



Who Are You?

By Swami Jyotirmayananda

REALIZING the essential nature of your own Self is the greatest attainment in life, while not knowing your own Self is the basis of all life's difficulties. The real "I" in you is the Supreme Self, God—characterized by Pure Existence, Knowledge and Bliss. There is but One Existence, One Universal Life. There is but One Unity, One Harmony. It is the only Reality. But due to ego, the perception of multiplicity and its resulting misery come into play.

Just as the light of the sun is refracted through a prism into seven colors, the light of the Self is refracted through the mind into the multicolored experiences of the sense-world. Just as light passing through a moving reel of film casts pictures on a movie screen, so the light of the Self passing through the moving film of the mind casts the scenes of tragedy and comedy, separation and union, pleasure and

pain on the soul of man. These changing scenes are not realities—the Reality is the screen, the support, the Self.

Ego is a fictitious product born of the complexes of the mind. It is the central reflection of the Supreme Self cast in the mind. But due to its complexes, mind considers this center the total basis of the personality and its possessions.

When an artist is absorbed in his work, or an orator in his speech, or a writer in his literature, he is not aware of his ego. Thus the notion that one cannot perform any work without the ego is not true. On the contrary, the more ego is left aside, the more one excels; one is at their best when ego is expressed the least. Ego, therefore, should be analyzed, sublimated, and transcended in order to realize the goal of one's life and attain the knowledge of one's essential Self.

That essential Self is immortal, eternal and immutable. The same Self is in all beings. Devoid of misery, grief, fear and malady, it is an ocean of bliss and peace. But the ego creates the notion of a passing personality caught in the wheel of birth and death. It builds the prison walls of illusion, thereby limiting the consciousness of man. The ego produces feelings like, "These are mine. I must possess that beautiful car. I must acquire that position, etc."

When ego is renounced, one feels and experiences the unity of life, the immortality of the Spirit, the infinite bliss of the Self. Real renunciation is the renunciation of the ego. Real attainment is dedication of the ego to God. Real progress is the integration and sublimation of the ego. Real realization is the transcendence of the ego, and real life is the death of the ego.

DO NOT BE egoistic about little achievements in the world. What is wealth? It is insecure and perishable. What are human relations? They are passing clouds. What are earthly acquisitions? They are vanities. Why should one be proud of anything that perishes? The pride of those elated by earthly possessions must fall. History is filled with such examples. Napoleon once said there is no such word as “impossible” in the dictionary of the French. Still in the course of time he was defeated. Any success or attainment in this world comes from the Divine Will working through an individual. One must recognize this and learn to be humble and self-effacing.

Ego assumes various forms. Some are proud of actual possessions, just as Napoleon was proud of his actual heroism. Others only pretend to be heroic, like a donkey wearing the hide of a lion. Every such form of egoism, pride and vanity must be removed if one wants to experience the immortal Self within.

All human misery is created by egoism. Nobody is the cause of another's trouble. You are the architect of your destiny. You are the one imprisoned by your own self-created walls. Try to understand yourself. Try to simplify your life and purify your heart. When you emerge from your self-created prison walls, you will experience freedom and joy then and there, that very moment.

EGO WILL exist as long as one has not learned to analyze oneself. To illustrate this point, a parable is told about a young man who went to his

father-in-law. When he stepped from the carriage in front of the house, he was greeted by someone he thought was his father-in-law's servant, so he let the man carry his bag. The two entered the house where the father-in-law, in turn, took the man to be his son-in-law's friend. In this way the man, who was actually a stranger, received attention from both of them.

The day came, however, when the father-in-law asked, “Who is this man who came with you?” The son-in-law replied in astonishment, “He is not with me. I thought he was with you.” The stranger heard this conversation and immediately took to his heels, never to be seen again. Even so, egoism develops between the Self and the mind and thrives in the attention of both. But when the mind turns towards the Self in the enquiry of “Who am I?” ego vanishes.

EGOISM IS sustained by gross mental complexes. The more one lacks perfection and integration, the more they need to compensate by clinging to a fictitious ego. Egoism is one's ruin. It breeds vices such as greed, infatuation, vanity, hypocrisy and various other afflictions. It deepens the impressions of worldly experiences and brings back the memories of the past, thereby veiling the beauty of the Self that shines in the present. It builds castles of expecta-

tions for the future and does not allow one to rest in the ever-present stillness of the heart.

Identification with the body, Egoism, and ignorance is the cause of all misery that mankind suffers. Identification with the body is removed by selflessly serving humanity and developing that Divine Love that brings the experience of expansion and joy to the human heart. The experiences of beauty, joy and peace prove the existence of the immortal Self beyond the body. Thus one is able to break the veil of illusion and identification.

Egoism is removed by the purification of the unconscious mind, by correcting the process of thinking and feeling. The more you develop love for God, the more your ego will surrender itself to Him.

Ignorance is destroyed by the Light of Knowledge. The Self shines brighter and brighter in the pure heart, until the Light of the Self finally destroys all ignorance. Learn to serve, love, meditate and realize. Be good and do good. You are not born for perishable attainments. You are Divine. Your destiny is to attain Divine Realization.

Just as a river enters the ocean, so the ego enters the Self in the state of God-realization. You lose your personality, but gain the universe. It is the death of the ego, but the birth of the eternal Spirit.

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