

Fear

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Are You Part of the 99.999%?

All *jivas* are born in fear. This is the original sin that religion talks of. Religion sells sin as a transgression against God, but that is not what sin means. It means to “miss the mark.” In other words, the idea that we are born in sin means we are born in ignorance of who we are, our true nature as awareness. The ego is a fear-thought born of the belief in separation. This fear is the “wound of humanity,” as I sometimes call it. It is the king of all *vasanas*, also what we call primordial beginningless ignorance, another name for *maya*. The more user-friendly term for this *vasana* is “free-floating anxiety,” which, if self-knowledge is not firm, causes a non-specific, unnamed existential fear, or dread. It is the fear that causes knots in the solar plexus. It is sometimes called the fear of “being and becoming,” what the Christians call “original sin.” It is always present, yet hidden in the causal body, and it is looking for objects to attach to (*rajas/tamas*). It is related to “others”; it is the ultimate experience of duality, or “otherness.”

Not everyone experiences it directly and acutely, although many do without even knowing it much of the time. The skyrocketing number of people experiencing anxiety attacks is testament to this. However, in most *samsaris* it works out in petty mundane and indirect ways all day long, year after year, the death by a thousand cuts. You can see the accretions in the faces of *samsaris* as they age – the exhaustion of existential suffering, the weight of the *vasanas* etched in faces inured to delusion. The fear-thought is reinforced at every turn in our society, through advertising, the media (only bad news sells, after all) and of course through “entertainment.” The more violence or threat of violence in a book or a movie, the more it sells. It seems *jivas* are addicted to fear and are drawn to it like moths to a flame.

You will notice that this ignorance is called “beginningless” ignorance. The implied meaning of this phrase is that it is not endless, because self-knowledge ends personal ignorance (*avidya*) for good. However, the nameless fear-*samskara* is one of the last to go for most inquirers. Self-realisation is no guarantee that it has been rooted out. For most people it disappears for a bit, then reappears, from which we can determine without doubt that fear is not real. Unfortunately, this knowledge is often not enough to slay the fear-dragon for good. There is no quick easy fix if fear is playing out in the mind. It will play out until it does not anymore, so the only solution is to apply self-knowledge when it arises and it is seen for what it is. In order to apply self-knowledge to fear-thoughts, they need to be identified and dissolved in the knowledge. For most people, fear is so ever-present that it goes unnoticed, because it is considered “normal,” even smart. Cynicism and lack of trust are the mark of a “worldly person.”

The ever-present but often unseen anxiety is a by-product of very deeply rooted *samskaras*, which have their origin in ignorance of course. It is macrocosmic or universal *rajas* (projection) and it is part of the *dharma* field. Everyone who is identified with being a person is affected by it to some degree. Usually the *vasanas* will exhaust themselves after a while, even though they inevitably return, but this one, this unnamed fear, is constantly “on.” As the self it doesn’t bother you at all of

course, and for those who are self-realised but not self-actualised, this unnamed fear will come and go. It is manageable if one does not identify with it, but to be free of the person's conditioning it needs to be purified through self-knowledge, as it causes great agitation for the mind, making true peace of mind difficult to achieve or maintain.

With regards to a specific fear, such as fear of injury from one's environment, it really helps to break down the threat. If you are going to act on a fear from external factors, it is best to act on facts based on reliable and proven statistics. Statistics is a record of the "big picture," the likelihood of an incident with reference to the total incidents and/or the total possible incidents. However, for statistics to be accurate, you need to be able to read them accurately.

A very important fact to bear in mind with regards to ALL research statistics is this: they are only as good as your ability to understand them with reference to THE BIG PICTURE. Most often though, statistics are interpreted to mean whatever people want them to mean, so they get totally distorted.

When looked at from a limited fear-perspective fuelled by anecdotal evidence (stories told by people who heard them from someone else), things can be blown completely out of proportion. If fear is what drives your assessment of any situation, fear is what you will see. Fear attracts fear.

So Is Fear Smart?

Fear is a natural emotion, the downside of desire. For one to live happily, it needs to be managed. Sometimes a fear is smart, sometimes it not smart. Yes, if you are standing in the middle of the road and a car is coming toward you at sixty miles an hour and fear motivates you to move, fear is smart, assuming you enjoy living. If you live in an area where the crime rate is high, it is prudent to be alert and lock your doors. However, most human fears are statistically challenged gratuitous fears. The problem with fear is not the unfortunate consequences it causes you to imagine, but fear itself.

To manage fear – the threat of bodily injury or death, for instance – accurate information is required. Anecdotal evidence is not accurate information, because it distorts threat assessment. A neighbour experiences a robbery, tells you about it and then tells you about other friends that have been robbed. You conclude that you are at risk. But is it true? Are you more at risk after you have heard of the robbery than you were before you heard of it? Probably not. You may even be less likely to be robbed insofar as robberies increase surveillance and thieves tend to go where surveillance is less.

When looked at with reference to the big picture, unless one is living in a country like Syria where *dharma* has almost completely broken down, destabilising life for everyone as the system that keeps things going has all but collapsed, crime and injury statistics paint a very interesting picture.

The sad thing is that few people look at or understand the big picture and how they fit into it. Whether one lives in what are considered "safe" environments, like the U.S. or North-western Europe, the majority of people worldwide live in fear of something bad happening to them. Yet seen from the perspective of the statistics above, people worldwide have less than a fraction of a per cent chance of experiencing mild to severe catastrophic events, also called "black swans," even in

high crime areas. Black swans are events that come “out of the blue” and can neither be predicted nor avoided. So if our original threat of a black swan is, say, .001%, even if we live in a country with a high crime rate and we apply the mitigating facts above, we have to add another zero or two to the percentage and the “threat” becomes almost laughable.

Taken on a worldwide scale and factoring in all war zone areas, even if we extrapolate these statistics and expand the likelihood of injury to 2% overall (which is probably too high), then 98% of time 98% of people on the planet will not experience injury in any form. In fact life will go along pretty smoothly apart from the usual ups and downs typical of life in *samsara* – which goes to prove that this is really a benign reality. *Isvara* is not “out to get us” at every turn, but can be trusted to be taking care of us for our best possible growth and sustenance at least 98% of the time. Regardless of what we have all been brainwashed to believe, the fact of the matter is that *dharma* is upheld 98% of the time throughout the field of existence. If it were not, we would all be refugees, packing guns and fighting for our lives, like the Syrian civilians are doing.

Notwithstanding seemingly endless evidence to the contrary, the *dharma* field can only function if *dharma* is upheld by the majority. It is a very small percentage of *adharma* practised by the minority that creates evil in all its forms – from the worst brutality to petty crime – and infects all minds with the thought that life is dangerous for everyone and no one is to be trusted.

Because of the nature of fear and *maya*'s power to delude, most of us live as though the facts were the other way around. In other words, we make the .0001% to a maximum of 2% of anything bad happening to us actually 99.999% to 98% that it will. One only has to look at the booming insurance costs to know this is true, which is why insurance companies make so much money: because they know that most of the time nothing bad happens!

So how are we going to negate the deeply entrenched fear-*samskara*? A “coping strategy” while helpful is not the answer; self-knowledge is the only answer to fear because fear is not real. Fear stands for False Evidence Appearing Real.

Ramji recognised the power of fear when he first realised the self and he strove to eradicate its power in the mind with a vengeance. He will not entertain any thought that has its origin in fear, not even the relatively benign thought like wondering about someone's hidden motives to locking his car door, unless he is in an area where crime is rife, which is seldom. One does have to use common sense. But beyond the application of common sense, fear-thoughts are the most debilitating and life-negating. Fear-thoughts come in many disguises, like having a suspicious, mistrusting mind, acting as though you are better than others, criticising others, manipulating people or situations emotionally or by whatever means to get what you want, dishonesty, etc. The list is long.

To believe in the reality of fear and carry it in your mind throughout your life is to kill the joy and spontaneity that make life truly beautiful.

So make a *sankalpa* (commitment) to negate every fear-thought that arises in the mind with the opposite thought, in the moment. Say to yourself, “My jiva lives in the 99.999%, not the .0001%.” Dare to live dangerously by embracing the freedom of choosing to live without fear. Never give in to gratuitous fear, for if you do, the price is always loss of freedom, loss of joy, loss of peace. Trust *Isvara* in all its glorious

forms.