

Understanding the Mind – Part 2

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Understanding the Mind – Part 2

In Part 1 of Understanding of Mind, we covered the following areas:

- Source of the Mind
- Creation of the Mind
- Structure of the Mind

To give a quick synopsis of Part 1: We saw that Awareness is the underlying reality of any experience you have. Without Awareness, it is impossible to have any experience. The experience could be through our eyes (visual), ears (sound), nose (smell), tongue (taste) or skin (touch). You would not be able to see a tree or listen to music without Awareness. Awareness is the underlying reality of experience

Experience = Awareness + Form (tree, music etc.)

We gave a detailed analysis of Awareness and concluded that Awareness is made up of the following:

Awareness = Subject + Object + Intelligence

Power of Awareness = Power of Knowing + Power of Knowing + Power of Known

In any experience which you are aware of, all the above components must be present. Even if one of them is missing, you cannot have Awareness, and if you do not have awareness, you cannot have any experience. So all 3 items must be present in any experience.

Awareness is the substratum of anything and everything in this universe you experience every day. The next question to ask is – Who Am I? and what relationship does this ‘I’ have with Awareness. We discussed that our underlying truth is that we are ‘Self Aware’. We saw that we could understand ‘Self Awareness’ in the following two ways

1. Self-Aware means that Self is Awareness and Awareness is Self. There is no separation between ‘I’ or ‘Self’ and Awareness. They are one and the same.
2. Self-Awareness means that the ‘Self is Aware of the Self’ or ‘I is Aware of the I’. In this type of statement, it would mean that the Self is both the Subject and Self is also the Object.
 - Self-Awareness = Self + Awareness
 - Self-Awareness = Self + Subject + Object
 - Self = Subject = Object
 - Self-Awareness = Self or ‘I’ = SatChitAnanda

Self-Awareness or SatChitAnanda is both the Subject and Object, it is therefore full, complete and non-dual. It does not need anything else, it is a 'stand-alone', it is self-shining and it is complete with all the Powers of Awareness (Power of Knowing + Power of Knowing + Power of Known).

If this is the case, why don't we feel it or know it? We saw that Ignorance hides our true nature from us. We forget that we are Self Aware and that we are full, complete and non-dual. This Ignorance is very powerful and it is this Ignorance which, 'as though', splits Self Awareness (Self + Subject + Object + Intelligence) into 4 different components to create the Mind

- Buddhi – The home of the Intelligence
- Manas – The home of the objects
- Sakshi (Witness) – The home of the Subject
- Ahamkara (Ego) – The home of the Self or 'I'

All the above concepts and ideas were discussed in great detail in Part 1. In Part 2, we are going to take this subject of Understanding the Mind forward and will cover the following areas:

- Functioning of the Mind
- States of the Mind
- Gunas (Qualities) of the Mind
- Control of the Mind

Functioning of the Mind

We have seen that Awareness is a mix of subject, object and intelligence. Self-Awareness, has the Self and the 3 parts of Awareness.

In the mind because of Ignorance these 4 components are sitting in different departments. The Intelligence is sitting in the Buddhi, the Objects part is sitting in the Manas, the Subject part is sitting in the Sakshi and the Self or 'I-ness' is sitting in the Ahamkara. These four parts are separated, but there is a natural tendency for these 4 parts to combine to create Self-Awareness. There is a mutual attraction to come together so that they can achieve it original status of being Self-Awareness. When the subject, object and intelligence are separated out, the self feels incomplete, it feels inadequate and it wants to feel full and complete. The only way self can feel the completeness when the subject, object and intelligence combine into one entity.

In the mind this can happen only when the subject (in sakshi), objects (in manas) and the intelligence (in buddhi) combine to create Awareness. Only when these 3 parts combine, Awareness is generated. The Ahamkara then links with this Awareness to complete the feeling of Self-Awareness, which is the original state of fullness and non-duality which we have discussed earlier. When this is achieved the feeling of completeness and fullness (Ananda) is there but the problem is that it does not last very long. It is momentary. It lasts as long as one thought last. When the second thought pops up, the full process has to be repeated. We know we have countless thoughts every day, the same cycle is repeated with every thought. We have a momentary bliss after every thought when there is unity between buddhi, manas, sakshi and ahamkara. This bliss or Ananda will break up when the second thought pops up. This is a never ending cycle.

It would be nice if a single thought could continue endlessly, this would be like magic potion for never ending bliss and Ananda. We know this is impossible. Great yogi's can achieve Samadhi (deep meditation) for extended periods when they can control their minds to focus on a single thought, this way they can achieve Ananda for an extended period. However, this Samadhi must come to an end and daily life resumes, our unending stream of thoughts return with full force and with limited and momentary moments of bliss.

The problem is that the stream of thoughts must continue in the mind because of the mutual attraction between buddhi, manas and sakshi. It may not be easy to control these thoughts but it is possible to manage our relationship with these thoughts. We would be discussing this in more detail in a later section of this article. At this stage it is enough to understand how a thought or experience actually takes place in the mind.

The Mind is complex and understanding how an experience or thought occurs in the mind is not easy. One thing, however, is clear - that the Buddhi, Manas, Sakshi and Ahamkara must combine to create an experience or thought. We will now undertake a step by step analysis on a how a typical experience is created in the mind

- Step 1: Activity in the Manas
- Step 2: Buddhi Knows
- Step 3: Ahamkara Interferes
- Step 4: Sakshi Witnesses

Step 1: Activity in the Manas

Manas is the home of the Objects and it has the Power of Known (Objects). We have seen in Part 1, this power is a very powerful part of the Power of Awareness, which has the ability of creating any object you want to experience. This power has unlimited capacity, but

unfortunately it is limited by the human mind. The human mind is limited what it can experience by the 5 sense organs - eyes, ears, tongue, nose and skin.

Even within these sense areas, the human mind has limitations. For example, the human ear can hear sounds up to only 20Khz of frequency. This is limited. We know other animals can manage a much wider spectrum. Our eyes can only see the 'light part' of the electromagnetic (EM) spectrum. There are species who handle other parts of the EM spectrum. In other words, there is a much bigger universe than what we can experience with our 5 senses.

We are all aware of the gross or physical sense organs. It must be pointed out that these sense organs are present in the physical world, but the manas, which is part of the mind is subtle. Can you see the mind? – No, because it is *subtle*. Every physical object must also have a subtle object. Even quantum physics agrees with this. The particle and wave duality in quantum physics is the same as the gross (particle) and subtle (wave) body explained here. Please read the article 'Quantum Physics and Vedanta' for a more detailed explanation.

If there are gross or physical sense organs, then there must also be subtle sense organs. These subtle sense organs are present in the Manas. As Vedanta teaches us that everything in this universe including our bodies and sense organs has 3 types of bodies

1. Karana Sharira – Causal Body (or Seed Body)
2. Suksma Sharira – Subtle Body
3. Sthula Sharira – Gross Body (or Physical Body)

The causal body creates the subtle body. The subtle body creates the gross body.

The Manas representing 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.

The sense organs are our connection to the external world. The external world of vision, sound, smell, taste and touch makes its presence known in the manas and each sense object is being connected to its respective sense organs. If you want see a tree, the subtle version of the tree will be present in the subtle version of the eye (in the manas). If you want to listen to music, the subtle version of the music will be present in the subtle version of the ear (in the manas). Whatever we experience in the external world is first present in the manas in its subtle form.

There is no denying that there is a lot of activity taking place in the Manas. All the sense organs, and the internal organs are continuously sending information into the Manas. It is indeed crowded with the different types of information. This information is in some type of wave form. Every object in the sense organs has a wave form representation. All these signals can become physical objects with the Power of Known which is available in the Manas. The problem is that the Manas does not know or understand what these input wave forms represent. This is because these wave forms are covered by Ignorance, in fact a better way to put it is that the building blocks of these object wave forms is Ignorance. Every wave form entering the sense organs in the manas is built in Ignorance. It may sound strange, but it is true that Ignorance is source of the entire subtle universe. In Part 1 of this article we have discussed that the Power of Ignorance creates the subtle universe. It is similar to the famous Vedanta example of creating the snake on the rope. This snake is the creation of Ignorance; in the same way the universe is creation of Ignorance.

If Manas had the knowledge what these input waveforms represented, it could then create the required objects. At this stage the Manas does not know or understand any of the input signals. Manas has the power to create the objects, but it does not have the power to remove the ignorance from these input signals which are present in the sense and internal organs.

The Manas needs help in the removal of Ignorance.

Step 2: Buddhi Knows

The Buddhi is the intelligent part of the mind and it has the Power of Knowing. In Part 1, we saw the awesome power of knowing, which is part of Awareness. It has the ability to know anything and everything in this this universe and beyond. It has that decoding power. The Power of Knowing is within Buddhi. If any object wave form comes in the presence of the Buddhi, the Buddhi would know what that object wave form represented.

The Buddhi is like the Central Processing Unit (CPU) of the human being. The input signal comes to the CPU to be processed. In the same way, the input signal from the Manas comes to the Buddhi to be processed. We saw that the input wave forms coming from the Manas are covered by ignorance, the Buddhi peels out this ignorance and reveals its actual identity. The object wave form with ignorance transforms into an object wave form with knowledge. This wave form with knowledge is a mental wave form and in Vedanta it is called a Vritti.

We can say that Buddhi is the most powerful CPU with parallel processing capability. It can handle so many different input stimuli from the five sense organs and also from the internal organs simultaneously. It removes the ignorance for each and every waveform which is present in the Manas.

It awaits further action from Ahamkara (ego) on some of the object vrittis (not all) which have come from the 5 sense organs. In many of the routine vrittis from sense organs and all the vrittis from the internal organs, the buddhi knows what action to take. Over time, it has learned what action is to be taken, so it can undertake these actions automatically. These actions can also be described as sub-conscious, the actions which you are not aware of but which continue to happen almost automatically.

Buddhi is a self-learning CPU, which learns and knows how to handle different actions. Like the CPU it is connected to output devices, the Buddhi is also connected to output devices like the five organs of action - hand, feet, talking etc. and also all the internal organs.

Since Buddhi has many different powers and capabilities, let us discuss some of the key powers:

Power of Cognition or Sensation: This is power of knowing what is available in the sense organs. This is the power which we have described earlier of changing the object wave form of ignorance to the object wave form of knowledge.

Power of Imagination: Day dreaming or creative/positive thinking are good examples. We are involved in this on a regular basis, where we can construct an imaginary vision for ourselves. This power is present in the buddhi.

Power of Logic: Power of comparing and contrasting, drawing inferences, discussion, etc. So we can say that the power of logic is within buddhi. If you see smoke on the hill, you conclude there is fire. A wide range of logic 'circuitry' is available in the buddhi, which we use on a daily basis.

Power of Will: This is the power to execute desires, wishes and ideals and is available within the Buddhi and the Ahamkara. It is originally within Ahamkara, but the Buddhi also learns this skill over time.

Power of Memory: This is where all the things learned and experienced are stored. This storage is also 'Citta'. Next time a similar vritti is presented, Memory knows what the vritti represents.

Step 3: Ahamkara Interferes

After the Buddhi processes the object wave form of ignorance from the Manas to a known mental wave form (called Vritti), this object vritti is now presented to the Ahamkara.

Ahamkara means 'I-Maker', it is the sense of 'I-ness' within you. It is not the Self in Self-Awareness, but it is a vritti and thinks it is the 'self'. It masquerades as the Self and Ahamkara is just a mental a wave form, 'I' or 'self'. If Ahamkara was the Self, it would never feel incomplete, inadequate and get only momentary doses of bliss and happiness – it would always feel complete and have continuous Ananda.

The vrittis, from the 5 senses and also the citta, the memory bank of past events, is presented to the Ahamkara. You have object vrittis coming in from your senses. The Ahamkara now has to interact with these vrittis. We saw the Buddhi could handle parallel processing by handling multiple inputs at the same time. The interaction between Ahamkara and these wide range of object vrittis happens only one at a time. You can only have one experience at a time. The Ahamkara interacts only with one vritti at a time and it gives 'my-ness' to the vritti .

How does Ahamkara choose between the different vrittis which are available. There are two ways this can happen

1. Ahamkara chooses a Vritti
2. A Vritti chooses Ahamkara

1. Ahamkara Chooses a Vritti: This is a willful action, where ahamkara deliberately chooses one of the object vrittis for further action. It is a noisy street, but you stop to admire a beautiful flower. Your ahamkara did not focus on all the noise, but deliberately chose the flower vritti to admire. This is a complicated process and many factors can make Ahamkara choose one of the vrittis available.

There are many instances, where Ahamkara does not choose any of the available vrittis but instructs the Buddhi to locate another particular vritti which will meet its current requirements and desires. For example, you have a desire to eat ice-cream but there is no ice cream in the house. The buddhi then instructs the manas to go to the car and drive to an ice cream shop to satisfy this desire.

2. A Vritti Chooses Ahamkara: It must be understood that each of the vrittis are conscious and have a life of their own. We have seen that most of these object vrittis are provided by the sense organs. These sense organs have their own likes and dislikes. Eyes want to see beautiful things, the tongue to taste delicious food, and so on. We all have had experiences where our sense organs have 'hijacked' the Ahamkara and 'as though' forced it to take a particular action against its will. The doctor has told us that any more sweets can be harmful to our health. We are fully aware of this, but still when we see a delicious sweet our hands reach out against our will and we put it in our mouths. In such instances the vritti dominates and manipulates ahamkara to undertake an action.

Vritti Modification: It is very important to understand that whenever Ahamkara interacts with an Object Vritti, it will modify the object vritti according to its likes and dislikes. In Vedanta this is called Raga and Dvesha. We have seen earlier that Ahamkara is also a mental waveform and when it interacts or superimposes with the object vritti the resultant vritti is a vritti modified by Raga and Dvesha. If you like something you will modify the vritti differently than when you dislike something.

The bottom line is that the Ahamkara modifies the incoming vritti according to its own disposition. If Ahamkara is feeling angry, it will react to the vritti differently than it would if it is feeling happy and peaceful. Ahamkara or ego adds a personal touch to the interacting object vritti. In fact, it also adds the 'I-ness' to the vritti. Ahamkara can become attached or addicted to certain vrittis because they give it momentary happiness and it wants to repeat these moment of happiness.

Step 4: Sakshi Witnesses

This is the last step in the process. We have seen that for Self-Awareness you need the following 4 elements.

Self-Awareness = Object + Intelligence + Self + Subject

We have seen in this step by step process that the object waveform in the Manas combines with the Intelligence in the Buddhi and the modification of this object vritti by Ahamkara or ego. To have awareness, the only missing element is the power of knower (Subject). We have seen in Part 1, that the Subject or Sakshi provides this power of knower.

When the modified object vritti from Ahamkara combines with the Subject or Sakshi, you have something 'magical' - you have awareness of the experience. You have awareness of the experience because all the elements of awareness are now present. Till we reached step 4, the object viewed was as a waveform or vritti. When the last missing element of the subject came

in contact with the object vritti, the waveform collapses to create the experience of gross objects around you. The Sakshi or subject is the one which witnesses this experience.

The current experience of reading this article or any other experience, must have go through this step by step process to create Awareness of any Experience. We have seen earlier that

Experience = Awareness + Form

In any experience we have, there are lots of forms and objects, but it is not easy to notice the awareness within it. Awareness is essential, but we do not notice it. We notice the forms, but not the awareness. It is similar to clay pots. When we see a pot, we notice the pot only, we say what a beautiful pot it is, or this is a blue pot, or it is a tall pot.

Experience of Pot = Clay + Pot Shape

In a clay pot, is it possible to separate the pot shape from the clay? It is impossible. When you try to do that you will realize there is nothing but clay, the pot shape is just a concept or idea which has been superimposed on clay. In the same way, in our daily experience, it is impossible to separate the forms we see from awareness. There is only Awareness and Forms have just been superimposed on Awareness to create an experience. As we have seen in step 1, the source for these forms is ignorance.

This 4 step process is how the mind functions for all experiences. Let us discuss some examples to reinforce this concept.

Example 1 – Scientist at Work: A scientist is working hard to prove a hypothesis. His current level of knowledge is far from the ultimate goal. The object vrittis of the current level of knowledge pass through the manas and buddhi. The scientist's ahamkara interacts with this object vrittis and modifies the vrittis according to what the scientist thinks are the best way to solve the problem. When the subject or sakshi collapses this updated wave form, the scientist will find that he has gained more knowledge but the goal is not yet in sight. The scientist keeps repeating this cycle, till one day, the ahamkara modifies the object vritti to match the vritti for proving the hypothesis. When this object vritti collapses, the scientist has gained the knowledge to prove his hypothesis.

It is important to understand that there is a fully functional universe operating in waveform, in fact it is not wrong to say that the only operating universe is in a mental waveform or vritti. The gross universe is just a gross version of the vrittis or subtle universe. The gross version does not add anything new.

Every object, concept, idea in this universe has a pre-defined vritti. The ahamkara in every person keeps trying to modify the incoming object vritti, when the modified vritti matches any

of the pre-defined vritti, then when this wave collapses, the person gains knowledge for that object, concept or idea. This is how our minds work while gaining knowledge.

Example 2 – Sub-conscious Driving: When we are driving, many times our mind is engrossed in some thought, but when the traffic light changes to red, we automatically stop the car. We (at least I do) sometime wonder how this happens. The red light vritti from the manas is presented to the buddhi. Over the years of driving, the buddhi has learned that one stops at the red light. So even without the involvement of the ahamkara, the buddhi on its own instructs the output device (the legs) to stop the car. The buddhi is always self-learning and has the ability to manage the day to day activity at a sub-conscious level while the ego is not involved.

Example 3 – Ahamkara Interpretation: The Ahamkara or ego is constantly modifying the incoming object vrittis and the resultant vritti is not the same as the original vritti. The original intention is lost. This modification is done by Raga and Dvesha. Desires of the Ahamkara is usually the driving force for Raga and Dvesha. When this updated vritti collapses in the presence of the Sakshi or Subject, the resultant experience has two components – the original representation of the object plus addition of the raga and dvesha. This addition by the ego is what we call emotions. Human being have a wide range of emotions and this is always the resultant of when desire interacts with thought.

States of the Mind

All Experiences happen only in the mind. Following are the 3 states for having experiences

- Waking State Experiences
- Dream State Experiences
- Deep Sleep State Experiences

It is not possible to have any experience outside these 3 states. Let us discuss each one of them in little more detail.

Waking State Experiences:

In the waking state we experience the external world through the 5 sense organs. The 4 step process explained earlier is very much applicable in the waking state. The vrittis from the 5 sense organs pass through the manas to the buddhi. They are modified by the ahamkara and when combined with the sakshi, the vrittis collapse to give you all the experiences of your waking state. We have seen earlier that this experience is nothing but Awareness with forms superimposed on it.

Vedanta teaches us that this Experience is nothing but Awareness and is called Atma. Many people confuse Atma with the 'I'. The Atma is much more than just the 'I', Atma is the experience the 'I' is having. We have seen that the experience is made up Awareness and Awareness is made up of, subject, object and intelligence.

Atma = Experience = Self + Subject + Intelligence + Object

In the waking state the experience of objects is made up of the external world perceived through the 5 sense organs. In Vedanta, the waking state Atma is called Visva. Visva in Sanskrit means the World.

Waking State Atma = Visva

In the waking state all the 3 bodies are available to generate the experiences

- Causal Body
- Subtle Body
- Gross Body

Waking State = Atma (Visva) + Gross Body + Subtle Body + Causal Body

Dream State Experiences

Vedanta teaches us that **all** the experiences and impressions we have during the waking state are stored in the Chitta. As explained in Part 1, the Chitta is storage device of the mind.

In the dream state the 5 sense organs are no longer active because we don't experience the external world in the dream state. Vedanta says the sense organs are resolved in the causal body. The Manas with the power of known(objects), the Buddhi with the power of knowing, the Ahamkara, the Sakshi with the power of knower, however, are all available in the dream state. The same 4 step process is applicable in the dream state also

1. The manas, instead of getting the input waveforms from the 5 sense organs, gets them from the Chitta. The experiences we have during the waking state play out during the dream state.
2. These input waveforms move on to the Buddhi, so that the knowledge of the waveforms can be gained. Some of the logical circuitry of the buddhi are inactive in the dream state. We can infer this because the dreams we have can be quite illogical and unreasonable, they do not reflect the reality of the waking state.
3. Object vrittis from the Buddhi are presented to the Ahamkara which will modify them based on its likes and dislikes.

4. Finally, with the interaction of the vrittis with the Sakshi, the object vrittis collapse, so that we can experience a dream while sleeping.

The experiences in the dream state are quite different from the experiences in the waking state. There are no inputs from the sense organs. For this reason, the profile of the Atma in the waking state is different from the profile in the dreaming state. Vedanta teaches that the Atma in the dream state is called Taijasa. Taijasa in Sanskrit means light or illumination – the illumination of the dreams.

Dream state Atma = Taijasa

Dream State = Atma (Taijasa) + Subtle Body + Causal Body

The Gross Body is missing in the dream state; it is not available to the dreamer. The dreamer has no clue about the gross body.

Deep Sleep State Experiences

In deep sleep, dreams are also not available to the experiencer. In the deep sleep state, the 4 components of the mind – the manas, buddhi, ahamkara and sakshi are still available. Also the 4 steps still take place in deep sleep state.

Both the 5 sense organs and the bank of experiences stored in the chitta are inactive in deep sleep. They do not operate in deep sleep. We saw earlier that waveforms in the waking and dream state were covered or made up of ignorance. In deep sleep there are no waveforms as the 5 sense organs and chitta are inactive. What is left is only Ignorance. Only this ignorance is present in the manas in deep sleep

1. This ignorance moves into the buddhi. Buddhi knows this is ignorance.
2. This ignorance is presented to the ahamkara. The ahamkara normally adds raga (like) or devesha (dislike) to the object vritti. But in this instance it cannot do anything because it is dealing with ignorance. You have no likes or dislikes because this is ignorance, you have no clue what it is!
3. When Sakshi comes in contact with Ignorance, it collapses Ignorance to create an experience of ignorance.

Experience of ignorance means you do not experience anything and that is what really happens in deep sleep, you have no experiences other than ignorance. In the waking and dream sleep the experience or thoughts keep changing, and the bliss is momentary – it lasts for the duration of the experience. In deep sleep there are no changing thoughts, there is only one continuous experience of ignorance. This means that during sleep we have one continuous experience of bliss. When we wake up or return to the dream state, this continuous bliss is gone. Vedanta

teaches us that this bliss in deep sleep is similar to the bliss experienced by SatChitAnanda, except that in deep sleep we are ignorant of this fact, while SatChitAnanda is fully aware of this bliss. That is the only difference.

Deep Sleep Atma = Prajna

The Atma which experiences the ignorance in deep sleep is called Prajna. Deep sleep is a mass of ignorance. We have seen earlier that the object vrittis in the waking and dream state are made of ignorance. This would only mean that the waking and dream state are born out of this mass of ignorance. This ignorance has the power to create the object vrittis which is source of this external world. This is indeed profound and quite difficult to grasp, but our ignorance is really the source for of all the objects we see every day.

Deep Sleep State = Atma (Prajna) + Causal Body

In deep sleep state there is no subtle body nor the gross nor the physical body. Only the causal body, which is made up of ignorance exists. This causal body is the cause for the subtle and gross body.

Gunas (Qualities) of the Mind

Guna means qualities or characteristics of the mind. Vedanta teaches the mind has 3 types of gunas.

- Rajas Guna – Passion, Motion
- Tamas Guna – Inertia, Darkness
- Sattva Guna – Bliss, Goodness

The mind is a combination of these 3 gunas. Sometimes one of the gunas is dominating, while other times another guna will take over. Whenever we act one of the gunas is used to complete the action. It is not wrong to say that the gunas are the driving force for action.

If you review the 4 step process in the functioning of the mind, the guna comes into play when the Ahamkara interacts with the object vrittis. We saw the ahamkara either likes or dislikes the object vritti. This like and dislike by ahamkara (ego) will depend on the disposition of the ahamkara at that moment. If the ahamkara is filled with tamas guna at that moment, it will show signs of laziness and lethargy. If ahamkara has rajas guna it will show activity by wanting new and variety of sensations. This will drive action or inaction.

All the 3 gunas are there for everyone, but the amount of each guna varies. The Rajas guna will be dominating for an extrovert or go-getter. The Tamas guna will be stronger for a depressed person. The sattva guna will be stronger for a spiritual person. These personality traits will be applicable to the ahamkara of a person.

Let us briefly examine how the gunas apply when the ahamkara (ego) interacts with the object vrittis:

Rajas Guna: The Rajas guna will not allow the ahamkara to sit still, it always wants action, it wants new objects to interact with. It is restless, when one action is complete, it will choose another action to complete. This person will not sit idle. A person with rajas guna has many desires and wants to satisfy all the desires which come up. This requires ahamkara to interact with object vrittis on a continuous basis. When rajas guna is dominant, a lot of activity takes place in the mind. There is nothing wrong with having the trait of rajas, but the question is that all this continuous action does not guarantee happiness and peace. If this is the case, then many actions could be a waste of time and effort.

Tamas Guna: This is the other side of the scale as compared to rajas guna. Here ahamkara is inactive, it does not undertake action. A range of object vrittis are presented to the ahamkara (ego) by buddhi, but ahamkara does not want to interact with any of them. The ahamkara is lazy and lethargic. This leads to inactivity, which is the characteristics of Tamas.

In such situations, it is possible some of the dominant object vrittis can force the ahamkara to undertake an action to satisfy the objects vritti own agenda. These actions could be wrong and against dharma. Overtime this ahamkara would be at the complete mercy of these dominant object vrittis.

The ahamkara in tamas guna is very weak and is prone to inactivity and wrong actions

Sattva Guna: In Rajas we saw that the focus of ahamkara is on the object vrittis. Instead if we focus ahamkara on SatChitAnanda within you, this approach can bring about a radical change. Compassion, goodness, forgiveness and other positive qualities will come forward. Interaction with the object vrittis will continue, but you will follow dharma or do the right thing in any action you take. Everyone has this sattva guna within them, but the question how dominant this is in our day to day activity. The profile of the sattva guna can be improved if you can train your mind adequately. This is our next topic for discussion.

Controlling the Mind

Controlling the mind is compared to trying to control the wind. It is not easy. Just try to focus and hold on to a single thought. You will find this quite difficult, within no time the mind has drifted to another series of thoughts. You may apply your will to control your thoughts in your mind, but the success is only momentary. In the functioning of the mind, we have discussed, that on many occasions, the object vrittis, which have their own agenda, take over the ahamkara. This way, the ahamkara (ego) is unable to apply itself in controlling these thoughts. Desires, which pop up in the mind, can also take over the mind. Desire for wealth, desire for happiness, desire for pleasure are powerful forces which can drive the mind to action. The Ahamkara is entrapped and is unable to control these desires. If you do not satisfy these desires, you have anger, frustration, jealousy. This is an unending circle we face in our lives.

So we see that it is not easy to control the mind and it's a major problem. The mind is the problem. What is the solution? Vedanta teaches that the solution is also the mind. The only tool we have is the mind. We may not be able to directly control the mind, but we can understand our (ahamkara's) relationship with the mind. In part 1, we discussed at length our real nature is Self-Awareness - that we are SatChitAnanda. Due to ignorance we have forgotten this, and we identify with the mind and the external world created by this mind, including our body.

The ultimate goal is for this knowledge to sink in so that we can realize that we are not this body -mind complex but that we are SatChitAnanda. As long as we continue to identify, and be attached to the body-mind complex, this knowledge will not sink in. We may have theoretical knowledge, but if it does not take root in our daily actions - if this is not fully assimilated in our life style, our progress will be limited.

Basically we have to purify our minds, so that the knowledge of Self as SatChitAnanda starts to sink in. This purification of the mind is important and is the only way to control the mind. Sri Sankaracharya, who is a very important figure in the Hindu tradition, explained the following steps, which will help us in this purification process.

1. Viveka – Discrimination
2. Vairagya – Dispassion
3. Sama – Quietude
4. Dama – Self Control
5. Tiksha – Tolerance
6. Samadhana – Well Placed
7. Mumuksuta – Desire for freedom

Let us discuss how these steps can help us in purifying and controlling our minds.

1. Viveka – Discrimination

Viveka means discrimination, but in Vedanta, it means the discrimination between the Real and Unreal. We think the world is real, but Vedanta teaches us that this is wrong and this misconception is the root cause of our suffering.

The definition of Real according to Vedanta is that it must pass the test of the 3 time periods – past, present and future. It should be unchanging in all 3 time periods. If an object undergoes any change in any one of the 3-time periods then that object is not real, it is unreal. Our body was born a few decades ago and will perish in the future, so it does not meet the requirement of Real. This applies to any object in the universe, It was not always available in the past and will perish in the future. Even this universe was born 13.7 billion years ago and it was not available before that and we know it will come to end in the future.

So nothing in this universe is Real, everything is Unreal. Everything we perceive and experience is unreal. So the question is - where is the Real stuff? This has to be discovered. We have to find out and realize what is Real. As we have discussed in part 1, Awareness is the underlying reality of any experience. It is substratum of any experience. This Awareness is the only Real stuff, everything else is unreal. This Awareness has been there in the past and will be there in the future. This Awareness is unborn, unchanging, uncreated and is the only Real thing and provides continuous bliss and happiness.

We have also discussed earlier that the Self is nothing but Awareness and Awareness is nothing but Self. The 'I' within you is the only Real thing in this universe, everything else is unreal.

This understanding can come only by applying Viveka or discrimination on a continuous basis to all our experiences.

2. Vairagya – Dispassion

Vairagya translates as dispassion or detachment. Vairagya is born out of Viveka. Once you understand what is real and what is unreal, your approach to the unreal objects and experiences in this universe will undergo a change. You need dispassion and detachment toward objects and experiences of the world. The question is how to develop this dispassion and detachment towards these objects.

The best way to start is to understand the value and function of all objects and experiences we interact with. We like ice cream and we think this ice cream gives us happiness. If you look at the ingredients of ice cream, you will not find happiness as one of the ingredients of ice cream. So where does the happiness come from? We think the ice cream provides us with happiness. What if we have a bad throat - the ice cream is not going to give us any happiness then – it'll make us sick! Actually the happiness is within us, but we think the happiness comes from the

ice cream. This wrong conclusion is the source of the problem. By applying Vairagya, we can reach the proper understanding that ice cream is not the source of happiness.

People have a strong conviction that money and wealth provide happiness. There is no doubt that if you want to survive in this world, you need money. You cannot do without money. Money has an inherent value which will allow you to buy and sell goods, but happiness is not a quality of money. Money can be a source of unhappiness too. When you spend money, you feel sad. If money is lost in the stock market, it creates unhappiness and anger. Money is money, happiness, unhappiness or sadness are our superimposition on money.

The same logic can be applied for all objects and experiences. We must learn to understand the actual value of any objects or experiences, and not add our own superimposition or commentary.

Vairagya does not mean we give up objects we like, or, conversely, run away from our responsibilities. Vairagya means understanding that the world and its objects are incapable of providing permanent peace and happiness. We must interact with objects with that attitude and approach. You should see this limitation again and again, every time you encounter any object or experience. This constant practice is important to help develop Vairagya in our daily life style.

3. Sama – Quietude

Sama means a quiet mind. Sama is born out of Vairagya. When you have understood Vairagya and implement it whenever you interact with an object, this would mean these objects do not trouble you anymore.

If you want a certain thing in life, and you don't obtain it, you might be frustrated and irritated. With the attitude of Vairagya, it doesn't matter if the desire is fulfilled or not. It's okay either way. This does not mean inaction, but the acceptance of the final outcome. This approach gives a peace of mind which is called Sama. With this quiet mind, it is possible to interact with anything in the world and not be affected by the outcome. You take all objects and experiences at their face value.

4. Dama – Self Control

Dama means self-control. You need to control the 5 sense organs and also the 5 organs of action. If these organs are drawn towards objects of the world, it means you are drawn away from your true nature of Awareness. You would need to apply your will power to willfully restrain the sense organs to move towards sense objects. If you truly want to avoid eating

harmful sweets, then, if walking in front of a sweet shop, restrain your eyes by not looking at the sweets, restrain your hands and legs by not walking into the shop.

Sama is effortless and is born out of understanding. Dama requires will power and willful restraint. If you do not have Sama and are unable to cultivate Vairagya, then you require Dama or self-control.

5. Tiksha – Tolerance

Tiksha means tolerance, enduring any pain or hardship without complaining about it. This does not mean you do not try to change the situation. You must. If it is not possible to change the situation, you should accept the pain with tolerance. On a cold winter day, if the window has been kept open, it does not mean you accept this suffering from the cold -you should go and shut the window. However even after you shut the window, if you continue feeling cold, you just tolerate it and accept the situation with equanimity. This attitude of equanimity in both good and bad situations is Tiksha.

6. Samadhana – Well Placed

Samadhana could mean meditation, but the correct interpretation would be - a mind which is 'well placed' at all times and under all circumstances. The idea is keep directing the ahamkara (ego) towards our true nature of Awareness – Sat Chit Ananda. This is not easy, but requires constant practice. For example, your boss makes some nasty remarks, in such situation instead of getting angry, you try and think that you are SatChitAnanda, you are full and complete. If you have this feeling, then you will be able to forgive your boss for making these nasty remarks and understand maybe he is having a rough day. This attitude is keeping the mind right place. More the practice, better the chance of achieving this goal of purifying of your mind.

7. Mumuksutva – Desire for freedom

Mumuksutva means the desire for Moksha, to be free from bondage or suffering. There is no denying that the goal for everyone in life is to have continuous happiness. We want to be free from suffering in our day to day life. Vedanta teaches us that when the ahamkara identifies with the body, mind and external world, we are bound to go through cycles of happiness and suffering. We have seen none of the objects of the world are a source of permanent happiness. We think it is and this wrong identification only leads to bondage and unhappiness. We need to train our mind to identify with Self-Awareness or SatChitAnanda. We can do this if we have a desire to achieve this goal. Instead of having the desire for external objects, you have to have the desire for SatChitAnanda. Focusing on this goal will take us a long way in controlling the mind.

The side effects of this lofty goal is that you could be on the path of enlightenment or moksha. You fully realize and discover your true nature of Self-Awareness. Once you achieve this, you will treat the body and mind as any other external object and watch the body, mind like another character in a movie of life. You will know that the pain belongs to body and not you, you will realize that sadness belongs to the mind and you. Nothing will affect you. This is the state of enlightenment. Vedanta teaches us that if you can achieve this state of mind, you will not be born again. The cycle of bondage will be over. The first step in this direction is to have the desire to achieve this goal. In fact, this should be the only goal. This attitude is called Mumuksutva.

Conclusion

If you want to make spiritual progress, it becomes very important to understand the mind. As quoted from the scripture, mind is the source of the problem and also the source of the solution. So understanding the mind becomes very critical and a prerequisite. In part 1 and part 2, we have made a detailed analysis of the mind – the source and creation of the mind, the components of the mind, the functioning of the mind and lastly the control of the mind. Once you understand the mind, it is much easier to make spiritual progress.