

RINGS OF EGOISM

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My humble pranams to all co-travellers in the path of spirituality basking in the grace of our benevolent and unparalleled Master.

While the attitudes of Love and Devotion towards the Master and in fact all that Exists are noble the essential aspect of sadhana is meditation as prescribed by the Institute based on the book "Practice and Efficacy of Sri Ramchandra's Rajayoga" and other instructions of the Master remains the most important aspect of sadhana.

In the notes provided in the book Practice and Efficacy of Sri Ramchandra's Rajayoga certain important features of the topic of the book were avoided as it was thought that it may be not necessary. But I feel that I may share some more understanding based on my imperience, on the subject. The notes cover upto the conditions in the 'Heart region'.

Master has presented his philosophy in three different

methods. In 'Reality at Dawn' he gives us a picture of Rings, (5 rings of Maya, 11 rings of Ego and 7rings of splendour), in the book 'Efficacy of Rajayoga" he presents three regions called Heart region, Mind region and Central region and in the book 'Towards Infinity' he explains the system through a journey in the 13 knots located in the human frame. It has been a matter of a bit of confusion for many to integrate all these. But these books are presentations in three angles: The philosophical 'Reality at Dawn', the yogic and semi metaphysical 'Efficacy of Rajayoga' and the yogic psychological 'Towards Infinity'. After suggesting these I would like to dwell more on the practical aspect of Rings of Egoism.

Master has not given an account of these rings in his works except in this book based on Regions. In the Chapter Central Regions he in a sense covers all aspects of Brahma Vidya. He gives an account of the stages of Ego we form as we progress in the path. I have and I am sure serious sadhakas here also have their own descriptions of the Ego we have confronted in the path and in our unfoldment. Their subtleties arise and come to consciousness as impediments during the day to day transactions, during meditations and to a large extent in our dreams. In all these realms the experiences are intense relating to Ego shakes our roots and brings to

awareness the ignoble mistakes and follies that formed various coverings over basic 'Identity'. What I attempt to present here is only a sketchy attempt to trace the various stages of Egoism we have. The topic is not the old conventional and traditional Ego which is another word for 'Pride' and 'arrogance'. The Ego we are considering is related to the realm of possessiveness involving 'me', 'mine', 'we' and 'our'. From these states of possessiveness we discover it is all 'His' in every sense of the term. The problem continues even at higher stages and so long as the Jiva is there some residual Ego will be there.

Though totally out of context yet I thought it necessary to point out a report I heard in the past two days or so, that in a particular Mutt at the famous pilgrim centre Madurai in Tamil Nadu, the Head of the Mutt chose his successor and very soon has withdrawn that status. This led to litigation and quarrel. That is the non possessiveness of the renounced! I mention this only to caution how much we cling to things and statuses.

These rings Egoism are in the heart and mind regions and the last ring is very near the Central region.

Master says," The idea of egoism starts from the body.

When you do anything under this influence you feel the solidity of things with the idea that you (body) do anything under this influence, you feel the solidity of things with the idea that you (body) are doing it. This is the lowest or the crudest form of egoism. In this stage the eye of a person is located on his body. He sees and feels the body to be the doer and does not go beyond it. He has no Idea of any thing else except the physical body. This is the condition of ordinary people of the world." This is the characteristic of the first ring of egoism. The Masters statement are clear but needs to be imperienced is the truth of this as applied to us. I am aware of the condition of struggle here even as every one of us here, we have a logic to defend ourselves in this aspect. Should we not identify with the body and keep it in perfect condition for after all the statement that the body is the instrument for doing good. (Sarira madhyam Khalu Dharma sadhanam).

Master continues saying that "When you proceed onwards you feel that something other than your body is the doer of the things. This is the second stage of egoism. Here the vision of a person passes on from the physical body to something inward or finer. Different people identify according to their own thoughts and beliefs. Some feel that soul is doing all actions and the body acting only like a machine or a tool..." The characteristic of the second ring of Egoism is this identification with

the 'soul' whose nature neither the person nor any one is capable to explain. As I have several times stated there is nothing as an entity called 'soul' and it is only a conglomerate, most of the time it is considered as "Conscience" by a peculiar capacity to create 'a faculty' with an 'entity' which is purely a figment of imagination. But this illusion and identification with that illusion is the characteristic of this second ring of egoism. All assessment of the individual as well as others in the aspect of so called 'character and conduct' is a bias or prejudice this faculty makes and most of the time is the basis for inter personal conflicts.

In this third stage the Ego adopts the posture that it is 'mind' that is the doer of things and holds that all actions are due to the accumulated 'idea power' (termed as samskaras, effect of karmas etc.) that is the doer and the individual is helpless. This aspect is the most popular one of the religious/ pseudo religious persons. And many times those who call themselves as Jnanis give this argument. Though there is a truth that all things that happen to us are a result of our past actions, the abdication of responsibility for correction that follows the result of the prior actions is a totally unwarranted journey into sloth and despondency.

In this fourth stage the idea that one, whom he has been accepted as our master, is doing all things. This is a subtle egoism where one continues to dwell in the thinking that it is his master who is doing all things outwardly, and internally all the time feeling that he is the doer. Very many aspirants who travelled the path for considerable time come to this stage and unable to leave possessiveness of things and men because of lack of determination would like to psychologically seek solace in this false hood- I had many occasions to point out the falsehood and lie are variations of Ego. This is the ring that holds persons to superstitions, idol worship, etc., in all of which we find the feeling that the person is the doer, though they outwardly profess that it is all their God or master etc., who is the doer. If they are put the question why then he is perturbed for delay in performing the puja or non performance of the puja, or use of certain items only in sadhana and if they are not made available get upset with everyone else first and himself later they bluff their way through.

The fifth ring relates to the maturity of this type of thinking that it is not body that is doing the things but the one to whom he has submitted as his master is doing all the actions. This is the stage, when every other aspect of sadhana being there one enters the realm beyond body. Here ends the region of elements or Pind Desh.

In Brahmand (which is a part of the heart region) the rings take a different hue. Here the person feels that the work is being done automatically with no idea of the doer. But the identity is aware of the work being done. Awareness is the quality of identity and hence ego in a very subtle shade is there. This state of ego is felt near the Prapanna condition where bhakti becomes finer. The worship of the Master started earlier in the gross form in Pind desh undergoes total transformation and continues with bare awareness. Dedication of the individual through every pore of his being is the basic characteristic. The idea can be understood even without the concept of body accompanying this state. It is infact a refinement of the state of Surrender developed in the Pind Desh. The body with eight limbs which describes the condition of one in the state of Surrender (sashtang pranam) gets transformed into the feeling that one is after all an 'anga' or limb of the Master. But still the feeling that one is a part of the whole is sufficient for the Master to call that a form of Ego. Such is the sensitiveness that Master exhorts us to develop.

In the next of phase of ego this awareness also is gone and one finds that the work is being done automatically and he is not aware of the work before or after the event.

It is total unawareness and it is in this condition work of the higher type are allotted. In our system the Master uses many aspirants without their awareness and they may not come to know that it is all his work at any point of time. But this requires the aspirant to be in the state of constant remembrance. This is in truth the condition of ego in the case of one at the level of Prapanna Prabhu.

The rings of ego may be considered to have ended here. All these stages of Ego are all in Heart region and we enter the Mind region. Here the ego is a very fine variety. Here the feeling of being a subject of God or Master expires. The vibrations are felt more intensely in the areas beyond the sahasrara and though we cannot call enjoyment or pleasure the feelings are there. Though the 'doer' is gone almost, the 'knower' and 'enjoyer' continues in the individuality. This transformation of the ego happens in the Mind region of God. It should be noted that it is the mind region of God and not our mind that is at play. Our mind is gone much before in the beginnings of Brahmand if the sadhaka has been keen in reaching the goal.

One needs a very strong determination to move on and should yield to the work of the master who is giving the push. On ones' own swimming up the stream is almost

impossible except in the cases of exceptional fishes which know that art. All the shades of egoism may still be extant here also and a slip from this condition is also possible if any of them or some of them take a grosser turn.

When the push is given by the Master the fringes of central region starts. I prefer to encourage aspirants saying that they have entered the central region at this stage though that is not the total truth. My interest is that they will take sadhana more seriously and feel grateful to the Master and firm up their will and determination to reach the goal. To support aspirants in this stage is impossible without the active support of the aspirant. Even before arriving at this point many an aspirant who was lucky to have the grace of the Master thinks that he has reached his goal and gets satisfied with the condition and remains in the realm of egoism of the finer variety. In such cases transmission perse does not help much and one needs to wait till one comes out of the heat. This is the reason Master many times stressed that it is only the chosen who reach the goal. As a practical guidance I may state service to the Masters cause and mission alone can bring us his grace.

In the rings of splendour it continues as mere identity

being barely conscious. In the central region it continues till the centre is reached. In this stage it under goes further refinement and the identity remains naked before the Master.

I have not been able to still see the fineness of the 11th ring and I wonder whether it continues co terminus with the rings of splendour in the final stage.

When we go through the biographies of the Master it is clear that they were still having problems with body to a greater extent and mind to a lesser extent based on the various ideas and ideologies to which they have subscribed. In the letters of the Master we find him referring to the state of humanity remaining nominally even after laya in the Absolute. This raises questions of serious philosophical concern. Because the system of our Master is entirely new and the discovery of the Central region is one of his unique contributions in the field of yoga we cannot adopt the definitions of laya as given in the scriptures or texts. If we are having the imperience of entering into the Central region even while living in the body it is because of His grace and His love which knows no bounds. It is here our notions gained from scriptures and texts of Vedanta come in the way and start questioning the very pramana (tool of knowledge) we

have adopted namely the anubhava pramana which is substantiated by the imperience following the same.