

# Understanding the Mind – Part 1

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## Understanding the Mind – Part 1

Mind indeed is mysterious. Nobody has seen it, but we all know it exists. We all have thoughts, perceptions, and emotions and we know all this happens in the mind. So it does exist, but where does it exist, how does it function and how and why was it created? These are indeed key questions, and if you investigate you will find very few good answers.

Science has done a great job investigating the brain. With the major Brain initiative by the National Institute of Health (NIH) which is currently underway, a great wealth of knowledge will be uncovered on the workings of the brain. The NIH proposes to map the brain the same way the Genome project mapped the human body. This knowledge will provide deep insight on the structure and functioning of the brain.

But will this knowledge help in understanding the Mind? Mind is only known to us as a subjective experience. It is not an object, which can be dissected and analyzed like other objects in the universe. My mind, my experiences, my perceptions are so personal, no one else can see them or experience them. In the same way, I also do not have a clue of what is happening in other people's minds. Science can tell what part of the brain is firing up when I am having a certain experience, but they have no idea what is the actual content of the experience.

Fortunately, sages and rishis in ancient India followed a different path. They closed their eyes and looked inwards and analyzed the experiences and thoughts they had in great detail. They meditated and contemplated on these issues. They used their minds to understand the mind! They learned a lot, they understood a lot, and they documented their findings in the ancient scriptures. The ultimate goal for the rishis was to find a solution to human suffering. They found that the mind is the ultimate cause for suffering and also that the same mind provides the solution to overcome this suffering. It's both the cause and the solution to suffering.

Therefore understanding and controlling the mind becomes extremely critical. This is the focus of this article. This article is based on the understanding and analyzing of the Mind as taught in the ancient scriptures. This article will cover the many different aspects of the mind. The coverage these topics will be done over two articles

Article 1 will cover the following

- Source of the Mind
- Evolution of the Mind
- Structure of the Mind

Article 2 will cover the following

- States of the Mind
- Powers of the Mind
- Functioning of the Mind
- Control of the Mind

## Source of the Mind

To learn about the source of the mind, you need to understand and analyze the experiences you have. All our perceptions, feelings, thoughts and current thinking are nothing but the experiences we have. When we are awake, there is hardly any moment when we do not have some sort of experience. We have experiences on a continuous basis, sometimes it is structured and willful, while at other times it is random, jumping from one thought to another. Some people have compared this jumping around of experiences with a monkey in a cage or the direction of the wind changing randomly.

- Experience can only happen in the mind and nowhere else. The world is out there, but we experience it only in our minds. Science also states the same thing. Light is reflected from an external object, and this light travels to the retina in our eye. The retina converts the incoming light into an optical signal. This optical signal is transmitted to the visual cortex in the human brain. Science still doesn't tell us how the optical signal is converted to an actual image, but somehow the visual image is created and we experience this visual image in the mind. This is true for all the five senses – sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell. Even the internal thoughts and emotions which we experience happen only in the mind.
- Everyone has a unique and private experience. Even if two people are seeing the same object, the experience each of them will have will be different. I am color blind, when I see the external world, I have a different experience of the world compared to other people.
- If you think about it, experience is the only connection we have with the external world. There is no other way to learn and understand the universe. If we do not experience a thing, then the question can be asked does that thing even exist. Experience is the only way to validate the existence of the universe. We understand and learn from experience, there is no other way to get to know the external world.

As experience only happens in the mind and we want to learn about the building blocks of the mind, the only way forward is to analyze our own experiences.

**Experiences Decoded:** The following simple equation is a perfect analysis of an Experience

Experience = Awareness + Form

We are always aware of our experience. We can never say we had an experience, but we are not aware of it. This is simply not possible because awareness is a critical pre-requisite and ingredient of an experience. You are having an experience because you are aware of it. If there is no Awareness, there can be no Experience. We are aware that we have a non-stop and a continuous flow of experience. Usually no two experiences are the same, the form part of the experience is always different and keeps changing. Sometimes it is visual, sometimes it is auditory, and sometimes it is based on past memories. The Forms keeps changing, the Experience keeps changing but does the underlying Awareness also keep changing? Our experience confirms that Awareness will always remain the same. It would seem that Form part is superimposed on the unchanging Awareness to complete the Experience.

If you expand this logic and apply to the entire human race, each and every person will have their own experience in their own mind. This Experience equation is valid for everyone. Everyone has different Forms superimposed on Awareness to complete the Experience. Everyone will have their own unique Form to create their own unique Experience.

The common factor in everyone's experience is Awareness. This Awareness seems to be present in everyone's mind. Can there be so many different Awareness's? Is the same Awareness present in everyone's mind? Is your Awareness different from mine and everyone else? These questions will answer themselves once we get a better understanding what we really mean by Awareness.

### **Understanding Awareness:**

Awareness is the most powerful force in the universe and it is the underlying reality of this universe. It has the power to connect with a form present in the mind and create an experience which you are aware of. For an analogy, think of the sun. When there is no light from the sun, you cannot see anything, but in the presence of the light everything becomes visible. In the same way when any form which comes in the presence of the light of Awareness, the experience bulb lights up in your mind and you are aware of the form. If you think about it, even the light of the sun is a form in the presence of the light of Awareness.

If you carefully study Awareness, you will conclude that the Awareness is made up of a Subject and Object with the following functions

1. There must be a Subject, who is Aware of the experience. This subject is the knower of the Awareness

2. There must be an Object, which must be experienced. This object is the known part of the Awareness
3. There must be Intelligence by which the subject gets to know the object. This is the knowing part of the Awareness

Knower, Known and Knowing are the 3 powers of Awareness. It must be clear that

- Awareness = Subject + Object + Intelligence
- Power of Awareness = Power of Knower + Power of Knowing + Power of Known

Awareness is made of Subject, Object and Intelligence and it has three different powers - Knower, Knowing and Known. It must be understood that the Subject and Object and the three powers are not something outside in the world, but they are within Awareness and make up Awareness. If any one of them is missing, the awareness will not work, and will be incomplete.

- If there is an object to be observed, but there is no subject, there will be no awareness, as there is no one to see the object.
- If there is a subject, but no object to see, there will no awareness as the subject has no objects to observe
- If there is an object, but the subject has no way of knowing what this object is, no awareness will take place. This knowing must have intelligence.

Wherever there is awareness, the Subject, Object and Intelligence must be present with all the three powers. Let us try and understand this in little more detail.

### **1. Power of Knowing or Intelligence**

The knowing or intelligence component of Awareness is extremely powerful, in fact language and words may not be enough to describe its awesome power. Here are some examples that indicates its strength and power.

**Example 1:** I am seeing a tree. A more Vedantic way to put it will be 'I am the seer seeing a tree'

This is a simple experience we have every moment, but it shows the extraordinary power of Awareness. Let us breakup this experience into the different components of Awareness

Ego = I am

Subject = Seer

Object = Tree

Intelligence = Seeing is the power of Awareness, which makes it possible for 'I' to know the tree. Without the power of Seeing, none of us will see any object. Someone may argue that the eye provides this power. The eye does nothing other than converting the image into an optical signal and bringing the signal to the mind. What is the ability that decodes this optical signal into the understanding that this object is a tree? It is power of the Seeing which is within Awareness which allows us to know that there is a tree. This intelligence in Awareness knows that the optical signal is a tree.

Awareness = Seer + Seeing + Seen

**Example 2:** You are reading a book or 'You are the reader reading a book'

This power of intelligence is within Awareness and is available to each and every one. Let us decode the experience of reading.

Ego = You

Subject = Reader

Object = Book

Intelligence = Reading is a power within Awareness which allows the Subject or Reader to connect with the contents of the book. It is within Awareness because you are aware that you are reading - first, to know the words and sentences, and then to know what is being read. We are so used to reading that we do not think of this ability as anything special. If there was no power of reading within Awareness, there would be no way you could read anything. With this power of "reading" we are aware we are reading and this awareness completes the reading experience.

Awareness = Reader + Reading + Read

**Example 3:** You are visiting a friend or 'You are the visitor visiting a friend'

Subject = Visitor

Object = Friend

Intelligence = You are aware that you are visiting a friend. This power of knowing that you are visiting is part of the Intelligence within Awareness and also knowing that this person is a friend. If you did not have this power within you, you will never know this person is your friend and you have specifically made an effort to visit him.

Awareness = Visitor + Visiting + Visited

We can continue to give any number of examples to highlight the power of Awareness. We can take any verb in the English language and add the 'ing' to this verb. This word when connected with a Subject and Object will have the power of creating an awareful experience within the mind. Some more examples:

Awareness = Eater + Eating + Eaten

Awareness = Sleeper + Sleeping + Slept

Awareness = Fighter + Fighting + Fought (an Object)

Awareness = Player + Playing + Played (an Object)

Awareness = Learner + Learning + Learned

The intelligence within Awareness has an unlimited range of power, it is impossible to comprehend. We can comprehend only what experiences our mind can handle. We will be discussing shortly, our minds are limited and therefore can handle only a limited range of experiences.

Awareness is not limited by the capacity of our mind. It is much more and has an infinite amount of intelligence, it has the infinite amount of knowledge about everything that is possible. What is amazing, this unlimited intelligence, this pure intelligence, this Awareness is available within everyone's mind.

## **2. Power of Knower or Subject**

In the earlier section, we saw the power of knowing, the intelligence of knowing. There must be a Knower to actually see an object and perceive what it looks like. This is done by the Subject within Awareness. The Subject is the Knower of the experience. This Subject is not only the Knower of seeing, but is also the knower of hearing, the knower of reading, knower of sleeping, etc.

- When it is the knower of seeing, the Subject is a Seer
- When it is the knower of hearing, the Subject is a Hearer
- When it is the knower of reading, the Subject is a Reader
- When it is the knower of running, the Subject is a Runner

There is only one Subject, and it is the Knower of so many things. In fact it is the Knower of everything. All this is within Awareness. We shall see later on this Subject with the Power of Knowing is available within the mind of each one of us and it is the only way we can know, what our experiences are.

Our minds are limited and therefore the power and range of the Knower is limited. Awareness is beyond the mind and this Subject within Awareness is Knower of everything that is possible. There is nothing that Awareness does not know.

Conclusion: Where ever there is Awareness, there must be a Subject. This Subject is the Knower and has the power of knowing everything that is possible. We should never confuse this Subject with Ego. This Subject is part of Awareness and this Subject does NOT have an ego. If I say 'I am the Knower' or 'I am the Subject', the 'I am' is the Ego. Knower and Subject is not part of the Ego, it is part of Awareness. In Awareness there is no attachment and no ego, it is simply aware.

### **3.Power of Known or Objects**

The Object component of Awareness is also extremely powerful and it has the ability to take any form that we experience in the mind.

If you see a round circle, then awareness cannot take shape of a square. If it does, you will never experience the round circle. Awareness must also be a round circle with the same exact dimensions. If you see a tree, then awareness must also take the shape of the tree. This tree must be filled up with the Awareness. If the tree is half filled with awareness or the awareness does not have the same shape as the tree, you will not be aware of the tree.

If you want to observe any object with form,

1. The form must be filled in with Awareness and nothing but Awareness. If the form does not have Awareness, then observer or subject will not be able to experience the object with that form.
2. The Awareness must take the exact shape of the form.

Awareness by itself is formless, but it has the potential to take any form. If you look into a powerful microscope, awareness can take the shape of a molecule or if you look at the universe through a telescope, awareness can take shape of the stars and galaxies. Big or small, awareness can take the shape of anything. Awareness has the potential to take any form.

What is the difference between Awareness and Form?

**Pot/Clay Metaphor:** Vedanta uses the example of pot/clay to explain this concept. If you have clay, this clay has the potential to take the shape of any type of pot - small, large, round or square. Once these pots of different shapes and sizes are ready, the question can be asked, what part is the pot and what part is the clay? The answer to this question is as follows

Pot = Form

Clay = Content



The content is only clay, the pot form is superimposed on the clay. There can be no misunderstanding and confusion about this. In the same way everything we experience in our mind is only made up of Awareness and different Forms are superimposed upon this Awareness.

Next time you see a tree, or listen to music or feel the cold water, you must be clear that the tree, music or water is made up only by Awareness and nothing but Awareness.

Awareness is this powerful force in our mind, which has the ability to take up any shape or form. Another way to put it: all possible 'potential forms' are available within Awareness. They are inherently present in Awareness and they take a required form when you experience that form in your mind. How many different 'potential forms' are present in Awareness? Countless, infinite!!

## **Understanding Self-Awareness**

In the previous section we saw, Awareness is the underlying force in the mind. It is the knower of everything happening in the mind, it has the ability to take the form of all the possible objects and has infinite intelligence to give meaning and understanding to any experience.

Vedanta teaches us that we are much more than the mind. The mind is limited, it uses only partial power of Awareness. The power of Awareness is unlimited or infinite, but the power used by the mind is only limited.

There must be a Self, who is Aware; someone says 'I am Aware'. So who are we? We are the Self, the 'I'. No one can deny this fact.

Vedanta teaches we are Self-Aware. What does this mean? It means that the Self IS Awareness and nothing but Awareness. Also Awareness IS Self. They both are the same. When you say Self, it automatically means Awareness and when you say Awareness, it automatically means Self. There is no separation between them. Since Self is Awareness, this means that the Self is the Subject and Self is also the Object. Self is both the Subject and Object.

How do we understand this with our everyday experience? What does Self-Awareness mean? It means the Self is aware that it is the Self. Let us put this in terms of statements we have used before.

- Self is Knowing the Self

Here Self is the Subject, and also the Self knows Self, therefore Self is the Object also. If the 'Self' is Self-Aware, then the Self is both the subject, object and Intelligence. The Self being the subject, object and Intelligence is the only way 'Self' can be Self-Aware.

1. The experience the self (small s) has in the mind shows the presence of duality/, the 'I' experiences the separation between the subject and object. The subject is 'over here' and the object is 'over there'. In Self-Awareness, there is no duality, the Self is both the subject and object. It is non-dual, it is one, and there is unity.
2. We saw earlier that to have an experience you need a subject, object and intelligence. Self-Awareness has all the 3 components to complete an experience. It is thus self-sufficient and self-contained. It does not need anything else for its existence.
3. It must be understood that in Self-Awareness, the subject and object are not different components or parts. They are completely homogenous, undifferentiated, undivided and part less. It is not very easy to grasp or visualize this, but this is the nature of Self-Awareness.
4. Self or Self Awareness is ONE and is homogenous. Self is both the Subject and Object. Just for our understanding and our ability to grasp this concept, we can say that the Self has the following functions/parts.
  - Self = Self + Awareness
  - Awareness = Subject + Object + Intelligence
  - Self = Self + Subject + Object + Intelligence
5. Self-Awareness is beyond the mind. Mind is limited and has duality. Self-Awareness is pure, non-dual and complete. It has all the infinite powers we have described earlier. It knows everything and it has infinite Intelligence. It has the ability and potential to create all required forms. What more does the Self need? Nothing.

Vedanta teaches that you are the 'Self' and this 'Self' is not the mind, but SatChitAnanda. SatChitAnanda is your true nature, your underlying reality. Based on all these discussions we can conclude the following

Self is Self-Aware = Self is SatChitAnanda

**Self-Awareness is Sat:** Sat means Real. According to Vedanta, for anything to be Sat, it must exist and be present in all the 3 tenses – past, present and future. Self-Awareness meets this requirement. Self-Awareness is therefore unborn, uncaused, unchanging and uncreated. It has always been there and will always be there.

**Self-Awareness is Chit:** Chit means Awareness, it means it is the Subject and Object with all the creative powers and intelligence we have discussed earlier. Many books will also translate this as Consciousness, but I feel this is not very accurate. We shall discuss that shortly.

**Self-Awareness is Ananda:** Ananda means Bliss. This term can be confusing because we do get momentary bliss in our day to day lives and this is not the Ananda we are talking about. We are talking about the Ananda of Self-Awareness. Self-Awareness is full and complete, it has all three components: subject, object and intelligence. It does not need anything extra and it is not dependent on anything external. This fullness and completeness leads to full time (not partial) Bliss or Ananda and this is the essential nature of Self-Awareness.

From a personal point of view, it is much easier to understand the concept of 'Self-Awareness' as compared to 'SatChitAnanda'. They both mean the same and point to our essential nature of Self. The concept of 'SatChitAnanda' seems so lofty and always feels like something 'out there', difficult to understand and grasp. It seems much easier to relate to 'Self-Awareness', because it feels much closer to us and easier to relate to. In fact, it IS us.

### **Awareness and Consciousness**

More often than not, Consciousness is used to describe Awareness. This can be misleading and usually a source of misunderstanding and confusion. Medical professionals, psychiatrists and philosophers have their own definition and understanding of consciousness and this is an additional source of confusion. From the point of view of Vedanta, there is a clear distinction between Awareness and Consciousness, but unfortunately most sources do not explain this properly and this creates confusion and ambiguity.

The essential nature of the Self is not Consciousness but it is Awareness. We have shown at length that Awareness is SatChitAnanda and that is the only correct way to understand Awareness. However when the mind comes into contact with Awareness that mind becomes Conscious. When any Form comes into contact with Awareness that object becomes Conscious. Consciousness is not independent but it is dependent upon Awareness.

Here is an appropriate quote from Nisargadatta Maharaj, an Indian sage who explains the difference between Awareness and Consciousness brilliantly.

*"Awareness is primordial; it is the original state, beginningless, endless, uncaused, and unsupported, without parts, without change. Consciousness is on contact, a reflection against a surface, a state of duality. There can be no consciousness without awareness, but there can be awareness without consciousness, as in deep sleep. Awareness is absolute, consciousness is relative to its content; consciousness is always of something. Consciousness is partial and changeful; awareness is total, changeless, calm and silent. And it is the common matrix of every experience." (from "I Am That", chapter 11)*

### **Awareness and Maya Shakti**

Vedanta teaches us that Maya Shakti is the creative power, and this creative power is available within Awareness. From our earlier discussion we saw Awareness has the following 3 powers:

1. Power of Knowing/Intelligence
2. Power of Knower
3. Power of Known/Objects

Maya Shakti is sum total of these 3 powers.

Maya Shakti = Power of Knowing + Power of Knower + Power of Known

This unlimited and amazing power is called Maya Shakti and it is resident within Awareness. Since Self is Awareness, Maya Shakti is resident within Self. Since you are Self, I am Self, we all have the Maya Shakti within us. Self-Awareness is full and complete. Vedanta teaches us that Self-Awareness does not do anything. Maya Shakti is within Self-Awareness, but it is dormant, and all the powers are un-manifested and are in 'potential form' only.

In the coming sections we will discuss, how with the creation of the Mind, this Maya Shakti is unleashed and it manifests to create this intelligent and living universe.

## **Evolution of the Mind**

Self-Awareness is full, complete, self-contained and it is the underlying nature of Self. If Self-Awareness is our reality, why don't we know it, why don't we feel it? The simple answer is that we are Ignorant, we are not aware of our true nature. This ignorance has a tremendous impact on our true nature of Self-Awareness. In the previous section we said that the Self is the Subject, Object and intelligence. Thus it is homogenous, self-sufficient and non-dual. It has all the knowledge and intelligence.

With ignorance, we no longer know we are both the subject and object, we do not know that both subject and object are one and non-dual. If we do not know that we are both the Subject and Object, it means that the subject and object are no longer a single entity, but they are a separate and independent entities.

This separation of Subject and Object as independent entities is the basis of the Mind. There is a duality of having a separate subject and object in the Mind. The Mind is created due to the ignorance of our true nature of being Self-Aware. Even Maya Shakti which was dormant in Self-Awareness now becomes active in the Mind. The power of Maya Shakti is available within the Mind.

With Ignorance, the Self is no longer the Self, it forgets it is full, complete and is SatChitAnanda. The Self is replaced with a self (small s) and this the ego we feel and have.

Mind = Awareness + Ignorance

Mind = Subject + Object + Intelligence + Ignorance

self (ego) = Self + Ignorance

This ignorance is the underlying force which creates the mind with duality from non-dual Self and it also creates the ordinary ego. It is difficult to comprehend but Ignorance has the force to create this separation between subject and object. The unity between subject and object is lost. The mind has duality, therefore has a feeling of subject as being 'in-here' and the object being 'out-there'. This is the experience for most of us.

It must be clearly understood that Self-Awareness does NOT undergo any change. It is SatChitAnanda, it is unchanging, full and complete. Self-Awareness is pure and it has NO ignorance. Ignorance gives an impression that it changing non-dual Self-Awareness to a mind with duality and changing the Self into self (ego). In reality Self or Self-Awareness does not change at all, it only gives an 'impression', 'as though' it has changed. How do we understand this 'as though' change? Vedanta gives the following two examples

**Example 1 – Rope/Snake:** In the evening twilight, we are walking on the road, and we confuse a rope for a snake. We see the snake and think it is real. When we shine a torch on it we realize it is a rope. Only because of ignorance we mistake the rope for the snake. The rope has never undergone any change, it has always been a rope. In presence of ignorance, it is 'as though' the rope has become a snake.

**Example 2 – Red Water:** Put a clear glass pitcher of water in front of a red wall. What will we see? We will see red water. Is the water really red? No, water is never red, it always colorless. In the presence of the red wall, the water appears 'as though' it is red.

In the same way, in the presence of Ignorance non-dual Self Awareness 'appears' as Mind with duality. In reality, Self-Awareness does not undergo any change, it is only an 'as though' change and this is because of Ignorance. If there was no Ignorance, Self will never experience the Mind, Self will only experience Self-Awareness.

## Understanding Ignorance

Ignorance is very powerful. It has the capacity of creating the mind with duality. It has the ability to 'as though' separate the Subject and Object from non-dual Self Awareness. It must be understood that there is no separate entity such as Ignorance. Awareness is full of knowledge. Ignorance in that respect is the lack of knowledge. The lack of knowledge is the cause of Ignorance and this Ignorance is cause for the Mind. The technical term used in Sanskrit for Ignorance is Avidya, which is the opposite of Vidya (Knowledge)

**Ignorance is Beginningless:** There is no start time for Ignorance. Ignorance is beginningless, it has always been there. There cannot be a beginning for Ignorance, for this will imply that before the beginning, there was no ignorance and if there was no ignorance it would mean there was only knowledge prior to that. This is not possible, because once you have knowledge, you cannot have ignorance after that. Once you have knowledge of  $2 + 2 = 4$ , you cannot have ignorance of this fact. Ignorance does not exist once you have knowledge, but it does exist before you have the knowledge. Since we still do not have the knowledge that we are Self-Aware, therefore we always have been Ignorant. This only implies that Ignorance is beginningless and it has been always been there. However, Ignorance does have an ending. Once you gain knowledge, then the ignorance is gone. This applies to any type of knowledge. So Ignorance is beginningless but it does have an end time.

**Degrees of Ignorance:** We now understand that Ignorance is the underlying cause of the Mind. A single non-dual Self Awareness becomes a Mind with duality in the presence of Ignorance. There is one Self with Self-Awareness, but there are countless minds and each mind has a subject and object. How can one explain this phenomenon of countless minds? The only way to answer this is that Ignorance is not the same for everyone. Everyone has a unique profile of ignorance, a unique mix of ignorance and this creates a unique Mind. Let us take an example about the Ignorance of 'Self-Awareness'. There is full spectrum of minds, minds with 100% Ignorance to enlightened minds who have 100% knowledge or 0% Ignorance. This spectrum can be broken down into countless parts and each part will have a different amount of Ignorance. In this complicated profile, if you can imagine there are a countless number of 'pixels of ignorance'. Each 'pixel of ignorance' has its own unique mix of ignorance. When each 'pixel of Ignorance' comes in the presence of non-dual Self-Awareness, it creates a separate mind with duality.

Since there are countless pixels of ignorance, a countless number of minds are created and each mind will its own ego or 'I-ness' or identity. Your mind is one of them, my mind is also one, and so is the mind of each living being. Each mind creates its own universe.

Once again Self-Awareness does not change at all, it is unchanging, and it is full and complete. But due to Ignorance, it is 'as though' all the multiple minds with duality are created. This is the awesome power of Self-Awareness.

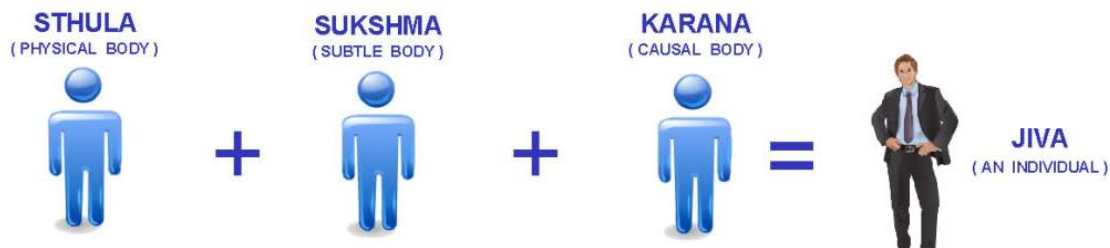
A brilliant verse from Brhadaranyaka Upanishad sums up this Power of Self-Awareness

*“Om, That Self-Awareness is infinite, and this universe is infinite. The infinite proceeds from infinite. Then taking the infinitude of the infinite universe, it remains as the infinite Self-Awareness alone.”*

**Ignorance is Dynamic:** Each ‘pixel of ignorance’ is not static, it is dynamic, it is conscious as it is in the presence of Awareness and each pixel creates an independent ego with a mind. The profile of Ignorance keeps changing. If today, you learn how to play tennis, you now have knowledge of playing tennis, so your ignorance for tennis is gone. This will affect your ignorance profile. If you study Vedanta and you get an understanding about Self-Awareness, your ignorance profile will undergo change in a positive direction. Tomorrow you do something foolish and stupid, forgetting you are Self-Aware, and your ignorance profile will move in a negative direction. Your day to day activity affects your ignorance profile.

**Ignorance and Causal Body:** According to Vedanta the human body, or for that matter any living being is made of the following bodies

1. Causal Body or Karana Sharira
2. Subtle Body or Sukshma Sharira
3. Physical/Gross Body or Sthula Sharira



The causal body is also called the seed body because it is very similar to a seed from which a tree with branches, leaves and fruits grows. A seed already has the ‘potential form’ of the tree in it. You could say that the tree in an unmanifest form is present in the seed. From a mango seed only a mango tree will grow and not an apple tree. In the same way, the causal body contains the human being in its ‘potential form’.

It must be understood that Causal body is made up of Ignorance. This Ignorance is our inner most self. Ignorance is the driving force of the Causal body. We have already seen that this Ignorance/Causal body creates the Mind and this Mind is nothing but the Subtle body. We shall discuss this Subtle body/Mind in more detail in the coming sections. The Mind/Subtle body with the power of Maya Shakti then creates the Physical/Gross Body and also all the external objects in the universe.

Ignorance is the root cause of everything. It is that powerful. Each living being have their own 'Pixel of Ignorance' creating their own independent mind and then their own independent universe. As mentioned, Ignorance gets all its power because it is in the presence of Self-Awareness.

The Ignorance in the causal body also has the following elements

- All its tendencies – character traits (called vasanas) gathered over previous lives.
- Desire to feel complete and full and achieve Self-Awareness
- The blueprint of one's life including all the karmas that one will exhaust in this life.

Under the right conditions, this causal body or seed body germinates and grows to play out the blueprint that is contained within it, using the subtle body and the gross body. When you provide the right amount of water and fertilizer to a seed, the un-manifested tree in the seed manifests into shoots, which then grows into a tree. In the same way, the causal body manifests to grow into a living being. The driving force is the Desire to feel full and complete with never ending happiness and peace, as in SatChitAnanda. This Desire is covered up with vasanas and karmas to provide a unique driving force for every individual mind.

## Structure of Mind

We have seen that Ignorance creates Mind. The Causal body creates the Subtle Body. Ignorance is the Causal body and the Mind is the Subtle body.

Earlier, we saw that Self Awareness is One, it is part less, unchanging and homogenous, but for better understanding we can think of Self Awareness to have the following components

- Self = Self + Awareness
- Self = Self + Subject + Object + Intelligence.

Due to ignorance, these '4 parts' in Self Awareness separate out to become independent functions in the Mind. The Subject becomes the Sakshi (witness) in the mind, the Intelligence becomes the Buddhi, the power of the objects becomes the Manas and the Self becomes the Ego. As discussed earlier, these changes are 'as though' changes. If there was no Ignorance, these parts would be One in Self-Awareness.

1. Sakshi – The Home of the Subject
2. Manas - The Home of the Object
3. Buddhi - The Home of the Intelligence
4. Ahamkara - The Home of the Ego (self)



## 5. Chitta - The Home of the Memory

The Mind is the core of the Subtle body. All the activity in the Mind is in the form of mental waveforms, which are called 'Vrittis'. The Buddhi, Manas and even the Ahamkara are nothing but Vrittis. They are just mental waveforms.

Let us try and understand this structure of the mind.

### **Sakshi – The Home of the Subject**

Sakshi means witness. The Power of the Knower, which is within Awareness, now resides in the mind as the Subject or Sakshi. This Sakshi witnesses everything which goes on in the mind. It is the seer, hearer, feeler, taster and the witness of all other activities in the mind. If there is any activity in the mind, the Sakshi is the one who witnesses it. It is important not to confuse the Ego with the Sakshi. The Sakshi has no ego, it's only function is to witness what is going on the mind. There are no desires, no 'I-ness' or feeling within the Sakshi.

If you are seeing a tree outside, it is the Sakshi within your mind which has the ability to perceive this tree. It has the Power of the Knower, which is available within your mind, which allows you to perceive the tree. This power is like a 'gift' which has been given to the mind by Awareness or SatChitAnanda. If this Power of Knower was unavailable, you will not be able perceive anything.

### **Manas – The Home of the Object**

Manas is the home of the Object. Ignorance creates duality by the separation of the Subject and Object. The Subject part is housed in the Sakshi, while the Object part is housed in the Manas. The Power of the Known (Objects) is also an integral part of the Manas. It has the ability to create the Objects which we can perceive.

The object which is housed in the Manas is the Body, your body, my body or the body or form of any living being. The Manas, representing the object part of the subtle body can be divided into the following abilities and powers:

- Sense Organs – Input organs connecting to the external Sense Objects
  - Eyes
  - Ears
  - Nose

- Tongue Skin
- Organs of Action – Output Organs
  - Hands
  - Feet
  - Talking
  - Reproduction
  - Evacuation
- Antahkarana – Internal Organs: These are organs which operate at the sub-conscious level. Organs like, heart, liver, stomach, muscles etc. There is no direct control over these organs but they function at the sub-conscious level.

2. We are aware of the Sense Organs and Organs of Action at the gross or physical level, but it must be understood that every gross body or organ must have a subtle body or organ. If there is physical eye, then there is a subtle eye also. This subtle eye operates within the Manas. In the same way if you have physical hands, then you also have subtle hands. Also all the internal organs like heart, muscles, liver, all of them have a subtle version. When you combine all the organs mentioned above you get the subtle part of the body. These organs are interconnected, and how this done is through the amazing power of Awareness.

Body = Sense Organs + Organs of Action + Internal Organs

2. The sense organs in the Manas interact with the objects available in the outside world in the subtle form. The subtle eyes interact with the visual world outside. It receives the subtle version of what is happening out there on a continuous basis. In the same way the subtle version of the ear, nose, tongue, skin is in constant interaction with the subtle world of sound, smell, taste and touch. As mentioned earlier, the subtle world operates in the wave form. In Vedanta these wave forms are called 'Vrittis'. As the world keeps changing, the vrittis in the sense organs keep changing.

3. These vrittis are filled with the Power of Awareness and become the physical or gross objects these vrittis represent. Maya Shakti collapses these mental waveforms or Vrittis to create the gross version of the subtle objects in the sense organs. The objects thus created are made up of nothing but Awareness. If there was no Awareness in the object, the Sakshi or the Subject would never perceive the object.

4. Each of these organs are smart, intelligent, conscious and independent power centers. The Manas is filled with the power of Awareness and therefore each of these organs within Manas is conscious and intelligent. Each of them has a function to perform, the eyes to see, legs to walk and stand, the heart to pump blood and so on. Each of these organs are a power center, they have their own likes and dislikes. For example, the taste buds in the tongue like a sweet

taste, and when there are chocolates or ice cream available, they can push the ego to order the feet to walk to the fridge, and eat chocolates or ice-cream to satisfy the craving. This type of power is present in all the sense organs. Logically, the ego must control the sense organs and direct their activity. However, if we are not vigilant, these sense organs can overpower the ego and take control of our day to day activity.

## **Buddhi – The Home of the Intelligence**

Buddhi means intelligence. The Power of Knowing which is part of Awareness resides within Buddhi. It provides the intelligence to the mind. It decodes and understands the objects vrittis which are present within the Manas.

If you looking at the tree outside, the tree vritti is present within the Manas. This tree vritti moves into the Buddhi, the Buddhi decodes this vritti and knows this vritti is a tree vritti and send this information to the Sakshi to view the tree. A good way to understand this is that the Buddhi is like the CPU (Central Processing Unit) in a computer. It processes the information coming from the Manas and sends the output to the Sakshi to witness. The Buddhi is the core of the mind and provides the intelligence to the mind.

The Power of Buddhi is limited by Ignorance. If this Ignorance can be removed, then the Buddhi can have all the Powers of Knowing. It can have unlimited intelligence. The million-dollar question is how do we remove this Ignorance? Understanding and assimilating the knowledge of Vedanta will go a long way to achieve the ultimate goal of removing Ignorance.

Buddhi is not a static entity, it is dynamic and self-learning. As Ignorance is removed, the power of the Buddhi is enhanced and as the Ignorance is enhanced, the power of the Buddhi is reduced. If you have the basic talent and you keep practicing playing a musical instrument, say, a guitar, your Ignorance of playing this instrument is reduced, and the power of Buddhi is enhanced. The more you practice, the more enhanced will be your skill level, and the more enhanced will be your Buddhi.

We have seen earlier that the Ignorance profile for each individual is unique and different. Some people's Buddhi is more refined and pure, while other people may have a Buddhi which is less refined. Some of the common characteristics of the Buddhi are as follows

- Decoding and understanding the Vrittis
- Decision Making
- Discrimination

In Part 2, we will discuss some of the Powers of Buddhi which are available within the mind

## **Ahamkara – The Home of the Ego**

Aham means 'I' and kara means 'maker', so Ahamkara means 'I Maker'. This is what we usually refer to as Ego. The Self in Self-Awareness, in the presence of Ignorance becomes the Ahamkara or Ego in the individual mind. We have discussed earlier that Self is SatChitSananda; it is full and complete and does not undergo any change. In the presence of Ignorance, the Self 'as though' changes to become the Ego. The Ego is not the Self, but is a mental wave form or vritti and behaves as if it is the Self. Ego adds the 'I-ness' and 'My-ness' to the mind. Ego is part of the mind and anything in the mind is part of the subtle body.

In Self-Awareness, the Self is both the Subject and Object. In the same way, the Ego thinks it is both the Sakshi (the home of the Subject) and the Manas (Home of the Object). Ego attaches and identifies itself with the Sakshi and Manas.

**Ego and Sakshi:** The Power of Knower and the Subject (Sakshi) and not of the Ego, but the Ego thinks it is the operator and owner of this power.

- I am the thinker
- I am the decider
- I am the seer
- I am the dreamer
- I am the reader
- I am the worker

This list can go on. We have seen earlier the thinker, decider, seer and other such functions are the power of the knower (Sakshi/Subject), but the Ego adds the 'I am' to each of the situations and takes over that role. It literally hi-jacks all the functions of the Sakshi.

**Ego and Manas:** The Power of the Object/Known is within the Manas. We saw earlier that the Manas is the subtle version of the physical body and it has the following organs

- Five Sense Organs
- Five Organs of Actions
- Internal Organs

The Ego has complete identification with the body, it thinks 'I am the body'. It thinks all these organs are part of the body and it adds 'my-ness' to these organs

- My ear
- My liver
- My eyes
- My skin

The Ego is fully attached to all these organs. If your eyes hurt, the Ego feels pain. Ego does not realize that it possesses these organs and it is not these organs. This misunderstanding is the source of all suffering.

**Ego and Sense Objects:** We have seen earlier that external sense objects operate within the sense organs. The visual world operates within the subtle eye in the mind, the auditory world within the ear and so it is with all other sense organs. Ego attaches itself and adds a 'My-ness' to all of the sense objects. Some examples:

- My car
- My friends
- My house
- My son
- My favorite food

This list can go on. Ego is attached to these sense objects by adding 'My-ness' to them. These sense objects are just objects and are independent of the ego. But ego thinks they belong to it and a sense of attachment. If anything happens to these objects, the Ego is affected. If the car breaks-down the ego gets affected. If someone else's car breaks-down, the ego is not affected.

**Ego and Role Playing:** To understand this, let us see a typical day of Ahamkara or Ego.

- I get up in the morning and go for a walk. I am a Walker
- I do some meditation. I am a mediator.
- I have my breakfast. I am an Eater
- I get into my car and go to the office. I am a Driver
- I manage my staff in the office. I am a Boss
- I have a meeting with my boss. I am a Subordinate
- I am thinking how to improve sales. I am a Thinker
- I return home. I am a Husband
- I play with the kids. I am a Father
- I talk to my parents. I am a Son
- I watch some TV. I am a Watcher
- I go to sleep. I am a Sleeper
- I have a dream. I am a Dreamer

- I see something. I am a Seer
- I taste food. I am a Taster
- I smell food. I am a Smeller
- I listen to sounds. I am a Listener

Can you imagine how many different roles we play every day? Fortunately we are not suffering from schizophrenia; otherwise we would have to deal with so many different personalities. If you notice 'I am' or the Ego is common factor for all the roles we play, there is only one 'I am'. This 'I am' or Ahamkara is like your resume, it will describe who you are and also list all the possible roles you play. As we assume new ones, they are added to the list. When you start playing a role, Ahamkara undergoes change and it plays that role. When the situation changes, the 'I am' will change and play the role for the new situation. This Ego is very versatile and adaptable.

**Conclusion:** Ego has completely forgotten it is the Self in Self Awareness. Instead, Ego attaches itself to the Sakshi and Manas with 'I-ness'. Instead of feeling full and complete, the Ego is looking for happiness in the external world.

### **Chitta (Home of the Memory)**

The literal meaning of Chitta is "Mind Stuff". In Vedanta the Subconscious Mind is termed as Chitta. Much of the subconscious mind consists of submerged experiences which are stored in the Chitta. The Chitta is like a calm mind lake with vrittis or thought waves on the surface and stored experiences below the surface.

We have seen earlier that experience is nothing but Awareness and this Awareness must have Subject and Object. So whenever the Sakshi (Home of Subject) comes in contact with Manas (Home of Objects) an experience or thought wave is created on the surface of the Chitta. The technical word for this experience in Vedanta is Samskara or impression. When this thought wave, experience or samskara completes its presence on the surface, it sinks below the surface into the Chitta and creates an impression of that experience. A specific experience creates a specific impression. This impression is stored in the Chitta. No experiences are lost in Chitta. Even the smallest experiences are available in the subconscious mind as impressions in the Chitta.

When you perceive an orange and taste it for the first time, you get an experience of the orange. You know the taste and you know the object orange. The Samskara of this knowledge is stored in the Chitta. Next time when you think of an orange this knowledge will instantly move from the subconscious mind to the surface of your mind to complete the experience.

When an impression or experience is triggered by an external event or some internal event, the impression bubbles up to the surface as a vritti or thought wave and this thought wave is termed as memory. Impressions are stored in the Chitta and when they come up to the surface it is called a memory.

The profile of the experiences stored in the Chitta can create tendencies or personality traits. If you have a whole bunch of positive experiences, your personality traits would be different from a person who has had only negative tendencies. These tendencies are also interconnected with the Causal body. As the experience profile keeps changing the casual body also gets updated. So when you are born again your personality traits and tendencies are carried over in the Causal body.

## **Conclusion**

In the Part 1 of this article we have understood that the underlying reality of everything is Awareness and is present in every experience. The Self, which is our reality, is this Awareness. The Self is Self-Aware. Unfortunately, we are ignorant of this fact. This Ignorance is powerful, - in the presence of Awareness it 'as though' become the Mind. The non-dual Self Awareness becomes the Mind with duality. Sakshi, Buddhi, Manas, Ahamkara and Chitta are different parts of the Mind.

In Part 1 we now have a comprehensive understanding of the Mind, in Part 2, we will cover the functionality of the Mind and also how to control the Mind to achieve permanent peace and happiness.