

DRAFT COPY

INTRODUCTION

“You say that it’s the institution
Well you know, we all want to change your head.
You say you’ll change the constitution.
You better free your mind instead.”

John Lennon

One of the central theses of this talk is that if you want to create a society that is socially inclusive, it is not enough to write a good constitution. You also have to create a psychology of social inclusiveness in that society. Why? Because right now our societies, and that would include Europe and North America, are egocentric societies that effortlessly teach a psychology of social exclusion day in and day out.

To see that this is true, all you have to do is look around at our planet for a moment. You don’t have to look far to see that the entire planet, including this subcontinent, is full of inequalities, political conflicts, and even military conflicts, that are caused by differences in group identity. These are conflicts that occur between groups because they have different identities. Here in South Asia, some of those conflicts would include the conflict between Dalit Sikhs and Jat Sikhs. The conflict between the Tamils and the Sinhalese. The conflict between Muslims and Hindus. The conflict between the Pihari and Madeshi peoples of Nepal. The conflict between the CPI (M) and the Maoists in Bengal right now, and the inferior position of women in many of our societies. (Ideology) It’s endless. These conflicts create unequal and violent societies and war, and they blunt the lives of people who are oppressed simply because they are a member of a minority group. (And all of this can be prevented.)

One of the central theses of this talk is that all of these identity based conflicts are created and caused by the human mind. To be more specific, the identity based political conflicts are caused by the unhealthy dynamics of the egocentric mind. This happens even here in south Asia, especially here in multicultural South Asia, even though it is the birthplace of the idea that the ego is an illusion that causes all of humanity’s suffering.

How do we know that the ego causes identity based conflict? Because the politicized identity conflicts of the world have the same exact structure and dynamic as the structural conflict that lies at the heart of every egocentric mind. The mind with an ego is a mind that is in conflict with itself. Plato, Freud, Melanie Klein, Jung, Winnicott, Kernberg, and Kohut are just some of the names of the clinicians and theorists who have recognized that the egocentric mind is a mind that is in constant conflict with itself.

Why is the socialized mind a mind that is in conflict with itself? Because the socialized mind has to control itself to fit into society. I’ll come back to this idea at length.

The ego creates externalized political conflict by projecting the conflict it has with itself onto the world. This internal conflict becomes the model for the ego's relationships with other people. (This is the basic tenet of a school of Psychoanalytic theory called Object Relations Theory) What does this mean? It means that the mind with an ego takes this conflict it has with itself, and creates the same kind of conflict with the people that it knows – especially with those people that it perceives as having different identities than itself. The mind with an ego is a mind that is looking for and creates conflict. This is why the ego, and more specifically, the unhealthy identity that the ego creates, is the cause of the political identity conflicts we see all around us.

The three basic theses, then, of this talk are:

1. The political identity conflicts of the world are caused by the unhealthy identity of the egocentric mind.
2. The identity of the egoless mind is, in contrast, a healthy identity, and it is easy to identify the qualities of this healthy, or egoless, identity.
3. To create a society that is socially inclusive, you have to create a psychology of social inclusiveness that is based on egoless identity in that society. If we begin now to teach our children, politicians and members of the constituent assembly to have healthy identities, we can gradually eliminate – over the next half century – political identity conflicts from the world stage.

For the last 16 years, I have been interviewing Tibetan lamas about their experiences of their own minds in meditation for the purposes of:

- a. Developing a descriptive science of the ptaitsoc.
- b. Deriving from that descriptive science an empirically valid theory of the nature of the healthy human mind.

This work is showing that the healthy human mind is the egoless mind, and that unlike the egocentric mind, the egoless mind has a healthy identity.

In this talk I am going to quickly do four things:

1. Describe the defining structure and dynamic of the egocentric mind.
2. Describe the qualities of the unhealthy identity of the egocentric mind and show how these qualities create political conflict.
3. Describe the qualities of the healthy, or egoless, identity, and
4. Make two concrete proposals as to how these scientific findings can be applied to preventing the occurrence of political conflict. After all, the best medicine is preventive medicine, is it not?

THE EGOCENTRIC MIND: EGO ← → SELF

First of all then, what is an ego? And why is the mind with an ego a mind that creates conflict with both itself and with other people?

Briefly now, because time is short, the socialized human mind is divided into two basic parts: the ego and the true self.

Your true self is who you really are. It is both the larger way in which you see the world – your vision of the world, or cosmology if you will, and it is the way you really feel and see things in every moment that you are alive. That is your true self. Some theorists have called the true self a mandala.

The ego, in contrast, is the person that you are taught to be by society.

The ego has two aspects. One part of your ego is the identity that your society and family has created within you. Every person that lives in a society is taught to have an identity.

Examples: I am a doctor. I am a dalit. I am a great man. I am worthless. I am a Chhetri. I am a Maggar. I am Dutch. So forth and so on.

The second part of your identity is the realities and stories that you create to sustain your belief that you have the identity that you think you have to have. These stories also help suppress your true self. (Repeat)

In other words, the ego is a magician – a creator of illusions. Your ego is the part of your mind that needs to think that it is the person that you have been taught to be by your society and family. And when your true self and your experience is different than that identity, for example, your ego magically and automatically manufactures stories to convince you that you have the social identity you think you have to have.

These stories appear as recurring cycles of thoughts and emotions in your mind. The stories have recurring themes that over and over say things like: I am great. He is no good. The dominant group in my society is better than me. My group is the best. The dominant group in my society is evil because they are trying to suppress my ethnic group. And so forth and so on.

In western mind theory these stories are called defense mechanisms and fantasies. In Buddhist mind science these stories are called vasanas in Sanskrit and Bak-chaks in Tibetan.

And herein lies the basic conflict of the egocentric mind. It is a conflict between your self and your ego. This conflict is the means by which the mind controls itself. It is the means by which the mind makes its behavior conform to social expectations, and it is a constant conflict between who you really are and the person you think you are and should be. We all have this conflict within ourselves.

INTRODUCTION TO LAMA STUDY

Ok. So what is our research on Tibetan lamas showing? In general, it is showing:

1. First of all, it has generated a descriptive science of the phenomena that appear in the SoC, and all of the theory that follows has been derived from this descriptive science.

- This descriptive science is the raw data of this research, and describing and delineating these phenomena at this point in the history of science is akin to finding and describing new species in botany and zoology. Examples.
2. The egocentric mind is not a healthy or happy mind.
 3. The egoless mind is a healthy and happy mind.
 4. There are two essential differences between the egocentric and egoless mind:
 - a. They have different modes of self awareness.
 - b. They have a different type of identity.
 5. The egocentric mind has an egocentric identity which is unhealthy.
 6. The egoless mind has an egoless identity which is healthy.

QUALITIES OF EGOCENTRIC IDENTITY

It has also shown that the basic qualities of the mind with an egocentric identity tend to be as follows:

1. The egocentric mind has an identity that is different than its true self. This is the very nature of living in society and having an ego. You take on an identity that is different than who you really are. Extreme and easy examples of this phenomenon would be a young man who in response to family preference and pressure, takes up the identity of being a doctor when in truth he really wanted to be a musician. Or a young woman who foregoes being a doctor because her family wants her to marry early and have grand children right away. The point is that everybody does this.
2. The egocentric mind thinks that its false identity is real. It thinks that it is real in two senses: (1) that its identity is its true self and (2) that it's identity really exists. If you think about it for a moment, an identity is just snapshot, or photo of who you are. A person is constantly changing from moment to moment and over the course of their entire life. An identity is a static thing.
3. Because it thinks its identity is real, the egocentric mind uses its identity to constrain its own behavior. For example, the egocentric mind will repress thoughts and emotions and behaviors that are different than its identity.
4. This means that you are treating your identity as though it is better than your true self. After all, you are sacrificing your self to become your identity. In order to do this you need to think your ego and identity are better than your true self. As a result, you deify your identity and try to make your true self conform to that identity. To do this, you fight with and repress your true self.
5. Once you think your identity is superior to your self, it becomes only natural to think that its identity is superior to its own self, the mind with an ego also thinks that it is better than other selves and identities. Given that it has to establish its superiority over its self, it also has to establish its superiority over all other selves and identities. My religion is better than your religion. My ethnic group is better than your ethnic group. My ideology is better than your ideology. And so forth and so on.
6. The mind with an ego thinks that there is only one truth. The ego puts itself into a situation where it has to think that the realities it creates are the only truth. Why? Because when it chooses to believe its ego realities are true it also chooses to reject

the vision of the universe that is its true self. As a result, it gets the idea that this one truth is real and others are not. This becomes the idea that its truth is the only real truth in the world and that the ethos, or way of life, generated by that truth is the best way to live.

7. As a result, it needs to eliminate truths and identities that are different than itself. For example, the mind with an ego might try to create a society in which there is only one religion. Or it might just simply dismiss the religion or ideology of a different identity group as being false. Or it might commit a series of terrorist acts to eliminate a group of people with a different identity from its society. Or at its most extreme, it might even commit a genocide. Here then is the psychological cause of politicized identity conflict.

In summary then, the egocentric, or unhealthy, identity has three qualities that create politicized identity conflicts in the real world:

1. It has to be superior to other identities.
2. It thinks there is only one truth, and that its truth is the only real truth.
3. As a result it wants to eliminate other truths and identities.

It is easy to see that these qualities of the egocentric identity create the politicized identity conflicts of the world and are the very elements of these conflicts.

Finally, these qualities of the egocentric identity are created by the egocentric mode of self awareness. And the data that supports this thesis is the data that has been produced by the Lama studies. If there is interest and time, I can present that data in the discussion period.

QUALITIES OF EGOLESS IDENTITY

Now in contrast, the basic qualities of the mind with an egoless identity are very different. They are:

1. The egoless mind has an identity that is a genuine expression of your true self. It is an image or concept of your true self. So there is less chance of conflict between your identity and your true self.
2. The egoless mind realizes and lives in the paradox of identity:
 - a. On the one hand, it sees its identity as being sacred and real because it is an expression of its true self.
 - b. And at the same time, it sees that this identity is also just a form of ego. It is just a concept. A concept that you use to present your self to society and organize your life.
 - c. As a result, the egoless mind takes its identity seriously and at the same time, it has a sense of humor about its identity. It knows that it is just a concept of itself.
 - d. As a result, the egoless person doesn't demand that other people take his or her identity seriously.
3. The mind with an egoless identity does not think it is better than its own true self. It sees its identity as both being and not being its true self. Since it does not think it is

- better than itself, a person with an egoless identity does not think that he or she is better than people who have different identities.
4. The person with an egoless mind lives in a world in which all identities and ways of life are equally valid. It wants all of the different kinds of human beings in the world to be who they are. (There is actually a technical term for this quality of the egoless mind in Buddhist mind science: Bodhicitta. Bodhicitta is the wish that all human beings be self realized and happy.)
 5. In addition, the egoless mind realizes and accepts that there are many different truths in the world. It comes to this understanding when it opens up to and accepts its own self. This generates the realization that there is more than one way of looking at life. As a result, the egoless mind embraces a second paradox: all personal truth is both relative and absolute truth.
 - a. Your own truth is absolute in that it is the only truth you have. It is relative in that it is just your truth. The egoless identity accepts that other people, other religions, other cultural groups have different truths and identities.
 - b. The egoless mind also understands that the ego makes up stories to feed and sustain its identity. This realization deepens the understanding that all reality is relative – even the truths of its true self.
 6. As a result, the mind with an egoless identity does not need to eliminate or destroy people who have different truths and identities. It does not need to live in a society that has only one religion, or one ethnic group or one ideology. It embraces all identities and all ways of life as being equally valid.

It is also easy to see now that the mind with an egoless identity is not a mind that will create conflicts with people who have different identities than itself. Once again, the qualities of the egoless identity are created by the egoless mode of self awareness. If time and interest permit, I'll present this data as well in the discussion period.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In closing then, I'd like to propose two concrete policies for the SAARC countries:

1. That all of the countries of SAARC develop a curriculum that teaches healthy identity to all of its school children and healthy identity politics to all of its politicians and bureaucrats.
2. That SAARC establish an institute called "The Institute for the Study of Healthy Identity Politics" that will create the curriculum for these courses on Healthy Identity and study other means of creating healthy identity politics. Furthermore, I would like to suggest that The Institute of Healthy Identity Politics be established here at the Tribhuvan University here in Kathmandu.

Thank you very much.