

The Ego and Karma

The ego has gotten a bad reputation in spiritual lore. The ego has been called the canal man (or woman), the man (or woman) of sin, the ogre at the threshold, the child of the devil, the spawn of delusion, and other dark and degrading epithets.

While some of these attributions certainly may be fitting when the ego is on its worst behavior, the ego is not always an evil actor, and it is not always the aspect of your nature that actually initiates behavior. It is important for aspirants to not vilify and fear their ego, but rather to understand it and to civilize it.

We can start by identifying what the ego is neurologically. In human evolution, we developed a larger over-brain, which is called the cerebral cortex. This distinguishes our species from our nearest relatives, the great apes—our cerebrum is larger.

This outer, richly endowed structure brings to us many of the higher executive functions of the personality (frontal lobe), plus the ability to comprehend and produce speech and writing (temporal lobe).

Underneath this structure are some of the older neurological components that we share with other mammals. This midbrain, or limbic system, contains areas of the brain associated with survival—sexuality, hunger, thirst, pleasure and pain, and emotion.

This older neurological part of the brain often operates without the awareness of the cerebral cortex, leading some brain researchers to suggest that much of what we call the unconscious part of our mind might be the everyday operation of the midbrain. They also trace many of the drives that we associate with the ego to these midbrain structures.

So the good news and the bad news, is that the ego is a part of us—indeed, it is hard-wired into our brain. And it contains those structures that enable us to feel emotion—which many writers and philosophers say is what, at bottom, makes us uniquely human.

When we step back from this perspective of the ground state of awareness, in which we view our brain from attention's seat behind the medulla oblongata, we encounter the ego as the integrating center of the Conscious mind.

To encounter the ego in this form, we must travel up the thread of awareness through the vehicles of consciousness of the Conscious mind—past the movement awareness center, the sensory awareness center, the body awareness center, the feeling center, and reason—and we find it, at the next center.

Studying the Ego

The ego has been described through different of its attributes. These attributes include:

1st Ray - The first octave of **volition**—variously called the strong will, the rebellious will, or desire-driven will—that you use to irresistibly pursue your desires and your honor.

2nd Ray - The **I Am statements** that make up our different roles we play in life, e.g. I am an employee, I am a husband or wife, I am a father or mother, I am a fan of [whoever you admire], and so on.

3rd Ray - The twelve sectors of **human desires** or dreams—which is the seedbed where you plant your desires in each area of your life—to which you become strongly attached to them, and motivated to obtain them, until you finally achieve them.

4th Ray - This appears as the seven strata of the ego, which are your **layers of defenses** that arise when you, those who you love, or your possessions are threatened.

5th Ray – This is the recognition that you are embedded in your **life experience**, and that those experiences shape you and influence you. As you expand this perspective, you also recognize that you are part of a family, a racial or ancestral group, an ethnic or cultural group, a national group, and a religious or political group. These associations with others in these groups shape the way you view yourself and your world.

6th Ray – These embrace the **character traits** you express when you operate from the platform of the ego. These can be positive, altruistic traits—you might be kind, generous, and caring with those you love. These can also be the negative traits that religious traditions commonly associate with the ego—lustful, greedy, proud, arrogant, cruel, jealous, envious, angry, fearful, paranoid, bigoted, selfish, and judgmental—and you can probably add several more to this list.

7th Ray – In this synthetic perspective, you see the domains through which the ego operates—the **Egoic domains**.

There is the *conscious zone*, where it uses its will, expresses through its different identity states, and pursues its desires. It experiences itself embedded in its life experience and cultural matrix. It may express itself through consonant, positive emotions, as it enacts its expected roles in life. [This is the zone where your ego is on its good behavior.]

There is the *unconscious zone*, or shadow, where you operate from your layers of defenses, and encounter your hidden, or socially unacceptable desires. These may express as cravings or addictions, compulsions, or acting out your powerful negative emotions. [This is the zone where your ego is definitely on its bad behavior.]

There is the *transcendent zone*, where you encounter the ego as the **Egoic seed atom**. Your conscience, your Self, and ultimately, the Soul, overshadow this aspect of your nature. It is variously called the wonder child, or the animal spirit—and contains your innate wonder, playfulness, and joy. It is like a little pixie or fairy within you.

It is also this transcendent part of your Egoic nature that connects with the **cord of faith**—when this thread, which connects the ego with God, is progressively dredged out of the unconscious, the ego can finally begin to conceive of something greater than itself. It is this same thread of faith by which the ego can begin to pray, listen for inner guidance, and dialog with its Higher Power. [This inner communion and downpour of Light begins to rehabilitate and civilize the ego.]

As we look at the ego from this broader perspective, perhaps you can understand why we cannot countenance the broad brushing of this center as craven, despicably evil, or as an inner demon.

What we can say is, that as the Egoic seed atom is progressively tuned up during the process of spiritual evolution, the ego is gradually tamed, reformed, and civilized. The wild animal is trained; it becomes our pet. The wild demon that formerly needed propitiation; it becomes a human child. The sinful hellion and rebel discovers repentance and faith; it receives the discipline, and reforming Grace of the Living God.

If we can understand what the ego is, and how it is progressively changed with spiritual evolution, we can be more patient and compassionate with the ego. We do have to destroy it, rip it out, blind it and kill it. We have to train it, the same way we might teach a puppy. We have to love it, the same way we love our own child. We have to discipline it, set limits and boundaries, and let it flourish within the garden we have made for it.

How the Ego Impacts Karma

Those of you, who have taken the Karma Workshop, know that karma exists in two modes: stored and dynamic. In this webinar, we will touch briefly on these two aspects of karma, and explain how the ego plays into this framework.

In that workshop, we also discuss the ways in which we interface with karma, in which we work with it, and work it out through spiritual practices. Those of you who are taking or have completed the Mudrashram® Master Course in Meditation or the Accelerated Meditation Program learn these methods, and are able to use them to dissolve the stored karma within you.

[Please contact us if you wish to take the Karma Workshop, or to learn how you can enroll in either of these courses. Click the link in the email that allowed you to join this webinar, and you can send us an email directly through that portal.]

We will excerpt from the Karma Workshop to help you better understand where the ego fits in the master rubric of Karma.

How is New Karma Created?

“New karma is created with your every thought, word, and deed. Each cause that you set into motion has consequences for your self, your family and other people interrelating with you, your community, your nation, the whole of humanity, the kingdoms of nature upon this planet, and the entire universe.”

“As you evolve spiritually, you gain the *option* to function from higher aspects of your being, through higher octaves of your volition. These higher octaves of volition allow you to relate to others with compassion, sensitivity and wisdom. They express the innate virtue and life of service that arise from your spirituality.”

“We say option, because your ego does not cease to function. You still may find yourself relating to others from its defensive, thoughtless, and selfish mode of being-in-the-world. But as you evolve, you can express the higher aspects of your nature. These octaves of volition are shown below.”

Octave	Type of Will	Mode of Activity
Ego	Desire-based	Action based on passion, impulse, and strong desire
Etheric body	Suggestion-based	Action based on suggestion and repetition, habit
Personal Volition	Intelligence-based (Skillful will)	Uses the faculties of the Metaconscious, Subconscious and Conscious mind to carry out discrete goals; checks the activity of desire-based and suggestion-based will
Lower Subtle	Archetypal (Primitive)	Expresses the abilities of the Lower Subtle Band of the Superconscious mind
Higher Subtle	Magical	Channels the abilities of the Higher Subtle Band of the Superconscious mind
Biophysical Universe	Natural	Embodies instinctual and cultural modes of sexuality, parenting, and working
Abstract Mind	Apperceptive	Operates in the realm of the Abstract Mind Plane
Psychic Realm	Psychic	Anchors psychic powers in the personality; expresses the powers of the Psychic Realm

Octave	Type of Will	Mode of Activity
1st Planetary Initiation	Moral will	Guides behavior by scriptural injunction and wisdom, can be illumined by the Holy Spirit
2nd Planetary Initiation	Solar Angelic will	Creative fiat affecting the Astral Plenum; manifestation
3rd Planetary Initiation	Manasic Will	Focal point for radiation of inspired thought from the Illumined Mind, establishes attunement with the Soul, the Monad, and the Hierarchy of Light; aligns with Purpose
3rd through 5th Planetary Initiations	Transpersonal Will	Controls and direct all active octaves of the will, mastery of all vehicles and powers
Monad	Divine Will	Attunes all octaves of the will to Spirit

“As your higher octaves of volition begin to operate, you refine the quality of the karma that you create. You express in a wiser, gentler, more compassionate manner. You are less driven by craving and obsession. You can function in your life with greater serenity and detachment. You shift from an urge to control to the wish to serve others. You transition from the need to win and be right, to a need to understand and discover the truth about others and your self.”



Dynamic and Stored Expressions of Karma

We refer to the dynamic and stored portions of Karma in our article, “Notes on Karma,” which is in the addendum of the Karma Workshop. In this article, the dynamic form of karma is referred to as the Rajo Guna expression of karma; the stored form is called the Tamo Guna expression.

“Rajo Guna emphasizes the dynamic aspects of karma in action. This is the law of cause and effect. Methods that improve the quality of karma that you generate include basing your actions on love and compassion, feeling empathy for others, using restraint and discipline of passions, doing deeds of charity and philanthropy, studying the scriptures and observing the precepts of religion.”

“Tamo Guna emphasizes the substance of the unconscious mind, the actual impressions of karma as they are layered behind the vehicles of consciousness, upon the matrix of human life, and behind the Soul and the spirit.”

The Ego’s Role in Karma

The ego creates karma when it is the agent of action. As you can see, a human being can act out of many different octaves of volition, and so creates a different quality of karma from each level, and a different karmic expression.

The ego’s role in karma is not always negative, for example, when it is enacting social roles or engaging with others in a positive and altruistic way. When the ego is operating on its good behavior, we say it creates positive or good karma.

We also know the ego's dark side, too. We know when our ego lashes out in anger, operates under the thrall of its cravings, or acts thoughtlessly and cruelly towards others. When the ego acts in these negative ways, we say it creates negative or bad karma.

It is simplistic to say that the operation of good and bad karma stems only from the ego, for the will can operate at higher levels as well—we can act from habit, from the skillful and intelligent will of the Self, or under the inspiration of a higher octave of the will. Indeed, action can also spring directly from patterns in the unconscious [e.g., when we are driven by our destiny karma], from the suggestion of our attentional principle, or the influence of our spirit.

Each of these actions impacts our self, those in our immediate circle (relatives or family), our circle of friends, our neighbors, our co-workers, our community, our region, our country, the world, the other kingdoms of Nature, and the spiritual Plenum.

We create evil karma because we are shortsighted, and only consider the standpoint of how our actions will affect ourselves and our immediate family or group. We do not consider the larger impact of our actions.

So the salesman who sells a product that pollutes the environment and poisons other people, sees it as a good thing, for it earns him a good income, provides for his family, helps his employer succeed, and keeps the corporation's shareholders happy. He does not consider the wider impact of what he sells beyond this limited circle.

When we have access to the vistas of expanded consciousness, we can include in our vision these wider circles of causation. As we look at the world from this grander perspective, we can change our behavior to be more respectful, less harmful, more thoughtful, kind, and compassionate.

How We Get Off the Wheel

If we are always creating new karma through the dynamic aspect of karma, some of these impressions become stored in the unconscious. The law of cause and effect brings immediate consequences in only a small proportion of cases; in most cases it may repose in the vaults of the unconscious for months, for years, even for millennia—until it finally has its hour of fruition. So how can we become free?

The key to this proposition of becoming liberated—as the Hindus say, attaining Moksha—lies in becoming an instrument of the Divine Will. Since most people are not in touch with this aspect of their nature—for it lies buried under an avalanche of karmic accretions—they continue to create new karma, and set the seeds for unending births and deaths.

Doing action under the guidance of the Divine Will, we call Agya. So how do we get in touch with Agya?

1. **Meditate on the Divine Will** – One of the things we teach in the Karma Workshop is meditating on the Divine Will, and discerning what God wants you to do.

Since it is hard sometimes to differentiate the Divine Wish (Mauj) from the plethora of other voices within, this is sometimes not a reliable method to ascertain what God wants.

2. **Establish a disciplic connection with a Master who has become free from birth and death** – When you become a disciple and are able to commune with the inner Master or guide form (Nuri Swarup), you may receive the telepathic or intuitive impress of what the Master and the Divine want you to do.

The major difficulty with this approach is that sometimes disciples' imagination runs away with them, and the "Masters" that they meet are phantoms of their own unconscious, or denizens of the Psychic Realm.

- 3. Receive verbal Agya from the human form of the Master** – Disciples of sundry traditions are known to hover around their Initiate, hoping that he or she will give them direct Agya.

The difficulty with this is that many of the great Masters of humanity have thousands of disciples, and you might get a two second audience with them in a "darshan line," or get to hear their inspired discourse (satsang) in a huge crowd—neither of which yield any guidance for the disciple's specific situation.

- 4. Read the scriptures and try to discern the will of God** – This is the approach of many religions, where they attempt to carry out the directives of their scripture.

The problem with this approach is that it would appear that God couldn't make up His mind about what people are supposed to do, as the scriptures of each religion tell humanity to do something else. What the disciple needs is that inner guidance specific to him or her—scriptures do not provide it.

- 5. Receive a personal audience or consultation with your Master** – This might be done through a variety of means, including mailed correspondence, email, telephone, videoconference, or in person sessions.

The issue here is that the Initiate may either not do sessions, or it takes so long to get a session that it is almost impossible to get guidance. Alternately, you may be so busy that you cannot get with the Master when he or she is available.

- 6. Develop yourself spiritually to the point where you can discern the Divine Will directly** – This is the objective of your aspiration, and if you are diligent in your spiritual work, you will arrive here... eventually.

The challenge that arises is that though you are progressing through your spiritual work, you are unsure about what you need to do now, today, in your current situation. It is said that a disciple's life is fraught with confusion and consternation—and here is why—they cannot discern what is right action in each situation.

- 7. Darshan, Satsang, and Charanam** — Through the radiant transmission of the Light of the Divine through the presence of the Master (Darshan), the inspired discourse of the Master (Satsang), and our inner surrender and willingness to be guided (Charanam), we can do much to make ourselves receptive to the Divine Will. Indeed, in the Mudrashram® tradition, the Darshan transmitted through Light Sitzings, the Living Spirit whispers its guidance in the silence; and in that lyric communion, our Souls may hear, and carry out that direction.

Alas, few can put aside the stubborn pride of the ego to truly surrender to God and live their lives for Him. In our busy lives, few can spare the hours to receive the Darshan and Satsang of the Masters of their spiritual tradition.

The Role of Satsang in Correcting the Ego

The ego responds to inspired discourse and the intuitive guidance of the Spirit in several ways:

1. It makes the ego aware of the Self, the Soul, and the Divine. This inculcates humility, deference, and obedience to the Higher Power.
2. It gives guidance for the Conscience, which in turn, checks the ego.
3. It reveals the Soul's purpose to the Self, which guides it in right activity.
4. It reveals the higher octaves of the will and the powers at each level; it inspires the Soul to carry out its service at each level.
5. It guides the attentional principle to anchor suggestions to correct negative patterns of attitude and behavior.
6. It corrects erroneous beliefs and reveals the inner source of truth (Dharma).
7. It inspires the Soul and the spirit to transform further, to purify its vehicles of consciousness, and to activate the Soul's higher potentials.

Satsang brings a downpour of knowledge (Jnana), facilitates discernment (Vijnana), and enhances enlightenment and Gnosis (Bodhi). If you have access to an illumined advanced disciple, or a Master, you have access to potential, life-changing Satsang.



The Darshan or Holy Sight of a Master also has a powerful effect on the ego. Darshan occurs when a Master unites his or her attention with the illumined and empowered ensouling entity within, and sends for the waves of Grace from that core of divinized Love, Wisdom, and Power. You experience darshan when you behold him or her in this state. You may also have darshan by hearing the spoken words of the Master when he or she is operating from this state. You may have inner darshan by beholding his or her radiant guide form within you.



We encourage you to reflect upon the ego from these alternate perspectives, and to gain a clear understanding of the role it plays in karma.

Through your dedication and sustained inner work, it will become possible for you to reform your ego, to awaken each of the higher octaves of will within you and the potentials they bring, and you will be able to progressively advance in full consciousness to Mastery and Liberation. We extend our best wishes that you may succeed in this sacred endeavor, and you may fulfill your full Divine Potential in this very life.

Thank you for attending our webinar today!

