



POLAND



POLAND

THE “I-AM” CONCEPT IN P.T. RAJU’S COMPARATIVE ANTHROPOLOGY

Alimardon Mustafaev1Lecturer of the National Pedagogical University
of Uzbekistan named after Nizami,

2Researcher of the Tashkent state university of oriental studies

e-mail: alimardon.mustafaev@gmail.com

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20809436>

Abstract: This article examines the concept of “I-Am” as one of the central elements of P. T. Raju’s comparative philosophical anthropology. The study analyzes the philosophical foundations of this concept, its relationship to the Indian doctrine of ātman–Brahman, and its dialogue with Western conceptions of selfhood and personhood. Particular attention is given to Raju’s attempt to synthesize Eastern metaphysical spirituality and Western rational personalism within a unified anthropological framework. It is argued that the “I-Am” concept serves as a methodological and philosophical bridge between cultures, providing a basis for intercultural dialogue and a universal understanding of human nature. The article concludes that Raju’s theory remains relevant for contemporary comparative philosophy and philosophical anthropology.

Keywords: P.T.Raju, comparative philosophy, philosophical anthropology, selfhood, personhood, I-Am concept, ātman, Brahman, intercultural dialogue.

The twentieth century witnessed significant efforts to establish philosophical dialogue between Eastern and Western intellectual traditions. Among the thinkers who made substantial contributions to this endeavor, P. T. Raju occupies a distinctive place. As one of the pioneers of comparative philosophy, he sought not merely to compare different philosophical traditions but to construct an integrated vision of the human being capable of transcending cultural boundaries.

A central element of Raju’s philosophical anthropology is the concept of “I-Am,” which he regarded as one of his most original contributions to comparative thought. Through this concept, Raju attempted to reconcile the metaphysical insights of Indian philosophy with the rational and personalistic approaches of Western philosophy. His objective was not to eliminate differences between traditions but to reveal their deeper structural affinities and complementary insights regarding human existence.

Raju’s conception of “I-Am” originates from his interpretation of the Upanishadic tradition, particularly the famous mahāvākya ahaṃ brahmāsmi (“I



am Brahman”). According to the Advaita Vedānta tradition, the deepest essence of the individual self (ātman) is identical with the ultimate reality (Brahman) [1].

However, Raju did not simply reproduce traditional Vedāntic interpretations. Instead, he reinterpreted them within a comparative framework. He argued that the human being cannot be understood solely as a biological organism, a social actor, or a rational subject. Human existence possesses a deeper spiritual dimension that manifests itself through self-awareness.

For Raju, the statement “I am” represents the most immediate and undeniable fact of consciousness. Before any cultural, religious, or social determination, the individual experiences the awareness of being. This awareness becomes the foundation upon which all further dimensions of personality are constructed.

One of the most original aspects of Raju’s theory is his effort to establish a dialogue between Indian metaphysics and Western philosophical anthropology. He observed that Western philosophy often emphasizes the autonomy and individuality of the person, while Indian thought frequently stresses the spiritual unity underlying all existence.

Raju identified important parallels between the Upanishadic formula *aham brahmāsmi* and the Biblical revelation “I AM THAT I AM” (Exodus 3:14). Although these traditions emerged in different cultural contexts, both point toward a profound understanding of being and selfhood.

Similarly, he recognized the significance of René Descartes’ *cogito ergo sum* and Immanuel Kant’s concept of transcendental apperception. While these Western formulations focus on rational self-consciousness, they nevertheless reveal an important dimension of the self as an active and knowing subject. According to Raju, the Western emphasis on rationality and the Eastern emphasis on spiritual realization should not be viewed as contradictory but as complementary approaches to understanding human existence.

The “I-Am” concept is inseparable from Raju’s broader anthropological model. He proposed a stratified understanding of human reality consisting of several interconnected levels:

- The biological level, where the human being exists as a living organism.
- The cultural level, where identity is shaped by language, tradition, and social experience.
- The rational-moral level, where the individual acts as a conscious and responsible subject.





- The spiritual level, where the deepest dimension of selfhood becomes manifest.

These dimensions do not exist independently of one another. Rather, they form a unified structure whose center is the conscious experience of “I am.” This experience provides continuity between the finite individual and the universal ground of being.

Consequently, Raju rejects both reductionist naturalism and abstract metaphysical monism. Human beings are neither merely biological entities nor entirely dissolved into an impersonal absolute. Instead, they embody a dynamic unity of individuality and universality.

The comparative significance of the “I-Am” concept lies in its ability to function as a common philosophical ground for intercultural dialogue. Raju maintained that every philosophical tradition seeks to answer fundamental questions concerning the nature of the self, consciousness, and ultimate reality. Although the answers differ, the questions themselves reveal a shared human concern.

Through the concept of “I-Am,” Raju developed what may be described as an anthropological universalism. Unlike abstract universalism, which ignores cultural diversity, Raju’s approach acknowledges the historical and cultural uniqueness of different traditions while affirming the common spiritual foundations of humanity.

This perspective enabled him to avoid two methodological extremes: cultural relativism and false universalism. The first denies the possibility of meaningful intercultural understanding, while the second reduces cultural diversity to a single uniform framework. Raju sought a middle path that preserved both human unity and cultural plurality.

In the context of globalization, migration, and increasing intercultural interaction, Raju’s conception remains highly relevant. Modern societies face the challenge of maintaining social cohesion while respecting cultural diversity. The “I-Am” concept offers a philosophical basis for addressing this challenge by emphasizing both the universal dignity of the human person and the legitimacy of cultural differences.

Furthermore, Raju’s theory contributes to contemporary debates in comparative philosophy, philosophical anthropology, intercultural ethics, and dialogue studies. His work demonstrates that genuine dialogue requires neither assimilation nor isolation but mutual recognition and intellectual openness.





For societies pursuing human-centered development, intercultural cooperation, and spiritual renewal, Raju's anthropology provides valuable theoretical resources. It encourages a vision of humanity grounded in dignity, self-realization, and respect for cultural diversity.

P.T.Raju's concept of "I-Am" constitutes one of the most significant achievements of twentieth-century comparative philosophy. By integrating the metaphysical insights of Indian thought with the personalistic and rational traditions of Western philosophy, Raju developed a distinctive model of philosophical anthropology centered on the unity of human existence.

The concept reveals the human being as simultaneously spiritual, rational, cultural, and personal. It provides a framework for overcoming the opposition between universality and particularity, tradition and modernity, East and West. As a result, the "I-Am" concept remains an important contribution to contemporary philosophical anthropology and intercultural philosophy, offering a compelling vision of human unity amidst cultural diversity.

References:

1. Raju P. T. The Concept of Man: A Study in Comparative Philosophy. London: Allen & Unwin, 1960.
2. Raju P. T. Introduction to Comparative Philosophy. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962.
3. Raju P. T. The Philosophical Traditions of India. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971.
4. Raju P. T. Structural Depths of Indian Thought. Albany: SUNY Press, 1985.
5. Radhakrishnan S. An Idealist View of Life. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1932.
6. Halbfass W. India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding. Albany: SUNY Press, 1988.
7. Panikkar R. The Intrareligious Dialogue. New York: Paulist Press, 1978.
8. Mall R. A. Intercultural Philosophy. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000.
9. Mohanty J. N. Classical Indian Philosophy. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000.
10. Gupta B. The Disinterested Witness: A Fragment of Advaita Vedānta Phenomenology. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998.
11. Deutsch E. Advaita Vedanta: A Philosophical Reconstruction. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1969.
12. King R. Indian Philosophy: An Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999.

