

You Have an Ego but You Are Not an Ego

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2013-11-05

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/1068>

Patrick: Hi, Sundari, my name is Patrick Price. I live in Liverpool, England, and have been using James' website for two years now.

Sundari: I am glad you found James and that ShiningWorld has been of benefit to you.

Patrick: And I know I am awareness and not the ego known as Patrick.

Sundari: *Moksa* is discriminating you, awareness, from the objects that arise in you. All objects are made up of awareness and have a dependent existence from you, awareness, but awareness is not the objects and is always free of them. An object is anything other than you, awareness. No object knows the subject because no object is conscious. Objects exist and are knowable because of the presence of awareness which when *maya*, or ignorance, obtains is what "gives rise to" consciousness. Awareness is not an object of perception so it cannot be known by the objects. The senses for knowing anything, perception and inference, are too gross to know awareness because awareness is that by which all things are known. Only through Vedanta, or self-knowledge, can the ignorance of one's true nature be removed so that the true nature of the self is revealed in a purified mind.

Patrick: But I just have a few issues about how everything fits together, and would be very grateful if you could clear a few things up. Awareness is all, so does that mean that the ego, i.e. me (awareness), taking myself to be the body is just a thought?

Sundari: Maybe you have worded your question badly but it appears that you are confused about what the ego is. The ego is not you, awareness; the ego is made up of awareness but awareness is not the ego. Awareness does not think, it is that by whose presence thinking appears to take place. All thoughts arise from *Isvara*, or the *dharma* field, as a result of the *gunas*, which govern the creation of the *vasanas* and Patrick's conditioning. If awareness takes itself to be the ego or the body then it is identified with objects and is the self under the spell of ignorance. Gross objects like the body, just like subtle objects like thoughts, are objects that appear in you, awareness, and are known to you, awareness. All objects are experienced "in the mind" as thoughts but the mind itself is an object known to you, awareness. The mind is not conscious and does not think either but appears to be conscious and to think because the light of awareness shines on it, giving it the appearance of consciousness, like a torch lights up a dark room.

The ego is just another word that describes the thought that limitless, non-dual consciousness - you - is a limited separate entity called "Patrick." It is a thought that arises out of consciousness, is made up of consciousness and dissolves into consciousness with the removal of ignorance by self-knowledge. This thought gives

rise to the idea that you are a doer, the one appears to think and who experiences things. There is no such thing as an ego in reality, it has no existence other than as a thought arising in you, awareness. Have you ever seen an ego? All egos function in the same predictable way, in fact there is only one ego and all embodied entities (*jivas*) share it unless and until they know what their real identity is as awareness.

Our egos do actions to get something we think we want or need to complete ourselves or to get away from something we don't want. It is programmed thinking, and the resulting actions that arise from the playing out of the *guna*-generated *vasanas*, in other words, ignorance.

The ego is the "I"-thought wrongly associated and identified with objects. The technical name for it in Sanskrit is *ahamkara*. In the spiritual arena, especially in *yoga*, the idea abounds that the ego is the problem and needs to be busted or removed. Vedanta disagrees. It sees it as only a thought that has no effect on awareness. It is not real. And if it is not real, how can it be busted? It can only be understood for what it is.

The *yogic* understanding of ego also gives rise to the belief that there are two selves: the small self, or "I," and the big self, or "I," which, of course, there are not. There is only one principle in reality and it is awareness; everything arises out of it, like the spider's web emerges from the spider's body and is made from the spider's body. The distinction here is: although there is only one self, when *maya* is operating, awareness appears as the creation and as a *jiva* (apparent individual entity, body-mind-ego) and then identifies with the individual subtle body. The self apparently under the spell of ignorance then thinks that awareness is an object to be obtained.

So it is correct to say that awareness and the ego exist in different orders of reality, like the ocean and the wave or the gold and the ring. No ego or object exists without awareness. The ego, the body and all objects are inert, value-neutral, and have a dependent existence on awareness but awareness is always free of the objects. As stated above, this is what discrimination is all about. So you have an ego but you are not the ego. You have a body but you are not the body. The mind appears to think but it does not think.

I hope this helps!

~ *Namaste*, Sundari