

# Ahaṁkāra

(Letter Sadānanda 30.12.60)

Into English Bengt Lundborg, © Kid Samuelsson 2010

Dear Vāmandās, Hella, friends [...]

Concerning *ahaṁkāra*: *guṇa-maya*<sup>1</sup>-*ahaṁkāra*<sup>2</sup> or the “I-maker” is different from *avidyā-maya-ahaṁkāra*<sup>3</sup> or *ahaṁ-tā*<sup>4</sup>, although the word *ahaṁkāra* is often used in this *second* sense. *Prakṛti*<sup>5</sup> 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 turned away from God 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<sup>6</sup> and I have an *avidyā-maya-ahaṁkāra* = *ahaṁtā*.

When I serve in bhakti I employ everything in *sevā* and have a *cin-maya-ahaṁkāra*<sup>7</sup>, I know who the *ātmā* is and use the *guṇa-maya-ahaṁkāra* in *sevā* – hence I know myself as the bhakta *Vāmandās* and know also that the *ātmā* has a personality of his own that will gradually make itself known to me and that commences 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 serving *here*, but I have no *avidyā-maya-ahaṁkāra*, which, as opposed to *guṇa-maya-ahaṁkāra*, is often called *ahaṁtā*, *asmitā*<sup>8</sup> etc. [...]

Yours Sadānanda

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<sup>1</sup> Here the word *maya* with short a-s means “consisting of”.

<sup>2</sup> *Ahaṁkāra* formed by *Māyā*’s *guṇas*, a real concrete layer and a function of the subtle physical body.

<sup>3</sup> *Ahaṁkāra* formed by *Māyā*’s aspect as *ignorance* (*avidyā*), the illusory experience of the I.

<sup>4</sup> The erroneous “sense of I” that consists in the intellect (*buddhi*) holding the view that together with the gross and subtle physical body it is the true, real I, the *ātmā*.

<sup>5</sup> The primordial substance of all matter and its manifestations.

<sup>6</sup> A *true* person; see footnote 7.

<sup>7</sup> *Ahaṁkāra* permeated by *cit*, God’s Own power of serving, knowing love.

<sup>8</sup> “Bewilderment” (*moha*; *asmitā*), through which one is incapable of realizing that the intellect (*buddhi*) is not the true I; i.e. the opposite of Descartes’ well-known statement: “I think, therefore I am”.