

A FEW MORE PAGES OF NOTES AND QUOTES FOR SECRET OF THE I [PURPLE PB NOTES ONLY... ALREADY IN *SECRET OF I* NOTES]

ON EGO

Think! What does the "I" stand for? This single and simple letter is filled with unutterable mystery. For apart from the infinite void in which it is born and to which it must return, it has no meaning. The Eternal is its hidden core and content. 8.1.8

The ego self is the creature born out of man's own doing and thinking, slowly changing and growing. The Overself is the image of God, perfect, finished, and changeless. What he has to do, if he is to fulfil himself, is to let the one shine through the other. 8.1.7

What is the ego but the Overself surrounded with barriers, conditioned by its instruments--the body, the feelings, and the intellect--and forgetful of its own nature? 8.1.6

Because this emanated consciousness of the Overself ties itself so completely and so continuously to the thought-series, which after all are its own creations, it identifies itself with the illusory ego produced by their activity and forgets its own larger, less limited origin. 8.2.47

Why I chose "*What Am I*": (1) Because I wanted to start with the idea of a non-"I" consciousness instead of their own "I" with which they are continuously occupied; (2) Because the word Brahman is of neuter gender, neither masculine nor feminine. Brahman in us is Atman, the Self--but utterly impersonal. "What" lends itself more easily to this impersonality than "Who"; (3) The answer to "*What Am I*?" is multiple but it begins with "a part of the world!" and is followed by another question, "What is my relation to this world?" The answer requires the discovery of Mentalism, leading back through the thought of the world, thinker, and consciousness, to Brahman. 8.1.36

Place of Ego in World-Order

At every point of his progress the ego still functions--except in deep, thought-free contemplation, when it is suppressed--but it becomes by well-defined stages a better and finer character, more and more in harmony with the Overself. But total relinquishment of the ego can happen only with total relinquishment of the body, that is, at death. 8.1.188

The highest goal of the quest is not illumination gained by destruction of the ego but rather by perfection of the ego. It is the function of egoism which is to be destroyed, not that which functions. The ego's rulership is to go, not the ego itself. 8.1.189 *compare 23.5.3 above*

How can a person fully express himself unless he fully develops himself? The spiritual evolution which requires him to abandon the ego runs parallel to the mental evolution which requires him to perfect it. (8:1.158) find the other one on two ways...

The twofold way is indispensable: on the one hand the way of self-effort, working to overcome the ego, and on the other the way of Grace, through constantly remembering your true identity in the Overself. 23.5.193

In all human activity the ego plays its role, and so long as this activity continues the ego continues. There is much confusion and much misunderstanding about this point. We are told to kill out the ego; we are also told that the ego does not exist. The fact is it must exist if activity exists. What then is to be done by the spiritual aspirant? He can bring and eventually must bring the ego into subjection to the higher Power. It is still there, but it is put in its proper place. Now why are we told to kill out the ego if it is not possible? The answer is that it is possible, but only in what is the deepest point of meditation, called *nirvikalpa* in Sanskrit, where all thoughts are blotted out, all sense reports cease to exist, and a kind of trancelike condition comes into being. In this condition, the ego is unable to exist; it becomes inoperative, but it is certainly not killed or it would not return again after the condition ends as it must end. It does not really help to assert that the ego does not exist or if it does exist that it must be killed. The fact is it must be taken into account by everybody who seeks the higher life; whatever theories he entertains about the ego, it is there, must be reckoned with, must be confronted. Some of the confusion is due to the fact that the ego is a changing thing; it changes with time and experience, whereas the Infinite Being, the Ultimate, is changeless. In that sense reality cannot be ascribed to the ego, but only in that ultimate sense. We however are living down here, in time and in space, and to ignore that fact is to cultivate intellectual deaf and dumbness. [190](#)

There is much confusion about this matter of the ego and much looseness in the use of words concerning it. We are told to eliminate the ego and to eradicate the personal self. But the fact is that so long as he is upon this earth he is using a body and a mind and inheriting a whole combination of factors, tendencies, characteristics which have come down from former lives and together now constitute his personality. They will still be present so long as he is alive. To destroy the ego completely would necessarily mean to destroy the physical body, which is a part of it, and to remove his particular individuality which sets him apart from others. This cannot be done, but what can be done is to render the ego subservient to the higher self, an obedient instrument of the higher will. 8.1.[197](#)

It is both true and untrue that we cannot take up the ego with us into the life of mystical illumination. The ego is after all only a reflection, extremely limited and often distorted, of the Higher Self . . . but still it *is* a reflection. If we could bring it into correct alignment with, and submission to, the Higher Self, it would then be no hindrance to the illumined life. The ego cannot, indeed, be destroyed so long as we need its services while in the flesh; but it can be subjugated and turned into a servant instead of permitting it to remain a master. When this is understood, the philosophical ideal of a fully developed, mastered, and richly rounded ego acting as a channel for the inspiration and guidance of the Higher Self will be better appreciated. A poverty-stricken ego will naturally form a more limited channel for the expression of the Higher Self than would a more evolved one. The real enemy to be overcome is not the entity ego, but the function of egoism. 206 see also 207-208

The ego to which he is so attached turns out on enquiry to be none other than the presence of World-Mind within his own heart. If identification is then shifted by constant practice from one to the other, he has achieved the purpose of life. Notebooks 8.1.127

Let them not waste so many words about or against this little ego of ours, decrying its character or denying its existence, but try to understand what is really happening in its short life. Let them find out what is actually being wrought out within and around it. Let them recognize that the Governor of the World is related to it and that we are steeped in the Divinity whether we are aware of it or not. 8:1.130

The subtler mental equipment must be energized and developed before he can use the subtler ideas of philosophy in the higher stages of this quest. First comes the idea of mentalism. Beyond that comes the idea of simultaneity--that he both is and is not a twofold being. [2:4.74](#)

UNIT OF LIFE/MIND

Students who have come finally to philosophy from the Indian Advaita Vedanta, bring with them the belief that the divine soul having somehow lost its consciousness is now seeking to become self-conscious again. They suppose that the ego originates and ends on the same level--divinity--and therefore the question is often asked why it should go forth on such a long and unnecessary journey. This question is a misconceived one. It is not the ego itself which ever was consciously divine, but its source, the Overself. The ego's divine character lies in its essential but hidden being, but it has never known that. The purpose of gathering experience (the evolutionary process) is precisely to bring it to such awareness. The ego comes to slow birth in finite consciousness out of utter unconsciousness and, later, to recognition and union with its infinite source. That source, whence it has emanated, remains untouched, unaffected, ever knowing and serenely witnessing. The purpose in this evolution is the ego's own advancement. When the Quest is reached, the Overself reveals its presence fitfully and brokenly at first but later the hide-and-seek game ends in loving union. 26.4.256 (*of course also 26.4.257*)

The unit of mind is differentiated out and undergoes its long evolution through numerous changes of state, not to merge so utterly in its source again as to be virtually annihilated, but to be consciously harmonized with that source whilst yet retaining its individuality. ([25:2.204](#))

Perhaps one day some bright mind will write a book entitled *Inspired Egoism* to bring people into the understanding that the ego too has its place in the scheme of things. It is the little circle within the larger one of the Overself, and if it remains conscious of its true relationship to the Overself, it may still rest there and carry on with its functions. [8:1.203](#)

Trace Ego To Its Lair: (Notebooks)

So long as we persist in taking the ego at its own valuation as the real Self, so long are we incapable of discovering the truth about the mind or of penetrating to its mysterious depths. It is a pretender, but so long as no enquiry is instituted it goes on enjoying the status of the real Self. Once an enquiry into its true nature is begun in the proper manner and continued as long as necessary, this identification with ego may subside and surrender to the higher. 8.4.386

To trace the ego to its lair is to observe its open and covered manifestations, to analyse, comprehend, and note their everchanging ephemerality. Finally it too turns out to be but a thought structure--empty, and capable of dissolution like all thoughts. 8.4.387

Be still and know! This is to be done by practicing the art of meditation deep into its second stage and then--for it cannot properly be done before--tracing the ego to its hidden lair. Here it must be faced. Being still involves the achievement of mental silence, without which the ego remains cunningly active and keeps him within its sphere of influence. Knowing involves penetrating to the ego's secret source where, in its lulled and weakened condition, it can be confronted and killed. 8.4.390

There would be no hope of ever getting out of this ego-centered position if we did not know these three things. First, the ego is only an accumulation of memories and a series of cravings, that is, thought; it is a fictitious entity. Second, the thinking activity can come to an end in stillness. Third, Grace, the radiation of the Power beyond man, is ever-shining and ever-present. If we let the mind become deeply still and deeply observant of the ego's self-preserving instinct, we open the door to Grace, which then lovingly swallows us. (8:4.417)

He will advance most on the Quest who tries most to separate himself from his ego. It will be a long, slow struggle and a hard one, for the false belief that the ego is his true self grips him with hypnotic intensity. All the strength of all his being must be brought to this struggle to remove error and to establish truth, for it is an error not merely of the intellect alone but also of the emotions and of the will. Perspectives p. 198

Surrender: turn to the Overself

He who enters upon this quest will have plenty to do, for he will have to work on the weaknesses in his character, to think impartially, to meditate regularly, and to aspire constantly. Above all, he will have to train himself in the discipline of surrendering the ego. P. 21

We who honour philosophy so highly cannot afford to be other than honest with ourselves. We have to acknowledge that the end of all our striving is surrender. No human being can do other than this--an utterly humble prostration, where we dissolve, lose the ego, lose ourselves--the rest is paradox and mystery. (20:5.11)

This whittling away of the ego may occupy the entire lifetime and not seem very successful even then, yet it is of the highest value as a preparatory process for the full renunciation of the ego when--by Grace--it suddenly rises up in the heart. (8:4.422)

By thought, the ego was made; by thought, the ego's power can be unmade. But the thought must be directed toward a higher entity, for the ego's willingness to attack itself is only a pretense. Direct it constantly to the Overself, be mentally devoted to the Overself, and emotionally love the Overself. Can it then refuse to help you? 18.1.77

Until it is brought to his attention, he may not know that the idol at whose feet he is continually worshipping is the ego. If he could give to God the same amount of remembrance that he gives to his ego, he could quite soon attain, and become established in, that enlightenment to which other men devote lifetimes of arduous effort. 8.4.153

The principle which makes union with the Overself possible is always the same, albeit on different levels. Whether it appears as humility in prayer, passivity to intuition, stillness in meditation, or serenity despite untoward circumstances, these attitudes temporarily weaken the ego and lessen its domination. They temporarily silence the ego and give the Overself the opportunity to touch us or work through us. So long as the ego dominates us, we are outside the reach of the Overself and separated from its help. 22.5.33

The ego thought is like a string upon which our multitudinous sense-memories, interests, desires, fears thoughts and feelings are threaded. And when one speaks of the surrender of the ego, it is not the surrender of one particular bead which is meant, but rather of the entire string which holds together all the diverse beads and without which all would collapse. This is effected, and can only be effected, by turning the mind inwards, and by concentrating deeper and ever deeper within the heart until individual beads of thought and feeling no longer engage our consciousness, but only the single thought of self-existence. Then we discover that we are really angels fallen from the empyrean. Quest of the Overself

There are certain rare moments when intense sorrow or profound bereavement makes a person sick at heart. It is then that desires temporarily lose their force, possessions their worth, and even existence itself its reality. One seems to stand outside the busy world whose figures flit to and fro like the shadowy characters on a cinema screen. Worst of all, perhaps, significance vanishes from human activity, which becomes a useless tragi-comedy, a going everywhere and arriving nowhere, an insane playing of instruments from which no music issues forth, a vanity of all the vanities. It is then, too, that a terrible suicidal urge may enter his blood and he will need all his mental ballast not to make away with himself. Yet these black moments are intensely precious, for they may set his feet firmly on the higher path. Few realize this whilst all complain. The self-destruction to which he is being urged by such dread experiences of life is not the crude physical act, but something subtle--a suicide of thought, emotion, and will. He is being called indeed, to die to his ego, to take the desires and passions, the greeds and hates out of his life, to learn the art of living in utter independence of externals and in utter dependence on the Overself. And this is that same call which Jesus uttered when he said: "He that loseth his life shall find it." Thus the sorrows of life on earth are but a transient means to an eternal end, a process through which we have to learn how to expand awareness from the person to the Overself. ([1:2.170](#)).

Nisargadatta Maharaj. I Am That “the Way”

Q: Is there a way to it?

M: Everything can become a way, provided you are interested. Just puzzling over my words and trying to grasp their full meaning is a sadhana quite sufficient for breaking down the wall. -- what is needed is sincere interest. Earnestness does it.

Q: Can I do it?

M: Of course. You are quite capable of crossing over. Only be sincere. *Ch 42*

Q: How do I go about it in practice?

M: Whenever a thought or emotion of desire or fear comes to your mind, just turn away from it.

Q: By suppressing my thoughts and feelings I shall provoke a reaction.

M: I am not talking of suppression. Just refuse attention.

Q: Must I not use effort to arrest the movements of the mind?

M: It has nothing to do with effort. Just turn away, look between the thoughts, rather than at the thoughts.

Q: How long will it take me to get free of the mind?

M: It may take a thousand years, but really no time is required. All you need is to be in dead earnest. Here the will is the deed. If you are sincere, you have it. After all, it is a matter of attitude. Nothing stops you from being a jnani here and now, except fear. You are afraid of being impersonal, of impersonal being. It is all quite simple. Turn away from your desires and fears and from the thoughts they create and you are at once in your natural state.

Q: No question of reconditioning, changing, or eliminating the mind?

M: Absolutely none. Leave your mind alone, that is all. Don't go along with it. After all, there is no such thing as mind apart from thoughts which come and go obeying their own laws, not yours. They dominate you only because you are interested in them. It is exactly as Christ said 'Resist not evil'. By resisting evil you merely strengthen it. *Ch. 72*

Q: What is the purpose of meditation?

M: Seeing the false as the false, is meditation. This must go on all the time.

Q: We are told to meditate regularly.

M: Deliberate daily exercise in discrimination between the true and the false and renunciation of the false is meditation. There are many kinds of meditation to begin with, but they all merge finally into one.

Q: Please tell me which road to self-realisation is the shortest.

M: No way is short or long, but some people are more in earnest and some are less.

Q: How can I aspire to such heights, small and limited as I am?

M: realise yourself as the ocean of consciousness in which all happens. This is not difficult. A little of attentiveness, of close observation of oneself, and you will see that no event is outside your consciousness.

Nisargadatta Maharaj. I Am That ch. 1: the sense of “I am”

Questioner: It is a matter of daily experience that on waking up the world suddenly appears. Where does it come from?

Maharaj: Before anything can come into being there must be somebody to whom it comes. All appearance and disappearance presupposes a change against some changeless background.

Q: I am always somebody with its memories and habits. I know no other ‘I am’.

M. Go deep into the sense of ‘I am’ and you will find. How do you find a thing you have mislaid or forgotten? You keep it in your mind until you recall it. The sense of being, of ‘I am’ is the first to emerge. Ask yourself whence it comes, or just watch it quietly. When the mind stays in the ‘I am’ without moving, you enter a state which cannot be verbalised but can be experienced. All you need to do is try and try again.

After all the sense ‘I am’ is always with you, only you have attached all kinds of things to it -- body, feelings, thoughts, ideas, possessions etc. All these self-identifications are misleading. Because of them you take yourself to be what you are not.

Q: Then what am I?

M: It is enough to know what you are not. You need not know what you are. For as long as knowledge means description in terms of what is already known, perceptual, or conceptual, there can be no such thing as self-knowledge, for what you are cannot be described, except as except as total negation. All you can say is: ‘I am not this, I am not that’. You cannot meaningfully say ‘this is what I am’. It just makes no sense. What you can point out as ‘this’ or ‘that’ cannot be yourself. Surely, you can not be ‘something’ else. You are nothing perceivable, or imaginable. Yet, without you there can be neither perception nor imagination. You observe the heart feeling, the mind thinking, the body acting; the very act of perceiving shows that you are not what you perceive. Can there be perception, experience without you? An experience must ‘belong’. Somebody must come and declare it as his own. Without an experiencer the experience is not real. It is the experiencer that imparts reality to experience. An experience which you cannot have, of what value is it to you?

Q: The sense of being an experiencer, the sense of ‘I am’, is it not also an experience?

M: Obviously, every thing experienced is an experience. And in every experience there arises the experiencer of it. Memory creates the illusion of continuity. In reality each experience has its own experiencer and the sense of identity is due to the common factor at the root of all experiencer-experience relations. Identity and continuity are not the same. Just as each flower has its own colour, but all colours are caused by the same light, so do many experiences appear in the undivided and indivisible awareness, each separate in memory, identical in essence. This essence is the root, the foundation, the timeless and spaceless ‘possibility’ of all experience.

Q: How do I get at it?

M: You need not get at it, for you are it. It will get at you, if you give it a chance. Let go your attachment to the unreal and the real will swiftly and smoothly step into its own. Stop imagining yourself being or doing this or that and the realisation that you are the source and heart of all will dawn upon you. With this will come great love which is not choice or predilection, nor attachment, but a power which makes all things love-worthy and lovable. Ch 1

Q: What is the Sadhana for achieving the natural state?

M: **Hold on to the sense “I am”** to the exclusion of everything else. When thus the mind becomes completely silent, it shines with a new light and vibrates with new knowledge. It all comes spontaneously, you need only hold on to the “I Am” You will recognize that you have returned to your natural state by a complete absence of all desire and fear. Ch 69

Q: How to find the way to one’s own being?

M: **give up all questions except one: “Who am I?”** After all, the only fact you are sure of is, that you are. The “I am” is certain. The “I am this” is not. Struggle to find out what you are in reality. 66

Separate consistently and perseveringly the “I am” from “this” or “that” and try to feel what it means to be, just to be, without being this or that. Ch 18

Look at yourself in total silence, do not describe yourself. Look at the being you believe you are and remember—you are not what you see. “This I am not—what am I” is the movement of self-inquiry. Resolutely reject what you are not, till the real Self emerges in its glorious nothingness. Ch 100

Give up the idea of being a person, that is all. You need not become what you are anyhow. There is the identity of what you are and there is the person superimposed on it. All you know is the person, the identity—which is not a person—you do not know, for you never doubted, never asked yourself the crucial question—“Who am I?” The identity is the witness of the person and Sadhana consists in shifting the emphasis from the superficial and changeful person to the immutable and ever-present witness. Ch 86

No effort can take you there, only the clarity of understanding. Trace your misunderstandings and abandon them, that is all. There is nothing to seek and find, for there is nothing lost. Relax and watch the “I am.” Reality is just behind it. Keep quiet, keep silent; it will emerge, or, rather, it will take you in. ch99

NM: You have put so much energy into building a prison for yourself. Now spend as much on demolishing it. In fact, demolition is easy, for the false dissolves when it is discovered. All hangs on the idea “I Am.” Examine it very thoroughly. It lies at the root of every trouble. It is a sort of skin that separates you from the reality. ... ch63

Disregard whatever you think yourself to be and act as if you were absolutely perfect—whatever your idea of perfection may be. All you need is courage. Ch 82