



Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center

Ajahn Kumāro Bhikkhu, Resident Monastic
122 Arlington Street, Unit B, Asheville, NC 28801
Elisha Buhler's telephone #: (910) 922-1549
website: mittameditation.com
email: mittameditation@gmail.com

January 2023 Newsletter



Egoic consciousness, the false self

This essay will shine light on the ignorance that mistakes the egoic consciousness for a self. This ignorance is a cause of suffering experienced by the individual, the violence towards and disintegration of society, humanity and the environment. Ego recognition, understanding its behavior and the harm it causes is the initial step to liberation from the control that the ego exerts over the mind and freedom from suffering.

The ego is a dynamic process and the mind itself. The function of the ego is to assure the survival of the physical and emotional body. The home of the ego is the body and the ego identifies with the body. In addition, the ego identifies with feelings, perceptions, thoughts, emotions and sense consciousness. The ego is thus composed of the five aggregates that constitute the individual personality:

1. material form,
2. feelings,
3. perceptions,
4. mental formations, and
5. sense consciousness.

The Buddha defines a self as that which does not change, is permanent and has constant consistent qualities. The five aggregates that constitute the individual personality or ego are in a constant state of flux, they arise based upon conditions and cease when those conditions cease, therefore the ego is not a real self even though the ignorant mind perceives the ego as a self. The ego is a false self.

The ego arises in a particular physical form and in a specific environment as a result of its craving for particular experiences associated with material forms, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and sense consciousness. The personality and the environment in which the ego finds itself is related to the ego's cravings and attachments for particular aggregates. When the body disintegrates to fundamental elements, the ego creates another form to be its vehicle in a particular environment in accordance to the ego's predisposition for particular experiences and cravings. Karma is the intention and cravings for particular experiences.

The ego suffers and causes the mind to suffer. Freedom from the suffering ego and how it makes the mind suffer requires examination and understanding of the behavior and symptoms of the ego. When the behavior of the ego is recognized and understood then there is an opportunity to not react to the whims of the ego but instead exercise wisdom in order to think, speak and act in wholesome and skillful ways. The following are some characteristics of the ego.

- An important part of the ego's identity is the physical body. The ego's home is the body. The body is born, grows old, gets sick and dies, it is impermanent and decays. The impermanent body causes the ego to experience continuous anxiety and fear: fear of sickness, death and fear of being diminished. The fear of death and sickness is suffering.
- Due to the fear of death and sickness, the ego fights for power and control over the physical body, the environment and others to prevent any form of diminishment. All egos desire power and control and are in competition with each other. The competition is ruthless and destructive. Striving and competing for power and control, and the resulting violence is suffering.

- The ego is the perpetuator of rebirth because it requires a vehicle to exist. The ego craves for existence and for a body so that it can live. The craving for rebirth is the cause of saṃsāra, the perpetual wandering and suffering in the round of rebirths; i.e. being reborn again and again in an unstable realm that is continuously changing and decaying. Saṃsāra is suffering and the ego that wanders in saṃsāra suffers.
- The ego is nurtured and gains a greater sense of self when it identifies with material possessions, personal relationships and concepts: beliefs, views, and ideas. The ego has an endless appetite, greed and unwholesome desires for ever more possessions, relationships and concepts to identify with. The things that the ego identifies with are impermanent and the ego's sense of self is therefore impermanent and suffers from instability. The unceasing hunger and nonfulfillment for a greater sense of self is suffering.
- The ego is always hungry for more things to identify with and thus, experiences a continuous sense of lack, it never has enough. The ego is never at peace nor can it ever be satisfied or happy. Insatiable hunger for more things to identify with is suffering.
- The ego's sense of self is nurtured by acting superior, putting others down with judgments and criticism. The ego projects self hatred and its own inferior qualities onto others in order to protect its self image from being seen as vicious and inadequate, the ego blames others for its own short comings. The ego's longing for respect and honor cannot be fulfilled when attacking others with judgment. The ego has no true friends and suffers.
- The ego acts the role of victim in order to redirect blame for causing harm from itself onto the other. The ego acts as if it is innocent and others deserve punishment. The ego cries false tears and suffers.
- The ego uses anger and hatred to raise destructive energy for combat, it feeds on this type of negative energy. Attack is perceived as justified for self defense and survival. The continuous state of war is suffering.
- The personality of the ego changes as new information is assimilated, new ideas and beliefs are accepted and as environmental conditions change, this causes the sense of self to change, to be unstable and uncertain. The ego craves a stable sense of self when its very nature and the world is unstable, this is suffering.

The Dhamma that the Buddha taught includes the nature of reality, the causes of suffering and the training that uproots the causes of suffering. When the mind is governed by the wisdom and truth of the Dhamma then the power and control of the ego over the mind will evaporate. The ego fears the Dhamma and uses its intelligence to prevent the mind from training in the Dhamma. The ego has great intelligence and cunning that were developed over hundreds and perhaps thousands of past lives. However, the ego does not have wisdom, it does not see the complete picture of reality but its own finite and limited entity.

The ego acts like a two year old child and tries to dominate the mind with incessant whining, crying and elaborate stories in order to get its way: to hold onto its power and control over the mind and to distract the mind from living in accordance to the Dhamma. Have loving-kindness for the ego, like you would have for an ignorant and misguided child, but do not necessarily follow its dictates. Exercise wisdom when considering and responding to the ego.

Egoic consciousness is better understood when it is contrasted with Pure Consciousness. Pure Consciousness is not personal, it is not my consciousness or your consciousness, and it is not egoic consciousness. Pure Consciousness is a characteristic of reality, is not born nor does it die, is permanent, eternal and boundless.

Pure Consciousness is distinct from the contents of experience which are composed of the five aggregates. Pure Consciousness is the screen on which the contents of consciousness appears.

Other characteristics of reality are wisdom, loving-kindness and happiness. Wisdom includes such knowledge as: the characteristics of the ego, the impermanent nature of the world and body, and the causes and escape from suffering. Loving-kindness is the felt understanding that Pure Consciousness is identical in all beings and therefore, all beings are in essence not separated from

each other but are one with all of reality. Happiness is the experience of being free of the power and control of the suffering ego, it is the experience of great peace and contentment. Mindfulness and concentration are the mental faculties utilized to make the distinction between Pure Consciousness and the contents of consciousness that the ego identifies with.

Egoic consciousness is limited and localized Pure Consciousness. The ego's function is to survive and is always at war, fighting to control the environment and to manipulate others. The ego however, is necessary to protect the physical and emotional body that interacts in the world. The aim is not to eliminate the ego, which is impossible but to dethrone it from being lord and master over the mind. The skill that is to be cultivated is to live with the ego, not as our identity or master over the mind but as a servant and instrument of the Dhamma or the voice of wisdom. The current state of humanity, the vast majority of people, do identify with the ego and allows the ego to manipulate and control the mind, which causes suffering. An aspect of ignorance is lack of knowledge and understanding of the ego and its behavior.

The first step in becoming free of the ego is to understand the nature and behavior of the ego. When there is understanding of the characteristics and symptoms of the ego then there is awareness of the ego's control, power and presence. There is then an opportunity and ability to avoid reacting to the dictates of the ego, this is freedom. The practice is to train the mind to pause, create a nonreactive space in order to investigate the wisdom of responding to the ego's whims and instead act in accordance to the Dhamma, with wisdom.

There is a necessity to study and know the ego for what it is, a suffering false self and to dethrone the ego from its lordship over the mind and make it a servant of the Dhamma. Pure Consciousness, transcends the ego and is thus a refuge from suffering. The enlightened mind rests in Pure Consciousness, liberated from the ego, knows peace and happiness.

Lord Buddha taught the Dhamma in order to transcend the ego by training in the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. As disciples of the Buddha, it is our duty to study and train in the Dhamma for the benefit and liberation of all sentient beings.

The ego fears the Dhamma because the Dhamma is the means that causes the ego to relax its hold over the mind. The ego plagues the mind with forgetfulness of the Dhamma in order to assure its own preservation and control over the mind. To counter forgetfulness of the Dhamma keep a spiritual diary of inspiring Dhamma teachings and return frequently to the stillness and silence of Pure Consciousness.

The ego serves only itself, therefore to be free from the ego it is necessary to serve others with generosity and kindness. Instead of viewing oneself as an isolated individual apart from others and the environment, view and perceive the interconnection of all of life. The suffering of others is our own suffering and giving to others is a gift to ourselves because we are all intimately connected physically, emotionally and spiritually. Freedom from suffering is the experience and understanding of the connection with life, this is love - another word for happiness.

When mistakes are made due to a lapse of mindfulness and concentration, and the mind forgets to act in accordance to the Dhamma, then as quickly as possible, the mind is to regain mindfulness and other wholesome mental faculties. This is the best that can be done and little by little mindfulness and concentration is strengthened through exercise of their use. Self judgment or self hatred are behavior characteristics of the ego and not the Dhamma. Forgiveness is crucial: forgive others for their ignorance, ill will and greed, forgive the mind that is under the power of the ego and most importantly of all, forgive oneself. We are all in the same boat, riding the turbulent waves of saṃsāra. Have compassion for all sentient beings that are suffering and have compassion for the suffering mind.

Announcements

- Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center has a presence on Meet-Up social media and we ask that you please sign-up for every event that you are planning to attend at www.MeetUp.com. Some people are intimidated by a small number of attendees and a larger number will be encouraging.
- Please help advertise Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center by providing a review at www.google.com/maps.

Activities of the Meditation Center

- Sitting meditation is held everyday at 6:30AM and 5:30PM. After meditation, Ajahn Kumāro is available to answer questions and discuss the Dhamma. Please sign up on Meet-Up or send an email mittameditation@gmail.com on the days and time you would like to participate.
- The days of the full moon, new moon and the two half moons are called in Pāli: The Uposatha, and is a Buddhist day of observance. A lunar calendar is available at <https://cal.forestsangha.org>. Ajahn Kumāro will perform the ceremony of giving the eight precepts on the full and new moon days after the 5:30PM meditation. You may elect to take the five precepts instead of the eight and may determine to keep the precepts as long as you see fit (one night, a week, a lifetime, etc).
- Meditation Workshop is held on the first Sunday of each month between 11:00AM and 1:00PM. The workshop will provide instruction and practice for sitting and walking meditation. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the Dhamma. Please sign up on Meet-Up or send an email mittameditation@gmail.com if you are planning to participate.
- Question and Answer Tea is held on the third Sunday of each month at 3:00PM. Please sign up on Meet-Up or send an email mittameditation@gmail.com if you are planning to participate.
- Every Monday at 4:00PM the Meditation Center will be cleaned. Please join us in maintaining a clean space for practicing and discussing the Dhamma.
- Everyday at 8:40AM Ajahn Kumāro leaves for alms-round in order to give residents of Asheville the opportunity to earn merit by practicing generosity of giving food and placing it into the alms bowl. Ajahn does not accept or handle money. Ajahn usually arrives at the Whole Foods Market, 70 Merrimon Ave. just before 9:00AM and stands in front of the store for alms.
- Ajahn is available at other times during the day to meet with individuals or groups when requested.
- For more additional information please send an email to mittameditation@gmail.com. We also have a presence on Facebook and Meet-Up social media.

Request for Support

The Meditation Center is in need of support in order to accomplish its' mission and vision. The support may take various forms. You will support the Meditation Center by:

- Being present at the Meditation Center for group meditation.
- Giving alms during alms-round.
- Bringing to the Meditation Center items that are listed on the support page of the website: www.mittameditation.com.
- Volunteering your skills, energy and time at the Meditation Center.
- Informing your family and friends about the Meditation Center and encouraging them to participate in the activities.
- Donating financial contributions for the Meditation Center's expenses. Kalyana-Mitta Meditation Center is recognized as a tax-exempt organization by the IRS under section 501(c)(3). Donations are deductible in accordance with IRS regulations. Financial contributions may be made on the support page of the website: www.mittameditation.com and additional means for making financial donations may be discussed with Elisha Buhler at (910) 922-1549.