

# JOY: The Journal of Yoga

May 2003, Volume 2, Number 5

## **Doubt, Certainty, & Submission**

John C. Kimbrough

"We must know where to doubt, where to feel certain, and where to submit" – Blaise Pascal

In all of us, because of our ego, because our desire to feel special and different, unique and important, there is a tendency to resist anything that asks us to change.

If we are doing fine, what do we need this for?

With age, and experience, we see how life changes.

It can be a real source of wonder, to see where we have been, and how we have got to a certain place,-mentally, emotionally and physically.

So, perhaps something that filled us with pride and satisfaction five years ago, does not have that same effect nowadays.

Perhaps, something that was at one time a source of comfort or joy has lost that magic.

Perhaps, something that we have used as an escape has now become an obsession or addiction.

What once made us feel certain, now makes us feel doubt.

Those things that we did submit to, the desires of the body and mind, have overwhelmed us, so we can not understand them, escape from them or change them.

And then maybe we look for something better, but there is this doubt, this pessimism, this cynicism.

Will it work?

Should I listen?

It is so strange.

It is "foreign".

Actually, we could say that all paths and practices are foreign, but are they really?

Maybe they just seem foreign because they are teaching us something that we have not thought about for a while, but still, we might say, "I understand this already".

Maybe they seem foreign to us because they are teaching us about things inside of us already, that we have not looked at for awhile, have not reflected on for awhile, have not acted on in awhile, so these things are foreign to us, even though they are in us and have always been part of us.

Teachings can reawaken ourselves to these things inside of us.

It does not really matter where the teaching originated from.

It does not really matter how clergy and practitioners of that teaching dress.

It does not really matter what kind of food they eat.

What matters is that they are devoted and devout in their practice.

When one is devout, there is understanding and there is wisdom.

So maybe the time of doubt is at the beginning, when we take the first tentative steps to something new.

Something that may challenge us with it's practices. Something that may create new awakenings and realizations for us that at times are joyful, at other times painful. Something that may invite impatient, unsupportive and ridiculing attitudes and words from others.

We have to have a degree of faith and patience to overcome this initial doubt.

We have to do what is asked from us in order to overcome this initial doubt.

We have to understand and apply, learn and practice, in order to overcome this initial doubt.

So, if one is trying to learn and practice Yoga or Buddhism, how long should one give oneself, before they clear up the doubt and become certain?

That is a difficult question to give a clear response to.

It will differ, depending on the quality of the conditioning that one brings to the practice.

If we have or do not have someone to assist us on the path will also be a determining factor in our success.

One day, we may notice great insights and changes, another day, things will be a bit more sluggish, in our mindfulness and the results from our practice.

One day there may be doubt, another day, certainty.

When doubt falters, it is replaced by certainty, and with that certainty, faith grows, understanding grows, enthusiasm and diligence grows.

With certainty, there is submission.

This word always brings up so many denotations and connotations in an individual's consciousness, but usually not of a positive or wholesome nature.

It sounds negative, demeaning and against the way of how we want and desire to think of ourselves as beings of freedom.

We always associate the act of submission to another person- a tyrant, a dictator, someone who might want to use, exploit or hurt us.

God knows, there have been thousands of examples of this in the history of humankind.

Submission in working a spiritual path refers to the sacred teachings.

Sometimes problems develop when we submit to one teacher, forgetting that it is his or her ability to articulate the teachings in a way that assists us, but it is still the teachings that we are learning and growing from.

Unscrupulous teachers have been known to take advantage of those who listen to them, and some people unfortunately, need to attach to a teacher, thinking that they are enlightened and an answer to all their problems, when instead, not fully understanding the teachings and forgetting the ability of the teacher within.

Doubt, certainty and submission can mirror how we come to and start to live and grow with a spiritual path and practice.

When we experience these things, let us understand that they are natural, and not let them make us fearful or anxious.

If one is ridiculed for their way, well, sadly, that is the way of many people, to make fun of, to ridicule, maybe even humiliate others.

But we can go back to the refuge that we have cultivated within, not a refuge where we hide and whimper, but where we grow and become stronger, so that now and in the future, we cultivate a light that brings us and others peace, joy and wisdom.

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John lives and teaches in Bangkok, Thailand. He can be reached at [johnckimbrough@yahoo.com](mailto:johnckimbrough@yahoo.com)