

Solving Mental Conflicts

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### The Nature of the Ego and Its Termination

*The Ego as the Center of Conflict*

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#### Question::

*Does animals have egos? When & Why does the 'ego' originate, in the first place?*

*(or)*

*Where does "learning" start, in the evolution process?*

*(or)*

*What is ego-consciousness? Where exactly does it start in the evolution process?*

*(or)*

*Why and How does the 'ego' originate, in the first place? How are 'human consciousness' and 'ego' related?*

*(or)*

*Why should one try and integrate 'opposites of experience'? What good does it bring?*

*(or)*

*What is a condition necessary to fulfill to emancipate consciousness?*

*(or)*

*What is the role of ego, in human life? What purpose does it serve, in terms of human mentality? What happens if there is no provision of the ego, in human life?*

*(or)*

*How is it that ego is so crucial for 'human experience'?*

*(or)*

*What is "ego-nucleus"? What does it do?*

*(or)*

*What does 'understanding-an-experience' imply?*

*(or)*

*Why is it that 'phase of ego-formation' in one's life, is considered a necessary evil??*

*(or)*

*What is the necessity of 'spiritual endeavour'? What for is spiritual endeavour?*

(or)

*What is 'ego', basically?*

(or)

*When does the 'ego' vitiate our experience and perpetuate our illusory thinking?*

(or)

*How come 'ego' cause divisions?*

(or)

*What are 'internal conflicts'? Why do they arise, in the first place?*

(or)

*Why can't we act balanced, all the time?*

(or)

*What is the cause of mental derangements? How are 'abnormal' people different from 'normal' ones?*

(or)

*Why do we make wrong choices? How can we make right choices all the time?*

(or)

*What is the chief characteristic of the ego?*

(or)

*What is the 'principle of ignorance'?*

(or)

*How does "CONSCIOUS CONTROL" help eliminate one's inner conflicts?*

(or)

*Why can't the human mind function harmoniously, all the time?*

(or)

*How does 'true valuation' help control the forces of the sub-conscious?*

(or)

*What constitutes true valuation? How can one make intelligent choices?*

(or)

*What are 'values' for?*

(or)

*Why 'wisdom' is necessary?*

(or)

*What does the solution of our 'mental conflicts' require?*

(or)

*When can one live a life of values?*

*(or)*

*What are 'hidden conflicts'? When does 'mental conflicts' disappear completely?*

*(or)*

*How come conflicts regarding 'ordinary things' affect the general outlook of one's life?*

*(or)*

*What are imaginative conflicts? How can one differentiate between an 'imaginary conflict' and a 'real one'?*

*(or)*

*What is the role of 'introspection' in handling 'mental conflicts'?*

*(or)*

*Why "ideals" are necessary for everyone?*

*(or)*

*How does 'true ideal' help resolve 'mental conflicts'?*

*(or)*

*What is right valuation? How come it help transcend limited-ego?*

*(or)*

*How does 'life of true values' aid disintegration of ego? What happens when ego disintegrates?*

## **Answer:**

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**In the pre-human stage consciousness has experiences, but these experiences are not explicitly brought into relation with a central "I".**

**For example, a dog may get angry; but it does not continue to feel "I am angry".** Even in this case, we find that *the dog learns through some experiences and thus bases the action of one experience on another; but this action is a result of a semi mechanical tension of connected imprints, or sanskaras. It is different from*

***the intelligent synthesis of experiences that the development of “I”-consciousness makes possible.***

*The first step in submitting the working of isolated impressions to intelligent regulation consists in bringing them all into relation with the center of consciousness, which appears as the explicit ‘limited ego’. The consolidation of ego-consciousness is most clear and defined from the beginning of human consciousness.*

Human consciousness would be nothing more than a repository for the accumulated imprints of varied experiences if it did not also contain the principle of ego-centered integration, which expresses itself in the attempt to organize and understand experience.

**The process of understanding experience implies**

- **the capacity to hold different bits of experiences together as parts of a unity, and**
- **the capacity to evaluate them by their being brought into mutual relationships.**

The integration of the opposites of experience is a condition of emancipating consciousness from the thralldom of diverse compulsions and repulsions, which tend to dominate consciousness irrespective of its valuation. The early attempts to secure such integration are made through the formation of the ego as its base and center.

**The ‘ego’ emerges as an explicit and unfailing accompaniment to all the happenings of mental life in order to fulfill a certain need. The part played by the ‘ego’ in human life may be compared to the function of ballast in a ship.**

The ballast in a ship keeps it from oscillating too much. Without it, the ship is likely to be too light and unsteady and is in danger of being overturned by the lawless winds and waves. Thus ‘mental energy’ would be caught up endlessly in the multitudinous mazes of ‘dual experience’ and would all be wasted and dissipated if there were no provisional nucleus.

**The ‘ego’**

- takes stock of all acquired experience, and

- binds together the active tendencies born of the relatively independent and loose instincts inherited from 'animal consciousness.'

**The 'formation of the ego' serves the purpose of –**

- giving a certain amount of stability to conscious processes, and also
- secures a working equilibrium which makes for a planned and organized life.

**It would be a mistake, therefore, to imagine that the arising of the ego is without any purpose.** Though it arises only to vanish in the end, it does temporarily fulfill a need that could not have been ignored in the long journey of the soul.

**The ego is not meant to be a permanent handicap, since it can be transcended and outgrown through spiritual endeavour.** *But the phase of ego formation must nevertheless be looked upon as a necessary evil, which has to come into existence for the time-being.*

**The ego thus marks and fulfills a certain necessity in the further progress of consciousness.** However, **since the ego takes shelter in the false idea of being the body, it is a source of much illusion which vitiates experience.** It is of the essence of the ego that it should feel separate from the rest of life by contrasting itself with other forms of life.

Thus, though inwardly trying to complete and integrate individual experience, the ego also creates an artificial division between external and internal life in the very attempt to feel and secure its own existence. This division in the totality of life cannot but have its reverberations in the inner individual life over which the ego presides as a guiding genius.

**While always striving to establish unity and integration in experience, the ego can never realize this objective.** Though it establishes a certain kind of balance, this balance is only provisional and temporary. **The incompleteness of its attainments is evident from the internal conflict that is never absent as long as experience is being faced from the point of view of the ego.**

From moment to moment, the mind of man is passing through a series of conflicts. The minds of great and distinguished persons as well as the minds of common people are seen to be harassed by conflicting desires and tendencies. Sometimes the conflict the mind is faced with is so acute that the person concerned yields to the pressures, and there is either partial or total derangement of the mind.

There is really no vital difference between the normal and the so-called abnormal individual. Both have the same problems; but the one can more or less successfully solve his problems and the other cannot solve them.

**The 'ego' attempts to solve its inner conflicts through false valuation and wrong choices.**

**It is characteristic of the ego that it takes all that is unimportant as important and all that is important as unimportant.** *Thus, although power, fame, wealth, ability, and other worldly attainments and accomplishments are really unimportant, the ego takes delight in these possessions and clings to them as "mine".* **On the other hand, true spirituality is all-important for the soul, but the ego looks upon it as unimportant.**

For example, if a person experiences some bodily or mental discomfort while doing work of spiritual importance, the ego steps in to secure the unimportant bodily or mental comfort even at the cost of giving up the really important spiritual work.

**Bodily and mental comfort, as well as other worldly attainments and accomplishments are often necessary; but they are not therefore important.**

**There is a world of difference between 'necessity' and 'importance'.** Many things come to the ego as being necessary, but they are not in themselves important. *Spirituality, which comes to the ego as being unnecessary, is really important for the soul.*

*The 'ego' thus represents a deep and fundamental principle of ignorance which is exhibited in always preferring the unimportant to the important.*

**The mind rarely functions harmoniously because it is mostly guided and governed by forces in the subconscious.** *Few persons take the trouble to attain mastery over these 'hidden forces' that direct the course of mental life.*

**The elimination of conflict is possible only through CONSCIOUS CONTROL over the forces in the subconscious.** This "control" can be permanently attained only through the repeated-exercise-of-true-valuation in all cases of conflict presented to the mind.

**If the mind is to be freed from conflict, it must always make the right choice and must unfailingly prefer the truly important to the unimportant. The choice has to be both 'intelligent' and 'firm' in all cases of conflict— important as well as unimportant.**

**It has to be 'intelligent' because,** only through the pursuit of true and permanent values is it possible to attain a poise that is not detrimental to the dynamic and creative flow of mental life.

An 'unintelligent choice' if it is firm, may temporarily overcome conflict; but it is bound in the long run to curtail the scope of life or to hamper the fulfillment of the whole personality. *Moreover, the conflict will reappear in some form if it has not been intelligently solved.*

**An intelligent solution, on the other hand, requires an insight into true values, which have to be disentangled from false values.** The problem of conflict of desires thus turns out to be the problem of conflicting values, and the solution of 'mental conflict' therefore requires a deep search for the real meaning of life. *It is only through 'wisdom' that the 'mind' can be freed from conflict!*

**Having once known what the right choice is, the next step is to stick to it firmly.** Although, the competing tendencies in the mind may be quieted by choosing one particular course in preference to other alternatives, they still continue to act as obstacles in making the choice fully effective and operative. *At times, there is a danger of a decision being subverted through the intensification of those competing forces in the subconscious.*

**To avoid defeat, the mind must stick tenaciously to the right values it has perceived. Thus, the solution of mental conflict requires not only perception of right values but also an unswerving fidelity to them.**

**An ‘intelligent’ and ‘firm’ choice, however, has to be repeatedly exercised in all matters– small or great.** For the ordinary worries of life are not in any way less important than the serious problems with which the mind is confronted in times of crisis. *The roots of mental conflict cannot completely disappear as long as there is only intermittent exercise of intelligent and firm choice.* **The life of true values can be spontaneous only when the mind has developed the unbroken habit of choosing the right values.**

Three-quarters of our life is made up of ordinary things; and though conflict concerning ‘ordinary things’ may not cause much mental agony, it still leaves in the mind a sense-of-uneasiness that something is wrong. The conflicts that turn upon ordinary things are rarely even brought to the surface of consciousness. ***Instead they cast a shadow on one's general feeling about life as if from behind a screen.*** Such conflicts have to be brought to the surface-of-consciousness and frankly faced before they can be adequately solved.

The process of bringing conflict to the surface of consciousness should not degenerate, however, into a process of imagining conflict where there is none.

**The SURE SIGN of a real hidden conflict is the SENSE that the whole of one's heart is not in the ‘thought’ or ‘action’ that happens to be dominant at the moment.** There is a vague feeling of a narrowing down, or a radical restriction of life.

**On such occasions, an attempt should be made to analyze one's mental state through deep-introspection; for such analysis brings to light the ‘hidden conflicts’ concerning the matter.**

When the conflicts are thus brought to light, it is possible to resolve them through ‘intelligent’ and ‘firm’ choices.

**The most important requirement for the satisfactory resolution of conflict is ‘motive power’ or ‘inspiration’ which can only come from a burning longing for some comprehensive ideal.** Analysis in itself may aid choice, but the choice will remain a barren and ineffective intellectual preference unless it is vitalized by zeal for some “ideal” appealing to the deepest and most significant strata of human personality.

Modern psychology has done much to reveal the sources of conflict, but it has yet to discover methods of *awakening inspiration* or *supplying the mind with something that makes life worth living*. This indeed is the creative task facing saviours of humanity.

**The establishment of a 'true ideal' is the beginning of right valuation. Right valuation in turn is the undoing of the constructions of the ego which thrives on false valuation.** Any action that expresses the true values of life contributes toward the disintegration of the ego, which is a product of ages of ignorant action. *Life cannot be permanently imprisoned within the cage of the ego. It must at some time strive toward the Truth.*

In the ripeness of evolution comes the momentous discovery that life cannot be understood and lived fully as long as it is made to move around the pivot of the ego. Man is then driven by the logic of his own experience to find the true center of experience and reorganize his life in the Truth. This entails the wearing out of the ego and its replacement by Truth consciousness.

**The disintegration of the ego culminates in realizing the Truth.** The false nucleus of consolidated sanskaras must disappear if there is to be a true integration and fulfilment of life.

– Meher Baba

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Source ::

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