

One of the greatest problems...it will appear very paradoxical, but this is true: before you can lose your ego, you must attain it. Only a ripe fruit falls to the ground.

Ripeness is all. An unripe ego cannot be thrown, cannot be destroyed. And if you struggle with an unripe ego to destroy and dissolve it, the whole effort is going to be a failure. Rather than destroying it, you will find it more strengthened in new subtle ways.

This is something basic to be understood: the ego must come to a peak, it must be strong, it must have attained an integrity -- only then can you dissolve it. A weak ego cannot be dissolved. And this becomes a problem.

In the East, all the religions preach egolessness. So in the East, everybody is against the ego from the very beginning. Because of this anti-attitude, ego never becomes strong, never comes to a point of integration from where it can be thrown. It is never ripe. So in the East it is very difficult to dissolve the ego, almost impossible.

In the West, the whole Western tradition of religion and psychology propounds, preaches, persuades people, to have strong egos -- because unless you have a strong ego, how can you survive? Life is a struggle; if you are egoless, you will be destroyed. Then who will resist? Who will fight? Who will compete? And life is a continuous competition. Western psychology says: Attain to the ego, be strong in it.

But in the West it is very easy to dissolve the ego. So whenever a Western seeker reaches to an understanding that ego is the problem, he can easily dissolve it, more easily than any Eastern seeker.

This is the paradox: in the West ego is taught; in the East egolessness is taught. But in the West it is easy to dissolve the ego; in the East it is very difficult.

This is going to be a hard task for you, first to attain and then to lose -- because you can lose only something which you possess. If you don't possess it, how can you lose it?

You can be poor only if you are rich. If you are not rich your poverty cannot have that beauty which Jesus goes on preaching: Be poor in spirit. Your poverty cannot have that significance which Gautam Buddha has when he becomes a beggar.

Only a rich man can become poor, because you can lose only that which you have. If you have never been rich, how can you be poor? Your poverty will be just on the surface; it can never be in the spirit. On the surface you will be poor, and deep down you will be hankering after riches. Your spirit will hanker towards riches, it will be an ambition, it will be a constant desire to attain riches. Only on the surface will you be poor. And you may even console yourself by saying that poverty is good.

But you cannot be poor -- only a rich man, a really rich man, can be poor. Just to have riches is not enough to be really rich. You may still be poor. If the ambition is still there, you are poor.

What you have is not the point. If you have enough then the desire disappears. When you have enough riches, the desire disappears. Disappearance of the desire is the criterion of

enoughness. Then you are rich -- you can drop it, you can become poor, you can become a beggar like Buddha. And then your poverty is rich; then your poverty has a kingdom of its own.

And the same happens with everything. Upanishads or Lao Tzu or Jesus or Buddha -- they all teach that knowledge is useless. Just getting more and more knowledgeable is not much help. Not only is it not much help, it can become a barrier.

Knowledge is not needed, but that doesn't mean you should remain ignorant. Your ignorance will not be real. When you have gathered enough knowledge and you throw it, then ignorance is attained. Then you really become ignorant -- like Socrates who can say: I know only one thing, that I don't know anything.

This knowledge, or this ignorance -- you can call it whatever you like -- is totally different, the quality is different, the dimension has changed.

If you are simply ignorant because you never attained to any knowledge, your ignorance cannot be wise, it cannot be wisdom -- it is simply absence of knowledge. And the hankering will be inside: How to gain more knowledge? How to gain more information?

When you know too much -- you have known the scriptures, you have known the past, the tradition, you have known all that can be known -- then suddenly you become aware of the futility of it all, suddenly you become aware that this is not knowledge. This is borrowed! This is not your own existential experience, this is not what you have come to know. Others may have known it, you have simply gathered it. Your gathering is mechanical. It has not arisen out of you, it is not a growth. It is just rubbish gathered from other doors, borrowed, dead.

Remember, knowing is alive only when you know, when it is your immediate, direct experience. But when you know from others it is just memory, not knowledge. Memory is dead.

When you gather much -- the riches of knowledge, scriptures, all around you, libraries condensed in your mind, and suddenly you become aware that you are just carrying the burden of others, nothing belongs to you, you have not known -- then you can drop it, you can drop all this knowledge. In that dropping a new type of ignorance arises within you. This ignorance is not the ignorance of the ignorant, this is how a wise man is, how wisdom is.

Only a wise man can say: I don't know. But in saying: I don't know, he is not hankering after knowledge, he is simply stating a fact. And when you can say with your total heart: I don't know, in that very moment your eyes become open, the doors of knowing are open. In that very moment when you can say with your totality; I don't know, you have become capable of knowledge.

This ignorance is beautiful, but it is attained through knowledge. It is poverty attained through richness. And the same happens with ego -- you can lose it if you have it.

When Buddha comes down from his throne, becomes a beggar...what is the necessity for Buddha? He was a king, enthroned, at the peak of his ego -- why this extreme, moving down from his palace to the streets, becoming a beggar? But Buddha has a beauty in his begging. The earth has never known such a beautiful beggar, such a rich beggar, such a kingly beggar, such an emperor.

What happened when he stepped down from his throne? He stepped down from his ego. Thrones are nothing but symbols, symbols of the ego, of power, prestige, status. He stepped down and then egolessness happened.

This egolessness is not humbleness; this egolessness is not humility. You may find many humble people, but under their humility, subtle egos are functioning.

It is said that once Diogenes came to visit Socrates. He lived like a beggar; he always wore dirty clothes with many patches and holes. Even if you presented him with a new dress, he would not use it -- first he would make it dirty, old, torn, and then he would use it.

He came to visit Socrates, and he started talking about egolessness. But Socrates' penetrating eyes must have come to realize that this man was not an egoless man. The way he was talking about humility was very egoistic.

Socrates is reported to have said: Through your dirty clothes, through the holes in your clothes, I cannot see anything else but the ego. You talk of humility, but that talk comes from a deep centre of the ego.

This will happen, this is how hypocrisy happens. You have the ego, you hide it through the opposite; you become humble on the surface. This surface humbleness cannot deceive anyone. It may deceive you, but it cannot deceive anyone else. From the holes of the dirty dresses, your ego goes on peeping. It is always there. This is a self-deception and nothing more. Nobody else is deceived. This happens if you start throwing the unripe ego.

What I teach will look contradictory, but it is true to life. Contradiction is inherent in life. I teach you to be egoists so that you can become egoless. I teach you to be perfect egoists. Don't hide it, otherwise hypocrisy will be born. And don't struggle with the unripe phenomenon. Let it ripen -- and help it. Bring it to a peak!

Don't be afraid -- there is nothing to be afraid of. This is how you will come to realize the agony of the ego. When it comes to its peak, then you will not need a Buddha or me to tell you that the ego is hell. You will know it, because the peak of the ego will be the peak of your hellish experiences, it will be a nightmare. And then there is no need for anybody to tell you: Drop it! It will be difficult to carry it on.

One reaches to knowledge only through suffering. You cannot throw anything just by logical argument. You can throw something only when it has become so painful that it cannot be carried any further. Your ego has not become that painful yet -- hence you carry it. It is natural! I cannot persuade you to drop it. Even if you feel persuaded, you will hide it -- that's all.

Nothing unripe can be thrown. Unripe fruit clings to the tree and the tree clings to the unripe fruit. If you force it to separate, a wound is left behind. That scar will continue, the wound will always remain green and you will always feel hurt.

Remember, everything has a time to grow, to be ripe, to fall down into the earth and dissolve. Your ego also has a time. It needs maturity.

So don't be afraid of being egoists. You ARE, otherwise you would have disappeared long ago. This is the mechanism of life: you have to be egoists, you have to fight your way, you have to fight with so many millions of desires around you, you have to struggle, you have to survive.

Ego is a survival measure. If a child is born without the ego, he will die. He cannot survive, it is impossible, because if he feels hunger he will not feel: I am hungry. He will feel there is hunger, but not related to him. The moment hunger is felt, the child feels: I am hungry, he starts crying and making efforts to be fed. The child grows through the growth of his ego.

So to me, ego is part of natural growth. But that doesn't mean that you have to remain with it forever. It is a natural growth, and then there is a second step when it has to be dropped. That too is natural. But the second step can be taken only when the first has come to its crescendo, its climax, when the first has reached its peak. So I teach both -- I teach egoness and I teach egolessness.

First be egoists, perfect egoists, absolute egoists, as if the whole of existence exists for you and you are the center; all the stars revolve around you and the sun rises for you; everything exists for you, just to help you to be here. Be the center, and don't be afraid, because if you are afraid then you will never be ripe. Accept it! It is part of growth. Enjoy it and bring it to a peak.

When it comes to a peak, suddenly you will become aware that you are not the center. This has been a fallacy, this has been a childish attitude. But you were a child, so nothing is wrong in it. Now you have become mature, and now you see that you are not the center.

Really, when you see that you are not the center, you also see there is NO center in existence or everywhere is the center. Either there is no center and existence exists as a totality, a wholeness without any center as a control point or every single atom is a center.

Jakob Boehme has said that the whole world is filled with centers, every atom is a center, and there is no circumference -- centers everywhere and circumference nowhere.

These two are the possibilities. Both mean the same; only the wording is different and contradictory. But first become a center.

It is like this: you are in a dream; if the dream comes to a peak, it will be broken. Always it happens -- whenever a dream comes to a climax, it is broken. And what is the climax of a dream? The climax of a dream is the feeling that this is real. You feel this is real, not a

dream, and you go on and on and on and on to a higher peak and the dream becomes ALMOST real. It can never become real; it becomes almost real. It comes so close to reality that now you cannot go further, because one step more and the dream will become real -- and it cannot become real because it is a dream! When it comes so close to reality, sleep is broken, the dream is shattered, you are fully awake.

The same happens with all types of fallacies. Ego is the greatest dream. It has its beauty, its agony. It has its ecstasy, its agony. It has its heavens and hells, both are there. Dreams sometimes are beautiful and sometimes nightmares, but both are dreams.

So I don't tell you to come out of your dream before the time has come. No, never do anything before the time. Allow things to grow, allow things to have their time, so that everything happens naturally.

Ego will drop. It can drop of its own accord also. If you simply allow it to grow and help it to grow, there will be NO need to drop it.

This is very deep. If YOU drop it, ego has remained inside. WHO will drop it? If you think YOU will drop it, YOU are the ego -- so whatsoever you drop will not be the real thing. The real thing will be preserved and you will have thrown something else.

You cannot make yourself egoless. Who will do it? It happens, it is not a doing. You grow into ego and a point comes when the whole thing becomes so hellish that the dream is broken. Suddenly you see the goose is out -- it has never been in the bottle.

You have never been an ego. It was just a dream around you. A necessary dream, I say, so I don't condemn it, a necessary part of growth.

In life everything is necessary. Nothing is unnecessary, nothing can be unnecessary. Whatsoever has happened had to happen. Whatsoever is happening is happening because of certain deep causes. You need it so you can remain in the fallacy. It is just a cocoon that helps you, protects you, helps you to survive. One need not be in the cocoon forever. When you are ready, break the cocoon, come out.

The ego is the shell of the egg, it protects you. But when you are ready, break the shell, come out of the egg. The ego is the shell.

But wait. Hurry will not be of much help; haste will not help -- it may hinder. Allow time, and don't condemn it, because who will condemn it?

Go to the so-called saints -- they talk of humbleness, humility -- and look into their eyes: you will not find such refined egos anywhere else. Now their egos have taken the garb of religion, Yoga, sainthood, but the ego is there. They may not be collecting riches, they may be collecting followers; the coins have changed and they go on counting how many followers....

They may not be after the things of this world, they are after the things of that world, but this or that, both are worlds. And they may be even more greedy, because they say these temporary things, momentary things of this world, consist of momentary pleasures -- and

they want eternal pleasures. Their greed is supreme. They cannot be satisfied by momentary pleasures. They want eternal pleasures. Unless something is eternal they are not gratified. Their greed is deep, their greed is absolute and greed belongs to the ego. Greed is the hunger of the ego.

So it happens sometimes that saints are more egoistic than sinners, and then they are far away from the divine. And sometimes sinners can attain to the god more easily than those so-called saints, because ego is the barrier.

This has been my experience that sinners can drop their egos more easily than saints, because sinners have never been against the ego. They have been feeding it, they have been enjoying it, they have lived with it totally. And saints have always been fighting the ego, so they never allowed it to become ripe.

So this is my attitude: ego HAS to be dropped, but it may take a long waiting; and you can drop it only if you cultivate it.

This is the arduousness of the whole phenomenon, because the mind says: If we have to drop it, then why cultivate it? The mind says: When we have to destroy it, then why create it? If you listen to the mind you will be in trouble. Mind is always logical and life is always illogical, so they never meet.

This is simple logic, ordinary mathematics, that if you are to destroy this house, then why build it? Why this whole trouble? Why this effort and waste of time and energy? The house is not there, so why build it and then destroy it?

The house is not the point really -- YOU are the point. Building the house, you will change, and then destroying the house you will change completely, you will not be the same -- because creating the house, the whole process of it, will prove a growth to you. Then, when the house is ready, you pull it down. That will be a mutation.

Mind is logical and life is dialectical. Mind moves in a simple line, and life moves always jumping from one pole to another, from one thing to the very opposite.

Life is dialectical. Create, and then life says: Destroy. Be born, and then life says: Die! Attain, and then life says: Lose! Be rich, and then life says: Become poor! Be a peak, an Everest of the ego, and then become an abyss of egolessness. Then you have known both -- the illusory and the real, the maya and the Brahma.

Almost every day it happens: somebody comes to be initiated into sannyas, and then his mind starts functioning and he says to me: Wearing orange will make me more egoistic, because then I will feel that I am somebody different, distinct -- I am a sannyasin, one who has renounced. So wearing orange will make me more egoistic he says, and I say to him: Become! Become egoistic, but consciously.

Ego is a disease if you are unconscious about it, if you hide it in the unconscious. Ego is a game if you are conscious about it. You can enjoy it. You can play it. Be conscious, mindful, and play the game! A game is not bad, but when you forget that it is a game and become too serious, then problems arise.

So I say sannyas is not serious; it is a game -- a religious game, of course. It has its own rules, because every game must have rules; without rules no game can be played. Life can be without rules, but games cannot be.

If somebody says: I am not going to follow this rule, then you cannot play the game. You play cards, then you follow rules. And you never say: These rules are just arbitrary, artificial, why can't we change them? You can change them, but then the game will be difficult. And if every individual follows his own rules, then the game is impossible. Life is possible! You can play as you like because life never believes in rules -- it is beyond rules. But games have rules.

Remember: wherever you see rules, know immediately this is a game. This is the criterion: wherever you see rules, immediately know this is a game, because games exist through rules.

So if I say: "Wear orange, have the mala" -- this is a game, obviously. Play it as well as you can and don't be serious about it -- otherwise you miss the point.

Be egoists -- perfect, cultivated, refined. Go on working on your ego and make it a beautiful statue, because before you give it back to the god, it must be something worth giving, it must be a present.

My Way: The Way of the White Clouds, Chapter #8, 17th May 1974

I have heard, a man in an orange robe entered the Vrindavan juice bar, barged up to the front of the line, and demanded tea and cake. He paid with a hundred-rupee note and complained about the cost and the long lineup. After choosing the biggest piece of cake and the biggest cup, he took over an old lady's seat and proceeded to gobble the food. A bystander, puzzled by his behavior, asked the meaning of it. "Why," he explained, "Osho said that only a crystallized ego can be dropped."

There is more possibility to misunderstand me than to understand me. And in misunderstanding, you will find much solace, much consolation.

Just the other day, Mulla Nasrudin came to me, and he said, "Enough is enough -- I cannot trust you anymore."

I said, "What happened, Nasrudin? You have been such a long-obedient disciple to me."

He said, "Now it is too much. Just the other day I was at the racetrack. Somebody's change had fallen, so I was picking it up, and there comes a blind, or mad or drunk guy, and he saddles me as if I am a horse."

So I said, "Why didn't you stand up?"

He said, "But you have said accept everything, so I said Osho says accept totally. So I accept it and I try to see now what happens -- and the madman jumps on me."

I was also intrigued; I said, "Then what did you do?"

He said, "What can I do? I have to run -- and I come third in the race! Now this is too much! I cannot trust you anymore!"

There is every possibility to misunderstand me and there is every possibility to find rationalizations. This is how the mind goes on being foolish, the mind goes on playing around, fooling around. It always finds ways to protect itself. If I say drop the ego, you say okay, and you try to drop it; and then the ego becomes your humbleness and you start moving around with your nose up, looking at everybody as if everybody is condemned to hell. And you have that look of "holier than thou" and "I am the most humble man around here." If I say the ego has to become big, only then it bursts, then you say, "Okay. That's what we have been always trying. Now you are also supporting it -- so far so good."

When are you going to understand me? When you listen to me, always remember, your mind is there to corrupt it. Unless you are very, very watchful, your mind will pollute it. And mind is so cunning, it can always find a way out. And it is so clever, it can always make rationalizations look like reasons.

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