

The Knot of the Heart

Extract from a letter by Svami Sadananda Dasa
to Vamandas and Hella 22 April 1955

Into English, comments within square brackets, footnotes and

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Dear Vamandas, dear Hella [...]

The empiric *I*, which we ourselves daily experience as our own personality, is the result of the appearance of the illusory concept of the I, the notion that I am the physical body and my mental-emotional being (buddhi, manas and ahamkara)¹. This I consists of a-sat, conditioned, dependent, perishable existence. The citta (cetas), the soul or heart, the emotional life, only exists as long as jada [that which is lifeless in itself] (seemingly) is touched by cit; it has no existence at all, not even a perishable one, it is only “imagined”.

Personal immortality in the sense of a preserved individuality of the soul, an individuality that in some way – however sublime or ethereal – would have some resemblance to our present empirical person, simply does not exist. Maya, who keeps us away from what is true and real and conceals our true nature, gives rise to the claim of the ahamkara or the I-maker – for the sake of our ‘spiritual’ satisfaction – that we simply have to believe in something that resembles the Christian belief in the immortality of the mortal soul. Our personal vanity simply cannot bear that nothing of our personally experienced personality *will or can* be preserved, at the moment when the pure I or the self [the atma] – released from the slavery under body, spirit, intellect, heart or ‘soul’ – knows himself to be in the realm of truth, in God’s realm.

¹ The atma loses his true I-consciousness by turning away from God and His service and choosing to seek selfish enjoyment in the domains of Maya. He then identifies himself with soul, mind and body, while his true I-consciousness gets paralysed and replaced by ahamkara (the I-maker), a layer or function of the psyche, consisting of subtle matter. The atma now says ‘I’ about something that is alien to his own nature, which he is not, whereas the body and the mind believe themselves to be the true I (the atma).

As long as we rove through endless cycles of births, we will carry the delusion of the individual soul. But when the true I, the true self [the atma], seized by God's Own power of pure, serving knowledge (bhakti), learns to know and experience God, then – as a *result* of this knowledge – the pure, true I will know what, who, and where he/she is, and experience his/her *eternal* bodily form and personality, which is fundamentally different from the empiric soul in every respect. Bhagavatam and the school of bhakti do not consider “knowledge of one's self” as the means to untie *the knot of the heart*, but knowledge of God, the *result* of which is knowledge of the true self [the atma]!

Commentary by Sadananda from “The Sthula- and Sukshma-deha”:

Note that the term ahamkara, which actually denotes the I-principle consisting of the guna-s, in the Shastram-s often is used for *asmita*, the delusive fallacy (viparyaya) of the intellect (buddhi) to consider itself and the two deha-s (the gross and subtle body) to be the true I, the atma. From this *asmita* follows *mamata*, i.e. the sense of my and mine, the mistake to set other objects and individuals in a personal relation to this delusive I, related to the two deha-s, to think: *my* parents, *my* children, *my* house, *my* property, *my* relatives etc.

In a similar way, the terms manas, cittam and buddhi are often used for the antahkaranam as a whole. *Hridaya-granthi*, the knot of the heart, denotes ahamkara, which consists in ignorance, in the sense of *asmita*, because it binds the atma to the coverings, in an almost inseparable unity.

Your Sadananda