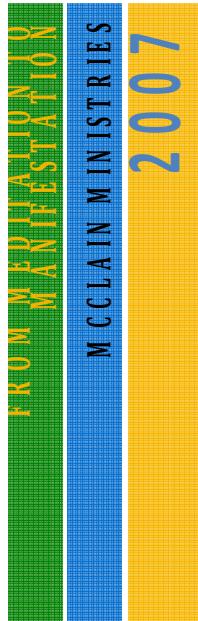


Chapter Thirty-one

MANAGING THE EGO = SPIRITUAL GROWTH



One of the very biggest challenges facing the evolution of any person is in overcoming the demands of the individual ego. It is simply not possible to achieve enduring and genuine progress until the ego has been well and truly brought under control to the extent that it no longer exerts any negative or detrimental influence upon self or anyone else.

The ego is that aspect of a person striving to make its presence felt both on the individual personality and upon others, constantly demanding to be satisfied and satiated otherwise discontent and personal disharmony will be the result its demands are not fulfilled. **The ego is responsible for many negative human traits, including but certainly not limited to being critical and judgmental of others, being rigid and inflexible, being manipulative, need to feel superior, feeling anxious and fearful, mood swings, taking everything too personally, taking everything too seriously, constant need for approval and praise, feeling hurried and driven to do things, competing rather than cooperating, feeling resentful and guilty, unable to live in the present moment, addictions to alcohol, tobacco and other mind altering substances, overly concerned with personal appearance, overly concerned with success, feeling insecure, constant worry over trivialities, clinging to the past, feelings of despair and hopelessness, feeling life is meaningless, and the need for power over others. All of these are seriously negative human traits, and ones that can easily make a persons life a misery.**

The ego causes an illusory focus on those aspects of the physical world that are really not at all important for peace, harmony and happiness, and most importantly for enduring evolution and progression. Without true inner peace, harmony and living in the Spirit, true progress quite simply cannot be made. It must therefore be

considered to be an unwelcome adversary, focusing on the individual self rather than absolute reality, and above all one that focuses on self rather than the most sacred path and true meaning of life.

Many people are very quick to blame others or the world in general for their own problems; it is always much easier for people to blame everything and everyone else rather than having to face up to everything themselves, thereby taking full responsibility for their own thoughts and actions. Whenever anything adverse happens the immediate reaction of many is usually focused towards looking for scapegoats rather than looking inwards towards self for the real cause of the corresponding effect. Some people are so much under the control of their own ego that they really are absolutely convinced they are always right and everyone else and indeed the rest of the Universe must always be completely wrong; a level of ego which can have most detrimental consequences indeed for such an individual.

The ego constantly strives to have people believe they are not responsible for their own actions but are rather a victim of circumstance or of the state of the world in general. Such a person might blame family, friends, politicians, people they work with, work bosses, or simply ascribe negative effects to such non-existent notions as "bad luck", "fortune" or "chance". In fact absolutely anyone and everyone they can associate with a situation will be blamed rather than blaming the true cause; themselves.

The ego constantly strives to be always right, always superior, never wrong and never inferior. It constantly seeks self-importance, power and superiority over others, often at any cost, and regardless of who they are affecting or hurting at the same time.

The ego is not something that can simply be destroyed; it is rather a vital aspect of individuality, for life and indeed for conscious awareness. The ultimate objective therefore is not to attempt to destroy it, but rather to transcend its influence, thereby bringing it under complete control in order to serve its intended purpose by accentuating its necessary positive attributes while suppressing the

negative and destructive attributes so detrimental to genuine peace, happiness, harmony, and most importantly personal progress.

The ego can be likened to a telescope on the world collecting sensory information, and delivering such information to the five physical senses and the mind. The fact is however, many people still do not simply accept the information being received through the ego as a necessary part of conscious existence; they also proceed to analyze or very often even over-analyze the information received through the ego, reacting or over-reacting to it accordingly.

The ego can also be likened to a postal service, delivering letters to the mind for advisory and information purposes. These letters should be immediately acknowledged and then filed away for 'future' reference if appropriate. Instead, many people will actually open the letters and then proceed to tell the ego how to respond to the sensory information received. Furthermore, many people have a tendency to see only those things they want to see, and accordingly are selective over which letters they open and which they will subsequently respond to.

The ego likes to make comparisons, particularly with other people. In and of itself making comparisons is fine for the purposes of making a necessary choice, the problems really arise when it is not satisfied by merely making comparisons but is allowed to extend the comparisons to include comparative judgments about other people, possessions, and everything else the ego erroneously regards as important. It will for example encourage people to take up various sports, hobbies and skills, often not merely for the benefits or health, happiness and relaxation which they can surely bring, but also as a means of seeming superior to others by means of making comparisons with others relative to these pastimes.

The ego however does need to make comparisons as a function of living in the material world. For example, when walking around a supermarket, comparisons need to be made between the quality and prices of items to be purchased. This sort of comparison is very

useful and is being applied for positive reasons. The problems would arise in this case however when comparing an item, not for genuine reasons of price or quality, but rather with view to making a purchasing decision based on the perception that the item is superior to an equivalent item already owned by a neighbor, friend or relative.

The same example would hold true in purchasing a new car for example, and indeed any highly visible object by which people believe they will personally be judged. In the example of the car, subjective comparisons must of course be made between all of the options available in order to take account such fundamentals as fuel economy, insurance costs, servicing costs and many other necessary and relevant factors, all of which need to be justifiably reconciled before such a significant purchase can be justified.

The ego will take over if allowed to do so however by endeavoring to ensure the car is bigger than those of friends, neighbors, relatives and others, has more seats, a bigger engine, better acceleration and top speed, more internal luxuries, better electronic equipment and so on. The ego in this case has clearly caused the purchaser of the car to make a significant purchasing decision over and above that which was fundamentally justifiable, based almost entirely on egotistical reasons; the need for a feeling of perceived superiority over others.

The ego often exerts a particularly strong influence in personal relationships. Everyone should be attracted to a partner for individual personality and other genuine qualities and virtues, because they share common interests for example and in general because they are very well suited to each other. Some people however will be attracted to a partner for much more superficial reasons, often because they perceive the partner to be glamorous, handsome, appears to be generally attractive in the eyes of others, or very often because they are perceived to be wealthy. In these cases the ego is in full control over something as fundamentally

important as choosing a partner, or even a future husband or wife. This of course is a very major contributory reason as to why so many marriages result in separation, divorce or ongoing unhappiness.

The ego has delusions of grandeur and likes nothing more than to be noticed, flattered and admired. In reality of course nothing ever makes anyone better or in any way more superior as compared with anyone else. Every single person without exception is an equal aspect of God, made in the true Spiritual image of God, but each having unique characteristics, abilities, shortcomings to face and so on.

If we judge others then we equally judge ourselves. Acceptance is a most important aspect of life, acceptance of everyone for what they really are and what they represent, and most importantly as an equal expression of God.

The other side of the ego is in feeling worse or inferior by comparison with others. People might perceive themselves for example to feel useless, unworthy, unwanted, and many other such negative perceptions of self. There really is no difference at all between this side of the ego and the one suffering from delusions of grandeur; they are all positive and negative aspects and degrees of the same thing. Ultimately to transcend the ego is to know beyond any doubts whatsoever that everyone without any exceptions are equal, and to live and interact with people and situations accordingly. God is perfection, and everyone without exception is an inseparable expression and equal aspect of that same perfection.

The ego will revel in exerting its influence over many other aspects of people's lives. For example many people like to feel sorry for themselves by feeling they are a victim or a martyr in some way. Such people will often feel everything is hopeless, that they are burdened with demands and responsibilities they cannot handle, feel unappreciated, misunderstood, feel badly treated and generally believing they are the victim of bad luck, chance, fortune and other such non-existent notions.

The ego does not like responsibility and will often do whatever it can to deny and avoid responsibility. Typical signs the ego is in control of responsibility are when people blame others for everything that goes wrong in their own lives. The ego will typically blame anyone and everyone except themselves for anything happening they do not like or will not accept responsibility for, be it by the government, a friend, a neighbor, a family member, a co-worker or even God. As we already know, each and every person creates their own reality and thus to blame others is quite simply futile.

This is not to say however people are knowingly creating situations giving rise to the response of the ego, but are rather doing so subconsciously. It is not until all negative situations are accepted and fully analyzed can the realization be reached as to the origins of the situation, and thereby positive actions be taken to make the necessary corrections.

Accepting and taking full responsibility for all such situations is empowering, and those who can achieve this will have considerably more control over every aspect of their own lives, will be in conscious control of creating their own reality and as a direct result experience a much happier, more peaceful and harmonious life.

The ego also revels in the illusion of always being busy. People often like to believe they are so busy with daily work, chores and other responsibilities that they have no time available for anything or anyone else, often including themselves. The more a person dwells on this illusion of busyness, the busier they will believe they really are; a situation that can quickly escalate into a full busyness martyr syndrome. Worse still, if the ego believes a person is not busy enough it will create work in order to justify the illusion of busyness, often repeating the same chores and tasks over and over again until they are perceived to be satisfactory, and the need for feeling busy has accordingly satisfied the ego. Such people always consider themselves to be very busy, always endeavoring to make the people around them believe they really are busy and yet still getting

nowhere in particular and not achieving much of any real significance, certainly not in proportion to their perceived workload.

The ego also often revels in disaster, particularly when it happens to people who are not liked. People unfortunately often revel in the misfortunes of others on whatever scale the misfortune occurs, whether it is a problem at work, someone losing their employment, a marriage breaking up or simply a general lack of ability by someone to accomplish something. Unfortunately, people generally find it much easier to revel in the misfortune of others than to equally share in their happiness when good and positive things happen to the same people. This is again another extremely negative and insidious attribute of the ego, believing itself to be always superior and reveling in the misfortune of others in order to satisfy itself and to create an illusion of perceived superiority over others.

Notwithstanding all of its insidious influences, the ego is nevertheless a vital aspect of conscious awareness and can therefore never be destroyed. At the same time the ego is frequently responsible for considerable misery and suffering and a lack of peace and harmony generally. It strives to dominate and feel superior, and always insists on getting its own way if at all possible. The ego can and profoundly will hold people back both in everyday life and in personal evolution and progression on the path. Until such time as the ego is tamed and its influence fully transcended, true and enduring progress, peace, happiness and harmony quite simply cannot be achieved and maintained.