

# What Is the Soul?

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**Don:** The word “soul” has always puzzled me, as I am not clear what the word means for those who use it. Soul is a word being used by various traditions that in Vedanta terms describes a *sattvic* subtle body that is reflecting the self with little “contamination” from the other two *gunas* and as such is mistakenly attributed by the person (*jiva*) to be their “spiritual” self or the spark of God within. For some in the Western tradition, it is what goes to heaven or returns to God, and in the Eastern tradition it is the enduring reincarnating self that eventually reunites with the One.

In Vedanta, I see it as representing a *sattvic* subtle body, an object, and therefore unreal, *mithya*, and is merely the reflection of the self but is often mistakenly by the person to be the self.

**Sundari:** The soul is the self, the *jivatman*. It is one but has three parts: original pure consciousness plus the subtle body, or eternal *Jiva* (reflecting medium), plus the reflection, the non-eternal or “personal” *jiva*. There is only one eternal *Jiva* appearing as many apparently unique individuals, or non-eternal (personal) *jivas*. Although it seems like the personal *jiva* lives but for a moment in time, in truth it is indestructible because the non-eternal *jiva* is awareness too and is always present, just not always appearing as a subtle body, or person. And as a subtle body, it is an eternal **principle** in awareness, either unmanifest or manifest whenever *Maya* manifests. *Isvara* and the universal eternal *Jiva* are never annihilated; they are both eternal principles (or concepts) in awareness which manifest whenever *Maya* manifests, which is also an eternal principle or power in awareness. Neither the eternal *Jiva* nor non-eternal *jiva* are real with reference to awareness.

Here is one of the greatest of all great sayings in Vedanta that captures this truth and the essence of Vedanta:

***Brahma Satyam Jagan Mithya Jivo Bramaiva Na Parah.*** Memorize it.

It means:

**I, the self, am limitless consciousness, and the *jiva* is non-different from me.**

~ Love, Sundari