

## DEFINITE WORDS FOR DEFINITE THINGS

The terms and even the concepts of the “Higher Self” and the “Higher Ego” are sometimes confused and mixed up by students of Theosophy. Considering that “Self” and “Ego” are generally synonymous terms in the English language, this is perhaps not too surprising, yet it can lead to misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the Theosophical teachings, since our Higher Self is *Self* in the sense of being the One Universal Self of all, pure eternal Spirit, the impersonal and infinite divine Essence, and not any type of *Ego*, individuality, or anything individual or personal.

The purpose of the present is simply to show in H.P. Blavatsky’s own words what is actually meant in Theosophy by the terms “Higher Self,” “Higher Ego” (which can also be called the “Inner Ego”), and “Spiritual Ego” (which can also be called the “Divine Ego”). Although all related and referring to the elements of the “Upper Imperishable Triad” of Atma-Buddhi-Manas, they are nevertheless three distinct terms which should be used in three specific ways.

The following passage is from HPB’s important book “The Key to Theosophy” p. 174, 175-176, and is part of a section aptly titled “DEFINITE WORDS FOR DEFINITE THINGS.”

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“This “Higher Self” is ATMA, and of course it is “non-materializable,” as Mr Sinnett says. Even more, it can never be “objective” under any circumstances, even to the highest spiritual perception. For *Atman* or the “Higher Self” is really Brahman, the ABSOLUTE, and indistinguishable from it. In hours of *Samadhi*, the higher spiritual consciousness of the Initiate is entirely absorbed in the ONE essence, which is Atman, and therefore, being one with the whole, there can be nothing objective for it. Now some of our Theosophists have got into the habit of using the words “Self” and “Ego” as synonymous, of associating the term “Self” with only man’s higher individual or even personal “Self” or *Ego*, whereas this term ought never to be applied except to *the One universal Self*. Hence the confusion. Speaking of Manas, the “causal body,” we may call it – when connecting it with the Buddhic radiance – the “HIGHER EGO,” never the “Higher Self.” For even Buddhi, the “Spiritual Soul,” is not the SELF, but the vehicle only of SELF. All the other “*Selves*” – such as the “Individual” self and “personal” self – ought never to be spoken or written of without their qualifying and characteristic adjectives.” . . .

“To avoid henceforth such misapprehensions, I propose to translate literally from the Occult Eastern terms their equivalents in English, and offer these for future use.

“THE HIGHER SELF is – Atma, the inseparable ray of the Universal and ONE SELF. It is the God *above*, more than within, us. Happy the man who succeeds in saturating his *inner Ego* with it!

“THE SPIRITUAL *divine* EGO, is – the Spiritual soul or *Buddhi*, in close union with *Manas*, the mind-principle, without which it is no EGO at all, but only the *Atmic Vehicle*.

“THE INNER, or HIGHER “Ego” is – *Manas*, the “Fifth” Principle, so called, independently of Buddhi. The Mind-Principle is only the Spiritual Ego when merged *into one* with Buddhi, – no materialist being supposed to have in him *such* an Ego, however great his intellectual capacities. It is the permanent *Individuality* or the “Reincarnating Ego.”

“THE LOWER, or PERSONAL “Ego” is – the physical man in conjunction with his *lower* Self, *i.e.*, animal instincts, passions, desires, etc. It is called the “false personality,” and consists of the *lower Manas* combined with *Kama-rupa*, and operating through the Physical body and its phantom or “double.”

“The remaining “Principle” “*Prana*,” or “Life,” is, strictly speaking, the radiating force or Energy of Atma – as the Universal Life and the ONE SELF, – ITS lower or rather (in its effects) more physical, because manifesting, aspect. Prana or Life permeates the whole being of the objective

Universe; and is called a “principle” only because it is an indispensable factor and the *deus ex machina* of the living man. ...

“If outsiders as well as Theosophists would agree to it [*i.e. this system of terminology*], it would certainly make matters much more comprehensible.”

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We see here that the unqualified term “The Self” is to be used only when referring to the *Higher Self*, which is Atman, a Sanskrit word which can also be written as Atma, and which literally means “Self.” This is also the sense in which the phrase “The Self” is used in Hinduism, notably in the Upanishads.

It also becomes apparent that very few of us actually have the Spiritual or Divine Ego as of yet. The Spiritual Ego, also called the Divine Ego, is something which only comes into being when Manas is “merged *into one* with Buddhi” or – from the perspective of Buddhi – when it is “in close union with *Manas*, the mind-principle, without which it is no EGO at all, but only the *Atmic Vehicle*.”

When an individual succeeds in uniting Manas with Buddhi – which we are told is a very rare occurrence, the fruit and result of many dedicated lifetimes of serious spiritual study, spiritual practice, and spiritual service – the result is referred to as either Manas-Taijasi or Buddhi-Taijasi, which are synonymous terms according to H.P. Blavatsky’s “Theosophical Glossary”.

On p. 159 of “The Key to Theosophy” she says, “For “Taijasi” means the *radiant*, and Manas, becoming radiant in consequence of its union with Buddhi, and being, so to speak, merged into it, is identified with the latter; the trinity has become one; and, as the element of Buddhi is the highest, it becomes *Buddhi-Taijasi*. In short, it is the human soul illuminated by the radiance of the divine soul, the human reason lit by the light of the Spirit or *Divine SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS*.”

And on p. 136 she says of Manas – in relation to the two higher principles of Atma and Buddhi, which two together constitute the Monad – that “It is, therefore, when inseparably united to the first two, called the SPIRITUAL EGO, and Taijasi (the radiant).”

This is clear enough. To achieve, awaken, or attain, the Spiritual Ego, the Divine Ego, is our aim. The Master Koot Hoomi explains that since Buddhi is the vehicle for the direct radiation of the Light which we call Atman, Atman being the “supreme energy,” it’s therefore the case that “The supreme energy resides in the *Buddhi*; latent – when wedded to Atman alone, active and irresistible when galvanized by the *essence* of “Manas” and when none of the dross of the latter commingles with that pure essence to weigh it down by its finite nature.” (“The Mahatma Letters” p. 341)

William Q. Judge uses the above terms laid out by HPB in his book “The Ocean of Theosophy,” saying on p. 57 that –

“In this higher Trinity, we have the God above each one; this is Atma, and may be called the Higher Self.

“Next is the spiritual part of the soul called Buddhi; when thoroughly united with Manas this may be called the Divine Ego.

“The inner Ego, who reincarnates, taking on body after body ... is the fifth principle – Manas – not united to Buddhi.”

We should clarify that the phrase “The God above us” or “The God above each one” when referring to Atma, the Higher Self, is not meant in the sense of any Divine Being or personal God up in Heaven. It is a way of impressing the idea of the universal and impersonal infinitude of THAT which is the highestmost part of our being and of every being and thing in the Universe. It is on *that* level, which we could call the Atmic level, that all is truly ONE.