

CHAPTER IV

MAYA AS AHAMKARA OR EGOTISM ¹

Evils of egotism - The difficulty of conquering egotism - 'Ripe' ego and 'unripe' ego - How to conquer the ego - Ego in the man f of realisation

Evils of Egotism

99. The sun can give heat and light to the whole world, but he cannot do so when the clouds shut out his rays. Similarly as long as egotism veils the heart, God cannot shine upon it.

100. Egotism is like a cloud which keeps God hidden from our sight. If it vanishes by the mercy of the **Guru**, God is perceived in all His glory. For instance, you see in the picture that **Sri Ramachandra**, who is God, is only two' or three steps ahead of **Lakshmana** (the **Jiva**), but **Sita** (**Maya**), coming in between the two, prevents **Lakshmana** from having a view of Rama.

101. Q, Sir, why are we in bondage like this? Why do we not see God?A. Man's ego itself is **Maya**. It is the veil that shuts out the Light. Verily, with the death of the ' I ' all troubles cease. If by the grace of the Lord a man once gains the knowledge that he is not the doer, then he assuredly becomes a **Jivanmukta**, one freed in this very life, and transcends all fear.

102. If I hold this cloth before me, you cannot see me any more, though I am still as near you as ever. So also though God is nearer to you than anything else, because of the screen of egotism you cannot see Him.

103. As long as there is egotism, neither Self-knowledge (**Jnana**) nor liberation (**Mukti**) is possible; and there is no cessation of birth and death.

104. Rice, pulse, potatoes and other things put in cold water in an earthen vessel can be touched with the hand until they are heated on a fire. The same statement applies to the **Jiva**. This body is the earthen vessel; wealth and learning, caste and lineage, power and position are like rice, pulse and potatoes. Egotism is the heat. The **Jiva** is made hot (haughty) by egotism.

105. Rain-water never stands on high ground, but runs down to the lowest level. So also the mercy of God remains in the hearts of the lowly, but drains off from those of the vain and the proud.

106. Egotism is so injurious to man that as long as it is not eradicated there is no salvation for him. Look at the young calf and the troubles that come upon it through egotism. As soon as it is born, it cries, 'Hamba' - 'I am,' 'I am' The result of its egotism is that when it grows up, if it is an ox, it is yoked to the plough, to drag carts full of heavy load; if a cow, it is kept tied to its post and is sometimes even killed and eaten. But still, in spite of all this punishment, the animal does not lose its egotism; for drums that are made ,of its hide produce the same sound of 'Ham', 'T'. The creature does not learn humility until the cotton-carder makes bow-strings out of its entrails; for it is then that the animal's intestines sing out 'Tuhu' - 'Thou art'. The 'T' must go and give place to the 'Thou'; and this is not achieved until man becomes spiritually awakened.

107. Freedom will come when your- 'I-hood' (egotism) vanishes and you yourself are merged in the Divinity.

108. When does a man attain salvation? Only when his egotism dies.

109. Q. When shall I be free?

A. When that 'I' vanishes from you, 'I' and 'mine' - this is ignorance; 'Thou' and 'Thine' -that is true knowledge. The true **devotee** always says, "O Lord, Thou art the doer (**Karta**). Thou doest everything. I am a mere instrument in Thy ands. I do whatever Thou _akest me do. All this is Thy glory. This home and this family are Thine, not mine; I have only the right to serve as Thou ordainest."

The Difficulty of Conquering Egotism

110. The vanities of all others may gradually die out but the vanity of a saint regarding his sainthood is hard indeed to wear away.

111. The cup in which garlic juice is kept retains the odour, though washed several times. Egotism is such an obstinate aspect of ignorance that it never disappears completely, however hard you may try to get rid of it. go. You may reason and discriminate without end, yet this 'I' comes back again and again. Today you may cut down the Peepul tree, but tomorrow you will see it sprouting again.

112. The dyspeptic knows only too well that sour things are injurious to him, but such is the force of association that the sight of them is enough to make his mouth water. So, even if one tries hard to suppress the idea of 'I-ness' and 'mineness' yet when one begins to act, the 'unripe' ego asserts itself.

113. There are few who can attain [Samadhi](#) and get rid of the Aham-the feeling of 'I' within. Generally it does not go. You may reason and discriminate without end, yet this 'I' comes back again and again. Today you may cut down the Peepul tree, but tomorrow you will see it sprouting again.

114. Those who seek name and fame are under a delusion. They forget that everything is ordained by the Great Dispenser of all things and that all is due to the Lord and the Lord alone. The wise man says always, "It is Thou, O Lord, It is Thou"; but the ignorant and the deluded say, "It is I, it is I"

'Ripe' Ego and 'Unripe' Ego

115. There are two types of egos, one 'ripe': and the other 'unripe'. "Nothing is mine, whatever I see or feel, or hear, nay, even this body itself, is not mine; I am always eternal, free and all-knowing,"-such ideas arise from the 'ripe' ego. "This is my house, this is my child, this is my wife, this is my body,"-thoughts of this kind are the manifestation of the 'unripe' ego.

116. The ego that asserts "I am the servant of God" is characteristic of the true [devotee](#). It is the ego of [Vidya](#) (Knowledge), and is called the 'ripe' ego.

117. What is the 'mischievous I'? The 'I', which says, "What! Don't they know me? I have so much money! Who is so wealthy as I am? Who dares to surpass me?"

118. The 'I', which makes a man worldly and attached to lust and wealth is mischievous. The individual soul and the Universal' Being are separated because this 'I', comes in between them. If a stick is placed on the surface of water, the water will appear to be divided into two sections. The stick is the Aham-the 'I'. Take that away, and the water becomes again undivided.

How to Conquer the Ego

119. If one ponders over this word 'I', trying to track it down, one sees that it is only a word which denotes egotism. But it is extremely difficult to shake it off. So one must say, "You wicked 'I', if you will not go by any means, remain as the servant of God." The ego that feels itself to be the servant of God is called the 'ripe I'.

120. [Sankaracharya](#) had a disciple who had been serving him for a long time but was not still given any instruction by him. Once, while seated alone, [Sankara](#) heard the footsteps of someone coming behind. So he called out, "Who is there?" The disciple answered, "It is I." The [Acharya](#) thereupon said, "If this 'I' is so dear to you, then either expand it to infinity (*i.e.* know the universe as yourself), or renounce it altogether."

121. If you find that you cannot drive off this feeling of 'I', then let it remain as the 'servant I'. There is not much to fear from the ego which is centered in the thought, "I am the servant of God; I am His [devotee](#)." Sweets cause dyspepsia, but not sugar-candy which is an exception. The 'servant I', the 'I', of a [devotee](#), the 'I' of a child-each of these is like a line drawn with a stick on the surface of water; this 'I' does not last-long.

122. Just as sugar-candy has no unwholesome effect like other sweets, so also the 'ripe' ego which considers itself to be the servant or worshipper of God causes none of those evil consequences characteristic of the 'Unripe' ego. On the other hand it leads to God, and signifies that one has progressed in [Bhakti Yoga](#) or the path of devotion.

123. What is the nature of the feelings and impulses of one who has the attitude of the 'servant I'? If this conviction is true and sincere, then there remains only the form, the appearance, of his former feelings and impulses. Even if the 'ego of the servant' or the 'ego of the devotee' remains, one who has realised God can hurt none. The whole sting of individuality vanishes from him. The sword becomes gold by a touch of the philosopher's stone. It retains its former shape, but can no longer hurt anyone.

124. If you feel proud, let it be in the thought that you are the servant of God, the son of God. Great men have the nature of children. They are always children before Him; so they are free from pride. All their strength is of God, and not their own. It belongs to Him and comes from Him.

125. A person who is convinced that everything is done by the will of God, feels himself to be a mere tool in His hands. He is then free from all bondage even in this very life. "Thou doest Thy work, Lord; but man says, 'I do it!'"

126. As long as one says, "I know" or "I do not know", one looks upon oneself as a person. My Divine Mother says: "It is only when I have effaced the whole of this Aham (I-ness) in you, that the Undifferentiated Absolute (My impersonal aspect) can be realised in [Samadhi](#)." Till then there is the 'I', in me and before me.

127. After a process of severe struggle with one's lower nature and the assiduous practice of spiritual discipline leading to Self-knowledge, one attains the state of [Samadhi](#). Then the ego with all its train vanishes. But it is very difficult to attain [Samadhi](#); the ego is very persistent. That is why we are born again and again in this world.

128. So long as one is not blessed with the vision Divine, so long as the touch of the philosopher's stone has not transmuted the base metal in one into gold, there will be the illusive feeling: 'I am the doer.' And until this illusion ceases, there will persist the idea that gives the sense of distinction between 'I have done this good work', and 'I have done that bad work.' [Maya](#) means this sense of distinction, and it is because of *it* that the world continues. One reaches Him if one takes refuge in [Vidya Maya](#)-that aspect of Divine Power having the preponderance of [Sattva](#) -which leads one by the right path. He alone crosses the ocean of [Maya](#), who comes face to face with God- realises Him. A man is truly free, even here in this embodied state, if he knows that God is the true agent and he by himself is powerless to do anything.

The Ego of the Man of Realisation

129. Will the sense of 'I', never die away completely? The petals of the lily drop off in time, but they leave their mark behind. So the ego of man entirely disappears (when he realises God), but traces of its former existence remain; this, however, does not produce any evil effect.

130. The truly wise man is he who has seen the Lord. He becomes like a child. The child, no doubt, seems to have an individuality, a separateness, of its own. But that individuality is a mere appearance, not a reality. The self of the child is nothing like the self of the grown-up man.

131. Some great souls who have reached the seventh or the highest plane of [Samadhi](#), and have thus become merged in God-consciousness, are pleased to come down from that spiritual height for the good of mankind. They keep the ego of Knowledge (the Aham of [Vidya](#)), which is the same as the higher Self. But this ego is a mere appearance. It is like a line drawn across water.

132. As a piece of rope, when burnt, retains its form, but cannot serve to bind, so is the ego which is burnt by the fire of supreme Knowledge.

133. A man dreams that someone is coming to cut him to pieces. Frightened, he awakens with a groan and sees that the door of his room is closed from within and that no one is inside it. Even then, his heart continues to beat fast for some minutes. So does our Abhimana, or sense of 'I', leave behind it some momentum even when it has departed.

134. After the attainment of **Samadhi** some still retain the ego-the 'I' of the servant or worshipper of God. **Sankaracharya** kept the ego of **Vidya** (knowledge) for the purpose of teaching others.

135. **Hanuman** was blessed with the vision of God both with form and without it (Sakara and Nirakara). But he retained the ego of a servant of God. Such was also the case with **Narada**, **Sanaka**, Sanandana and **Sanatkumara**.

A devotee: Were **Narada** and others only Bhaktas, or were they Jnanis also?

The Master: **Narada** and others had attained the highest Knowledge (**Brahmajnana**). But still they went on like the murmuring water of the rivulet, talking and singing the praise of God. This shows that they too kept this ego of Knowledge, a slight trace of individuality, to mark their separate existence from the Deity, for the purpose of teaching others the saving truths of religion.

136. Once the **Master** asked a disciple of his in a playful mood, "Well, do you notice in me any Abhimana (pride arising from the sense of 'I')? Have I any Abhimana ?

The Disciple: Yes, Sir, a little; but that little has been kept for the following purposes: first, for the preservation of the body; secondly, for the practice of devotion to God, thirdly, for mixing with the company of devotees; and fourthly, for giving instruction to others. At the same time, it must be said that you have retained it only after a good deal of prayer. I mean, the natural state of your soul is capable of being described only by the word **Samadhi**. Hence I say that the Abhimana or egoism which you possess is the result of your prayer. The Master: Yes, but it has been retained not by me but by my Divine Mother. It lies with my Divine Mother to grant the prayer.