

Ahaṁkāra

(I-maker)

Letter from Sadānanda

30 December 1960

Into English, within square brackets and footnotes

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Dear Vāmandās, Hella, friends [...]

Concerning the Structure manuscript and Your lectures – in short: The principal structure is the following: Manas comes from sāttvika ahaṁkāra¹, buddhi from rājasika ahaṁkāra etc., and in principle there is *not* a great difference (‘atibhinna’) between *citta* and *manas*, which is sāttvika. (Jīva Gosvāmī) However, this ideal principal *structure* only exists in *theory*, because in *practice* it is the *rājasika* element that predominates in man – rajas and tamas – except in a character dominated by sāttvika, which means that *manas* is not *pure* but *overpowered* by rājasa- and tāmasa-vāsanās² etc.

This is why the *Gītā* and the *Bhāgavatam* say that on the margas [paths] of karma and jñāna one shall try to overcome tamas and rajas and strive to acquire a character dominated by sāttvika. On the bhakti path, however, it is God’s Own cit potency, which like fire makes the three guṇas red-hot and brings about functions that are *nirguṇa*, beyond the guṇas, creating the impression that the eyes, hands, buddhi, manas, etc. *serve Him*, whereas it is God’s Own power of bhakti that works and makes use of the eyes etc. [...]

Concerning *ahaṁkāra*: guṇa-maya³-*ahaṁkāra*⁴ or the “I-maker” is different from avidyā-maya-ahaṁkāra⁵ or ahaṁ-tā⁶, although the word ahaṁkāra is often used in

¹ Cf. http://sadananda.com/txt/de/text_downloads/de/tattvams-de.pdf

² Seeds of lust and hate, deeply hidden in the citta. Cf.

http://sadananda.com/index.php?action=text_downloads_vamandas_0_02_en_f

³ Here, the term ‘maya’ with short a’s means ‘consisting of’.

this *second* sense. Prakṛti⁷ places at our disposal the ability to walk (feet), to see (eyes), to decide (buddhi), to experience (manas) as well as the ability to know ourselves as a *person* (ahaṁkāra). When I am averse to God and His sevā, I employ these abilities in my willingness to enjoy, and *ignorance* (avidyā) overwhelms me; I regard body, soul, etc. as *myself*, as *mine*, and *abuse* feet, eyes, etc., as well as my ability to know myself as a person, and have an avidyā-maya-ahaṁkāra = ahaṁtā.

When I serve in bhakti I employ everything in sevā and have a cin-maya-ahaṁkāra⁸, I know who the ātmā is and use the guṇa-maya-ahaṁkāra in sevā – hence I know myself as the bhakta *Vāmandās* and I also know that the ātmā has a personality of his own, which will gradually make itself known to me and be employed when I enter God’s realm. As long as I am *not* there I make use of my feet, etc., and my guṇa-maya-ahaṁkāra in His service *here*, but I have no *avidyā-maya-ahaṁkāra*, which, as opposed to guṇa-maya-ahaṁkāra, is often called ahaṁtā, asmitā⁹ etc. [...]

Your Sadānanda

⁴ The ahaṁkāra formed of Māyās guṇas is a concrete layer and function of the subtle physical body, i.e., citta, *ahaṁkāra*, manas, buddhi, the ten senses of perception and the ten senses of action, and *the individual ātmā*, which gives them life; cf. the link to footnote 2.

⁵ The ahaṁkāra formed of Māyās aspect as ignorance (avidyā) – the illusory I-concept.

⁶ The erroneous I-perception, which is caused by the intellect’s (buddhi) erroneous perception that the gross and subtle physical bodies are the true self, the real I, the ātmā.

⁷ Māyā as causa materialis, the primordial substance of all matter and its manifestations.

⁸ Guṇa-maya-ahaṁkāra permeated by saṁvid-śakti (bhakti), God’s Own power of serving, cognizant love, which like fire transforms the iron, the guṇa-maya-ahaṁkāra, into its own nature and makes the iron identify with it. In other words, we have now four different notions of the I: 1) Guṇa-maya-ahaṁkāra 2) Avidyā-maya-ahaṁkāra 3) Cin-maya-ahaṁkāra (in sādha-deha: “I am the bhakta Vāmandās”) 4) the ātmā’s own inherent I-concept (in siddha-deha: “I am the eternal servant of God, with my own name, character, sevā etc.).

⁹ ‘Bewilderment’ (moha; asmitā), which makes one incapable of realizing that the intellect (buddhi) is not the true I. This is the opposite of Descartes’ well-known statement: “I think, therefore I am”.