

The Content of the I-concept

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Annotations within square brackets and as footnotes,
based on the works of Walther Eidlitz (Vāmandās):

*Kṛṣṇa-Caitanya, Sein Leben und Seine Lehre*¹,

Uppsala 1968;

*Der Sinn des Lebens*²,

Freiburg im Breisgau 1974

Into English and © Kid Samuelsson 2006

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¹ English edition: *Kṛṣṇa-Caitanya, The Hidden Treasure of India, His Life and His Teachings*, Kid Samuelsson 2014. Retrieved 22 September 2020:

https://www.sadananda.com/index.php?action=text_downloads_vamandas_0_04_en_f

² English edition: *The Meaning of Life in Indian World of Thought*, Katrin Stamm and Bengt Lundborg 2008. Retrieved 22 September 2020:

https://www.sadananda.com/index.php?action=text_downloads_vamandas_0_02_en_f

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- a** = ātmā
- b** = inner subtle covering
- c** = outer gross covering
- A** = Paramātmā³

In the embryonic stage, the functions of the physical body, the sense organs, the senses, cittaṃ, manaḥ and buddhi are unconsciously linked to an I. The content of this I-concept depends on the stage of development of the sense organs, the senses, the cittaṃ, manaḥ and buddhi.

In the infant, the I-consciousness develops to an organic unity of sthūla- and liṅga-deha [the gross and subtle material covering], as a unity. Everything that is experienced, is connected with this I.

In general, first an unconscious, later a conscious separation between the ‘I’ and the ‘You’ develops, i.e. the world as experience and the world as an outside world opposite to the I (*i.e. world as experience and world as conception*).

In accordance with this development, the relation between the inner and outer covering and parts of or the whole experienced world is coordinated by the experience of ‘my’.

The primitive yet unreflecting man regards himself as a unity of sthūla- and liṅga-deha, without differentiating between them:

³ *ātmā*: eternal, individual, true self; an infinitesimal spark of the Fullness of Divinity, consisting of the three concomitants: the Substantive (independent Existence), the Cognitive (pure Consciousness), and the Blissful (true Joy) (sat-cit-ānanda).

inner covering: transient, subtle, mental covering; contains 5 *senses* of action and 5 *senses* of cognition; prāṇa (life-force); cittaṃ: passive, receptive consciousness (aptitude to experience sth.); manaḥ: desire, pondering (willingness to experience sth.); buddhi: judgement, intellect (ability to know the object of experience); ahaṃkāra: I-maker, personality (basis for the sense of ‘I’ or identification).

outer covering: perishable gross body; contains 5 *sense-organs* and 5 *organs* of action; prāṇa (life-force).

Paramātmā: Supreme Self or personal Oversoul; Lord, partial aspect of the One personal God; ‘silent Witness’ and eternal Friend of the ātmā on his seemingly endless journey through countless wombs.

1. The most primitive man.

$$\textcircled{\mathbf{bc}} = \mathbf{I}$$

The reflecting man has noticed that he consists of an inner and outer covering and experiences this through the more or less conscious discrepancy between wanting to and being able to (threefold division in wanting to, being able to and conception).

2. Man has realised, that he consists of **b** and **c**:

$$\textcircled{\mathbf{b + c}} = \mathbf{I}$$

Buddhi makes a distinction between its mental existence and the physical. The first is regarded as eternal, is idealised, characterised as *soul* and conceived of either with or without a physical covering. It is a matter of abhiniveśa, i.e. the false conclusion of the buddhi, which makes a person cling to his mental or physical covering, or both, and often in an idealised form, making him so absorbed in his own personality that he considers his I to be eternal. Cf. the concept of individual immortality in Judaism, Christianity, Islam etc.

3. Here, man separates his mental organ from his physical organ.
At the point of death **b** is kept; **b** becomes idealised, is named 'soul', will last forever, will exist with or without a **(c)**-body.

$$\textcircled{\mathbf{b + (c)}} = \mathbf{I}$$

(On average, a living being passes through 8.4 million wombs:

- 0.9 million in water
- 2.0 million in that which is solid
- 1.1 million in mud
- 1.0 million in air
- 3.0 million among four-footed animals
- 0.4 million as human beings

The sequence of the different sthūla deha-s is not determined in a mechanical way, it follows in accordance with a person's sañcita⁴- and prārabdha⁵-karma. It is very rare that the ātmā receives a human frame. One life as a human being is followed by another when neither an excess of virtues, which leads to higher forms of existence (great souls with subtle coverings, deva-s etc.) nor an excess of sins, which leads to lower wombs, have been accumulated in the present life as a human being.

If a person has fulfilled his duties as a human being *without selfish interest in the result of his deeds* [niṣkāma karma-yoga], he can, in a following life as a human being, with great dislike for all forms of life and extreme indifference to the world, follow the path of jñānam, which leads to mukti or nirvāṇam, or, with strong affection for Bhagavān, wishing to give Him joy, and with neither too strong antipathy nor too strong sympathy for the world, follow the path of bhakti, which leads to conscious or unconscious participation in Bhagavān's Self-unfolding.)

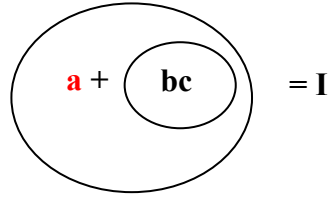
If someone is told that he shall conceive of his mental covering separated from his physical covering or in accordance with the 4th stage separate his mental-physical existence from an ātmā, which from his perspective only exists in theory, then one leads this person to a more or less conscious state of schizophrenia. This is thus the danger until one has attained the 4th stage.

⁴ Sañcita-karma: The total amount of a-karma (non-observance of the śāstric regulations), vi-karma (actions against the śāstric regulations) and karma (actions in accordance with the śāstric regulations) in the coverings of an ātmā, since eternity. According to the intensity of the karma in question, the results of the strongest karma manifest in the existence that follows directly but more intensive forms of karma from earlier forms of existence can manifest in the following life and the consequences of one or more karma-s from earlier lives can also be saved and manifest later.

⁵ Prārabdha-karma: The results of earlier actions and the guṇa-s, the qualities (i.e. which of the different guṇa-s that prevail in a person's aptitudes, saṁskāra-s and vāsana-s) that have begun to have effect in the present birth (janma; to become visible). Thus, janma in itself, because the whole course of a person's life, until his death, follows in accordance with his prārabdha-karma. The *countermovement* against sañcita- and prārabdha-karma is *puruṣkāra, man's endeavour*. Within [the boundaries of] sañcita- and prārabdha-karma the Śāstram-s show how and to which extent it is possible for an individual – despite his sva-bhāva (janma, guṇa and karma) [birth, qualities and karma] – to reach a gradual elimination of the influence and the effects of his sañcita- och prārabdha-karma.

Man has heard that there is also, apart from what he naturally considers his I, an ātmā, who because of his aversion to God has lost his [own, true] I-consciousness and identifies himself with the coverings. From this level it becomes possible to follow the path of karma, jñāna or bhakti [or a combination of them]:

Man has heard that there is also, apart from what he naturally considers his **bc**-identity, an **ātmā** – **a**. Now it depends on whether he has any sat-vāsanā-s⁶ and a-prākṛta (guṇafree)-sukṛti⁷ or not. Then there is a true chance for śraddhā⁸ to develop.



Man has heard that he – as a unity of ātmā and physical and mental coverings – owes his whole existence to Bhagāvan's indirect presence as Paramātmā. From this stage, the awareness that it is the Paramātmā who guarantees one's own existence as ātmā begins to develop, i.e. the more or less conscious *belief in God*.

⁶ Sattvic/virtuous impressions in the receptive consciousness (citta), resulting from the striving for successive emancipation in earlier lives on the path of karma- or jñāna-yoga, which stimulate the desire to get to know the truth, to achieve inner peace and to become pure.

⁷ Sukṛti: the sum total of all sat-vāsanā-s or elevating results of karma. A-prākṛta, viz. bhakti-vāsanā-s or cit-impressions in the citta, originating from service, done according to the scriptural injunctions on the first stages of the discipline of bhakti-yoga or loving, cognizant service of Godhead as a means and an end.

⁸ Inner conviction that certain actions and a respective way of thinking are conducive to what I consider to be my goal in life. Tāmasika-śraddhā: to believe, that doing the opposite of what the Śāstram-s (God's eternal Word revelation) prescribe, promotes the fulfilment of my aims. Rājasika-śraddhā: restless performance of man's duty as expected and required by the Śāstram-s. Sāttvika-śraddhā: clear knowledge of the ātmā (Paramātmā and Brahma). Nirguṇa-śraddhā: loving, cognizant service of God as a means and an end, to solely please Him, without expecting any personal gain.

5. The person concerned has heard that the aggregate of the **ātmā – a** and **b** and **c** constitutes his being and that their existence is guaranteed by **A**.

$$A + \textcircled{a + b + c}$$

6. The person concerned has realised that the physical body **c** can be either there (+) or not, can be changed, discarded or newly acquired (–), but is not able to distinguish his **ātmā – a** from his psyche **b**, yet.

$$A + \textcircled{a +} \quad +/- c$$

7. The person concerned has understood theoretically that his **ātmā** is different from his psyche and that it can exist separately from and independently of the mental and the physical body.

$$A + \quad (a) \quad +/- b \quad +/- c$$

The stages 4–7 are progressive levels of understanding the sādḥaka-s⁹ can reach in the course of their respective spiritual discipline.

On the 7th level the person concerned has reached *jñāna*¹⁰, but not *vijñāna*¹¹ yet.

The *ātmā* has awakened and realised himself *because he has realised his connection with the Paramātmā*. The coverings are still existing but he considers them and their processes as something completely alien to his nature. If this realisation is complete, the person is called *jīvan-mukta*, i.e. an *ātmā* who in itself is free from nescience and understands that it is the *ātmā* who animates both coverings:

⁹ Those who follow a spiritual discipline as prescribed in the Śāstram-s, the eternal revelation of God’s Word in the Hindu religious tradition.

¹⁰ Theoretical knowledge of *ātmā*, *Paramātmā* and *Brahma*.

¹¹ Direct experience, realisation of this pure, transcendental knowledge.

8. The **ātmā** in the person concerned is awakened and has realised his own true identity and his connection with **A**; **b** and **c** are still existing but he considers them and their inner processes as something disconnected from him and alien to his nature. Now the **ātmā** has become a disinterested and detached spectator of the processes in **b** and **c**, a *sākṣī* or *kṣetra-jñā*¹². This is the condition of the mukta¹³, who has not abandoned his subtle and gross coverings yet. He is named *jīvan-mukta*, i.e. the **ātmā**, now freed from nescience, whose presence animates and inspires both coverings (*jīvayati* = he animates).

A + **(a)** +/- [**b** + **c**]

The Paramātmā and the **ātmā** leave the coverings:

9a) The free **ātmā** discards the covering.

A + **(a)** →

If the path followed was jñāna-yoga, then the ātma realises his qualitative identity with God's or the Absolute's formless mode of being and can lose his identity in Him/it:

9b) The mukta who was a jñānī¹⁴ before, realises his qualitative identity with the formless Absolute and is apt to lose his own identity in it. The jñānī had been seeking to take sanctuary in the formless Brahma¹⁵, which is devoid of any expression of līlā-śakti¹⁶.

(a) ► **Brahma**

¹² "Knower of the field". The body, consisting of the inner and the outer covering, is the „field“ of experience for the conditioned ātmā.

¹³ The liberated ātmā.

¹⁴ One who followed the path of jñāna-yoga, of realizing the formless aspect of God or the Absolute.

¹⁵ Indistinguishable formless magnitude, which is an indolent, lax, presentment of cognitive Bliss but merely the penumbra of the intensely blended glow of the Blissful, the Substantive and the Cognitive (= Bhagavān; cf. ann. 18). It is cognizance but without any subject or object of cognizance.

¹⁶ God's Own Power, that gives shape to His Divine Play.

The bhakta, i.e. the ātmā of the person who has followed the path of bhakti, receives mental and physical coverings consisting of cit, coverings which form a genuine unity with the ātmā. At this stage the content of the I-concept thus embraces the ātmā and the cit coverings, which are not essentially different from the ātmā. If participation in Bhagāvan's Self-unfoldment follows, in the playful, realised service of Him, then, *seemingly*, but on a higher level, an I-perception is reached, which resembles the I-perception of the ignorant, in his relation to the non-cit coverings, at a lower stage. At the highest stage of development, this unity is so natural and without conscious reflection, and the events in the cit coverings so akin to the events in the mental and physical coverings that the uninitiate considers it to be the result of highest ignorance.

The most extreme example of this is therefore Bhagāvan's most intimate co-players, who consist of cit and who – like homo ludens¹⁷ – partake in God's play without being aware of it, or even – in order to intensify the play – believe they are most primitive human beings. In this state, the greatest ignorance is the greatest wisdom, and (as perfection of the path from 1–8) the complete lack of self-reflection – due to [all-absorbing] participation in the līlā – supreme joy, whereas the lack of awareness of one's own I – which consists of ignorance – is the greatest unhappiness:

9c) The **ātmā**, who has followed the path of bhakti, receives **b** and **c** consisting of cit¹⁸.

These **b** and **c** are *substantially not different from the ātmā* and form a genuine union with it.

Consequently the true ego-concept of the **ātmā** embraces:

(a + b + c)

The processes in **b** and **c** are seemingly the same as in **b** and **c**, but whereas in **b** and **c** they are without any secondary objects and are rooting in God-consciousness, in **b** and **c** they are pragmatic and originate in ignorance about the nature of the **ātmā** and God .

a + b + c partake in Bhagavān's¹⁹ nature and His līlā. The character of **b** and **c** is determined by the sort of sthāyī-bhāva²⁰ that slowly takes shape from level 5 onwards as śraddhā up to 9c.

¹⁷ The playing man.

¹⁸ Pure Cognizance.

When the bhakta, progressing from level **5**, has focussed on the Paramātmā = Viṣṇu in a mixture of jñāna and bhakti, **A** remains till level **9a** and the **ātmā** + **b** + **c** then join the līlā of Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu²¹ later on.

When the **ātmā** has focussed on Bhagavān with exclusive bhakti, Bhagavān enters the heart-lotus, made ready by bhakti, through the ear, and **A** (the Paramātmā) integrates into Bhagavān.

¹⁹ The sole Supreme Godhead, depending only upon Himself. He is the very intensely blended entity of eternal presence of felicitous Cognition (sat-cit-ānanda), personal, expressing the fullness of His own Power (cit-śakti), but without any direct relation to the worlds within time and space.

²⁰ A personal, everlasting relationship with God, individually determined by the character of the ātmā, a permanent unchanging prīti (love, friendship, cordiality towards Bhagavān), that has become completely one with the nature of the personality. At first, there is a union between the prīti and the empirical personality, i.e. union between the prīti and the consciousness and subconsciousness. Gradually, the sthāyi-bhāva turns into a union between the prīti and the eternal ātmā.

²¹ When omnipotence and glory (aiśvarya) prevail in Bhagavān, He appears as Nārāyaṇa.