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## **Seeing and Understanding What is Standing in The Way: The Current State of the Ego**

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In our interest in making any kind of change in our life, that being the way we are as a human being, we have to be mindful and knowledgeable about certain things, while at the same time implementing certain new attitudes and behaviors.

This summarizes what cognitive-behavioral therapy tries to achieve.

This change that we seek as a human being is not one that is measured by a change in our job or an advancement in our career, or by our financial or social status.

We can be confused and troubled as a simple street cleaner in New York City, as the President of the United States in Washington, D.C., or as a rich and famous actor or actress in Hollywood, California.

This same kind of dissatisfied, confused, troubled or depressed experience of mind and consciousness can manifest itself among those who live in London, Lagos, and Lahore, Berlin, Budapest and Bangkok, Tokyo, Tehran, and Toronto, and Johannesburg, Jakarta, and Jerusalem.

It can happen in a big city apartment or house or a small-town home or cottage.

It can be part of a being a young man or middle-aged woman, or a mother, child, husband or grandparent.

Perhaps any kind of change is built around seeing and understanding what it is within ourselves that is causing problems while at the same time, having an idea of what it is we want to change to or become.

Too many times, we only see what it is we want to change to or become instead of seeing what it is that is in the way.

It is hard to make any real progress until we are fully mindful about what it is within us that is causing problems or hindering progress.

Too many times, our ego does not allow us to look at ourselves with any degree of critical objectivity.

We defend, justify and do not pay much attention to ourselves because we think it is "natural" to be such a way, or that "everyone else does it".

In some countries and cultures such an attitude may be more pronounced and common than in other countries and cultures.

Much of what stands in our way obviously is a result of our conditioning (has it been wholesome or unwholesome?), our state of mind in reacting to that conditioning (with guilt, shame and ignorance or with understanding, insight and wisdom?) and what our current attitudes, habits, routines and behaviors are (are they self-destructive and abusive or healthy and balanced?).

In addition, one aspect of our ego may create another obstacle to making any kind of progress.

That being, that we think we can figure things out on our own and progress based on that and that other ways are not suitable for us, not practical, or are constraining and ask too much of us.

This can lead to doubt and a lot of time searching and seeking and perhaps wasting our energy.

In some cases it may even mean that we apply our enthusiasm, energy and interest in things that are creating more problems.

We may also sometimes be too quick to look at or grasp a way of living from another culture or country, say from India or China, not because we really think it is good or useful, but because it is different or exotic or we feel special and different from others in our interest of it.

If we are confused and unbalanced, it will be difficult to get to a state where we can formulate our own path and practice.

Sometimes we may take practices from different schools, philosophies and traditions and integrate them into something that suits more about who and how we are at the present, then lets us make any real changes in our being that would be healthy, wholesome and skillful.

We may practice Reiki, do Hatha Yoga, have aromatherapy applied to us once a week, sit on a hand-made meditation cushion, buy and read all of the latest books by Deepak Chopra and others and still smoke an occasional joint and think that we are making real progress.

What may be better is to learn and understand one path and make the effort to apply it.

It is hard to say if we can clearly come to that one path while pursuing all of these other sensual and intellectual experiences.

A path should provide us with three things. These are:

1. A clear and comprehensive philosophy as regards what causes our dissatisfaction, confusion, and problems and what the understanding and the implementation of the path and its teachings and practices can bring us to.
2. A set of recommended values, morals, ethics and behaviors that weaken and eradicate the negative while accessing and cultivating the positive.

3. A physical aspect and practice to it that works as a focusing and strengthening tool.

Both the The Noble Eightfold Path of Buddhism (Ariyya Antagikka Magga) and the Yoga of The Eight Limbs (Astanga Yoga) provide people with ways of living that fulfill such a set of criteria.

So in the most general terms we could say that one thing that stands in the way of getting to a new place in life is the current state of our ego, because we need to be able to find a mechanism or facilitator for making such a change and our ego will not allow us to investigate or trust ways that come from outside of us or that our ego will instead pick and choose what is most comforting and convenient for it in its present state.

The ability to put aside our ego and make changes may not happen at this time in our lives.

We may struggle and go in circles some more before we come to that new state of awakening on our own.

The change that may come may be the result of meeting someone, or experiencing something happy or something that is painful.

An awakening can come at any moment and many times we can not make it or force it to happen.

When that awakening occurs, we may be better able to trust something besides be pushed around and further confused by our ego and to work a path and practice that fulfills the three criteria mentioned above.

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