

## Ego Management in Gorakh Sutras

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### ABSTRACT

*Ego is an essential and integral part of you and it has a major role to play in your life. The human ego is the barrier to inner peace, harmonious relationships and self development. It can make or break one's life, therefore, it is important to be aware of its presence and its functioning. The concept of ego has different meaning depending upon the context. For the purpose of this paper "ego" is taken as the exaggerated emphasis placed on oneself on the notions of "I", "me" and "mine"; upon one's own attitudes, experiences, behavior or perspective. Now the question is whether "Ego" can be managed? Further, what is said about ego, its properties and its management, in ancient Indian wisdom with special reference to Gorakhsutras written by Mahayogi Gorakhnath.*

**Keywords-** Gorakhnath, Gorakhsutras, Hath Yoga, Ego

### Introduction

The human ego is the barrier to inner peace, harmonious relationships and self-development. Its effects pervade all aspects of life, and so an awareness of its presence and an understanding of its functioning is vital. This paper addresses the following questions:

- What is ego? What are the manifestations of ego?
- How does ego impinge upon inner peace and disrupt harmony in relationships?
- How is the ego to be managed?
- What mentions Ego finds in Gorakhsutras?
- What are the teachings of Gorakhnath in this respect?

### What is Ego?

The concept of ego has different meanings depending upon the to context of the discussion. For the purposes of this paper ego is taken to be the exaggerated emphasis placed upon oneself: upon the notions of 'I' me and 'Mine;' upon one's own attitudes, behaviour,experiences or perspective.

Broadly,there are three expressions of ego.

- 'I am supreme'
- 'I alone exist'
- 'I am the doer'

### 'I am supreme'

This is an exaggerated sense of self-worth based on one's physical and external achievements. The over-valuation of the qualities, functions or expressions of one's own personality generates an inflated sense of self-worth.

### **I-am-supreme:** Effect on Internal Peace & External Harmony

The ego becomes dependent upon the expressions and achievements of the personality for a sense of self-worth. However this self-worth is both false and fragile.

It is false in the sense that it solely upon one's own perspective. The ego, therefore, places one's own achievements in false, dishonest, imagined, virtual, privileged position. It is fragile because we have become dependent upon our achievements, and no level of achievement is permanently sustained. When the inevitable change in circumstances arises, the self-worth crashes. The most vulnerable of those who suffer this loss are the sports persons, young actors and actresses. They happen to reach the pinnacle of their fame in the prime of youth. Soon, thereafter, they experience a precipitous fall. Research has revealed that when participation in sport stops, either temporarily or permanently, professional and elite-level athletes can experience the same psychological stages as people grieving the loss of a loved one. Further, due to dependency, the individual becomes mentally preoccupied with maintaining the status achieved. This brings constant worry and anxiety of potential loss of status, and mental fatigue as psychological resources are spent maintaining the status so obtained.

### **Another question: Is inferiority complex also an expression of ego?**

From the perspective of relationships with others, the superiority complex inherently embodies a sense of separation, of otherness. Considering oneself as superior implies a categorization of and division from others. By harboring a preoccupation with a narrow band of human traits there is constant measuring of others against these traits alone. As a result, one misses the rich and complex series of

physical, social, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual characteristics of others. We are blinded to their true nature. As a result, our attitudes and behaviors towards them are based on a partial, flawed assessment. Not having an accurate understanding of others' talents, flaws, preferences, motivations, etc., we are unable to effectively relate to them. Finally, a superiority complex creates a sense of repulsion in others. Consider the opposite: when a person exhibits humility in their achievements, our natural response is one of genuine appreciation. We perceive a sense of openness and connectedness, facilitating communication and mutual understanding – vital to harmonious relationships. This open channel of communication is shut down in the case of meeting an arrogant and egoistic presence.

#### **'I alone exist'**

Each person present in a room has a different visual perspective of it. One person sees the east wall, another west and still another the north etc. No single perspective can capture the entirety of the room, there is always something hidden from any perspective. So too do we all have differing emotional, psychological, intellectual perspectives on life: what is beautiful/repugnant; what constitutes right/wrong; what is truthful/false; what has/lacks value; etc. No single perspective can lay claim to encompassing an absolute version of Reality. However, the error of the ego is to do exactly this. The personal perspective that we experience is automatically and unknowingly cast as being globally applicable.

#### **I-alone-exist: Effect on Internal Peace & External Harmony**

It is our assessment of reality that gives rise to our expectations of how the world of circumstances, objects and beings functions. When our particular perspective remains without critical assessment, we consider it to be an accurate and truthful representation of external reality. However, because an egocentric view of the world is limited only to the individual's experience and knowledge, the assessment of what-is will necessarily be a partial, flawed representation of the facts, giving rise to unrealistic expectations. These are the precursor to the mental anxiety or disappointment experienced when expectations are unmet. This simple disappointment of unmet expectations is compounded by the more complex problem of having to resolve

the contradiction between the current worldview and experienced reality.

Further, our psychological perspective determines the meaning and value that we ascribe to external circumstances, and thus our responses to environmental cues. As above, an egocentric stance means our conduct is based on a flawed assessment. Actions are thus non-productive or counter-productive to our own goals, leading to further disappointment and frustration, along with a sense of impotence at being unable to achieve our goals and generate inner happiness. Further, in the absence of introspective analysis the ego projects the dissatisfaction as resistance against its perceived cause: the environment. Rather than considering the possibility of 'Where may I have gone wrong?' an adversarial attitude towards circumstances develops. This sense of opposition or antagonism not only drives further unhealthy attitudes and behaviors, but promotes resistance and antagonism in those at whom the disappointment is directed. As stress and resistance escalate, the overall relationship deteriorates towards increasingly aggressive and overt expressions of conflict. An ego preoccupied with its own demands will be plagued with a constant anxiety over its future welfare, a sense of 'What will happen to me?' This state of insecurity is independent of current circumstances. As Kahlil Gibran writes:

And what is fear of need but need itself?

Is not dread of thirst when your well is full, the thirst that is unquenchable?

The excessive importance attached to one's own future experiences creates this state of misery in those enjoying even the most favorable circumstances. Further, to regard one's own perspective as supreme is to consider that what serves one's egocentric interests is inherently good, a view that inhibits mutually-beneficial relationships. By considering one's own demands as most important, the ego generates a sense of entitlement, and thereafter functions from the feeling that the world exists to cater to one's own demands. Aside from generating the disappointment of unmet expectations, this feeling impedes harmonious relationships with others. Other beings are treated as a means to the ego's own ends, and not as ends in themselves. Indifference to the subjective experiences and needs of others promotes actions that seek to fulfil our own

perceived needs at the expense of others, permitting coercive or destructive behaviors towards them.

‘I am the doer’

This is the ego’s unquestioned and exaggerated emphasis upon the contribution of one’s own actions towards an outcome. One diminishes or excludes the contribution of others. This is essentially a false sense of achievement and an attachment to one’s own actions and their outcome.

I-am-doer: Effect on Internal Peace & External Harmony

This attachment to one’s own actions and results generates a strong antithetical attitude towards any critique of one’s work. Even constructive criticism is met with anxiety or aggression as the sense of oneself as the creator of the work is threatened. There will also arise an inability to recognize valuable contributions from others, as this too impinges upon the notion that ‘I am the one who makes valuable contributions.’ e.g. A person attached to his own creative ideas will be unable to see novel and useful improvements to existing circumstances as this would reflect unfavorably on his need to see himself as the initiator of good ideas. This is the death-knell for cooperation, which we may define as the intellectual recognition that nothing can be achieved by oneself. Just as in the superiority complex, I-am-the-doer repels others. Indifference to the efforts and contributions of others conveys the message that they are perceived as inferior, again shutting down communication.

### Managing the Ego

These expressions of the ego are the natural result of leaving one’s own mind unattended. The natural tendency of the mind is to become attached to whatever it contacts, which reinforces the existing world-view. Combating this demands the application of the human faculty of free-will. A new, less egocentric perspective must be consciously adopted and maintained in order to circumvent the ego’s narrow range of vision. However, this cannot occur unless the individual has turned the attention within and recognized the presence and functioning of the ego. Hence the first step in managing the ego is to reflect upon the knowledge of the human mechanism, the anatomy of human experience. Having understood the need for ego management, the next step is for the intellect to conceive the ideal of personality development, i.e. ego-reduction. The ideal

set must be clearly-defined and understood by the intellect, and must elicit a natural affinity from the mind. It envisages a state of increased spiritual maturity, and (as a consequence) reduced dependence upon external circumstances for a sense of happiness, self-worth, or identity.

Once management and reduction of ego is set as the ideal, the actual means to achieve it must be deployed. This is done through the disciplined channelling of one’s energies into less ego-centric activities. The physical-emotional-intellectual aspects of the personality are channelled towards the ideal. The physical body is that which acts; the mind has emotion, preference, desire; the intellect is the capacity for comprehension, critical thinking, and decision-making. Thus action, emotion and thought are to be redirected away from the existing ego-perspective. To facilitate this, the ancient Indian philosophical texts describe practise of three yogas. In essence, yoga is any practice that one engages in to render the personality free from ego and its manifestations. These disciplines take advantage of a fundamental law that governs human existence: As you think, so you become. If our physical-emotional-intellectual experiences are based around the ego’s demands, we firmly establish that egocentric perspective. If we choose to adopt a higher perspective, we naturally grow into that. It is the same process we see occurring naturally in children. Their immature perspective on the world naturally shifts to become more mature as they grow in experience and understanding of the world. This natural growth has limitations, however, and it is incumbent upon human beings to consciously spur personality growth beyond naturally-defined limits. One then takes charge of one’s growth into higher dimensions of knowledge and wisdom.

Now lets discuss about Gorakhsutras and ego

**gcfd u cksfyck] Bcfd u pfyck] /khjs  
/kfjck ikao  
xjc n dfjck] lgtS jfgck] Hk.kr xksj[k  
jkao**

Don’t speak with ego, don’t walk with ego, keep your feet slowly and steadily. Don’t be filled with ego, remain low is what Gorakh says.

**ukFk dgS rqe lqugq js vo/kw n`<+ dfj  
jk[kgq ph;k  
dke Øks/k vgadj fuokjS rS lc fnlUj  
fn;k**

Gorakh says, "Listen, O! Saints! Have a determined mind, shun sex, anger and ego. By doing this you attain self-realisation.

**lkax dk iwjk] Kku dk Åjk] isV dk rwjk]  
fMEHk dk lwjk  
cnar xksj[kukFk u ik;k ;ksx] dfj ik[k.M  
fjNk;k yksx**

One who has tantrums, little knowledge, eats much, lives with ego can't attain self-realisation. They can only be populists and not yogis

**egeka /kfj egeka dw eSVs] lfr dk lcn  
fopkjh**

**ukUgka gks; ftu lrxq# [kksT;k] fru flj  
dh iksV mrkjh**

Those who are great, reduce their greatness and those who belittle themselves and search for the Guru are the ones who have reduced their ego. Meaning thereby that search of a Guru can never be complete if you enlarge your ego. It is by becoming humble only that you can search the real Guru. So humility is the key and not the ego.

**xq# dh ckpk [kkSts ukgha] vgadjh  
vgadj djS  
[kksth thoS [kksth xq: dS] vgadjh dk  
l;aM ijs**

vgadjh vgadj ls Hkjk gqv xq# eU=k  
ysus dh bPNk ls xq# dh [kkst ugha djrkA  
xq# dh [kkst djus okyk xq# dh [kkst dj  
thou liQYk djrk gS] vej gks tkrk gS vkSj  
vgaadjh dk 'kjhjkr gks tkrk gSA

Egoistic persons are full of ego and because of it don't search for the Guru. One who is in search of real guru focuses his life for this objective only and after finding the guru feels that his life has become successful and becomes immortal. The egoistic loses his body itself because of his ego.

## CONCLUSION

Thus we see that Gorakh feels that egoistic people can never tread the path of self-realisation and

ultimately lose their body in ego. He further adds that by becoming humble you can achieve everything. Humility is the key. If you want to be big, learn to be small. Similar views have been expressed by Guru Nanak, Kabir, Ravidass, Meera, Eknath, Tuka Ram, Gyaneshwar and more recently by Chand Nath Ji.

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