limitations. This means you think there are two “I”s,

a little-Sandra "I" and a big-AWARENESS "I." And you believe that if the little-Sandra I does certain things something good will happen. It's okay for now. Insofar as you take the I to be limited, the things that you have in mind to do - detach, remind yourself, etc. - should be done. Of course there is confusion because you believe there are two "I"s when there is only one. Based on your own everyday experience, are there two yous? Leave the ideas you picked up in the spiritual world out of it. Worldly people are better off than the spiritual types because they at least know that there is only one self. Experience shows that there is only one self. The only issue is about the nature of this self.