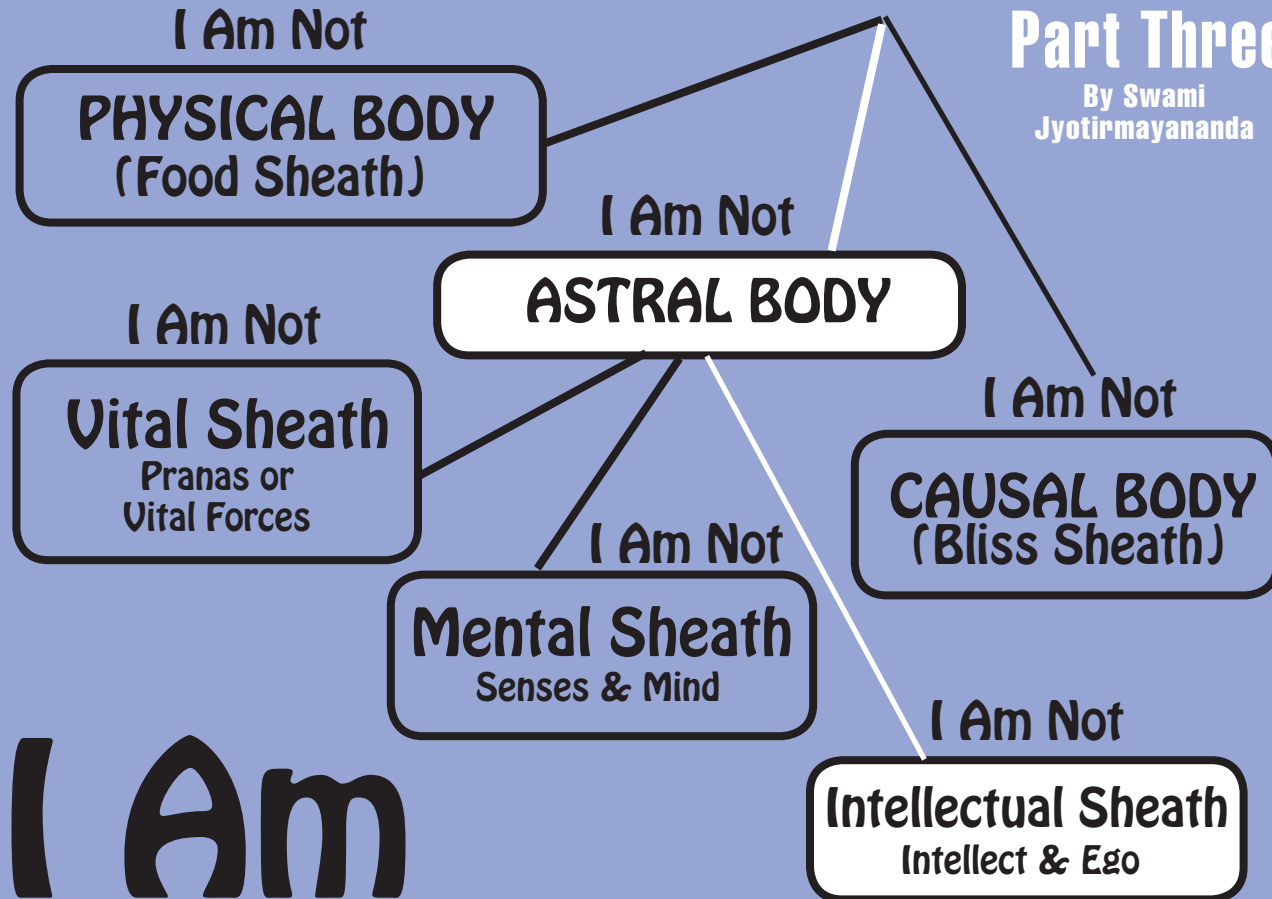


# Who Am I?

## Part Three

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# I Am The Self!

**Y**ou begin your practice of *vichar* (enquiry) by focusing your attention on the physical body and attempting to understand that you are not the physical body. If this understanding becomes profound enough, it changes all your values and your life becomes highly elevated. Then you

move one step forward in your reflection, and focus your attention on the astral body, which has three layers or sheaths—vital (*pranamaya kosha*), mental (*manomaya kosha*) and intellectual (*vijnanamaya kosha*).

In parts one and two of this series, we focused our attention on the negation of the

physical body or food sheath, as well as on the negation of the vital sheath and mental sheath. In part three, we will enquire into the nature of intellect and ego and one's false identification with *vijnanamaya kosha*.

## Negation of the

### INTELLECTUAL SHEATH

When you allow your vision to penetrate into the plane where intellect and ego are blended—the plane referred to as *vijnanamaya kosha*—the enquiry of “Who am I?” reaches a profound level. There you discover that your intellect and ego, like your body, vital forces, senses and mind, are not yourself. You are different from your intellect sheath.

#### I Am Not the Intellect

Intellect or *buddhi* performs the functions of reason and discrimination. As we have seen previously, the conscious mind (*manas*) functions as a messenger between the senses and the intellect. The senses present perceptions, and the mind receives those perceptions and passes them on to the intellect for organization and evaluation.

Intellect is your possession. You can sharpen your intellect, just as you sharpen a pencil. You can make it subtle, you can make it gross. You can render your intellect healthy, or you can render it unhealthy.

At one moment you say, “I understand this point very well. My intellect is keen.” At another moment you say, “My intellect is dull. I can't apply any of this philosophy!” This shows that you are identified with the intellect only

temporarily. Intellect is subject to variations in its nature; but the Self is constant.

Further, in every plane of your existence, you are inseparably related to the universe. Just as the mind within you is intimately related to the universal or Cosmic Mind—just as a wave is related to the ocean—your intellect is related to the Cosmic Intellect or Brahma the Creator.

#### I am Not the Ego

When you come to observe the very ego-center within yourself, you have reached a very advanced level in the process of enquiry into “Who am I?” Ego, known as *ahamkara*, is the most important aspect of the mind. It is the nucleus of the mental process. If you were to truly understand that you are not the ego, then one hundred percent of your spiritual task would be over! The moment you are able to break the illusion of the ego, your task is accomplished. You realize, “I am the Self.” However, outstepping ego is not an ordinary task. It is a much greater task than the climbing of Mount Everest.

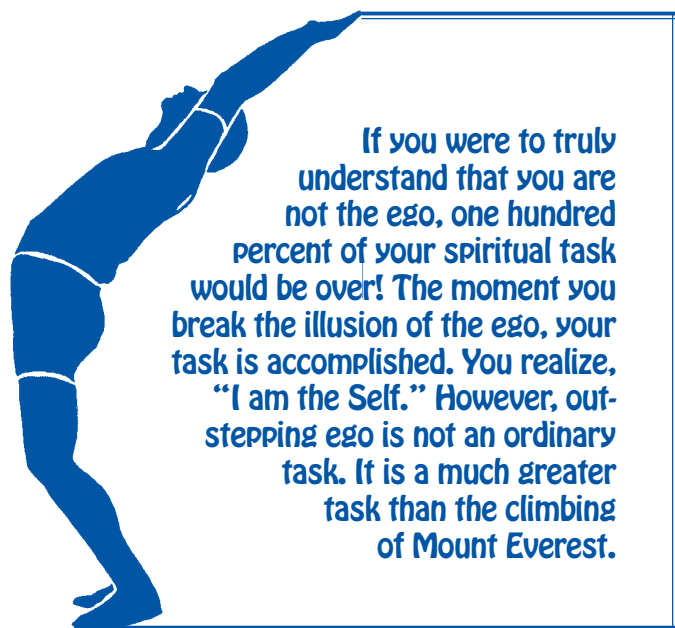
In the state of ignorance, ego becomes the dominating reality in one's personality. All problems arise on the basis of ego. When you are in deep sleep, ego is submerged; therefore you have no problems. When you wake up, a few moments after deep sleep, your ego is still not there; it is hiding somewhere. Then you begin to look for your ego. You ask yourself, “Who am I? Where am I? How is it that I have no problems? What was the problem I was worried about yesterday?” Soon the ego arises and you become aware of all the problems of yesterday and worry about how they can be resolved in the future.

If ego was not there, you wouldn't shed so many bitter tears. You wouldn't have all the anxieties, pain and grief. It is ego that enables one to misunderstand as well as to understand, to be happy and elated when there is praise and to be miserable and dejected when one receives insult.

Ego has a great role in human existence, and in the process of evolution, ego plays the greatest part. But, as you advance, you begin to understand that ego is illusory. It is, as Yoga Vasistha says, the ghost in the post, the snake in the rope. And yet, that snake in the rope has caused so many problems, so much suffering. That is the great Vedantic riddle. Ego, which does not exist in reality, continues to drive people into great misery, into experiences of bitterness. However, it is only due to ignorance that ego becomes the dominating reality in one's personality. As you develop knowledge, ego begins to dissolve.

### Three Types of Ego

Ego is of three types: *tamasic*, *rajasic* and *satwic*. *Tamasic* ego is the grossest. This is the



demonic ego that sustains the spirit of revenge against someone for years and years, the ego that delights in wrath, deep-rooted jealousy, violence and grossest expressions of life.

*Rajasic* ego is that which weaves the web of attachment and hatred (*raga* and *dwesha*) in daily life. It leans upon the senses and keeps the mind externalized over the objects of the world and filled with desires. *Rajasic* ego values vanity, pride, material possessions, glory, power. This *rajasic-tamasic* ego exists in most people as the cause of *karmic* bondage, and it needs to be pulverized, sublimated and eradicated.

*Satwic* ego, on the other hand, is that which delights in good association, which aspires for Self-realization. That type of ego arises when you purify your heart. *Satwic* ego is saintly ego—the ego that exists in a pure mind.

*Satwic* ego is transparent. Even though the ego is there, it does not obstruct one's vision of the innermost Self. *Rajasic* ego, however, is clouded, while *tamasic* ego is very dense.

In the old style lamps that burned kerosene or a substance of that nature, you had to continuously clean the glass and trim the wick. As the wick burned, a black deposit built up, and you had to remove that deposit from the glass and the wick so that the lamp would shine brightly. In the same manner, in human personality there is the need to cleanse the glass of the mind and trim the wick of ego.

You trim your ego by the practice of meditation, by enquiry, by devotion, and you cleanse the glass of your mind by selfless service, by good association. When ego is trimmed and *satwic* ego is allowed to develop more and more, the vision of the Self becomes unobstructed. Even though ego is there, it does not assert itself. Rather, it becomes the source of the most wonderful sentiments in the heart—the

Divine sentiments of universality that exist in Sages and Saints. Compassion, cosmic love, boundless generosity, profound contentment—all these arise out of *satwic* ego.

Thus an aspirant must gain insight into the art of unfolding *satwic* ego. When *sattwa* arises in your mind, enquiry into “Who am I?” becomes most effective. You cannot enquire into “Who am I?” when your mind is gloomy, morose, and filled with dejection. The moment you sit down and ask yourself “Who am I?” the answer comes, “I am this miserable personality!”

Only when you are *satwic* can you learn the art of letting go ego-consciousness. Only when the mind is joyous and relaxed does enquiry become a great spiritual adventure.

### **The Joy of Outstepping Ego**

Most people think that if ego was not there, life would become meaningless. In fact, life would become most meaningful. You are no longer a wave of individual personality; you have become the ocean of *Brahman* (the Absolute Self).

If ego were to dissolve, you would realize *Brahman*—the Absolute Self. The wave becomes meaningless when you realize the ocean. When that happens, will you feel miserable? No. You would be supremely blissful.

The moment you understand that the very ego within you is not yourself, you have found a secret of unending joy, a treasure of unbounded value. No longer will you be harassed by the agitations of your mind. Once you realize that you are not the ego, you can watch your ego being offended. You can watch so many negative thoughts streaming from that offended ego. And yet, deep within, you can draw yourself away from the ego.

When you relax and watch thundering clouds pass by in the sky, you learn that when the clouds have passed on, the moon begins to shine again. The appearance of clouds in the sky does not mean that the moon is gone forever. Similarly, you understand clearly that if at times you find your mind completely clouded with ego and its upsetting experiences, deep within you are not lost. This state will pass on.

The moment you detach from your ego, control of mind is very simple. All worries and anxieties center around ego, which is like the eye of a hurricane. The moving currents of your thoughts circulate around the illusion known as ego. The moment you break that illusion, all the thoughts will disperse and calm down instantaneously.

All the problems of the world vanish the moment ego is dropped. In deep sleep you experience that problem-free state. In deep sleep you have no ego. Therefore, there is no awareness of time and space and multiplicity. This same serene state could arise even when you are in waking state if your intellect developed a mature understanding that gives no importance to the ego.

You may enter into an ocean that is full of boisterous waves, but if you know how to dive below the waves, you find yourself in calm waters. In the same manner, through the practice of enquiry, you learn the art of going beyond the ego. Therefore you go beyond the waves of the world. And the moment you go beyond the waves, you experience a sense of unimaginable expansion within your consciousness, an inner spiritual communion with Peace Absolute, an inner awareness that “I am *Brahman*, I am not this individual personality.”

*(To be continued next month)*