

# Ego as the Cause of Unethics and Approaches to Dissolve it

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## Abstract

The investigation has been carried out to understand the mechanism of creation and dissolution of ego and in turn the ethical value of the teachings of Lord Krishna. Ethics emphasize on the fact that one is to enjoy only that which is rightfully his. The Lord showed that our body consists of two faculties, one is the soul and the other is the body. Soul gives life force to the body and makes it functional. Soul is also the source of ethics but is neglected to the extent that human beings identify themselves only with their bodies and this leads to the creation of ego. To overcome the problem of creation of ego, the Lord advocated three approaches, namely, karma yoga, gyan yoga and bhakti yoga. The karm yoga is meant for action-oriented, while gyan yoga for the intellectuals and bhakti yoga for persons who have faith in God and surrender to him completely. In case of karm yoga, body is not considered our own but an exaction of God. The karm yogi utilizes his body and his resources for the welfare of others. The case of gyan yoga is slightly different; the gyan yogi gets absorbed in the soul and believes that all things are happening by natural forces. He believes that soul is not the doer, so does not claim any doer ship or ego. The philosophy of bhakti yoga has a totally different mode of functioning. The bhakti yogi works for the happiness of God as he feels that everything belongs to God and not to him. When one follows any one of these approaches there is no way one can be unethical, then only ethics prevail.

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*Index terms*— ego, karm yoga, gyan yoga, bhakti yoga.

## 1 Introduction

here are many living species varying from unicellular to multicellular organisms. Among these, human beings occupy the top most place as their minds are the most developed. As a result, they develop relationships whereas other beings cannot do so. Consequently, human beings also suffer from I-ness (ego) and my-ness (attachment). It appears to be an epidemic affecting each one of us with few exceptions of great saints. This disease has resulted into the bifurcation of our society as well as families. The human being is consistently involved in preserving his I-ness or my-ness by resorting to even unethical means. To prevent such menace, our ancestors have laid stress on following ethics. Keeping the above considerations in view, an attempt has been made to discuss the mechanism of creation of ego and some approaches to dissolve it so that human beings follow ethics and become true humans.

## 2 II.

Ego as Basic Cause of Unethics

The morality or ethics demand that one should enjoy only what belongs to him or what comes to him naturally by fair means. But ego does not permit one to see any one higher than himself, so one is tempted to adopt unethical activities. It is therefore pertinent to understand the creation of ego.

### 41 3 III.

### 42 4 Creation of Ego

43 Our body consists of two parts, one is soul and the other is the body. The soul is eternal and belongs to God,  
44 while the body is subject to change and belongs to creation ( nature). There is no activity in the soul while  
45 activities keep taking place in the body so much so that it cannot take rest even for a second. The soul is animate  
46 while the body is inanimate, so it cannot attach or combine together because of their extreme nature, just as day  
47 and night cannot combine.

48 The soul has freedom to attach to its source i.e., God. But because of its ignorance it gets tempted to attach  
49 with the body and worldly illusions. Thus soul accepts or considers body as its own. As a result, the soul  
50 identifies itself with the body and creation of ego takes place. It could be represented as: Soul ( chetan ) +Body  
51 (jad or matter) = Human being =ego ( knot of chetan and jad)

52 The '+' sign denotes attachment and not the chemical combination of chemistry. The ego is nothing but an  
53 attachment to a perishable object may be body or anything else. Ego and attachment are nothing but two sides  
54 of the same coin. When we say,"I am body". This is ego (I-ness). When we say, "Body is mine", it means  
55 an attachment. Ego is so subtle in nature that it can take any form combining with anything possible. In the  
56 morning it may be present in the form of poverty and by evening it may take the form of extreme richness.  
57 Sometimes it may be in the form of health or sometimes some disease so on and so forth. A person experiences  
58 these various feelings depending on the ego in him. Both ego and attachment are interdependent, as one leads  
59 to another. Once ego is created, it further leads to the creation of desires, anger, greed, pride, deceit, hatred,  
60 jealousy etc. All these attributes are inherited from the body and are powerful because they control human  
61 beings.. It is under the influence of these attributes that human beings resort to all kinds of T Volume XIV Issue  
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67 makes it functional. Soul is also the source of ethics but is neglected to the extent that human beings identify  
68 themselves only with their bodies and this leads to the creation of ego. To overcome the problem of creation of  
69 ego, the Lord advocated three approaches, namely, karma yoga, gyan yoga and bhakti yoga. The karm yoga is  
70 meant for action-oriented, while gyan yoga for the intellectuals and bhakti yoga for persons who have faith in  
71 God and surrender to him completely. In case of karm yoga, body is not considered our own but an exaction  
72 of God. The karm yogi utilizes his body and his resources for the welfare of others. The case of gyan yoga is  
73 slightly different; the gyan yogi gets absorbed in the soul and believes that all things are happening by natural  
74 forces. He believes that soul is not the doer, so does not claim any doer ship or ego. The philosophy of bhakti  
75 yoga has a totally different mode of functioning. The bhakti yogi works for the happiness of God as he feels that  
76 everything belongs to God and not to him. When one follows any one of these approaches there is no way one  
77 can be unethical, then only ethics prevail. unethical deeds. Besides, human beings also possess the attributes of  
78 soul, i.e. being perfect, eternal, powerful, infinite, accepting ( beyond right and wrong), peaceful, loving, pure,  
79 blissful etc. These qualities are however, covered by impurities of desires and attachments to the extent that  
80 human beings are oblivious of their real qualities. The ethical teachings of India as given by Lord Krishna in  
81 Bhagwad Gita, revolve around the basic cause of ego and attachment and are described hereafter. Lord Krishna  
82 taught these ethics to Arjuna (his disciple) in the battlefield and are known as yoga systems. (Ram, 2005) IV.  
83 Action Oriented Approach ( Karm Yoga)

84 It is mainly useful to those individuals who are action oriented. It deals with living life as self-less service.  
85 One works for the welfare of other living beings without any expectations (In 2/47 Bhagwad Gita).While actions  
86 done with expectations develop a kind of attachment or bondage with the results. Further the results of actions  
87 do not depend upon expectations but on our efforts.

88 A karm yogi believes that whatsoever we possess in the form of body, mind, intellect, time, health, wealth,  
89 land, buildings etc. belong to creation as the gross composition of these things and creation is same. Both  
90 creation and these things are made up of five gross elements (earth, fire, air, water and space), so they belong to  
91 one matter, (jad) . This understanding is very essential as these things do not stay with us permanently as they  
92 are subject to change. They are given to human beings for service purpose only. To own the things of creation  
93 amounts to dishonesty and using them further for own name and fame is against the principles of ethics. When  
94 one does not own the materials, which are used for creation purpose, where is the scope of ego? One works  
95 mainly with the help of body, mind, intellect and speech which are parts of body and turn of creation. In order  
96 to understand this one must know how to deal with them and which ethic needs to be followed to maintain their  
97 purity.

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## 98 5 Table 1 : Ethics To Be Followed To Maintain Purity Of 99 Functional Parts Of Body

### 100 6 Part Guidelines

101 Body Not to allow it to harm others; not to become inactive or lethargic and not to engage it in energy depletion  
102 by indulging in sensual pleasures but make it useful and ready to help others.

### 103 7 Mind

104 Not to allow the mind to label or consider as bad, not to have any kind of negative intentions but to have positive  
105 thoughts for every living being.

### 106 8 Intellect

107 Not to allow it to interfere or be judgemental in telling others their duties: not to dislike or hate others but to  
108 engage in discrimination between eternal and perishables and to remain in equanimity (beyond right or wrong)  
109 in an impartial state and without expectation.

### 110 9 Speech

111 Not to allow oneself to criticize, offend or insult any being whether present or absent, living or dead, not to  
112 reciprocate if someone uses harsh insulting language and to engage in speaking truth.

113 If one uses body, mind, intellect and speech for the benefit of others, it will result in their purification and  
114 lead to good health. But one should not claim any ownership on the body, mind, intellect and speech. The  
115 ownership creates impurities in them and they become our masters and control humans. (5/12 Bhagwad Gita).  
116 We can control them fully if we do not own them. No ownership means detachment from them at mind level.  
117 The detachment means no expectation from them and these results in inner peace (12/21 Bhagwad Gita). Peace  
118 leaves no scope for unethics. Human beings, who help others are helped by nature, for example trees serve their  
119 fruits without discrimination and expectation, and in turn are taken care by farmers. If trees were to eat their  
120 own fruits, farmers would cut them and not take care of them as they would be of no use to them at all. So let us  
121 also learn from the trees, the spirit of selfless service to others. Likewise the Karmyogi works without expecting  
122 any kind of result, in other words, no attachment (myself) with the results, which leads to dissolution of ego in  
123 due course of time ( 2/71 Bhagwad Gita)

124 V.

## 125 10 Intellectual Approach ( Gyan Yoga)

126 This approach is useful for intellectuals. It deals with the realization of the soul. Soul realization is possible only  
127 by dissociating from body, mind and its attributes as these are hurdles in the way towards realization. Body  
128 etc being a part of prakriti (nature) are only meant to be used and not owned. With the help of intellect, one  
129 breaks his association or ownership with the body and other visible objects and later one continues to dissolve  
130 his association with subtle and subtle most thoughts till one gets detached fully from all the attachments. As a  
131 result, one realizes his soul (6/29 Bhagwad Gita). One may even put it in the sense that one breaks the association  
132 with the understanding that worldly things are not permanent so cannot stay with us.

133 worth mentioning here that it is the soul (animate) which can attach itself to others but the body and things  
134 being inanimate cannot attach with the soul. Only by sheer ignorance the soul has committed the mistake of  
135 attaching to the body. But the soul has to finally detach itself from the body and remain in its original pure  
136 form. And the soul is capable to reverse the process of its attachment. I.e. by detachment with the help of  
137 intellect (vivek). The reversal process is shown below:

138 Embodied soul -body (and its possessions) = Pure Soul

139 The ' - ' sign denotes detachment at intellect or mind level. Since creation of ego has taken place at intellect  
140 level therefore the dissolution would also take place at intellectual level. The creation is characterized by materials  
141 and actions. Both materials and actions are perishable. In the process, the Gyan yogi aims at detaching from  
142 activities also and remains in a state of non-doing (13/31 Bhagwad Gita). A non-doing state is a state free from  
143 ego or attachment where in a person does not claim the doership of actions done by him (his body etc.). A gyani  
144 understands that eyes see but ego claims that he is seeing. Likewise, ears hear but ego again claims that it is  
145 he who hears and takes the credit of these organs, so on and so forth. Outwardly the gyani appears to be doing  
146 work but internally he is established in the soul consciousness or ego-free state or in the non-doing state.

147 In fact, all actions are taken care of by nature and its natural forces (13/24 Bhagwad Gita) but the activities  
148 take place in the presence of the soul, as soul gives life to body. After dinner when we go off to sleep, activities  
149 keep going on in the body and in the morning urine; faeces etc are already in their required places. Blood flows in  
150 the body on its own without any interference from external factors. All activities take place in nature (3/27-28;  
151 14/23; 5/14 Bhagwad Gita). None is doer except nature (14/19, Bhagwad Gita).

152 A non-doing person maintains aloofness not only from actions but also from the effects of their actions. These  
153 effects may be in the form of hatred, anger, greed, deceit, pains, pleasures, diseases and any other circumstances.

154 He remains as an observer of the experiences being realized by the body or mind. It may be added here that pains  
155 and pleasures are experienced by mind. The ignorant beings are attached to the mind; therefore they undergo the  
156 effects of pain and pleasures. This is the reason why Lord Krishna advises all to remain in an unattached state,  
157 i.e. a state beyond duality of pains and pleasures; profit and loss ; victory and defeat; attraction and hatred etc  
158 (2/38 Bhagwad Gita). The Lord further explains that there is no provision for doer ship in nature. Everything  
159 is happening, nothing is being done (5/14 Bhagwad Gita). doer, he would have come under the jurisdiction of  
160 cause and effect theory. It is therefore clear that the Gyani or gyan yogi works without attachment therefore he  
161 is free from unethics and ego (18/53 Bhagwad Gita).

162 Both the approaches, Karm yoga and Gyan yoga are worldly in nature but they differ in their approach. The  
163 karm yogi aims at first dissolving the attachments by doing selfless service and then result in the dissolution of  
164 ego. On the other hand, Gyan yogi aims first at dissolving ego and becoming free from mamta (attachments).

### 165 11 VI.

166 Devotional Approach ( Bhakti Yoga )

167 This approach is suitable for those who have faith in God. It is based on the ethic of 'work is worship'.  
168 One can realize or worship God by performing one's actions but in a particular mode. For this, one has to  
169 accept the fact that he belongs to God (15/7 Bhagwad Gita). When it is deeply ingrained in the mind that he  
170 including all creations belong to God and develops his association of ownership with God, all his actions will be  
171 God-oriented. This approach is divine in nature when compared with karm yoga and gyan yoga, this is because  
172 in this philosophy the very first step is god realization. When this happens dissolution of ego takes place as a  
173 by-product.

174 After surrendering oneself, the bhakti yogi surrenders all his possessions to God. He does not own anything, If  
175 one claims to own anything then the element of ownership pervades and makes the thing impure and inauspicious.  
176 This makes the thing unsuitable for the worship of God. Thus one maintains their purity by surrendering them  
177 to God. As a result, all his actions become pure and auspicious. The purpose of worship is happiness of God and  
178 this is achieved by serving all creations of God as that is where God resides. All mundane activities like getting  
179 up, taking bath, washing clothes, eating , sleeping, doing one's duty and meditation all aim at serving God. One  
180 takes care of his body and all other things considering them to be gifts of God. The bhakti yogi considers himself  
181 as an instrument at the hands of God.

182 The Bhakti yogi believes that he is living in God's house. Every material in the house, furniture, clothes,  
183 ornaments etc whatsoever is there in the house, all belong to the actual owner i.e. God. So every activity in  
184 the house becomes God-oriented. When the goal is eternal, all activities become eternal. The eternality awakens  
185 just as coal shines when it comes in contact with fire. One sees God in all the beings (6/29 Bhagwad Gita). One  
186 worships God by each and every activity (18/46 Bhagwad Gita) and the Lord takes care of those who surrender  
187 their actions to him (12/47 Bhagwad The creator too created the universe in a state of nondoing (4/13 Bhagwad  
188 Gita ). Had the creator been the have any doubt regarding this concept (18/66 Bhagwad Gita). Now the question  
189 arises whether actions involving crimes or sins can be considered as God's work. Or can they be covered up in  
190 the garb of God's work. For this, it is advised that one should perform those actions which do not harm or hurt  
191 any living being even to the slightest extent in any way. The spiritual books and the codes of conduct prevailing  
192 in a particular country should act as a guideline (Sharma 2013 b).

193 One not only surrenders to actions but also to their results whether positive or negative and accepts them as  
194 a grace of God. As a consequence, the results are never questioned. The acceptance of results per se is beyond  
195 duality and is a symbol of satisfaction and contentment. Everything belongs to God. Rather, whole of creation  
196 is manifested in God (7/19 Bhagwad Gita). This belief itself dissolves ego (12/13, 14 Bhagwad Gita).

### 197 12 VII.

### 198 13 Conclusions

199 From the above discussion, it can be concluded that Lord Krishna's teachings show that unethics start from the  
200 moment one owns the body and other possessions. This is because these things actually do not belong to him but  
201 to the creation according to the karm yoga, to nature according to gyan yoga and to God according to Bhakti  
202 yoga. Therefore one should act as a trustee and act by adhering to the principles of Karm yoga, Gyan yoga and  
203 Bhakti yoga. All these systems dissolve ego and attachments which are the basic cause of unethics. <sup>1</sup>

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Figure 1: -



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