

The Inconvenient Matter of Narcissism

One of the challenges that aspirants and disciples face is working with their tendencies to **narcissism**—becoming absorbed in one’s self, and forgetting about the larger work in which they are participating. In this webinar, we will excerpt from some of our writings on this subject, and hopefully, clarify for you what narcissism entails, and how you can work with it.

Reintegration of Narcissistic Deviation from Optimal Functioning

Excerpted from *Meditation for Therapy: Theory and Application* © 2011

The sense of self-love and self-valuing in a person is called narcissism. This narcissism can be healthy, permitting optimal adjustment to the individual’s social and intrapersonal world, or it can express in the extremes of fragmentation or grandiosity. This continuum of the narcissistic bands is shown below.

1	Characterized by a fragmented, disjointed sense of self. The individual has difficulty owning behavior, beliefs, and feelings. Fragmentation may be dissociative (e.g. Multiple Personality Disorder), memory-based or temporal (e.g. fugue), affective (Borderline Personality Disorder), or cognitive (ranging from pre-psychotic to psychotic thought disorders) splitting from a unitive sense of self.
2	Characterized by a conflicted, dualistic sense of self where the individual identifies with one set of behavior, beliefs, and feelings and rejects the other side as ego alien. Marked by internal argument and dialogue between parts of oneself. Difficulty in goal-oriented behavior and focusing on goals: the internal conflict uses much energy and attention.
3	Characterized by a largely owned sense of self, but with “islands” of ego-dystonic behavior, beliefs, and feelings. The individual may feel largely in control of his or her life and affairs, but has a few odd, disturbing, or compulsive areas of behavior that arise in certain situations. These concern the individual.

4	Characterized by an owned sense of self and adoption of solutions or sublimations that allow the individual to own and master his or her drives satisfactorily, coupled with developed interpersonal skills. This is considered healthy, normal adult adjustment .
5	The individual begins to think more highly of him or herself than others. The person may begin to see themselves as superior to others, more intelligent, and may identify with those of his or her “own kind or may isolate him or herself. The individual may become arrogant, intimidating, judgmental, overconfident, and impatient with those who can’t keep up. This is described as unhealthy narcissism.
6	The individual begins to become absorbed in creative inspiration or meditative reverie and may neglect appearance, care of the environment and proper self-care. The individual may become moody, prone to creative flights of fancy and cascades of ideas. The individual can appear to be eccentric or odd. The individual may indulge in private, symbolic rituals.
7	Characterized by identification with an element of the Superconscious mind, or “collective unconscious.” The individual may believe that he or she is a “messenger” or “prophet of God,” “a chosen one,” or on a “Divine mission.” Some of these individuals are very charismatic, and may attract groups of people around them to “love them, serve them, and worship them.” If they are confronted, criticized, or ostracized by those who are not part of the group, but who point out errors or excesses of the group and its leader, the leader and the group may begin to develop delusional and paranoid thinking.

Meditation upon the qualities of normal adult adjustment will be helpful in regaining a balance when self-concept has deviated from the centered, integral basis of relating. These qualities of the normal adult adjustment include:

1	Equalitarian relation to others	Sees oneself as an equal to others, not below or above them
2	Empathic stance	One seeks to understand self and others

3	Realistic evaluation of others	One does not jump to conclusions, or prejudge others based on stereotypes; [instead] forms hypotheses which are confirmed or disconfirmed by continued experience and data; others' behavior is [realistically] appraised and not made to fit into a preconceived filter or pattern
4	Honest evaluation of self	One frankly acknowledges one's strengths and weaknesses, and does not minimize or inflate these abilities
5	Growth orientation	One continuously is seeking new knowledge, new abilities, taking measured risks to expand one's personal horizons
6	Humanistic standpoint	One identifies with the Self and sees others in this same light, recognizing both lower nature (ego) and higher nature (spirituality) in self and others
7	Humility	One experiences gratitude for what one has gained and experienced; and realizes one's mortality, human frailties and limitations without defensive denial or escape into fantasy. One has a healthy awe and respect for the beauty and majesty of Nature and the Cosmos.

...By increasing the amount of time spent in the central integrated position, the innate healing and integrative tendencies of the mind will tend to collapse these [other narcissistic levels] into a unitive relating style characteristic of appropriate self-concept. This type of reflection may have relevance [for] the psychotherapeutic rebuilding of healthy self-concept, and countering [the] fragmentation and grandiose deviations from this state of optimal functioning.



Dealing with Spiritual Narcissism

Excerpted from *Meditation for Therapy: Theory and Application* © 2011

Soul and personality do not immediately function fluidly together, but undergo a process of progressive integration. These stages are described below.

Full dichotomy – personality and Soul are polarized. Attention clings to one pole opposed to the other. The other pole is deprecated and labeled as illusion, fantasy, or self-deception. In cultism, the spiritual pole is embraced and the personality rejected; in atheistic materialism, the personality pole is held and the spiritual pole abandoned.

Narcissistic identification – the individual identifies as the Soul, and loses the grounding of the personal perspective. The individual becomes grandiose, regarding others as inferior, and expects others will worship him/her and serve him/her without regard for their feelings or welfare. The individual feels godlike, all-powerful, infallible, and perfect. He/she denies or suppresses any data that may suggest he/she is otherwise than godlike. An individual can become frankly delusional in this state.

Dialogic communication – after being convinced by noticing discrepancies between the Soul and personality that one is not a Divine, godlike being as in the narcissistic phase, the individual abides in a state of inner alertness or mindfulness. He/she establishes a state of dialog, where the Soul and personality tell the other about their experience and their perceived worldview. Mutual understanding and appreciation arises.

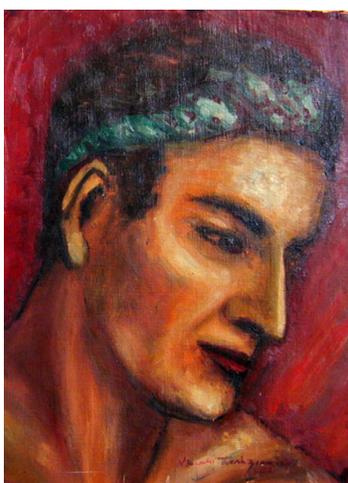
Functional integration – the Soul and personality recognize each other's inherent abilities and strengths. They agree to delegate aspects of functioning to each other, recognizing these areas as zones of special expertise. There is increasing mutual respect and cooperation.

Supernal suffusion – both personality and Soul recognize their place in the octaves of being. Both sense they are overshadowed and guided by a yet higher power, which may be identified as the Divine Will, God, the Spiritual Master, etc... This imbues the individual with great humility, and powers and abilities are dedicated to the service of this greater Power.

Seamless integration – This is the enlightened state in which the present time awareness is permeated by the presence of the Soul's wisdom and Grace. He/she fully incarnates the highest spiritual potentials as a human being. This state is referred to as Avatar, God-man, or Qutub, and is found in very rare individuals.

The aspirant and disciple must be especially sensitive when the narcissistic stage arises. It is important to highlight and discern differences between personality and the ensouling entity to avoid the stance of arrogance and insensitivity to others that characterizes the narcissistic phase.

Intentionally holding the attention in union with the attentional principle during this phase will make you aware of the discrepant elements of this unwarranted and premature state of spiritual identification, and help facilitate transition into the next stage.



“Narcissus” © Maha Genii Turriziani

Now that you have gained some initial exposure to how narcissism appears in personal and spiritual development, we will share with you some recent guidance from the Swamis on “the heart” in spirituality. They frankly discuss how narcissism creeps into spirituality, and the changes that must occur to become attuned to God’s Light and Grace.

While the article specifically addresses the steps to become a lineage holder, which does not apply to the majority of our students—as only rare individuals receive a calling to play this role in the Mudrashram® dispensation—the satsang I received about the role of the heart in response to one of my questions to Swami Prabhu Maharaj was poignant and powerful, and I will share it with you.

Reflections on Becoming a Lineage Holder

By George A. Boyd © 2014

Q: How does one transform along the Continuum to become a Lineage Holder? What does it take?

A: We have elsewhere described the journey of the ensouling entity to attain the state of the lineage holder. However, we have not given you information on the change that must take place in the human heart.

First you must visualize a continuum of change that happens, not only at the level of the Soul, but also in the human heart. We summarize this change of relationship with the Divine Will below. [We describe this inner relationship with our Master teachers in the context of Mudrashram®. You may be able to apply the same schema to the leader of other spiritual organizations.]

Level	Range	State of the Heart	Description
1	0-1	Malevolent self-will	They want to use the organization for personal enrichment or gain. They may attempt to deceive others that they are receiving guidance from the Swamis, when they are not. They turn the organization into a cult, and exploit students.

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Level	Range	State of the Heart	Description
2	1-2	Intelligent self-will	They guide the organization to profit, expand, and survive. They do not listen to the guidance of the Swamis; they use their own intelligence and experience to guide and direct their own actions and that of the organization. They “do their own thing” by selecting what they think is best from the teaching. They have a personal idea of what is best, and are completely out of touch with the Divine Will.
3	2-3	Narcissistic self-will	They are interested only in personal and spiritual advancement. They have no desire to assume a leadership role, and are unwilling to surrender to the Masters to become their channel or instrument. Their life and desires are primary; serving God—if this idea even enters into their mind—is secondary. They have insufficient spiritual mastery to sustain a stable connection with the Masters, so are unable to clearly discern the Divine Will.
4	3-4	Enthusiastic self-will	They are interested in sharing and helping others. The emergence of spiritual gifts or powers often marks this stage. They may actively embrace a teaching role, and may seek to be of service. They need to gain the requisite humility to truly surrender to the Masters, the necessary inner clarity and discernment, and mastery of teaching and ministerial skills.



Level	Range	State of the Heart	Description
5	4-5	Selfless Dedication	<p>They put God and the Masters before the self, and dedicate their time, energy, and resources to advance the mission. They are able to surrender to the Masters, and could become an instrument and channel for the Masters with sufficient preparation.</p> <p>They have developed humility, perseverance, and patience, so they are able to learn. At advanced stages of this state of the heart, they can lead others as the Masters direct them.</p>
6	5-6	Full surrender and complete faith	<p>In this state, God and the Masters are the one guiding light of their lives. They are willing to serve the Masters in any way, and put in the time and effort to master the skills of metavisual reading, teaching, and ministry.</p> <p>These ones become ready to become a lineage holder. They develop direct contact with the Masters and surrender to the Divine Will (Agya).</p>
7	6-7	Overshadowed and empowered	<p>Individuals who reach this stage are chosen to be the lineage holder: the Masters overshadow them and empower them. They are guided completely via the Divine Will, which overshadows their personal will.</p> <p>This state is only bestowed upon those ones who can sustain the state of surrender and dedication, and maintain their full faith, despite the adversity and difficulties this role may require.</p>

So the heart must change.

To disabuse oneself of the adharmic belief and behavior of level one, one must undergo painful, corrective emotional experiences that makes one aware of the consequences of doing these sinful actions, and one must sincerely repent. The ego is out of control in this stage, and must be reined in.

If one can develop a foundation of ethics, and is willing to study and implement what one has learned in school, one can become the skilled and competent professional of level two. Here the Self is ascendant; God is something one aspires to reach using a technique.

There is no inkling that the Self must become subservient to a Higher Power at level two—indeed, this is antithetical to the sense of Self that is dominant at this level. One must truly experience self-transcendence and Divine encounter to move to the next level—one must encounter God as something greater than oneself.

Those who enter the narcissistic bands of level three are concerned with advancement, transcending their pain and misery, fulfilling their desires, and leaving behind the “ignorant and deluded” masses. They often feel superior to others, and regard themselves as “highly advanced.”

The challenge for those at level three is embrace compassion, to dissolve the false barrier of “me and them,” and to truly sense the suffering of others. They need to get into touch with their desire to help others overcome their misery, and to lift them up. They must truly realize that spirituality is not about “me,” but about “them.” [The powers that dawn upon the Soul are not about bragging rights; they are there to serve others.]

Those that enter the bands of enthusiastic self will of level four will may train themselves in healing, teaching, metaphysical arts, counseling, therapeutic, or ministerial professions. They seek to help others, and to assuage their ignorance and misery. They teach and practice what they have learned.

Those at level four must come to understand that ultimately they do nothing: only the Light of Spirit can truly heal the body, grant inner vision and guidance, counsel, assuage the deep wounds of the heart, and transform others. At their best, they can become selfless instruments of this Living Force. [Our Light Sittings are designed to help others grasp this eternal truth.]

When one has realized the Omnipotence of God and the frailty of one's own nature at the dawning of level five, one seeks to serve the Divine in whatever way one can—love, surrender, and service become the keynotes of one's life.

The challenge at level five is to gain the requisite mastery of metavisional, meditational, and ministerial abilities to become ready to be an instrument for the Divine.

To advance to the deeper stage of devotion and surrender of level six, one must be willing to face one's deepest fear, pain, shame, and the secrets of one's "dark nature," and be completely willing for God to transform it. At this stage, one seeks to have the Divine Will guide them in each moment of life.

Those who have the requisite willingness to allow the Divine Will to guide them, and have mastery of the metavisional, meditational, and ministerial abilities needed to become a teacher can progressively inhabit and embody the Form of the Disciple, Mahatma, and Lineage Holder stages of the Path—and be truly ready to express the Grace of God through these forms in service to others. Those who are chosen to be the living Lineage Holder of the time have not only the spiritual attainment, but also have transformed their heart.

Spiritual attainment is important, but to become an instrument for God, one's human nature must also be brought into the work, and become transformed by God's love and Grace.

Q: How does one make progress on the spiritual Path? How does one become prepared to put on the Mantle of Mastery in the Mudrashram® and other spiritual traditions?

A: We will focus on describing this **inner process** as it occurs in the Mudrashram® teaching, but you may find analogous themes in other traditions. We identify seven different steps that each aspirant must undergo to reach the stage where they can become an instrument for God.

1. **Meditation Skill Mastery and Spiritual Advancement** – At the beginning of our work, when we introduce meditation in the Mudrashram® Master Course in Meditation and the Accelerated Meditation Program, we emphasize gaining mastery of the core meditation techniques of Integral meditation and the supportive techniques, and encourage our students to set as their meditational goal, the steady unfolding of their spirit and Soul along the Great Continuum of Consciousness.
2. **Integration** – Once the student has mastered the rudimentary skills of Integral meditation, we highlight integration. We encourage the student to contemplate the changes that occur within them as a result of inner transformation, and to bring these new abilities and spiritual truths and insights they uncover into expression in their lives, through creative outlets, and when appropriate, in their careers.
3. **Communion and Connection** – Once one can access the intuitive stream coming from their Soul, the next step is to begin to establish a relationship with the Masters. This can be developed through question and answers, through experiencing a Soul Attunement Guidance Channeling, and attending webinars, satsangs, and Light Sitzings.

As one moves on to the more advanced teachings of this tradition by taking the Satsang Program Home Study Course and the Mudrashram® Advanced Course in Meditation, one learns how to commune with the inner guide form of the externalized Masters of our lineage.

4. **Voluntary Service** – The next step is to voluntarily seek to be of service to the Masters, the organization, and the lineage holder to carry forward the mission of Mudrashram®. This does not arise through any attempts at persuasion, but spontaneously arises in the heart. One wants to do this, and sincerely desires to become involved.

5. **Teaching** – Once one has gained the requisite wisdom, insight, and mastery of meditation techniques, and has made sufficient advancement on the spiritual Path, one may wish to share what they have learned through teaching.

Structured teaching opportunities available for any students who have readied themselves and who have the requisite meditation mastery and maturity are the *Introduction to Meditation Course* and the *Stress Reduction Consultant Course*.

For advanced disciples—who have completed their spiritual developmental work at the Subtle, Planetary, Transplanetary, Cosmic, Supracosmic, and their aligned Transcendental Path—they can enter the Bridge Path and become teachers of the Mudrashram® Master Course in Meditation (*Teacher Training I*), the Mudrashram® Advanced Course in Meditation (*Teacher Training II*), and ultimately, advance to the Dharma Lord Stage, where one could be chosen to be a Lineage Holder.

6. **Surrendering to God's Will** – As we have discussed earlier, spiritual advancement alone does not qualify one to be a Lineage Holder. One must allow the Divine and the Masters to perfect one to do the Lord's work and to be His Instrument.

7. **Empowerment** – If one has met all of the requirements and one has the requisite devotion and surrender to the Divine, the Divine empowers one to be the Lineage Holder. We do not choose ourselves; God chooses and empowers us to act in this capacity. At this stage, the Masters fully overshadow one, and channel their guidance and teachings through this prepared instrument.

Realize that one cannot rely upon spiritual advancement alone to become a Master; one's human side must also be prepared. This occurs when one truly turns to God and surrenders to Him. Without this inner change, one becomes arrogant, narcissistic, and detached; and may become grandiose and caught up in one's inner world of delusions.

One must mature into the state of willingness to be guided by God. Sometimes those who have been the most broken and wounded are those most willing to turn to God; paradoxically, the strong and confident ones are the ones furthest away from being able to truly surrender.

The Lineage Holder is the instrument of the Divine, and the Divine rules over his or her life. To allow this to happen, one must be willing to turn to God first, last, and always; to rely upon Him wholly; and to be guided by His Will in each moment—listening for the inner Agya—do this; this is not the Wish; and do this, but this is not the time: wait.

To pass through this gauntlet of personal refinement is the most difficult thing: most are unwilling to surrender their autonomy and their desires and put God first. So it is for this reason that many do not advance beyond spiritual narcissism.

Rare are those who seek to serve and teach. Even more rare are those who put the service to God first in their lives. The rarest of the rare are those who surrender to the Divine Will—for these see no other way or path other than to turn their will and life over to the guidance of the Living God.

This is a hard teaching. Many of you will want to close your eyes and stop your ears. Some of you will feel terrified and want to run away. You resist this. You rebel against it. You are not ready to go here.

You think it is all about you. It is not. It is about them: the myriad beings who suffer and cry out. It is about God, who seeks a few good men and women to be emissaries in the world, and to carry out the Divine Purpose and Plan.

Only the rarest ones go here. Do you have it in you to be such a one?

“Many of you cry out, Lord, Lord—but your hearts are far from Me.”

– Jesus

“Many are called, but few are chosen.” – Jesus



In which **state of the heart** do you sense you are currently dwelling?

What would need to change for you to move to the next state of the heart?

In which step of the **inner process** are you currently most focused?

What would you need to master or change to move into the next step of this inner process?



Thank you for attending our webinar today!

