

You can do anything you set your mind to do and be anything you set your mind to be!

The above statement is profoundly and almost universally American. Hmmm! This idea has never had much meaning for, or impact on me. It is an either or position, dividing the world into white and black, for or against, being the problem or being the solution, etc. etc. ad nauseum, when in real life it is fairly obvious that things are yes or no, yes and no, neither yes nor no, and at least neither neither yes nor no. The complexity and fogginess of life is because of the interconnectedness of life. If we were self-contained, independent entities, we imagine that life would be much easier. But the fact is that we are not independent entities, no matter how much you set your mind to being independent.

We often say "Don't be so self conscious", meaning don't be so worried about how others look at you. This really means "Don't be so ego-centric". And yet, if not being so ego-centric is good, why is "being out of control" so bad? From the Samsara-delusion point of view, not being self-conscious is being out of the ego's control, and being out of the ego's control means chaos, havoc and mayhem - an interesting point of view and point of value.

Shouldn't being out of the control of the ego mean being connected and in harmony with everything? And if so, shouldn't "Don't be so self-conscious" mean "don't be such a control freak?" To be self-conscious is to need to be in control. To be in control is to be out of harmony with everything else. Therefore for the ego not to be in control, or to see that it is not in control, in spite of everything we do to assure that it is in control, is a good thing and not something that leads to chaos and havoc. On the contrary, it leads to increased appreciation of others, enjoyment of the beauty of life, relaxation, cooperation, a respect for and interest in differences, music, dance, and joy.

In Samsara, the world of relative reality, the world of delusion, the self is the center of the universe, and all the achievements of the self, good, bad, and neither, rise from the Three Poisons of anger, greed, and ignorance. It has produced the greatest century of technological comforts in history, along with the most self-destructive, genocidal, and mindlessly cruel century in history. The world of the ego is seemingly all we know and value. A world of individuals struggling to relate to each other, sometimes succeeding, more often than not creating conflict, separation, and disharmony. And yet, the moments of egolessness are infinitely more real, more harmonious, more luminous, more beautiful and fulfilling. The values of the Samsara half of us and the Nirvana half of us could not be more at odds, and yet, on the deepest level available to us they come together in separation - Namo and Amidabutsu.

Gassho,

*Rev. Maa*