

The Knot of the Heart

Extract from a letter by Svami Sadananda Dasa
to Vamandas and Hella April 22, 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 false identification of the I-concept with the physical body and our mental-emotional being (buddhi, manas and ahamkara)¹. Therefore, this I consists of *asat* [non-existence], conditioned, 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 any 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.

As long as we rove about 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 Knowledge (*bhakti*), knows God, then – as a *result* of this knowledge – the pure, true I will know what, who, and where it is, and will experience its *eternal* bodily form and personality, which is fundamentally different from the empiric soul in every respect. The *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*]!!

¹ The *atma* loses his true I-consciousness by turning away from God and His service and choosing to seek selfish enjoyment in the domain of *Maya*. Then he identifies with soul, mind and body, while his true I-consciousness gets paralyzed and substituted by *ahamkara* (the I-maker), a layer or function of the psyche, consisting of subtle matter. The *atma* now says “I” about something, which is alien to his nature, that he is not, and the body and the mind believe themselves to be the true I (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 gunas, in the Shastrams often is used for the *asmita*, the delusive mistake (*viparyaya*) of the buddhi to consider itself and the two dehas to be the true I, the atma. From this *asmita* the *mamata*, i.e. the sense of my and mine, follows: the mistake to set other objects and individuals in a personal relation to this delusive I, related to the two dehas, i.e. in accordance with this to think: my parents, my children, my house, my property, my relatives etc.

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

Your Sadananda