

# I Am Not the Ego

Sundari (Isabella Viglietti)

2018-09-16

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/3668>

**Q:** What is the ego?

**Sundari:** The technical name for the ego in Sanskrit is *ahamkara*. In one sentence, it is basically the “I” thought wrongly associated with an object. The Self is associationless.

**Q:** How does it function?

**Sundari:** If you want to know how your ego functions, it is very easy to do so and very simple because all egos work in exactly the same predictable way, so much so that it could be said there is only one ego and we all share it – if we are identified with being a person, that is.

The “ego” is a word that describes the thought that limitless, non-dual consciousness (you) is a limited separate entity. It is programmed thinking and the resulting actions that arise from the playing out of the *guna*-generated *vasanas* (in other words, ignorance). 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.

The ego functions in three basic ways for everyone:

**1. DOERSHIP:** It is that part of you that believes it is the doer and acts to get results. It is very unhappy when it does not get what it wants and usually blames someone or something for its failure. It then performs more actions to get what it wants or avoid what it does not want, *ad infinitum*.

**2. OWNERSHIP:** It is that part of you that owns objects, thoughts, feelings, people, things, experiences, identities, roles.

**3. INTERPRETER:** It is that part of you that interprets experience.

**Q:** Do we need an ego, speaking as the *jiva*?

**Sundari:** Yes, we do or we cannot function appropriately in response to what *Isvara* presents to us on a moment-to-moment basis. A healthy ego is supposed to function as a messenger from our “inner” world, the Self, to the “outer world” the apparent reality, the environment. The ego gives us our “sense of individuation” and *jiva*-identity. If we were “identity-less” as *jivas* we would be pathetic creatures. Most of us know someone who has not matured beyond childhood or whose life *karma* has severely damaged their sense of identity, and they are never mentally or emotionally balanced or healthy people.

**Q:** Do we need to destroy the ego – and is it even possible to do so?

**Sundari:** No and no. Nothing gets rid of the ego, because it is not possible to get rid of it. It is a function of the subtle body, a thought that belongs to *Isvara*, not the doer, or *jiva*. If everything is the Self, the ego is the Self too. Unless assimilation of the teachings on your true nature as the Self takes place in a qualified mature mind which renders the binding *vasanas* non-binding and negates the sense of doership, the identification with the doer/ego, is still there, so suffering is still there.

Some people very mistakenly believe that to kill the ego means this will magically transform them into paragons of virtue, humble and holy. It would not, even if it were possible to “kill” or bust the ego, which it is not. The ego cannot kill the ego. In fact this stupid idea will likely make you believe you are insufferably superior, even if masked in humility. There is nothing worse than a spiritual ego.

The ego is only a problem when it takes the *jiva* identity to be real. All *jivas* are born in fear because all *jivas* are born in ignorance of their true nature. Therefore the ego is no more than a fear-thought and normally not your best friend, unless you are a very mature person with excellent values and impulse control. The ego functioning in a positive way understands the law of *dharma* and *karma*, specifically non-injury, and the zero-sum nature of life. That is has nothing to gain or lose by doing or acquiring anything. So although it acts in an appropriate and timely way to get what it wants, it does not get agitated when it does not get what it wants. It knows that there is always more of whatever it wanted and is dispassionate and happy with or without the desired objects. With most people, this only takes place once Self-knowledge has obtained.

**Q:** Does the ego stand in the way of Self-knowledge?

**Sundari:** No. The ego does not stand in the way of the Self; nothing does. The ego has no effect on the Self, because it is not real, “real” being defined as “that which is always present and unchanging” – a definition that only ever fits consciousness, nothing else. And if it is not real, how can it be busted – or surrendered? It can only be understood for what it is. The only thing that salvages and transforms a fear/desire-based ego is to train it to think differently, and only permanent Self-knowledge has the power to do that. In the spiritual arena, especially in *yoga*, the idea abounds that the ego is the problem and must be “busted” or surrendered. Vedanta disagrees. Surrendered to whom and by whom? The ego cannot and will never surrender the ego, not for long anyway. There is nothing for it to gain by surrendering or so it believes, when rooted in duality.

**Q:** Are there any telltale symptoms that Self-knowledge is working on the ego?

**Sundari:** Yes, if *karma yoga* is practised correctly, the belief in doership is surrendered to *Isvara*, which lessens the pressure of your likes and dislikes, fears and desires. If you are committed to Self-inquiry, Self-knowledge gradually transforms the mind, removing ignorance and the ego gets on board, slowly but surely. One of the symptoms of Self-knowledge working on the mind quite common in the “firefly” stage of Self-inquiry is Self-knowledge “blinking on and off.” The

mind/ego is adjusting the way it usually relates to its environment and loses its compass of object identification, so does not know how to respond to what is happening to it. This passes as Self-knowledge deepens.

**Q:** So there is nothing I do, anything to get rid of it?

**Sundari:** No. The doer is the problem. As stated, only Self-knowledge dissolves the fear-based ego. It takes a while to really understand the truth that no action taken by a limited entity (the ego/individual identified as a person) will produce a permanent and limitless result, i.e. freedom from limitation, from suffering. You might get a temporary reprieve with the idea that you have surrendered the ego which feels like grace flooding in, but the ego is still there, make no mistake about it! If we are honest, it is everyone's experience that we cannot permanently surrender the ego. It always comes back, no matter how hard we try to get rid of it with meditation or any other *yoga*.

**Q:** The ego causes all suffering and blocks grace?

**Sundari:** As I said, the ego is not the problem. Only identification with the ego produces suffering, or the "blocking" of grace, meaning the misapprehension or lack of appreciation of yourself as whole and complete, non-dual, ever-present, unchanging, limitless, actionless and unconditioned consciousness – the KNOWER of the ego. There is no such thing as an ego in reality; it has no existence other than as a thought arising in you, consciousness.

~ Love, Sundari