

The Communication Mechanism

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Cassie: Dear Sundari, I wrote to you some time ago regarding my *svadharma*, and you were very helpful in helping me clear up some doubts. Since then my *jiva* life has become much clearer and simpler. I have a question from another aspect of working on self-knowledge, this time from working on qualifications. I am looking closer into my *vasanas*, I recognize them, name them and try to see them as an object to neutralize them. But I have one difficulty with my speech. When I am silent I am at peace with all that happens, with people and events; they truly don't bother me that much. But when I talk with somebody, all of sudden I get judgmental or critical, as if I couldn't imagine how to talk with others staying calm and free of easy judgement, and not feeling naive in doing so. Even when I am talking to someone who is also committed to self-inquiry, it seems it is difficult to understand and be understood through speech. Why is it so difficult for *jivas* to talk to each other?

I would appreciate some guidance about how to approach this issue - managing my speech, therefore, I guess, my thoughts. Or what keyword to use in browsing about it in *satsangs*. ☺

~ Lots of love, Cassie

Sundari: Communication is indeed a tricky aspect of *jiva* life. My mother used to say to me than you can never be sorry for something you never said, which is very true. Knowing when to keep our mouths shut is indeed a sign of wisdom, which is why it is one of the qualifications for *moksa*. We would all certainly benefit a great deal in terms of peace of mind if we were more mindful of when we speak, what we say and how we say it. This involves monitoring our thoughts and understanding how and why they are arising in the mind according to our *vasanas* and the *gunas* behind them. This is a sophisticated process, requiring a great deal of self-objectivity, and through it, mind control, *sama* and *dama*.

It is also true that one can miss the opportunity to say the right thing at the right time and regret it, which also causes disturbance in the mind. Timing, as well as the volume and sound of our words, has a big impact on what we are trying to convey with words. On top of that, all words have an ostensible as well as implied meaning, which most people are unaware of and do not take into consideration when talking or "listening." Even if the person we are talking to is on the same page as we are in terms of understanding the true nature of reality, everyone will hear what we say and what they say through the filters of their conditioning, the causal body.

Language is one among many forms of human activity and is an integral part of what makes us human. Words and sentences evolved through certain agreed upon rules as a matter of necessity. Even though there are so many different languages spoken on the planet, there really is no such thing as a private language, as all languages follow similar grammatical and phonetic rules. All the same, the way we all use language is intimately linked to our private inner world. Language can be seen as a mirror of the mind in that it mirrors and expresses the innate properties of human intelligence (or lack of it!).

Communication depends on something in common. It is a union of understanding because our common identity is awareness. If every "I" was unique, there would be no way to communicate with anyone, with or without language. We speak to the self in another body, whether we are aware of it or not. Most people are not aware of this. However, because there are so many factors involved in communicating with an apparent "other," it is often fraught with misunderstanding.

The communication mechanism works like this:

1. The first level of communication is between the subtle body of the one person talking to the subtle body of the other person, meaning the conscious mind of one person talking to another conscious mind.
2. The second layer of communication is a two-way internal dialogue between the personal microcosmic causal body (conditioning/*vasanas*), or unconscious mind, and the subtle body, or conscious mind (emotions/intellect/ego), of each individual. Both parties' causal bodies "talk" to "their" subtle body.

What then usually happens in communication with another is that instead of listening to what they are saying with an open mind, we are interpreting what they are saying through our own filters, meaning *vasanas* (ego). We do not "hear" what they are saying, we hear only what we are thinking about what they are saying, or we hear what we are thinking about what we want to say to them. We wait to speak, we do not listen. If the thinking is emotional, the intellect of each individual will be run by the emotional filter and will not be able to think clearly. Emotional thinking is the main problem in most of our human interactions and especially when we communicate. If the mind is dull (*tamasic*), thinking will be dull. If the mind is totally extroverted (*rajasic*) it will not be aware of how it is using words, projecting meaning and not listening. The quality of our thinking is determined by how much *sattva* is present in the mind. If *rajas* and *tamas* obscure it, communication will be fraught with difficulty.

3. The next two-way communication is between each of the microcosmic causal bodies of the two people talking to each other. This is usually an unconscious process on both parts. Whatever unconscious content is in the causal body, it will be behind the way we think and feel, directing what we think and say; we most most likely will be completely unaware of our projections and denials, even if we think we are being careful with how we speak and listen.
4. If all of that is not complicated enough, the fourth level of two-way communication is between the subtle body of the one person (conscious mind) talking to the microcosmic causal body (unconscious mind) of the other person and vice versa. Here is where we pick up and interpret unconscious content in the other, what some people like to call a sixth sense, intuition or psychic abilities. Most of the time these are subjective interpretations. Even if what we pick is true about the other person (or about us), they will not be aware of it, making it very risky to talk about this kind of information without engaging the ego.

To listen to a ShiningWorld video of this mechanism, click [this link](#).

So if you look at communication this way, you can see that it is really an eight-way communication. Is it any wonder that it is complicated, and often the source of so much pain and misery? There is a wonderful saying in the book *The Little Prince*, where the fox, talking to the Little Prince, tells him: "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly. What is truly important is invisible to the eye." We could also say

that what is truly important is inaudible to the ear. It is true that it is only ever the self talking, either in self-knowledge or self-ignorance, but because of the way our senses organs work, we only ever pick up a fraction of the sensory information available to the senses at any given moment. It goes to reason then that the input we do pick up, whether visually or audially, will be those stimuli that correspond with our frame of reference, which is our conditioning.

Yoga calls the heart the *hridaya*, and although we like to think that it is located physically in the human heart, it is really not located anywhere. It appears in the “heart cave,” “located” in the causal body. It means the essence, or “that without which a thing is not a thing,” like sweetness is the essence of sugar: sugar cannot be sugar without sweetness. It means that the true essence of everything is consciousness. If we do not have firm knowledge of who we are as the self, and the *jiva*-filter still obscures our transactions with the world, the mechanism explained above comes into play when we communicate with others.

It is only when we have understood and dissolved the *jiva* and all its “stuff” that we can instantly see our conditioning when it shows up, which of course it does. This is why we say that the price of freedom is eternal vigilance. When two people are fully aware of the power of *maya* to delude, see each other and talk to each other as the self, projection and denial (*rajas* and *tamas*) do not condition the mind. And if they do arise, the self sees the projection and denial instantly and dismisses it as *mithya*.

Until such time as it self-knowledge obtains permanently in the mind, it behooves us to know and understand the mechanism at play in our communication with supposed others, to practise mindfulness and restraint of speech, called *vaktapas*, or *sama* and *dama*, control of thoughts and speech. Unless we bring awareness to this our lives in the world will be very difficult because words truly are the source of all misunderstanding between *jivas*, ever since we developed language as a way to communicate.

Before embarking on a conversation, especially an important conversation, a good way to practise mindful communication is first and foremost to pray by offering the conversation to *Isvara* and resolving to take the results as *prasad*, i.e *karma yoga*. Bring to mind this whole teaching. Still the mind by observing your thoughts or breathing, sitting in silence, any technique that works for you. Start the conversation quietly, without being confrontational and make sure to avoid all trigger words, like “you always,” “you never,” “why did you,” “you did,” “but you said,” etc. Give yourself wiggle room by avoiding dualistic figures of speech, violent communication – and very importantly, be aware of the implied meaning of words. Be straightforward and honest, with compassion. Remember that honesty without compassion comes across as hostility.

~ Love, Sundari