

THE
MASTERY
OF SELF

DON MIGUEL
RUIZ JR.



THE
MASTERY
OF SELF

A TOLTEC GUIDE
TO PERSONAL FREEDOM



YogiImpressions®



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Originally published in United States by
Hierophant Publishing, 2016

First India printing June 2018
ISBN 978-93-82742-94-4

Printed at: Repro India Ltd., Mumbai

To all whom I love.

*Emancipate yourself from mental slavery;
none but ourselves can free our minds.*

—Bob Marley

*A moment of clarity without any action is just a thought that
passes in the wind. But a moment of clarity followed by an
action is a pivotal moment in our life.*

—don Miguel Ruiz Jr.

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A Message from the Publisher: How This Book Came into Being

Know Thyself

These were the words inscribed at the entrance of the Temple of Apollo, home of the Oracle of Delphi, arguably the most famous woman in all of Ancient Greece. History tells us that thousands upon thousands of people, including kings, queens, statesmen, philosophers, and common people alike, would travel hundreds of miles or more to receive her prophetic guidance every year. The temple itself was a towering structure that reached its pinnacle of influence in the middle centuries of the first millennia BCE. At the time, it was considered the most important religious shrine in all of Greece.

Building a massive temple like this, even with our advanced machinery and modern technology, would still be a major undertaking by today's standards. Modern

architects marvel at the intelligence, craftsmanship, and labor that went into creating this temple, but I find it more fascinating that of all the messages that could have been written at its entrance, the two-word axiom “Know Thyself” was chosen. Perhaps the oracle wanted to be sure that if you remembered only one message from your pilgrimage, then knowing yourself should be it. I often wonder what the world would look like today if some of our modern religions taught that self-knowledge, rather than blind adherence to external guidance and dogma, was the paramount goal of the spiritual path.

Not long after the zenith of the oracle, and on the other side of the world, a group of people came together to form a new civilization in what is now south central Mexico. They called themselves Toltec, which means “artist.” But these people were not artists in the traditional sense (although some were painters and sculptors also); rather, they saw themselves as artists of life, and the world we inhabit as the canvas upon which they painted their masterpiece. The legacy of the Toltecs and their teachings has been handed down from generation to generation, often in secrecy when the politics of the day required it, and don Miguel Ruiz Jr. is the latest teacher in the Eagle Knight lineage of the Toltec people.

When Miguel approached me about writing a book on self-mastery, I couldn't help but think of the Oracle of Delphi and her 2,500-year-old instruction to Know Thyself. I wondered how this sage advice would appear in the context of his Toltec ancestry. The book you are holding now, I am pleased to say, conveys exactly this—and much, much more. Miguel presents ancient wisdom in a modern way, and helps us to apply this timeless truth of Know Thyself in our everyday lives.

In the opening chapters, Miguel lays the groundwork for the book, providing a framework based on his Toltec tradition. He explains how the events and actions of your past have shaped your present reality. The following chapters are where he really digs in, giving you the tools you need to discover who you are at the deepest level, uncover any self-limiting beliefs you have falsely accepted as fact, and release any attachments you are holding that continuously drag you down. The later chapters will help you chart a new course to where you really want to go, which for some of you may be a very different place than where you are currently heading.

Miguel has stressed to me on many occasions that it's not enough to just read the information contained in these pages; it's when you choose to incorporate this knowledge into your life that you receive the benefits.

To this aim, he has included exercises at the end of many chapters that are designed to help you do just that. Returning to the Greek world for a moment, we can say that the exercises are where *logos* (knowledge) becomes *praxis* (practice)—or, as Miguel writes, “understanding the teachings is the first step, but applying them is what makes you a Master.”

So without further ado, it is with great pleasure that I present to you don Miguel Ruiz Jr.’s *The Mastery of Self*. May it serve you well on your journey of self-discovery.

Randy Davila
Publisher
Hierophant Publishing

Explanation of Key Terms

Ally—The voice of your internal narrator when it inspires you to live, create, and love unconditionally. The ally can also offer constructive self-talk.

Attachment—The action of taking something that is not a part of you and making it a part of you through an emotional or energetic investment. You can attach to external objects, beliefs, ideas, and even roles you play in the world.

Authentic Self—The Divine inside of you; the force that gives life to your mind and your body. It's similar to the concept of the spirit or the soul that is present in many religious traditions, but it's not exactly the same.

Awareness—The practice of paying attention in the present moment to what is happening inside your body and your mind as well as in your immediate surroundings.

Domestication—The primary system of control in the Dream of the Planet. Starting when we are very young, we are presented with either a reward or a punishment for adopting the beliefs and behaviors of what others find acceptable. When we adopt these beliefs and behaviors as a result of either the reward or punishment, we can say we have been domesticated.

Dream of the Planet—The combination of every single being in the world's Personal Dream, or the world we live in.

Narrators—The voices in your mind that speak to you throughout the day, which can be either positive (ally) or negative (parasite).

Parasite—The voice of the narrator when it uses your beliefs, formed through domestication and attachment, to hold power over you by placing conditions on your self-love and self-acceptance. This negative voice causes sadness, anxiety, and fear.

Personal Dream—The unique reality created by every individual; your personal perspective. It is the manifestation of the relationship between your mind and body.

Toltec people—An ancient group of Native Americans who came together in south and central Mexico to study perception. The word *Toltec* means “artist.”

Toltec warrior—One who is committed to using the teachings of the Toltec tradition to win the inner battle against domestication and attachment.

Introduction

IMAGINE FOR A MOMENT that you are in a dream.

In this dream, you find yourself at a huge party with thousands of people, where you are the only sober person and everyone else is drunk. The other partygoers are in varying states of intoxication. A few people have had just one or two drinks and are only tipsy; most fall into the realm of general drunkenness; and a handful are so drunk that they are making spectacles of themselves in all sorts of colorful ways. They may even have blacked out, as their actions seem completely out of their control.

Some of the people at this party are your friends and family, some are acquaintances, but most you don't know. You try to talk to a few people, but you quickly realize that their intoxication level has altered their ability to communicate clearly; it has clouded their viewpoint. You also notice that each person is experiencing the party differently,

depending on his or her degree of drunkenness, and your interactions change with every drink they consume.

The partygoers range from loud, outgoing, and merry, to shy, quiet, and sullen. As the party rages on, you watch everyone alternate between the two ends of the spectrum: from happy to sad, excited to apathetic. They fight and make up, argue, embrace, and argue again, and you watch as this type of odd behavior repeats itself endlessly in cycles throughout the night. You realize that even though they are drunk, it's not the booze they crave more of, but rather the drama of the party.

As the night continues, your interactions with the partygoers vary from person to person. While some are enjoyable, others have the potential to quickly turn volatile. Since their perception is clouded, the other partygoers react emotionally to situations that you can see are pure fantasy. For some of them, the dream has become a nightmare.

Most important of all, it's clear that no one at this party knows this is all just a dream.

Then it occurs to you that this is not a new party, but one you've attended before. At one point you were just like them. You went through all the varying degrees of drunkenness, behaving exactly as those around you are now. You conversed through the fog of booze, joined the folly of the party, and let the intoxication guide your actions.

Finally, it's clear that no one there realizes you are now sober. They think you are still drunk, just like them. They do not see your path, only their own. They view you only as a distortion, projected by their alcohol-addled minds, not as you actually are. They are also completely unaware of the true effect the liquor is having on them. Each is lost in his or her own dream of the party. They do not see how their interactions are no longer under their control. As a result, they continually try to entice you to join the drama of the party, to join the folly that their distorted perception has created.

What will you do?

Chapter One

The Making of a Master



AT THE PEAK OF her journey, a Toltec warrior clears her mind of beliefs, domestication, and attachments, marking the end of a war within herself for personal freedom. Surrounding her is an infinite number of possibilities, each one a choice that leads in a unique direction in life. When she makes a choice through her action, she knows that the path she follows is ultimately no different than the other paths, as they all lead to the same place. She has no demands for any outcome, as she realizes that there is nowhere she needs to go and nothing she needs to do in order to find herself. Her action is a result of the pure joy

of realizing that she is alive at this moment to choose one of the many possibilities.

This living with a quiet mind creates a state of pure bliss that comes from being entirely in the moment. Truly nothing matters but the present, because it is the only place where life can express itself.

This is a state that many of you have experienced at some point in your life, when you were completely engaged in the now. Some people experience it while they are exercising, consciously creating, being in nature, making love, or, of course, meditating or praying. It's the moment when the mind and the body are in complete awareness of the experience of life. It can also be said that it is during these moments that we often reach a pure state of unconditional love for everything and everyone, including ourselves.

While living full-time in this state of pure bliss is a goal for many, most will agree it is easier said than done—especially if we don't live isolated away from the world. Surrounded by other people, we choose who we will interact and engage with, and it's often in these interactions that the trouble begins.

In the Toltec tradition, the main function of the mind is to dream, or to perceive and to project information. The Personal Dream is the unique reality created by

every individual; it's their perspective, a manifestation of the relationship between mind and body, and intent is the energy that animates both. As our shared knowledge and experience mingle together, we co-create the Dream of the Planet, which is the combination of every single being in the world's Personal Dream. While we live individual dreams based on our individual perceptions, the Dream of the Planet is the manifestation of our shared intentions, where we allow our ideas and agreements to flow between us. If there is harmony in the Personal Dream, then there is a constant opportunity for harmony with the Dream of the Planet.

Since you are reading this book, it's likely that you don't live in a cloistered monastery or ashram, or all alone high atop a mountain. You have chosen to engage in the world, and you want to enjoy yourself in the process. Solitude can be a great tool for healing and communion with oneself, but it is our interactions with others that will allow us to thrive and enjoy an active life. If life is like a carnival, you have come to ride the rides.

But engaging in the Dream means you will likely develop preferences for certain potential paths—or, in other words, you will have wants and desires. When you become too attached to those desires and they aren't fulfilled, the result is that you suffer. There are also billions

of others involved in co-creating the Dream of the Planet, many of whom have wants and desires that are different from yours. Without respect and understanding, drama, disagreement, and even conflict are sure to occur. This begs the question, is there a way you can engage in an active life without becoming too attached to your own personal preferences? Can you remain calm and balanced when dealing with others, seeing them and yourself through the eyes of unconditional love, and consequently not be drawn into the drama of the party? In my experience the answer to both questions is yes, and that is the subject of this book. This can be done through a process called the Mastery of Self.

You become a Master of Self when you can engage the Dream of the Planet and everyone in it without losing sight of your Authentic Self, and while maintaining the awareness that every choice you make is your own. You are no longer caught up in the drama of the party. When you engage with the Dream of the Planet with the awareness and remembrance that it's only a dream, you are able to move freely, liberated from the chains of attachment and domestication.

An attachment is the action of taking something that is not a part of you and making it a part of you through an emotional or energetic investment. When you become

attached to something in the Dream of the Planet, you suffer every time the object of your attachment is threatened, and this is true regardless of if the threat is real or an illusion. Most people not only attach to their wants and desires as they relate to material things, but also to their beliefs and ideas. Although an attachment is something that can occur naturally in the moment, it becomes unhealthy when you lose the ability to detach from it when the moment ends or when the belief no longer reflects the truth. In many ways, attachments to beliefs are far more destructive than attachments to external items, because beliefs and ideas are much harder to spot and let go of.

Domestication is the system of control in the Dream of the Planet; it is the way we learn conditional love. Starting when we are very young, we are presented with either a reward or a punishment for adopting the beliefs and behaviors of others in the Dream. This system of reward and punishment, or domestication, is used to control our behavior. The result of domestication is that many of us give up who we really are in exchange for who we think we should be, and consequently we end up living a life that is not our own. Learning how to spot and release our domestication, and reclaiming who we really are in the process, is a hallmark of a Master of Self.

When you become so domesticated by or attached to a belief or idea that you can't let go of it, your choices narrow until any notion of choice is really an illusion. Your beliefs now define you, and they will dictate your choice. You are no longer the master of your own self, as your domestication and attachments are controlling you. As a result, you will engage with others and yourself in a way that does not serve your highest good. You have joined into the drama of the party, and it now shapes your Personal Dream.

The Dream of the Planet is full of traps to lure you back into the drama of the party, and falling into one of them can happen in the blink of an eye. If you choose to engage with the world, avoiding all traps is virtually impossible. However, when you become aware that you are falling into a trap, the simple act of noticing it allows you to begin to regain control. As you get better at spotting the traps and understanding your own underlying emotions and beliefs that make them traps for you in the first place, you are far less likely to take the bait. And even when you do, you can let go of whatever you are attached too as quickly as your will dictates. It may seem counter-intuitive, but *you choose to let go in order to be in control*. Doing so is the Mastery of Self in action.

As a Master of Self, you can have relationships with others, even those who disagree with you, while still being grounded in your Authentic Self. You are able to maintain your free will and respect the free will of others. Knowing that others see you in a specific way gives you choices when you engage with them. You shape-shift only in their perception, and your awareness of that allows you to stay true to yourself and not give in to the temptation to take on others' definitions of who you are. You realize that you don't have to put on any image that others project onto you because you know it is not your reality. With this awareness, you will be better able to co-create harmoniously with others, making the relationships that matter most to you more fulfilling and rewarding.

Most importantly, when you become a Master of Self, you know how to stay grounded in your Authentic Self regardless of what's happening around you. You also have the awareness to realize quickly when you are acting in a way that isn't helpful to yourself or others and can spot those situations when you are feeding your ego, or the false sense of self, instead of living in peace. In this way, you free yourself from the drama and self-inflicted suffering created by so many people.

Without awareness of how to engage the Dream of the Planet and the beings who create it, it is too easy to

internalize what is happening around you, or to forget that it is all a dream. As a result, your attachments grow until you are consumed with the drama of the party. Becoming a Master of Self is about maintaining awareness of your center while you are interacting with the Dream of the Planet, remembering that it's all a dream. Staying centered while engaging with the world is much easier said than done, and this book will be devoted to teaching you exactly how to do that.

Self-mastery is not an isolated idea within the Toltec tradition, as every form of spiritual discipline provides a map to help us live in harmony within the Dream of the Planet by freeing our mind from the tyranny of our own thinking and being affected by the projections of others. That being said, the Toltec tradition has some unique contributions to this effort, and we'll discuss these in greater detail in the pages that follow.

Before we deconstruct and rebuild the world around us, starting with ourselves, we need a greater understanding of attachments, domestication, and the difference between conditional and unconditional love. Then, and only then, can we reconstruct our Personal Dream in peace and harmony.