

## The Self



*How shall I grasp it? Do not grasp it.  
That which remains when there is  
no more grasping is the Self.*

—Panchadasi

When most of us use the word, "self," we are usually referring to our ego identity—that persona, or mask, we wear to maintain our illusion of individuality. This small self includes our subconscious mind, our intuitive mind, and virtually everything else our brains produce that make us believe we are separate and apart from every other thing in the universe.

Krishna, Plato, and Jesus, however, meant something entirely different when they used this word "self." Self, to them, refers to what lies beneath individuality. This Self is the core essence of what (not who) we really are: God, the Tao, Universal Mind. Self is what remains when the little self dies. Self is what we discover when we are "born again." Self is what appears when we cleanse our windows of perception. Self is what we recognize when we "wake up." Self, really, is all that exists.

This Self, in Hinduism, is called *Atman*. And *Atman*, Krishna tells us in the *Bhagavad Gita*, is Brahman, or God. The only distinction between *Atman* and Brahman—between Self and God—is the distinction we make ourselves. Remove that distinction and all that remains is God, or Universal Mind, or Tao.

Gnostics often referred to Self as a "spark," and God as the divine Light from which the spark emanated. For them, individual sparks of divine Light had broken off from the Godhead, and were trapped within, and by, the human body. In our ignorance, humans are unaware that this spark of Light exists within us. But when we become aware of our true nature, the Self, we dissolve back into the Divine Light.

Unlike Hindus and Gnostic Christians, Buddhists rarely speak of Self in the same way Jesus and Krishna do. In fact, much Buddhist teaching emphasizes "not-Self." Although pursuing much the same course toward enlightenment, the Buddha often turned the mind back on itself through the process of negation: "not this, not that." This process forces the disciple to give up all thought patterns by exhausting them, as in Zen Buddhist training. The closest concept to Self in Buddhism is "Mind"—not the intellectual mind, but what stands behind it. Inasmuch as there is a section in the book on Mind, we will leave these teachings for later.



Neither did ancient Taoism emphasize the concept of Self. While not denying it, Taoists of old simply emphasized the reality of Tao alone. Perhaps the Taoist masters decided that giving name to something other than Tao would be too misleading, and give rise to too much philosophy. After all, when one's sense of individuality disappears, there is nothing left but Tao. Buddhists might add the comment that ego is an illusion, and Tao was all that ever existed in the first place.

But what precipitates the ego's disappearance? What causes the thinking mind to cease its thinking? Lao Tzu might say that any attempt to answer such questions would require too much activity of the discriminating mind. Better to just shrug one's shoulders and laugh.

In order to know everything you must first know yourself. If you do not know yourself, Then you know nothing. Those who know themselves also know the All.

*The Gospel of Thomas*

A person who only sees his external self, rather than the Self within, not only diminishes himself, but misleads others as well.

*The Gospel of Mani*

Those who have truly found the Self within recognize that it exists everywhere.

*Dialogue of the Savior*

Do you not understand that what you see is what you will become? Therefore seek the Self within yourself, because this is who you really are.

*Dialogue of the Savior*

If you would become perfect, discover the Self within. Seek this awareness, not intelligence.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

The Self resides in all beings, but it is only recognizable to those with intuitive abilities.

*The Upanishads*

All those who devote themselves to the Self within make it an object of devotion that can never perish.

*The Upanishads*

Recognizing the Lord everywhere reflects the Self within. This is the eternal reward.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

In the realms of Suchness there is neither "self" nor "other." The only way to see what is real is to consider all things as being "not two."

*Seng-Ts'an*

When Mind is seen as all minds, there are no more words. In this understanding exists past, present and future.

*Seng-Ts'an*

Everyone has recognized the Self—one's essential nature. But few have realized it.

*The Surangama Sutra*

Recognizing the unity of all life, one sees his own Self in all other beings. This allows one to be impartial about all things.

*The Buddha*

Wisdom comes from knowing oneself. He who knows himself is enlightened.

*The Tao Te Ching*

Some people recognize the Self and are amazed. Other people who hear of the Self just wonder. Still others don't understand at all.

*The Tao Te Ching*

Strip away the non-essential, and the essential will reveal itself.

*The Tao Te Ching*

The Self that is restrained in all things will never suffer. It will endure forever.

*The Tao Te Ching*

Your salvation comes from being aware of what is already inside of you. If you are unaware, you will remain subject to death.

*The Gospel of Thomas*

When you understand yourselves you will understand everything. Then you will realize that you are God's children.

*The Gospel of Thomas*

Understand the Self within and know that you are already living God's Kingdom.

*The Gospel of Thomas*

The purpose of things in your life is not for you to love them, but to love the Self in all things.

*The Upanishads*

To recognize the One, mediate on the Self. Then you will go beyond joy and sorrow.

*The Upanishads*

Recognize that all things exist in the One, and you will become the One.

*The Bhagavad Gita*



One will not find himself by seeking among transient things.

*The Buddha*

All things are transient and subject to decay. To become attached to things leads to suffering. One can not truly say this belongs to me, or this is what I truly am. The answer to all things cannot be found in the outer world of things or self-concepts.

*The Buddha*

One achieves self-realization by practicing mental concentration. He will thus come to the state of Noble Wisdom.

*The Lankavatara Sutra*

While the wise man may dress in rags, his heart holds the greatest of riches.

*The Tao Te Ching*

He who identifies himself with the world, receives the world. He who sees himself as the world comes to accept it.

*The Tao Te Ching*

He who seeks knowledge accumulates it each day. He who seeks wisdom forgets all that he learns.

*The Tao Te Ching*

## The I Am: In the Presence of the Avatar



*OM (AUM) is not an immaterial abstraction which transcends the world of matter and earthly existence; it is the world we live in but do not see. It is here—now, I-Thou, and “the reality that flows.”*

—William Braden

One of the truly amazing parallels between Christian and Hindu texts is the use of the phrase “I Am.” The author of the canonical Gospel of John has Jesus use these words quite often when referring to himself as the incarnation of God. Orthodox Christians took such phrases as “I and the Father are one” literally. Rather than understanding the statement in a mystical sense, they believed that Jesus, and no one else, could identify with God the Father.

Gnostic Christians, however, used the phrase “I Am” in its original, mystical, context. The Jesus who speaks these words in the Gnostic Gospels is not the historical teacher from Galilee; he is the eternal Christ, the avatar—the incarnation—of the Godhead who takes on human form again and again throughout human history. The Hindu avatar, Krishna, uses the phrase in precisely the same way. In fact, as the reader will discover, the “I Am” statements in both the *Bhagavad Gita* and the Gnostic Gospels are

so similar in language and content that they are essentially interchangeable. In these texts, Krishna and Christ are transparent beings who channel the voice of God.

The use of the term, “I Am,” is also familiar to every Jew. In the Hebrew Bible, these words are the “name” of God: “Yahweh,” which is variously translated as “I Am,” “I Am that I Am,” or “He who is.” The word, Yahweh, is related to the Hebrew verb “to be,” but goes beyond that sense to suggest the active presence. It implies that God is immanent in our lives.

This “active presence” word for God, however, did not originate with the Jews. As a name for God, it was well known among all Semitic peoples long before the advent of monotheism. It is possible that ancestors of the Hebrews picked up the term during their sojourn as slaves in Egypt. The tribe of Levi, to which Moses belonged, knew the word and knew that it was often used in a shortened form—Yo! Yah! or Yahu!—as a mantra.

Both the ancient Egyptian priests and the Brahmins of India understood the fundamental principles of vibro-therapeutics. Both those religions used sacred syllables as chants and mantras to set up vibratory reactions that were useful for healing. Their toning was also used to stimulate latent centers of human consciousness.

For the ancient Brahmins, as well as for modern Hindus, the sacred syllable, AUM, represents the primal sound of creation. It is considered to be the “hum” of the universe. Is it possible that there is a linguistic connection between the sacred Hindu syllable, AUM, and the Semitic name for God? Even the English “I Am” sounds much like the Sanskrit “AUM.” Whatever the case, linguistically, both avatars of God, Christ and Krishna, incorporate the essence of Being-ness in their use of the expression “I Am.”





I Am the Light which is upon them all.  
I Am the All. All things came from Me  
and all things will return to Me. Split  
the timber and there I Am. Lift a stone  
and you will discover Me there.

*The Gospel of Thomas*

I Am all existence. I Am mother, father,  
child. Whether moving or unmoving, that I  
Am. All that exists, exists in Me.  
I Am the womb of life. I Am the invisible  
one who dwells in all things.

*The Trimorphic Protennoia*

I exist in every soul. I awaken those who  
sleep. My voice cries out in every creature.  
I have existed from the beginning.

*The Trimorphic Protennoia*

I Am manifest in those who love Me.  
Silence is my dwelling place, yet  
those who seek Me will hear Me.

*The Trimorphic Protennoia*

I Am the origin of all things. All things  
came from Me. Whether moving or  
unmoving, all things exist in Me.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

I Am the Father of the Universe,  
and I Am the source of the Father.  
I Am the Mother of the Universe,  
and the source of the Mother.  
Beyond Me nothing exists.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

I Am the self-existent One. I can be found  
in every heart. I Am the beginning; I Am  
the middle; and I Am the end of all things.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

I Am the Soul which dwells in all things;  
I Am their beginning, middle and end.

*The Bhagavad Gita*



I Am the seed that is planted in every being.  
I Am Father, Mother, and child.  
I Am the incorruptible One,  
and I dwell within you.

*The Apocryphon of John*

I Am the foundation that supports  
the heavens, the Light that shines  
everywhere; the joy of all souls.

*The Manichean Psalms*

I Am the bread of life; he who comes  
to Me shall not hunger, and he who  
believes in Me shall never thirst.

*The Gospel According to John*

I can be heard in all things. My speech  
is beyond grasping. I alone exist.

*The Thunder: Perfect Mind*

I Am the Father and Mother of all  
things. Without Me nothing can exist.  
I am the Way; I am refuge; I am your  
friend. I see and support all things.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

I Am the sweet fragrance of the  
earth, the life in all beings.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

For those who focus on Me  
with a singleness of purpose,  
I Am easily attainable.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

I Am the eternal seed of all beings,  
the intellect of all intelligence, and  
the heroism of all heroics.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

I Am you and you are Me. Where you  
are, there also Am I. I Am planted  
in all things, and when the harvest  
comes, it is I which you reap.

*The Gospel of Eve*

I Am the life of the world. I Am  
sweet water and the sap in trees.

*The Manichean Psalms*

I Am she in whom all things come to be.  
I Am movement of all that moves.  
I Am Mind that dwells in the Light.  
I Am invisible and manifest in all things.  
I Am beyond measure and there are  
no words which can describe Me.

*The Trimorphic Protennoia*

I Am that which came into being at the  
beginning. I Am the Beloved,  
and the one who alone is righteous.  
I speak so that you may hear Me.  
Focus on Me so that you may see Me.

*The [Second] Apocalypse of James*

My love is equal for all beings. I can  
be reached through devotion, for  
I Am in them, and they in Me.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

I Am the wetness in water, the light of  
the sun, and the radiance of the moon.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

I Am time beyond time. I sustain all  
things. I Am life and I Am death. I Am the  
knowledge of those who know Me. Among  
the hidden mysteries, I Am the silent One.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

I Am the unborn, everlasting Lord of All.  
I Am born into the realm of nature.  
I Am AUM, the eternal Word. I Am  
the prayer that is made in silence.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

I Am a mirror; see yourself in Me. I Am a door, so knock upon Me. I Am your resting place, so rest yourself within Me.

*The Hymn of Jesus from The Acts of John*

I Am a lamp,  
so that you might see Me.  
I Am a path for you to travel.

*The Hymn of Jesus from The Acts of John*

I Am the Holy Father, the Living One  
who reveals all things that are hidden.

If you understand Me,  
you will become what I Am.  
Reach out and take hold of Me.

*The [Second] Apocalypse of James*

I pervade all things, both manifest  
and un-manifest. All things and  
all beings exist in Me.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

I exist in the hearts of all those  
who worship Me. I Am the light of  
wisdom that dispels the darkness.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

I Am the Father, the Mother, the  
Sustainer, the Grandfather, the Purifier,  
the One thing to be known.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

I Am the perfect Thought of the  
Invisible One. Through Me, all  
things came into being.

*The Trimorphic Protennoia*

I Am the beginning and the end. I Am the  
One who is honored and the One who  
is rejected. I Am that which is holy, and  
the One who is defiled. I Am the virgin  
and I Am the Mother. I Am the One who  
is barren, and I have many children.

*The Thunder: Perfect Mind*

I Am in that place  
which knows no division.

*The Gospel of Thomas*

I Am knowledge contained within the  
soul. I Am time that never ends. I Am  
the Creator who sees His creation. I Am  
death, the end of all things; and I Am the  
source of all that will yet come to be.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

I Am the beginning and the end. I Am the  
sacrifice and the offering. I Am the sacred  
gift, sacred food, sacred words, and the  
holy fire into which all offerings are made.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

I pervade the Universe.  
Know that I Am.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

