

Pure Experiences

Selected Articles

Volume - 1



Tarun Pradhaan

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Preface

This book contains some selected articles from my blog. The articles are on spiritual topics, mostly related to the path of knowledge.

This volume is generally about the basic concepts of the Self, consciousness, mind and the world.

I gain from many teachers and I am grateful to them for the teachings. This is my humble effort to convey the very same teachings in a more modern and accessible form.

Tarun Pradhaan
Pune, India
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The Path of the Heart

गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णुर्गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः ।
गुरुरेव परं ब्रह्म तस्मै श्रीगुरवे नमः ॥

I was introduced to the phrase "The path with a heart" many many years ago via some books by Carlos Castaneda about his teacher Don Juan[10]. I didn't understand much, the books appeared mostly cryptic and went over my head. Anyhow, the phrase made some impression on me, as later on, it became clear what he was talking about, it was something that I was searching for since the beginning. I have readopted this concept as "The path of the heart" [1]. This version of the phrase is somewhat more clear but less poetic, and we will now discuss what it actually is and why it is so important.

It has been my experience, that a majority of people live their lives without much thought, half asleep, unaware, almost like zombies. Their lives are nothing but a series of compulsions [2], imposed upon them by their own desires, fears, emotions, social pressures, bodily needs, likes, dislikes and other such reasons. The major portion of their lives consists of survival related activities - eating, reproducing, relating, security, social status and such. That is, they are mostly busy fulfilling their basic needs, often even after these needs are sufficiently met. They have no inkling of what they are doing, why they are doing it and what are they supposed to do. They spend their lives aping each other, oblivious, enslaved, and then they die. Of course, many of these appear to be very happy, "successful" and also acquire a few things of value, mostly material value. However, most live a life of boredom, frustration, conformity, misery and suffering interposed with flashes of joy, pleasure and knowledge. They also live under the delusion of control and free will, inflicted with various habits, in traps of various beliefs, often disguised as a feeling of "superiority" and "worth". Their sense of ethics, morals and aesthetics is borrowed from others in mostly democratic fashion, and a few rare individuals, who dare to deviate from the norms, are branded as rebels, "different" or are simply called crazy.

By now, you must be thinking that I'm being overly negative towards some who are just ordinary and normal people, and perhaps I'm full of arrogance and hubris. This is life, isn't it? Ups and downs, pleasure and pain etc are a part of it, you may say, and just because they happen to live naturally, with all their desires and fears, does not make them "zombies" or miserable idiots. Well, I agree, it is only natural, and such people are not idiots certainly, many are very wise and smart actually. I do prefer to use another word instead of idiots, zombies or sleepers, which is - Ignorant. It describes their condition in a most accurate, inoffensive, and neutral way. An ignorant is a person, who lacks some needed knowledge, however, that person is fully capable of such knowledge and can gain it any time. So in essence, such people are on a path of ignorance, to put it metaphorically.

I, myself, traveled on that path for the majority of my life time, and I'm still not sure if I've taken a diversion to some other better path or if I'm still lost in it.

Anyhow, it does look too negative, so to be fair I'll mention some positive points about the ignorant kind. So, in my experience, such people are often very good natured, polite, helpful, obedient, hard working, devoted to their duties and responsibilities, sympathetic, law-abiding, and do possess a lot of other humane qualities. However, when such a person is tested and tried under difficult situations (such as a famine or a war), these traits break down and we witness the animalistic and instinctive nature in the very same person. Such people cause very little harm anyway, as they are powerless and are on the mercy of external situations. They do not do much good either, for the same reasons.

Then there are these other people, who, having fulfilled their basic needs, come to a place where they find a big void, an emptiness, a sense of meaninglessness, a lack of purpose. They feel as if there is something that is missing. Not knowing what, they struggle, and often try to find it in the same worldly things, albeit in an excessive way. Such people are highly ambitious, such people are entrepreneurs, politicians, kings, high on the ladder of "success", always in the lead in the rat race. They are achievers, they are role models. They are rich and affluent, charismatic and powerful. They live an extraordinary life, all while trying to fill the void they perceive in themselves through objects and material activities.

Now, you might have assumed that such people are finally on the right path, why else am I singing such praises for them. It does look like a perfect kind of life one dreams of having. Well, no... there is a downside. The void cannot be filled by external means, its not there because they lack something materially or socially. The void remains forever, they struggle and struggle and can't fill it. There is never enough, they are never content, never satisfied. Their lives are superficial,

they are miserable inside while showing off outside, they are still ignorant. However, they are on the brink. This suffering is often enough to push them on the right path. The realization comes late, often very late, as they are busy getting more and more, busy being "successful".

They have a big fear, the fear of losing it all, they are always on the mercy of others, who else can make them feel "superior", who else can tell them they have it all. A king in a desert is not a king, he needs others whom he can rule. A rich man in a desert is not rich, he needs poor around him to feel rich. A famous person needs others to keep the fame alive. The dependency on others, which overshadows their achievements, is the source of their suffering. They can only use others, they cannot own them, they know this and fear this. They are good opportunists, they are good at taking advantage. Such people become very greedy, violent, arrogant and jealous. Being in powerful positions, they can cause great harm. They have the potential to do great good too, although its seen rarely, there is always some hidden motive behind the humanitarian acts. They mislead, manipulate and justify their deeds with lies. All this for what? They don't know. They can only sense faintly that this is not what they want to do, they feel they need something else. They long for love, true friendship, simplicity and these all escape like sand from their fist.

There are milder versions of this kind also. Such people try to fill the void in them via other things, all external, and not at that grand scale. Some fall into substance abuse or gambling, or have more and more relations, marriages, children. Some eat more and more and become obese. Some hoard stuff, earn more and more money, consume more, buy more of shiny expensive things. They find that, in spite of getting what they desire and getting more than they desire or need, the happiness remains elusive, and transitory. The desires and wants seem to expand endlessly, giving no or momentary satisfaction, they actually become a source of suffering. Some people become depressed and lazy, not knowing how to cure the emptiness. They can't understand why there is still suffering when they have everything they need, and perhaps more than they need.

It has been also my experience. Having done whatever needs to be done for a good life, having gathered all that one may need for a good life and having gotten into as many relations and friendships as I wished, I found no peace at all. I've traveled this path also, for a long long time. I'm still not sure if I've completely abandoned this way of life.

There is no compulsion to leave the path of ignorance, there are no natural laws to prohibit it. There is no need to panic, one can live his entire life traveling on it, just normally. But there are consequences, and we will discuss later what those

are, may be. Certainly, one of them is suffering, doesn't sound like fun, the good news is, its avoidable in many cases. Sometimes only a hint is necessary and the person may quickly realize that he was going in a wrong direction. Thus begins the struggle to find the right path.

Now we have reached yet another kind. This kind is rare, I've seen only a few such people. They have either recognized the pitfalls in above paths or have already fallen into most of them, and somehow escaped, then found a better way. The hallmark of such people is their love of freedom. They need to be free, free of everything. They are actually doing something that they love to do, not because they were told to do it, or are not simply copying anyone. They are not bound by anything, not even by the things they love. They do not have much ego, no heaviness or inertia in their personalities. They love change, not fear it. They are adventurous and bold. Free of habits, beliefs and indoctrination of any kind, they stick to nothing and nothing sticks to them.

They are characterized by an intense curiosity, open mindedness, healthy skepticism, and great love of knowledge. They love to learn and teach. They question everything and believe nothing, they are not easy to fool. Creativity is their nature. They are artists, scientists, writers, philosophers and spiritual seekers or enlightened masters [3]. Seeing freedom as the essence of happiness, they prefer not to control others and do not seek power. They shy away from owning too many material things and avoid gathering a crowd of relations around them.

These people know something - something very valuable. They know that they have to follow what their heart says, not what others say. They refuse the ways of ignorance and suffering, and travel the path of happiness. They know that happiness comes from within, from doing what one loves to do. They do enjoy material things, friends, relations, society, entertainment etc, but remain completely detached and undistracted. Their heart pulls them back to their own path again and again.

These people know the key to happiness. They do desire, but are unaffected when these are not fulfilled. They do acquire things for the basic needs, but always draw a line where the need ends and greed starts. They enjoy the luxury, but never own it. Love radiating from them is unconditional, its something that has to be given to all, not taken from others. Their relations are without attachments and non-possessive, they prefer to give, not to take. They never judge and remain stable in all situations. They respect all the rules, but are never tied to them and get out of any situation that curtails their freedom as soon as they can.

The qualities of such people are too numerous to mention here, so I will keep that for another article. What about drawbacks? Do they have any bad qualities? I don't know really, but I've seen people fear them, hate them, ridicule them and see them as dangerous. But such people are ignorants, they hate freedom and fear anyone who is too free to be controlled. I can write a full book on how "society" treats such people and why, but I guess, it will be of not much use.

Obviously, the kinds described above do not fall into any sharply defined categories, there are all kinds of variations, blends and mixes. It all occupies the full spectrum of possibilities.

So I define the path of the heart as a lifestyle which leads to a life full of peace, happiness and satisfaction. It transforms a person into someone with qualities I mentioned above. [4]

Living is not this tawdry, mediocre, disciplined thing which we call our existence. Living is something entirely different; it is abundantly rich, timelessly changing, and as long as we don't understand that eternal movement, our lives are bound to have very little meaning.

- Jiddu Krishnamurti

An obvious question arises - how can one find the path of his heart? Is it the same for all? Does everyone needs to be a scientist/artist/yogi or whatever to be on that path? That's three questions... and in my experience, there are no definite answers. It seems the path finds you when you are ready. When you have tried various ways and those do not satisfy you, you keep wavering, you become aware of your situation and make some effort to search for a solution, then the path of your heart appears. Its not same for all, but mostly similar, rarely too exotic. There is a certain theme which seems to be common to all such paths, freedom, search for happiness, knowledge etc. It has mostly to do with the self, improvement of the self, and dealing with others only in certain situations where it helps the self. So is helping others and saving the world your path? May be, but I doubt that if you are ignorant and unhappy you will find much success in doing that. It has to start from the self. So if you are suspicious, whether or not a path is for you, check if you, yourself, are gaining something from it. If you are suffering and making others suffer by taking it, its not your path.

Taking the help of those who are already on the right path is recommended. However, you can not merely follow them, they are on their path, not yours. You will recognize such teachers from some qualities mentioned above. (No rules here, you may end up with wrong teachers, so beware). Simply mimicking what

they do or say is not going to help, its not what they do, its about what they are. You must see the essence of their being and try to find your own essence by reflecting on your own self. Once you gain something from a teacher let go of him. They won't stay with you anyway for long. They can only show you the path, cannot carry you on it in their arms. You must learn to walk on the path of your heart.

Everyone has a unique path, although there are similarities and telltale signs. You cannot simply follow someone else's path, as that path is of his heart, not your heart. It will lead to nowhere, may be some excitement and adventure, but you may remain unfulfilled in the end. A path is not marked by a profession or a job, a university degree or a skill, it is something that attracts you not because it pays money or brings fame or because your friends are walking on it, but because you deeply feel it is yours. Your path has rarely anything to do with others, it has to be about you. It takes some time, a lot of time, to recognize your path. We are too deeply indoctrinated and brainwashed by others to recognize it easily, especially during the childhood.

Another question arises, how do you know if you are on the path of your heart? Its easy, you will find ever increasing happiness and peace. The moments of suffering will appear, but will disappear soon. There would be a figure-ground reversal. More moments of happiness and peace and rare occasions of suffering and pain.[5] You will find that you are gaining the qualities mentioned above, without intense effort. You may get those qualities by hook or crook or with tiring and long effort, but that's unnatural and does not stand the trials of time. Gaining these traits is not the goal, the goal is to walk the path of your heart, other things are just fruits you may pick from the trees alongside your path.

Does the path end? Will there be a gold pot at the end of it? In my opinion (not in my experience), it never ends, it goes on. Its the journey that is fulfilling, not the destination. There is no destination. On the contrary, if you find that it ends somewhere, and you are facing a big wall, confused, stuck, not knowing what to do next, then you know it was not your path, it was a wrong path! Relax, think and take a diversion. It may happen that such situations arise even when you are on the true path of the heart, but they pass quickly and we learn from them. So some patience is needed before you jump to conclusions about your path. Let it reveal itself.

Have I already found my path? No, I'm still looking. I'm faintly aware of the directions to take and I can see some light at the far end of the tunnel. Hopefully its not a railway tunnel ;-). I'm not a teacher, only a student.

Did I discover all this? Am I making it up? No. There are many who hint towards something similar. I'm merely regurgitating what the great masters teach. Krishna teaches a concept called *Swadharma* [6], which is interpreted in many ways, I simply understand it as the path of the heart, take your pick. Western philosophy has the concept of Entelechy [7] which I interpret as the "internal end goal", very close to the concept of the path of the heart. Yogic philosophies stress on the *Mukti* (liberation or freedom) being the end goal of one's life, and freedom being the central theme of the path of the heart, I feel it comes closest.[8] Guatam Buddha recommends ending the suffering as the goal, which leads one to follow a certain path to end the ignorance - the cause of the suffering. I'm not qualified to comment on these great teachings, so please search and read any suitable material. [9] Its all very vast and you may need a good teacher to understand it all. The key is not to simply read these teaching, but to follow them, apply them. You will soon find that all such philosophies and experiences of others, however great, have some limitations, they are their experiences gained via following their paths. You need to follow the path of your own heart.

Notes:

[1] Not to be confused with "the path of devotion" or *Bhakti Marg*.

[2] I'm grateful to Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev for this teaching - ordinary life as a series of compulsions.

[3] Note that there are many people in mentioned "occupations", for example some "scientists" are just doing a job of a scientist, never discovered or invented anything extraordinary, and some "artists" are just skillful workers, having little creativity. These are not included in the list, obviously. I prefer the term, art-workers or science-workers for them.

[4] Note that the term "heart" is being used here metaphorically, e.g. the heart of a volcano - the hottest center of it. It has nothing to do with an organ pumping blood inside your body. It simply means the center of your being, where you feel you are and act from.

[5] Pain, as in mental pain, not physical. No paths or lifestyles guarantee elimination of bodily pains, although the suffering caused by them can be minimized.

[6]See this link for some interpretations or google it: <http://www.bhagavad-gita.org/Gita/verse-03-35.html>

[7] From <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/entelechy>

A particular type of motivation, need for self-determination, and inner strength directing life and growth to become all one is capable of being; the need to actualize one's beliefs; having both a personal vision and the ability to actualize that vision from within.

The entelechy is the name given to our inner dynamic purpose. It is the seed of potential that nestles deep within us, containing the fractal image of who we really are and what we can become. The Greek philosopher Socrates first coined the term entelechy, and the great mystic [Pierre] Teilhard de Chardin brought it to public attention. [...] The inner sense of purpose that is governed by the entelechy is the driving force behind our lives, helping us to blossom into the fullest expression of ourselves.

- Lisa Tenzin-Dolma, *Mind & Motivation: The Spirit of Success*

[8] I'm grateful to Sifu Rohit Arya for explaining these concepts very clearly. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qbCtvnAn5y0>

[9] For example see here:

<http://www.vipassana.com/resources/8fp1.php>

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/waytoend.html#ch1>

[10] Quote:

"Anything is one of a million paths. Therefore you must always keep in mind that a path is only a path; if you feel you should not follow it, you must not stay with it under any conditions. To have such clarity you must lead a disciplined life. Only then will you know that any path is only a path and there is no affront, to oneself or to others, in dropping it if that is what your heart tells you to do. But your decision to keep on the path or to leave it must be free of fear or ambition. I warn you. Look at every path closely and deliberately. Try it as many times as you think necessary.

This question is one that only a very old man asks. Does this path have a heart? All paths are the same: they lead nowhere. They are paths going through the bush, or into the bush. In my own life I could say I have traversed long long paths, but I am not anywhere. Does this path have a heart? If it does, the path is good; if it doesn't, it is of no use. Both paths lead nowhere; but one has a heart, the other doesn't. One makes for a joyful journey; as long as you follow it, you are one with it. The other will make you curse your life. One makes you strong; the other weakens you.

Before you embark on any path ask the question: Does this path have a heart? If the answer is no, you will know it, and then you must choose another path. The trouble is nobody asks the question; and when a man finally realizes that he has taken a path without a heart, the path is ready to kill him. At that point very few men can stop to deliberate, and leave the path. A path without a heart is never enjoyable. You have to work hard even to take it. On the other hand, a path with heart is easy; it does not make you work at liking it.”

— Carlos Castaneda, *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge*

Presence, Experience and Knowledge

Experiencing as being

I'm very very sure of one thing - something exists. Actually that's all I'm sure of. I have no other knowledge, no other experience of which I'm so sure of. I'm going to define that "something" as **Presence**. Its merely a term I'm going to use for something that I'm so sure of. The Presence is going through a process, which I'm going to call **Experiencing**, and an **Experience** is then defined as an arbitrary slice of Experiencing. I can't deny that there is Experiencing of Presence, however hard I try, and no one can. Denial or falsification is also an experience, and that makes it absolutely undeniable that there is Experiencing and/or Presence. What can be so convincing, so solid, so self-evident? So we are on a very firm ground here, it's a good place to start, perhaps it's the only place to start.

The modulations in Presence give rise to Experiencing. That's all there is, rest is merely details. Don't ask me what this thing called Presence is, and why are there any modulations or changes in it at all, how and why is this happening.... I have no idea. Grab a good book on Metaphysics to know what the great masters think about all this. I can assure you that nobody knows. Its paradoxical that something so evident and intimate is absolutely unknowable ! Well, welcome to the country of mystics, this is not your first surprise....

Anything that we add to the Presence, or any attempts to see it as anything else, will just pollute it. Its so fundamental that language fails to describe it, it has to be experienced as it is. That experience is blissful, to say the least. Presence has the ability to experience itself, and that's the most wonderful thing that I've ever experienced.

It is debatable whether Presence is an absolute or just another experience. Can there be an Experiencing without Presence? Can there be Presence without Experiencing? Well, for now, I'm going to avoid this chicken and egg situation by simply assuming the priority of Presence and assuming that Presence is capable of no-experience states. Although I've never experienced a no-experience state, and you must have guessed, its not possible to do so, its absurd to even say so. It's a place where our ordinary human ability of making sense of anything ends. Ultimately there are no-two, its all one, and that's what makes most sense [1]. So

the term Presence should point to the unity of all that is. Dividing it into two (the second being Experiencing), is only for convenience, or just another perspective.

It appears that there is an experiencer that is doing the Experiencing. We have just conjured up one more entity here. Its defined as the **Self**. This experiencer is what I refer to when I say the word **I**. Its debatable whether the Self exists. In my experience, the Self is also experienced. And it is possible to have experiences without experiencing the Self (the experience of no-self). So is it the experiencer who is doing all the experiencing? I wouldn't say so, only because I've already defined Experiencing as a process in Presence, so one can roughly say that Presence is doing it and the experiencer (Self) is merely an appearance (content) in the Presence, some product of Experiencing. I hope no one is offended here, because I'm basically saying you don't really exist !

Content is defined as that which is being experienced. Contents appear in experience. They can be perceptions (mostly sense perceptions [2]), thoughts, feelings, emotions, memories and all such entities [3]. Is our experience due to contents? That's a can of worms there. Instead of opening the can, I'll simply say, the contents and the experience of the contents are the one and the same. Variations of contents are just experiences of various kinds.

We are done with the definitions of basics [10]. These are merely definitions (according to my own experience and current understanding) not to be confused with the **Truth** (which I plan to define and discuss later in some other article). If it is not your experience, then it cannot be judged in terms of true or false. You need to see it yourself if these definitions and concepts bear any resemblance to Truth, using your own experience. If none, then just trash it all and make up your own definitions. We humans do expect that since we are more or less same kind of entities, the various truths will converge ultimately.

Knowledge and its importance

Knowledge can be gained in only one way, the way of experience, there is no other way to know.
- Swami Vivekananda

Knowledge is an organized structure of experience. This is the definition I'd prefer to adopt for now [4]. To know something is to experience it, to live it. There can be no doubts about this fact. If it is your experience, it is also your knowledge, and once there is knowledge, it is possible to see it in the light of one's previous knowledge, which leads to **Understanding**. So understanding is the process by which we fit the puzzle pieces of experiences together. Its a great ability (very rare unfortunately).

Understanding leads to correct thought and correct thought leads to correct

actions. It is our actions that define our lives, they are solely the cause of our condition - happiness or suffering. Thus, it is of immense value to know and understand. Knowledge is the foundation on which one's life is based. A shaky foundation results in a life full of misery. The ability to experience something and to know it is our greatest ability. It's a great gift.

Without knowledge our experiences would look like a jumble of randomness and chaos. We have this gift, the ability to organize our experiences to make some sense out of it. It is also a skill, to turn our experience into useful knowledge and to utilize it. There are some instincts built into us that take care of this activity at an elementary level. Even animals have this ability to some extent. However, it must be learnt mostly. There are many pitfalls here, one must learn to avoid them and use some tools such as logic and reason to organize one's experiences. It never stops, it's a lifelong process, for experiences never stop. If you hear someone saying that he knows everything there is to know, assume that he is dead.

Traditionally, things are divided into three kinds - known, unknown and unknowable. Known are those which were in your experience and fall nicely into the structure of it. Unknown are the kind, that are not in your experience yet, but you can ask a question about it and can look for an experience that will make it known. Unknown has a potential to become known. Unknowable is something which is impossible to experience, although we can ask questions about it [5].

We reach now at a place where one can ask what is there to know? Is it even possible to know anything? If it is possible to experience something then it is possible to know it. It is by definition, you see. So let's throw out that question and let philosophers play with it. So what is exactly there to know? I'm not sure. If you can ask a question, and can find an experience that answers it, that is there to know. If you can't ask a question about it, then it's not something you can know. The art here is to ask correct questions.

So does that mean, if you can't experience something, you can't know it? I must say, for now, no you can't. Here we enter the messy regions of indirect or inferred "knowledge". You may say, for example, that you know that there is this city called Mumbai somewhere which you've never seen, but you surely know it's there because you read about it, saw pictures or videos and have even met people who have been there. It's not a direct experience, but you still know it. You can always google it and find out the truth, right? No... all you ever had were experiences of reading, seeing pictures, talking to people. You know only that, you don't know Mumbai.

I will be adamant here and say that there is no such thing as indirect knowledge. It is by definition, it has to come via the experiencing. What we are talking about is **Information**. Information always points to knowledge, its not knowledge. Lets take refuge in well established discipline of information theory and define it as an experiential structure which has a lower amount of entropy compared to its surroundings. The structure must point to an experience, which gives it a **Meaning**.

For example, take a jar full of alphabets (written on something) and shake it well and pour them out. It makes no sense if we try to understand it in light of our previous experiences with alphabets (it provides no other knowledge, except that you know there are some letters scattered around there). Now arrange some letters that spell your dog's name, you have just reduced the entropy there and now it makes sense, you know what it is, it has some information in it, that is pointing towards an experience (dog). Information can be measured (in bits), so we are on a solid ground here, its Science ! It is a useful tool to gather knowledge.

Information needs to be interpreted properly in the light of existing knowledge or prior information, otherwise these experiential constructs are just **Data**.

A map is not the territory.
- *A popular saying*

In my experience, many people confuse information with knowledge. The confusion is deep, even teachers think that they are imparting "knowledge" to their students in schools, when they are merely making them memorize some text, written by someone else, about someone else's experiences. The result is that generations after generations of students come out of the school, knowing very little, with no skills of clear thinking, with heads full of just hot air. The condition is worse in cases where the type of experiences one must have are entirely subjective (such as spiritual disciplines), where the knowing must be direct and first hand. What happens is, the student thinks he knows everything about it simply because he read some great texts and heard it from some great masters.

If a big shot says something, it has to be true, and since its true, I know it now. Moreover, its written exactly so in that great text, which confirms it. Since the text is 5000 years old, it is an evidence that what I know is true. Now I really know it, I'm so smart ! No.... I'm stupid. I fell into a pit here. There is no hope for me. What I've done is, I found some information and erected a house of cards from it, calling it knowledge, using absurd and illogical arguments. I've failed to think correctly, failed to distinguish information from knowledge, and my hubris and desire to appear smart supported me and blinded me. I have no

critical thinking skills at all. The result is, I was an ignorant before, and now I'm full of BS. Not a good outcome, is it? [6]

If you are on a path of knowledge [7], it becomes absolutely necessary to learn the skills that bring you useful knowledge. These skills are - introspection, enquiry, contemplation, meditation, clear and peaceful mind, a fit body, critical thinking, agnosticism, healthy skepticism, curiosity, logic, reason, skillful arguing, open mindedness, ability to evaluate the evidence, not taking offense when you are proven wrong and ability to use information to gain knowledge. If one lacks these skills, there is no hope for him. I may write an article in near future, on how to cultivate these, although I have little knowledge myself about this subject, but I've fallen into enough pits to know what not to do. :-D

Knowledge is an impurity

Perhaps it will sound too absurd, but as soon as one knows, the experience is reduced to a knowing, which makes the experience impure. A pure experience has no knowing in it, no attempt is made to organize it, to improvise it or understand it. It remains pure as long as you don't intend to know it.

You see a tree, it's a wonderful experience, a very beautiful becoming in the Presence, that's all it is. As soon as you know it's a tree, it is reduced to knowledge, it is corrupted. As soon as you name it as a "tree", an object that is now classified and understood and has gone through the machinery of thought process, its no longer what it was.

The more knowledge we gain, more fake we become. Ultimately, it has to be destroyed, and one arrives at a place where every experience is seen as it is. This is the end of the knowing, beginning of being.

Ignorance as knowledge

That sounds impossible, aren't they opposites? I found that the state of ignorance is not really pure absence of knowledge, but its a corruption that happens when one gains partial knowledge. I have another word for a total lack of knowledge, its **Innocence**. Little knowledge is a dangerous thing, its worse than innocence. At least when you are innocent, you are blissfully so, like a little baby. Partial knowledge brings suffering.

So let me define **Ignorance** as a condition characterized by an absence of adequate knowledge or presence of partial knowledge which leads to actions that are less than satisfactory or result in suffering.

*To acquire knowledge should not be our first aim, but rather to rid ourselves of ignorance—
which is false-knowledge.*

- Wei Wu Wei

For example, if a person (X) has no knowledge of the value of gold, the “social status” that it enables, and no idea about the concept of richness, he is blissfully innocent, there are no desires or demands on him to do anything about it, there is no suffering. But as soon as he experiences another person (Y), loaded with gold jewellery and sees how others treat him (probably with more respect, admiration and love than X gets), X sees the gold as a reason for the “happy” condition of Y and lack of gold as the now “miserable” condition of himself. He has gained a partial knowledge that gold brings everything that Y has, and he lacks it. Suffering ensues. He tries to get some gold by hook or crook or very hard work, and that brings even more suffering (also to others). He is no more innocent, having turned into an ignorant.

One day he sees that Y is murdered and his gold was taken away by the murderers. He sees that the friends and family of Y are fighting and drooling over Y’s property or other valuable possessions. The “happy” situation around the gold bearer has somehow disappeared and is now worse than X’s own situation. He gains some more knowledge, and understands completely the dynamics, cause and effects of greed, possessions, fake relations that spring around such people and so on. The knowledge is complete now, X’s irrational behaviour ends, suffering ends, he returns to happiness, although now fully appreciating the pros and cons of having loads of gold. He is not innocent now, but neither is he ignorant.... he is “enlightened” (at least about a tiny aspect of human affairs). This knowledge will become a foundation for his future progress.

We have a sort of defect in our faculty of organizing the experiences. When there is partial knowledge, we tend to become lazy and try to complete it by assumptions of all kinds. We do not have the patience to wait for or pursue the required experiences, perhaps because we are not so interested or capable, or are too busy enjoying other things, or simply because we find security in those assumptions, they become precious, too hard to get rid of, and then they solidify, take the form of "knowledge", while hiding their artificiality. They then act as a shield for further knowledge, they appoint gatekeepers and only allow that which strengthens those assumptions and solidifies them more. The gatekeepers attack any new knowledge that tries to uproot the structures they are guarding. Such is the nature of **Beliefs**. A belief is an idea, an assumption, that has no basis in direct experience. It’s a structure that tries to mimic knowledge, but is hollow, it lacks the necessary experience or knowledge. A belief corrupts not only one’s

knowledge, but also one's innocence. If one is innocent, there is still some potential to know, but if one believes, the cup is already filled, there is no more room for anything else, including knowledge. [8]

A belief is a cheap substitute for knowledge.

- Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev

Note that each and every belief is not necessarily false or dangerous. Someday, what you believe today may turn out to be your experience. But as long as you are taking them as a substitute for knowledge, and not as mere assumptions or hypotheses, they are a hindrance to your progress. A belief is dangerous only if it is causing some harm to the person holding that belief and to the people around him. Its not necessary to get rid of ignorance or beliefs, there are no natural laws that prohibit them, but if you intend to make some progress on your path, it becomes a must that you identify them for what they are. [9]

If your life is full of suffering, misery and pain, it's a sure sign of presence of ignorance and beliefs. A purely innocent person also suffers, but not as much as an ignorant. Its always good to start from innocence rather than from beliefs, to empty the cup, and to be in a receiving posture. When you say "I don't know", you are in a receiving posture and you have opened many-many doors for knowledge and new experiences. So, if you find that at some point on your path, you are in a total mess, its time to return..... return to innocence.

Notes:

[1] A very well known structure of thoughts - *Advaita Vedanta*. Non-dualism.

[2] If you are wondering what other perceptions can be there besides the sense kind, I'm merely making a distinction here, between the perceptions that occur in normal waking state (experiencing the physical world) and those that occur in non-waking states, such as dreams, imaginations, vivid memories or other non-physical experiences.

[3] That's a bag-full of entities there, which I'm going to leave undefined for now, but the generally accepted meanings work well here.

[4] There are a lot of definitions of knowledge, most of them I find are circular. If you are interested, start with a good book on Epistemology. In Advaita, people write it with a capital K, but in this blog all mentions of knowledge or Knowledge are identical in meaning.

[5] Things or entities can be classified in many ways. This is just one way based on how they relate to knowing. One can assume that there is a fourth kind about which no questions can be asked, but it will be just a flight of fantasy.

[6] In this example, I'm not generalizing that everything said by masters or written in books is false. It can be surely true, and these people might have had first-hand experiences about it. We are very grateful that they share it with us all. The problem is that it is their experience, and their knowledge, it is not yours. It remains unsubstantiated until you experience it yourself, and only then you can confidently say that it was true.

[7] *Jhana Marg or Gyan Marg.*

[8] I'm grateful to Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev for explaining the ideas about knowledge and beliefs very clearly.

[9] I'm grateful to Thomas Campbell for his teachings about "Belief traps" and how to avoid them.

[10] Not really done, as you can see. I may appear to be a bit obsessive about defining everything so precisely, but I want to make sure that we are on the same page. I'm grateful to various philosophers who taught me the art of defining everything even before I open my mouth to talk about it.

Chapter 3

The Secret Life of the Self

This is the secret of spiritual life: to think that I am the Atman and not the body, and that the whole of this universe with all its relations, with all its good and all its evil, is but as a series of paintings - scenes on a canvas - of which I am the witness.

-Swami Vivekananda

We have seen in the previous article that the Self arises as a result of the process of Experiencing that is taking place in the Presence. Experiencing is just modulations of Presence, so the Self is nothing but one such modulation. In essence, Self is Presence, like everything else is.... although its much more pure form of Presence compared to other forms. One can say that it's just one step away from the Presence.

Self can be experienced, just as anything else can be. The act of experiencing the Self is truly wonderful. It's the knower knowing itself. A blissful feeling. Presence likes to do it. This experience is also called self-awareness or self-consciousness. Nowadays, it's a fashion to call it simply as Consciousness. It literally means to know together. The problem with this word is that its being used as a noun, verb and adjective all in one! This causes confusion. As a noun, its same as the Self (the experiencer or the knower). As a verb it's the act of experiencing (as in, to be conscious of a thing), and as an adjective, it's a quality that something has. Its also called the Witness consciousness or simply, the witness.

The entire universe is truly the Self. There exists nothing at all other than the Self. The enlightened person sees everything in the world as his own Self, just as one views earthenware jars and pots as nothing but clay.

- Shankara

There are a lot more terms for the Self, like the atman, spirit or soul. But these are either very old or mean many things or are rarely used. Anyhow, I think they mean something similar. Being so old and belonging to mostly lost cultures, these words have lost their meaning or have become open to interpretation [1]. This is a risky situation because then you are on the mercy of an authority who claims to know their "true" meaning. As we have discussed before, it leads to creation of beliefs and is not very useful. Anyway, if you prefer any of these other words,

then simply redefine the Self as that and proceed. A rose with any other name is still a rose.

“When I use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, “it means what I choose it to mean, neither more nor less.”

“The question is,” said Alice, “whether you CAN make words mean so many different things.”

“The question is”, said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master – that’s all.”

- Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland

Physicists like to call it the observer, or sometimes the conscious observer. Which usually means that there is an ultimate experiencer of an experiment, without whom there would be no experiment, and no result is obtained [2]. An unconscious observer may mean something like a computer or any other instrument that can record the data coming from the experimental setup. But it results in no conclusion, there is no information content in data recorded, and no knowledge can be gained by the computer itself. A conscious observer is needed. A conscious observer is the central theme of Quantum Mechanics, the most successful scientific model ever built! So never accuse a Scientist of being a pure materialist, most of the top row Scientists are not materialists. [3]

The mystic and the physicist arrive at the same conclusion; one starting from the inner realm, the other from the outer world. The harmony between their views confirms the ancient Indian wisdom that Brahman, the ultimate reality without, is identical to Atman, the reality within.

- Fritjof Capra, in The Tao of Physics : An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism (1975), Epilogue, p. 305.

Why is it there?

What’s it doing there? It’s a real puzzle for me. Some people say, you should not ask the “why” questions, things just are. It’s a puzzle because the Experiencing itself cannot magically produce the Self (or maybe I’m just assuming that). So the Self must be arising out of some strange property of the Presence.

I can only theorize about such a property. It seems that in the act of Experiencing, the Presence takes a point of view that is slightly shifted away from itself, so that it sees the Experiencing happening apart from itself. This creates a shadow of the Presence, seeing itself. A Self is born, experiencing the Experiencing. Once it sees itself as Experiencing, the Presence is pleased, and the Self dissolves back into it. It comes back on demand, whenever the Presence

wants to have a taste of Experiencing. By becoming the Self, Presence becomes slightly less than a totality, slightly impure. It does not remain in that state for long, it wants to merge back.

If you think that it all sounds like a mystical mumbo-jumbo, then you are right. We are in a mystic land here, anything goes. So never worry about the mechanics of the Self. Its more useful to know what it isfirst hand. That's another puzzle, why so few people know that there is something like this at the core of their being. They do not know their Self, or its nature. This is the ultimate ignorance, the original sin. This has been the claim of great masters that such ignorance is the root of all suffering. It is my experience (which may differ from yours), that merely knowing the Self may not result in a total dissolution of suffering overnight... magically. But knowing the secret of the Self is a must, a necessity, if you intend to progress on your path towards happiness. So, know thy Self.

Who am I?

If one has not asked this question even once in their entire life, he is in a deep, deep ignorance. Only a question can lead you towards knowledge. If you are on a path of knowledge, this is the question you should ask. This is the now famous method of **Self-Enquiry** [4]. One sits down and discards anything that he is not, and then whatever remains is the Self.

One starts with the physical objects, then body, then mental objects (thoughts, memories etc), finally having seen that all these are not Self, one knows what remains, their experiencer, as the Self. Its very important to actually see and understand that the objects/body/mind/names/professions etc etc are not the Self. A mere intellectual thought will not bring you to the Self. It may appear obvious that all these entities are not you, but that could be just your thought (which is not you). Once you reach the Self, its helpful to remain there, abide there. This will keep you from falling back into anything that is not Self. It turns out that this will happen very often, which is irritating, as it happens almost within seconds and without your control. As usual, there is no free lunch; it's a matter of practice, a lot of practice.

I've found that a different formulation of self-enquiry works better [5], where you ask – "What am I?" or "Am I aware?", instead of who am I. Because the word "who" is going to trick you into believing that you are looking for a person. You are not a person. Even better formulation is – "What is perceiving this?", where "this" is anything that is currently an object of perception. This shifts the attention from the observed to the observer. Shifting the attention from object to

the subject is the trick.

Self is seen as that which is beholding the object. The object can be anything, doesn't matter, even an imagination or a Mantra will work. So the Self, or the consciousness is the one that is perceiving the current content of the experience [6]. In doing so, it is also perceiving itself doing so. Who knows the Self? Obviously, the Self knows itself. There are no two Selves, with one seeing the other, there are no two you, so you can't see a thing called a Self, it sees itself.

For those, who have no inkling of this strange creature, the Self, it will take some effort, some guidance, skilful means, a teacher, and a lot of time. Some people reach there instantly, surely they are talented. Some people can stay there for long hours, surely they are rare. There are many-many methods and traditions for achieving this goal, as you must be aware. Take your pick, and for some it takes decades before they get a hang of it.

Who are others?

If I'm the Self, and if everything is just my experience, as seen by the Self, then who are these other people who claim to have their own Selves? What a strange question...

In my (very unstable and faint) experience, I see them as me, in the same way as I see all the characters that appear in my dream as me, after I wake up. Others do not have their own separate "Selves". They do have their separate personalities (which is a big problem, if you ask me :D). It appears that the Presence does not trust in having just one experiment, which is me, as my personality, it likes to take many forms. It is the same Presence that experiences multiple forms and it's the same Self. If you are experiencing a Self right now, it's the same one that I'm experiencing. Its rather confusing and must be explained via some metaphors.

For example, a screen experiences many characters, actors and scenes on itself. The screen becomes these entities, there are no entities separate from screen. An actor projected on the screen, cannot see the screen and believes he is separate from the others that appear on the same screen. From the point of view of the screen, there is no separation, it is the screen that is appearing as many to itself (or to the one watching the screen, the Self). [7]

Another example. Others are like hand puppets you make out of a bed sheet by poking your hands from different places under the sheet. These puppets talk to each other, fight with each other and are great fun to play with, these are nothing but the same sheet, operated by a single puppeteer. They look different from

outside, but are one if seen from inside the sheet. Its amusing to see little babies watch this and believe that they are "alive" and acting on their own will. An ignorant person is like a baby who thinks others are different, he takes them seriously. So am I saying, don't take other seriously? No, behave with them as you behave with yourself. What else can you do when you see others as you....[8]

Cultivation

The Self lives a secret life. It is not very obvious. Once it is brought into light, our job is done, right? No, once you see it, you will be most probably underwhelmed. You may say, is this it? Are you kidding me? I knew this all along. Of course, I'm the Self, I'm conscious of everything and of myself. It should not take 20 years of sitting in a cave to know this....That's what you may say. For many, it's a great reveal, it makes a difference of day and night. Such people are overwhelmed, and think they have now "become" something they were not before, something great. Anyhow, most fall back to their ordinary lives after some time, back to ignorance. Nothing changes, except they feel they know something more than others do.

The fact is, one cannot "become" a Self, one already is. One can become Self-realized, which may mean - the one who knows the Self and abides in it (experiences himself as the Self). Its not one of your possessions or achievements. You don't "get" Self-realization, you only get rid of ignorance.

Probably it is euphoric for some, but usually it doesn't last. It's a matter of practice to remain as Self and not to fall back into ignorance. For some it comes naturally, but most of us sweat it out. We need to Cultivate ourselves. It's a continuous process, often lifelong, to abide as the Self and let our knowing, thoughts, actions and behaviour happen naturally as a result. Cultivation changes one's whole life, his ways, lifestyle, relations, jobs, thinking, talking, doing and everything. For some it changes their taste of fashion and they want to wear strange clothes and Malas for some reason. It is debatable whether this is really necessary ;-) [9]

"There's a difference between knowing the path... and walking the path."
- Morpheus, *The Matrix*

Cultivation is a two way process. The abiding in Self naturally changes the outwards qualities and character. Changing the lifestyle or behaviour in certain ways often helps in abiding in the Self. For example, as a result of knowing the Self, one realizes that the body is an important but a tiny aspect of the Self and he naturally begins to spend less time consumed in bodily pleasures, spends less money on bodily greeds and obsessions, tries to remain healthy and fit, while

doing minimum he can for it. The body becomes a temple for the Self, instead of a trash bin for substances and foods. The body is nothing but a very useful tool for self transformation.

If someone leads a very busy life, working like a donkey to fill his boss's bank account, or is obsessed with people, who consume his whole day, he benefits a lot by giving up such lifestyle, living in a simple and relaxed way that leaves a lot of time for introspection and to practice abiding as Self. So it works both ways. Some people take it to the extreme and either totally discard their jobs, families and ignore their bodies or desperately try to arrange their outer situations so that they are "perfect" for their practice. It usually backfires. Remember, that its an internal work, and no amount of external manipulation will do it for you. One can only arrange stuff if it becomes too cumbersome or a major hindrance. There is no hurry to reach there because you are already there.

This is the whole point of spiritual practices or Sadhana. One cannot become Self-realized simply by practicing a ritual or doing something in a certain manner or by wearing fancy clothes and beards. Most of the work happens within, silently, while the outer circumstances help in that work (well, if they are not hindering). The fruits of sadhana appear automatically as the person changes and transforms from within. It is possible to refine the sadhana and to even accelerate your progress. It is a fine art and there are many good masters who teach their own recipes. Take your pick, but a master can only show you the path, you have to walk on it. Whatever may be the way, the tell-tale sign that you are progressing is - ever increasing happiness and peace, which is not momentary, but stable under all situations.

Notes:

[1] I'm very grateful to the ancient masters for their teachings, without them we wouldn't be even discussing all this. The problem is, these words have become heavily laden with all kinds of beliefs, and if I want to use these as they are, I may need to write a big fat book just to explain what I'm not talking about. Still people are going to quote it all out of context to make it mean whatever they want them to mean.

[2] See, for example, the famous Double Slit experiment, or the even stranger - Delayed Choice Quantum Eraser experiment. Such experiments demonstrate the non-existence of matter. But we will see later, that it can be just a word game, (when/how does something really exist?), there is matter, but its not just matter.

[3] I'm distinguishing a Scientist (with capital S) from science-workers. The latter are simply trained in a specific field of science and are doing a job of scientist to earn a living. A Scientist is a sage who pushes the whole humanity a few notches up by his work. These are rare.

[4] Due to the great master Raman Maharishi. I'm very grateful for his direct teachings on this subject.

[5] I'm grateful to Rupert Spira for teaching this formulation of self-enquiry.

[6] I'm grateful to Francis Lucille for this clear definition of consciousness.

[7] I'm grateful to Rupert Spira for sharing this metaphor.

[8] More about the others and questions like - if I am you then why don't I know your thoughts? ... coming soon. Meanwhile see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_Rule, a truly universal rule.

[9] I do understand that such exterior decorations are sometimes done just out of respect for the tradition, which is commendable. However, this opens up an opportunity for fake teachers trying to take advantage of gullible students, who, upon seeing the external appearance, take such a teacher for a wise man.

Creating the Experience

We have seen in the previous articles, some strange property of the Presence is responsible for the birth of the Self. By "property" I mean its ability to be either as a static witness or just as existence. When it assumes the form of a witness, it experiences itself as Self, otherwise it remains as Experiencing. It means, it can become two, while being only one, quite paradoxically. The two being the experience and the experiencer. But it does not stop there, it wants to become many.

We now explore this even stranger aspect of the Presence, which is the Experiencing. Its not merely a random process of modulations happening in the Presence, it has some interesting properties. Not only does Experiencing form impressions on the Presence, it also self-organizes itself in the form of various structures [8]. It'd be equivalent to say that the Presence self-organizes itself. Or in other words, it creates. The structures thus created are the **Creation**.

Change - the mysterious illusory force

It is our direct experience that Experiencing is not static, there is **Change**. In fact if there were no change, there wouldn't be any experience at all. So in my view change is synonymous with experience. When you experience, all you perceive is change. Change is as fundamental as Presence.

How is it possible that any change or activity or modulations even happen in something that is empty nothingness? I have no answer for that. The best answer I could find was that change is an unknowable, it cannot be reduced to anything else. Mind cannot find any explanation or cause for it. Change is, and that's all we can say about it.

We encounter a paradox here. Self is essentially changeless, it is nothingness and nothingness cannot change. Can it? Still we experience change. Hows that even possible? It is beyond the grasping power of Mind (at least for me). The only way that can happen is when you consider change as being unreal. Unreal meaning, it is, but it is not. Just as there are images in the mirror, but it is just a static mirror, images are illusion, they are not really in mirror. In other words, all change is an illusion, its not really there. This is traditionally called **Maya**.

It is also called Prakriti (Samkhya), Shakti (Shaivism), Kundalini (Hatha Yoga) or Energy of consciousness (or just Energy, New Ageism). Perhaps there are many more names in all world philosophies. Behind all those fancy names is our simple friend - change. It is very much here, present now in our everyday experience. Do not make the newbie mistake of thinking it is something magical and far out there thing. It is ordinary and very-very mysterious at the same time.

Considering that change is illusive, it is quite something. All that is manifested, all universes, past, present and future, everything that is a *thing* is because of change. It is the most powerful thing, most interesting thing in entire Presence. It is the only thing that we can experience, simply because it enables experience. In physical world we experience change in many forms - motion, light, energy, work, forces, fields etc. Matter is just changing nothingness. In mental world change is all mental processes - thoughts, memories, imaginations, perceptions, emotions etc. All nothing but non-physical changes in nothingness. Change is the metaphysical mother of **Time**, both subjective and objective time. Who'd have thought nothingness could be so interesting !

Anyhow, once you let go of the question - why there is change, you can take the next step and find out its implications, its effects, the how of it all. A change sets up a series of changes, there is never just one event, there is always a propagation of events that continues infinitely. This is our direct observation. The train of changes occurs in infinitely possible varieties. This is by necessity. Some trains of changes eventually form repeating chains, cyclic events. They have a lower entropy than mere random change. Such chains of change are being called a **Process** in this blog. Obviously, processes are infinite in number and extent, but the most interesting ones are those we can know, rest are unknowable and hence boring...(at least for me).

The Fundamental Process

The process that is responsible for all the organization that is happening will be called the **Fundamental Process** [2]. What it does is, creates information out of pure randomness. In other words it reduces the **Entropy**. It favours complexity and organization to chaos and randomness. Why does it do that? It doesn't "*do*" anything really. The process happens by necessity [3]. Anything that is organized prevails compared to the randomness, the latter results in no Experiencing.

The Fundamental Process feeds on itself. Meaning, any structures that are capable of creating more structures or augmenting themselves are favoured. Obviously, this is also by necessity. The structures that do not re-create or repair tend to get destroyed or do not progress further in complexity. Thus, the

Organizing or structuring is a natural outcome of the Experiencing. No one, or no-thing is “doing” it. There is no intention or will or cause for it. It happens because that is what must happen.

It seems there is an opposite process that’s going on in parallel, the process of destroying the structures, or an automatic increase in entropy. Everything that arises, falls... sooner or later. There is **Impermanence**. If you see it closely, the Fundamental Process is the Experiencing itself, seen as a creative process from a biased or selective perspective. We choose to see it as self-organizing, when actually there is not much happening, its all perpetual Experiencing, perpetual impermanence, because the Experiencing cannot stop, else it won’t remain Experiencing, it becomes pure Presence once it stops. The structures rise and fall on their own, and when they rise, we can choose to see them as arisen because of the Fundamental Process.

One metaphor to understand the Fundamental Process is that of tiny whirlpools, that form on the surface of running water, as impermanent structures, when seen broadly, there is nothing but water flowing downhill. The energy in the water sometimes makes its parts flow in opposite or circular way, there is no creation as such. The whirlpools are structures with a lower entropy compared to the water surrounding them, and so (selectively) appear to be formed by some process. They don’t last, but the flow never ceases.

Since the structures are a result of Fundamental Process, which is a Process, meaning a series of changes, the structures are essentially a change, they are not static, they are impermanent by necessity. Its change after all, so they arise and then something else arises, destroying the old, creating the new. Now you know why everything in this creation is called false (Mithya) and why it never lasts. Change, by definition, cannot remain static, nothing lasts, and since change is illusory, its not really there, the structures are illusory too.

This realization alone has the power to liberate you from the immense suffering that is caused when you try to hold on ever changing phenomenal stuff, people, relations, objects, bodies, minds, knowledge and all that. Everything gets destroyed in this sea of change, the only thing that never changes and is eternal is Self - the real you.

An example of the Fundamental Process is the process of speciation via natural selection, it is a tiny aspect of the Fundamental Process. From the evolution of the DNA molecule to the complex life forms, it is just the Fundamental Process acting on the physical world and creating structures. Another example is emergence of human personality via mutual interaction of mind and

environment/people/societies/ego etc. We, as we appear in the physical world, are nothing but one structure organized by this Process. (and impermanent , sadly :-))

The Fundamental Process is responsible for creation of the Mind, brain, body, the world, universe and everything else that can be experienced objectively. These are just structures. The inherent necessities in some structures puts constraints on them, and they evolve algorithmically. That explains the mathematical conformity of physical universe. Physical universe is a structure that is rule based (algorithmic) and probabilistic (statistical), and is so very predictable, except at tiny scales when statistical rules break down and it again appears as the Presence (sort of indicates it). It is debatable if there are other meaningful non-physical structures or “other universes” or even stranger things like disembodied Minds. Nothing in the Fundamental Process prevents them from existing, however, if it is not your experience, then they are as good as non-existent. Explore the possibilities, they are infinite [4].

The stream of human knowledge is heading towards a non-mechanical reality. The universe begins to look more like a great thought than a great machine. Mind no longer appears to be an accidental intruder into the realm of matter. We are beginning to suspect that we ought rather to hail it as the creator and governor of this realm.

— Sir James Jeans, *The Mysterious Universe* (1930), p-137.

The Mind as a collection of Contents

As we saw earlier, Contents appear in the experience. These are then structured in the form of Knowledge (it is an organized form of experiences, no experience means no knowledge). Knowledge pieces that fit together give rise to understanding, yet another structure [5]. Impressions form Memory, one more strange thing for you to ponder. It has a “temporal” quality.

The self-organizing proceeds even further and gives rise to a mega-structure called the **Mind**, which is a collection of contents and organizing processes [9]. (A good analogy is a computer having data, memory and programs to process/organize/use the data). As a fractal clone of the Fundamental Process, knowledge feeds on itself, that is, more knowledge leads to even more knowledge and stronger processes in order to organize it even further. For example, the knowledge of logic and rational thinking leads to a better structure of the existing knowledge and also empowers one to gain more knowledge. The knowledge of mathematics aids in better understanding of physics. Knowledge of human behaviour leads to better relations.... and so on.

The Mind is truly a great gift. In my experience, there is nothing as complex, marvelous and beautiful as the Mind. It is vast, and it is very useful. If you are on a path of knowledge, you are mostly concerned with Mind and its workings. Without Mind, there is no knowledge, no understanding and no exchange of knowledge. It is great, but it has limitations. It can be easily seen, experienced, so it is an object (after all it's a product of the Fundamental Process). As an object it is impermanent, it lasts for only for a little while, and so it becomes even more important to make full use of it.

Since knowledge is a form of impurity [6], and the Mind is full of it, the Mind itself can become a veil for the Self. The Self hides behind the Mind, and assumes it is Mind! Well, that's the bad news, the good news is that if trained and developed properly, it is the Mind that takes you back to the Self. It has the ability to reveal the Self in all its glory. Once you are back, the Mind becomes a wonderful vehicle for Experiencing.

Beyond Mind, Universal Mind and Human mind

My definition of the word knowledge is - a structure formed when experiences are organized automatically. What organizes the experiences? Its a part of consciousness I choose to call Mind. It is huge, creator of everything, still a tiny part of consciousness. How does organization happen? By the agency of auto-processes, such as evolution. E.g. winds carving a mountain into a particular shape. Universes evolving out of just a soup of atoms. I call that process the Fundamental Process .

Why are there any auto-processes? Because there is Change. Change is fundamental, we can directly experience it, nothing is static. Once there is change, things start emerging. Some change organizes itself by feeding on itself. This forms structures. It is also directly experienced. Its not a theory.

That was a brief summary of Mind and what lies beyond it. To avoid the confusion between Mind and human mind, I use the prefix "Universal", sometimes. So Mind = Universal Mind, and mind = human mind. We will now see how they are related.

Universal Mind has all the knowledge. Why? Because it has experienced what can be experienced. It has organized it all. However, it may still get new experiences, because experiencing never stops. It may get trillions of new experiences every moment. This is universal learning process, so it keeps learning (gaining new knowledge). That knowledge is learnable kind. The known unknown. It gets the experience and converts the unknown to known. It goes on forever. All that is

manifested, including us the humans, is nothing but Mind.

So why do I say that some things are unknowable even for the universal Mind? Because the Mind can only know what gets organized, what remains is unknowable. Mind gets only an interpretation of things that got organized automatically, not the things itself. Some things may be impossible to experience and so the Mind will never know them. Which means even the Mind has some ignorance. Only pure consciousness has access to everything, it is absolute.

Traditionally, the universal Mind has been personified and iconized in many ways. Ishwara (in Yoga/Samkhya), Brahma (Vedas), Devi (Mother, Shaivism) and perhaps a few names in western philosophies. Its the creator, because knowledge is essentially creation - structures in consciousness. What we know manifests, what we don't remains unseen. The discovery of universal Mind as all powerful creator spawned a variety of religions and practices that focused on pleasing it for worldly gains and even for knowledge and liberation. It can be possible and worship of creator(s) is all about that. It took a personalized form, got anthropomorphized. Do not make this newbie mistake, Mind is not a super-person that just sits there to fulfill your wishes and whims, nor does it zaps you with bolts if you make mistakes. It is essentially us, since we are essentially Self, and Mind is nothing but a manifested Self.

We humans get a little slice of Mind, because we are a limited expression of consciousness for the time being. We are a tiny part of creation, a tiny whiny structure that lasts for a few eye blinks. But we are essentially the same as whole. A fractal clone, if you will. So we as an individual experience an individual mind, and have access to its ground - the pure consciousness. After all, we are made out of consciousness.

The structures that we call "I", "myself" - body, brain, mind, a collection of memories and processes like thoughts, emotions and all that, is a product of evolutionary change. In other words, we are just parts of Mind. Its a special and complex structure, because we express consciousness actively, we have ability to say - "I'm consciousness".

As a fractal clone of Mind, our mind also organizes experiences, and we call those structures "human knowledge". So for example, we know via sensory perception and also via non-sensory perception (memories, logic, imagination, thoughts, ideas etc). This is learned knowledge. We constantly learn and convert the unknown into known. However in a very limited way.

What happens when we learn about the Universal Mind and consciousness?

Magic happens ! Now we can ask questions, and answers that are already a part of universal Mind start appearing. As the layers of ignorance that limit us into a human only mode start disappearing, we get more and more of knowledge directly. All knowledge falls on your feet.

However, there still remain unknowns and unknowables. Mind has those limitations, and mind is even more limited. My own knowledge and experience ends here. But we can speculate a bit -

What will happen when all (most) of ignorance is destroyed by the slow process of gaining more and more knowledge?

One thing we can predict is that, human mind will gain all access to Mind, it will become Mind that is already there. We become the ultimate creator. Its not a new creator, we just dissolve boundaries of our limitations and access the vastness of creation - a product of Fundamental Process. So we know all there is that's knowable.

What happens when we hit the wall in this seeming infinite Mind too? We emerge out of it and see our self as pure consciousness. Here it is meaningless to use the terms "we" and "I". Its all one. Consciousness sees itself as consciousness.

This can be called ultimate liberation. Traditionally, its called Atman merging with Paramatman (vedic view), or achieving Buddhahood (Buddhism). (Literally, Buddhi means Mind, Buddha means Beyond Mind.)

Human Mind v/s Brain

The self-organization is also responsible for the formation of the brain, the body that hosts the brain and a physical world that hosts the body. Well, very odd claim this one, isn't it in reverse – physical world-body-brain-mind-consciousness(Self)? It's a good question and an important question. The short answer is – it doesn't matter how you see it, its all one [1]. The processes in physical world leading to the Presence are same as the ones leading to a physical world starting from the Presence. (Its none other than our old friend the Fundamental Process). Your point of view decides the causal direction [7]. That direction is not one sided, it is only your perspective that defines the direction. For now, I've decided to start from the Presence, because, as we have discussed before, that is the only place where one can start from. Start from where you are, the solid ground of the Self, the most certain of all experiences.

Notes:

[1] The long answer will probably take up many pages. So I may write it down as another article someday.

[2] I'm grateful to Thomas Campbell for his teachings on the Fundamental Process. I've borrowed the phrase as it is. See :
<https://books.google.co.in/books?id=RYHtBPiZVgsC&lpg=PA1&dq=my+big+toe&pg=PA1&>

[3] If something happens by “necessity” it means that there is no possibility for anything else to happen. It is automatic, requiring no agent, no cause. It happens because that is what must happen.

[4] There are many ways to explore such possibilities, tuning out of the physical world by discarding the sensory inputs is one of them. More on that, and on questions like – what is real?, later....

[5] I'm using “organization” and “structure” interchangeably. They mean the same thing in this article – something of a lower entropy.

[6] See previous articles for this discussion.

[7] If you prefer to take the other perspective (physical-&mind), it should not cause many problems. However be prepared to answer questions such as the birth of the universe from nothing and the problem of Qualia (including consciousness) that seem to arise from nowhere.

[8] The Presence and Experiencing is traditionally and metaphorically described as a couple with various terminologies like - Purush and Prakriti (Samkhya), Shiva and Shakti (Shaivism). Obviously, the offspring is this whole creation. In philosophical terms it is Being and Becoming, or in New-age-ish terms Consciousness and Energy. Perhaps the meanings are open to interpretation, but in my view, they are all similar.

[9] I admit that the use of word "Mind" here is somewhat confusing, but I couldn't find any better word. So Mind with a capital M will be defined as the universal structure or universal Mind, and mind with small m is individual mind, a collection of thoughts, memories, imaginations, perceptions, abilities, and other processes. What's the difference? Not much, except mind is a tiny fractal part of Mind. Mind contains mind.

Chapter 5

Cessation Of Mind

The content below is an expanded version of a forum post.

Union or realization of oneness happens on cessation of mental activities. This is the age old formula (by the father of yoga Patanjali himself). All very good, but what is really meant by cessation of mental activity?

Does it mean I stop using my mind? Does it mean I stop the continuous chatter (monologue) that goes on inside my head? Does it mean I should stop perceiving things, recognizing things, naming/knowing them etc? Does it mean I bring the mind to a standstill like a dead or unconscious or asleep man? Do I need to be brain dead to get the experience of oneness?

What will stop the mental activity? Breathing in a specific way? Reciting a mantra non-stop? Staring at an image, or a mental image? Music, drumming? A drug? Or a "meditation" (whatever that is)?

How will the cessation of mental activity generate an experience of oneness? Is it magic? Is it yet another state of the mind? Does something magical happens to the Self (aka pure consciousness) when the mind stops? What is the mechanism, and if it fails, how will I know what caused the failure?

Sounds like a bunch of stupid questions. A teacher will tell you that you are thinking too much, just do it, do not waste time on these questions, its just more mental activity. But then we see thousands of seekers who go on "just doing" and even after decades reach nowhere. Not everyone is gifted, you see. One can see that the above questions are those which only a seeker on the path of knowledge can ask. Those resemble the questions which a scientist or an engineer would ask. Such people do not simply take things on faith, they need at least a convincing hypothesis, their approach is very systematic and rational. They need to go to the nuts and bolts level, need to check the blue prints and circuit diagrams. They demand a complete understanding. If you are such a person, keep reading.

I struggled with questions like these for years, and tried a lot of exercises to get rid of this "mind" thing. The result was a big zero, very frustrating. All one can do is hold the breath for a few seconds to trick the mind into not thinking or just fall asleep after falling into a trance like state. Of course, it is possible to

momentarily halt the monkey mind, stop recalling or imagining, and to enter a peaceful state of "nothingness". But it never lasts. It seems forced and unnatural, because as a human, we are habituated into using the mind non-stop. What I was doing here was just clearing the contents, I was not stopping the mind. This was a big revelation.

The best I could do was to become very aware and alert of mental activities and sensory contents, which is as good as clearing them, because I could create a distance between my Self (consciousness that I am) and mental activities (which I am not). So it was like an objectification of mind, now its just a machine with a load of software which produces thoughts and actions. So far so good, but..... still no oneness. I was totally separate from everything that the mind showed me.

Something changed when I finally started understanding teachings and tricks of non-dualism (Advaita Vedanta), originating from Vedas and explained in brilliant commentary by Shankara et al. But, the real impact happened through teachers such as Mooji, Papaji, Francis Lucille, Rupert Spira, Nisargdatta and of course, Ramana. Experiencing oneness is a piece of cake now. It lasts for a few seconds only, but is certain enough to remove all doubts, its a direct experience, not a thought, not a concept or some philosophical idea.

But how?? That's a \$M question. So we will invest some time going in depth of it first, else there will be no understanding.

What is mind and what are its activities?

This is the first question one should ask. If you do not know what are you trying to stop, you won't be able to stop it. You will terminate some or other stuff that you think is the mind, and the result will be nothing. Commonly, the non-physical collection of processes like thoughts, memories, imaginations, emotions and feelings etc. is referred to as the mind. But this is just surface of the Mind (with a capital M). We have studied Mind in past articles and we see that its a huge mega-structure. So huge that this whole physical universe is a tiny part of it. Mind is not huge in terms of size, you cannot measure it in km, because Mind itself creates space. Perhaps the physical universe is just some dimensionless numbers. Mind is huge in the sense of potential, it has almost infinite potential. Mind is a creation of the Fundamental Process (see past articles), and since this process is unceasing, not in time, the Mind is unceasing, and is not in time. The question of cessation of the Mind makes no sense in this light. Mind cannot be stopped.

Why? Because the process used to stop it will be just another mental process. It will be a substitution of one process for the other. You will simply assume that it

has stopped, but it has only changed state. Soon, the habitual processes come back. It doesn't last. Even death won't stop the Mind. Mind is universal, not individual. An individual is a product of Mind, not the reverse. A product cannot terminate its creating process.

So what are those non-superficial activities? The essential activity of the Mind is organizing and forming structures. It takes Experiencing (see past articles) and turns it into structures. Matter, bodies, brains, minds, thoughts, memories, a person etc. are all just structures. This organizing activity is "involuntary", you cannot stop it, you as a person, are the product of this activity. All you can do is become aware of it (as Self). Experience it as a process, as your part, not as yourself. That's the key.

The Trick

Mind does organization of experiences by dividing the incoming experiences into parts. The first division it creates is that of an experience and an experiencer. This can be directly seen. This is your direct experience now, there is essentially an experience, and there is the Self (you) who is the receiver of those experiences. The oneness becomes dual here. You need to note this carefully, and reverse it in order to experience the oneness. Its that simple.

The Mind doesn't stop there. It divides the experience into many, creates space to organize the pieces, creates time to organize the change or events, creates memories to store experiences, simulates experiences in the form of imagination, so on and so forth. It divides the incoming data into "external" and "internal". The external is anything that comes via senses. The internal is the activities that do not come via senses - thoughts, memories, desires etc. This creates the division of subject and object.

The Mind goes even further. It divides the objects into countless shapes, colors, textures etc. depending on the source sense organ. It divides the internal contents into many too, so e.g. a large variety of emotions, and an impressive set of mental abilities. The Mind also synthesizes, unites the parts, and this ability is the key when you are trying to unite divisions into one. We can unite everything back into one.

So lets do it

The trick is to understand the real meaning of "cessation of mind". We saw that cessation is an impossibility. And the real meaning is - **not** forcefully stopping the mind-machine or doing any of the "mind stopping acts". It results in just more

mental activity, of a different kind. All you need to do is keep all the activities of the mind in your "field of view" of awareness, bring them into front of screen of awareness, do not keep the mental activity as a background, let it become inclusive and visible as yet another object in the field of all those sensory objects.

Normally the mind will shift from one thing to another, analyzing everything one after the other. The mind also shifts to thoughts, emotions, memories etc. All you need to do is bring this activity into light of awareness, let it just be. It soon becomes very faint naturally. Now its just something happening apart from you, like other events in your field of view of awareness of which you are only a neutral witness.

Now just notice that there is only one thing - namely, an experience. One experience includes everything there is, except the witness. If you now shift your attention to the witness (Self/consciousness), you will see that now the experience has been reduced to just "experiencing". There is nothing else except this experiencing. And there is no difference between the experience and the experiencer. They are one. There is oneness.

There are still a thousand things, its still same busy-busy mind, but now its only a process in the whole and you are aware of it. Shift your awareness away from the process towards the wholeness. There is just "isness". The divisions are created by the Mind, and it is still doing it, but you are not bothered, you know its all one. You can directly see it now.

You will find that the experience of oneness has always been there. You were one with everything since the beginning. It was covered up by the activity of the Mind. You have not "become" one, you have just realized that you were always one. There, this is what Patanjali meant.

FAQs

What is this thing I call "field of view of awareness" or simply the field or screen or canvas of awareness?

It is the sum total of all the contents that you can be aware of. With eyes open, it is the view of the world outside plus a "view" of all the mental activities inside, overlaid on that. With eyes closed, only the visual contents disappear, rest of the stuff is still there on the screen.

With eyes open, the view tends to snap into a 180x180 solid angle of visual field, with mental activities as "background", and the Self as the receiver of all of the

view. With eyes closed you get a 360 solid angle view, with just "happenings" of mental events, sounds, touch and smells. You can eliminate sounds, smells to clear it further. With a flotation tank, the touch is also gone. You can stop the useless chatter, recalls, imaginations with some practice, and most of the content is gone. Mind is still there, only that the contents are missing. Its you and a minimal experience, that's all. It may or may not make the oneness easier. You don't need to go to such lengths to kill the contents. Its artificial, and does not last. Best way is to let everything be, just ignore it all. The everyday waking state of the Mind is all you need.

How to bring everything onto the screen of awareness?

To do this, its best to get into the usual "introspection mode" we have discussed in past articles on introspection. Keep the eyes open, be quiet and fully alert. Just plain everyday state of mind is good enough. Notice the surroundings, notice the objects, shapes and colors, sounds, smells, and everything simultaneously. This "defocussing" or zooming out, puts them all together on the canvas of your awareness. Be aware of them all at once, not trying to focus on one thing exclusively. Notice the mental activities - thoughts, recognition, perceptions, memories, reminders, and everything that goes on there. Bring them on the same canvas of awareness. Now the collection of objects and mental processes are in your "field of view" nicely and sharply. You have objectified the mind, it is just another process happening in front of you. You are the witness, not the thinker or perceiver.

What happens when you include mind as an object in the field of awareness?

First thing you will notice is that there is only one thing left - a pure experience. There is just an experience, nothing else. Probably the mind will jump back into it and start dividing things up, naming them, recalling and recognizing. Its ok, it means that you have a healthy and functioning mind. But be aware that all these activities are only a part of your experience. Include them in your experience , which is only one single experience. There cannot be two experiences.

How to unite the experience and the experiencer?

Shift your awareness to the one that is "experiencing". Its the usual Self (consciousness) which is seen as emptiness (no-thing). At this point notice that there is nothing but an experience of this experiencer experiencing.

Meaning, you have now included the Self into your one and only experience. Notice that that's all there is. There is nothing apart from this one experience in

this whole existence, and there was never anything else. All those thousand things were merely dividing acts of the mind. There are still divisions, but now you can see the reason behind them. Those are artificial, illusory. The Self is not "getting" an experience from somewhere, it is being that experience, and is actually same as the experience. In other words there are no two, there cannot be.

This in essence is the shortest and most direct way to get to the experience of oneness, unity, union or yoga, whatever people call it. It is very direct and takes no time. Writing about it is more difficult than actually experiencing it.

Chapter 6

Paradox

The following content is an expanded form of a forum post.

The whole point of the path of knowledge is to arrive at perfect answers. By perfect I mean those that are obvious, self-evident and based on direct experience, direct knowing, and sound reason and logic. However, a seeker will soon encounter serious issues if he tries to be so strict and rigid. He may find that there are many answers, all of them can be called perfect in above sense. Sometimes they are contradictory, and still make sense. Soon he will find that this is the norm, not an exception. Almost everything is a paradox.

By paradox I mean statements that are apparently contradictory, yet perfect and more importantly the Mind can easily grasp why that is so. If the Mind cannot see through a paradox, it remains an unsolved puzzle, an incomplete piece of knowledge, or most of the time there is some error somewhere or an unfounded belief is hidden in the logic. A paradox is clean, logical and complete knowledge. There are no doubts about it.

Paradox is fundamental. Existence is basically paradoxical. Lets see some examples.

Existence is all that is "out" there, but it is also identical to the Self (consciousness) that's "in" here. The Self is everything, it is infinite, but it is also a tiny point of nothingness. Presence is pure emptiness, yet it is everything at the same time, there is no space in it, yet its infinite. There is unity, yet we perceive it as multiplicity. The Self is changeless background which experiences change, yet it is change itself. The world is illusory, yet there is nothing as solid as that. Mind conceals our true nature, but its the mind that takes us back there. Knowledge is ignorance, yet knowledge itself brings us out of ignorance. Realization is effortless and most natural, easier than breathing, but it also take a lot of effort and is immensely difficult. A seeker seeks that which he already is. All there is, is perfection, yet we see all sorts of imperfections around us. Individuals have no free will of their own, yet we all act as if they have it. Universe emerges out of randomness, yet is perfectly ordered and mathematical. Physical universe is algorithmic and mathematical, yet mathematical systems are either incomplete or inconsistent (Godel's theorem). Mathematical systems are so, yet we humans can see the logical truths that are unprovable. There is no ultimate purpose, but everything including our path seems to be purposeful and meaningful. The only

"reality" there can be is simulation ("fake").

I'm sure there must be many more such paradoxes. It all seems hopelessly nonsensical initially. But surprisingly it all makes sense. The mind blowing thing is that we can see through them. IMO, these arise out of the limitations of mind, which tries to desperately make sense out of something which is beyond its capability, and lands into the pit of paradox instead.

Well, the above paragraph is a paradox itself. First I say it all makes sense, then I say it doesn't. And that's how it is. We can see why it is so very easily. The paradoxical statements taken separately are meaningful, but when joined together they become apparently meaningless. That's because the mind encounters a logical difficulty while fully knowing that both statements are about the same thing and are perfectly valid.

But how are we able to put them together and make peace with the rational abilities of the mind? Because our experience tells us so. Only an experience gives us a complete picture, not logic. Experience overrides logic, always.

Interestingly, we can exploit the above to create a good definition of "truth". If you define truth as identical to your experience, all paradoxes resolve themselves. They are now all "true", there is no contradiction.

If its your experience, its your truth. And when I say "your truth" I mean it literally. Truth is subjective, everyone must "get" his own truth. What I say may or may not be true, it must be so for you also. When you are adamant about what is truth, you are merely enforcing your own experience on others. It may happen, and happens most of the time, that many do not agree. There are 7 billion versions of truth for anything out there.

Once you realize this fluidity of the word truth, you will be very careful in its use. I do that as much as possible, avoid calling something as truth, unless it is very obvious under the context. And once you realize that paradoxes underlie everything, you'd be very careful in making definitive statements. In other words, you start sounding as nebulous, self-contradicting and mysterious as a mystic. That's a compliment.

Truth of a statement can also be evaluated via logic. The prior condition for logical truths in order for them to work is - proper definitions. If you do not have axioms, nothing comes out of empty logic. The choice of axioms is arbitrary. In path of knowledge, the trick lies in choosing good axioms. What are good axioms? Obviously, ones that are derived from a direct experience. Rest are merely beliefs, ideas, assumptions, hypotheses, imaginations, made up BS, lies and

what not. No matter how solid your logic is, the truths derived out of such axioms will never be perfect. BS in is BS out, not matter how hi-tech your computer is.

There is only experience, as we have seen, and so there is only truth, there cannot be anything else. So truth is one. There are no multiple truths. This may not seem right, but it is. Is it another example of a paradox? Aren't there little truths everywhere? It actually depends on how your mind wants to look at it. If it divides an experience, then the parts can be evaluated as true or false. We are in duality here, which is of course a byproduct of a functioning mind. In common language we say that there are *levels of truth*.

For example, its a common query that if everything is perfect, and the Self is all knowing and powerful, why is there ignorance and misery, why on earth the Self chose to appear in nasty forms we see all around us? Usually a mystic will just laugh and utter - why not? Most of the teachers will give a canned response of "why not" to such questions. And that is the only answer that makes sense. The teacher is trying to make you realize that you need to see the whole truth, not parts of it.

The part - everything is perfect - is true, that's your direct experience, and the other part that there is mess around us is also true and is obviously a direct experience. The problem is paradox. Minds do not deal with it elegantly. Mind is jumping from one level of truth to the other. Its jumping from nondual experience to dual experience, and it can't make any sense of it. The solution is - transcend mind, look at the experience. Its the whole truth. The whole truth is that there is perfection and imperfection simultaneously.

As an aside, you can go further and ask why. Because imperfect is also perfect. There is no law there that prohibits Self from manifesting as mess, and so it does. Presence is infinite, it has infinite potential. Self is infinitely free, so obviously all situations are allowed, perfection, imperfection, their combinations and overlays, both together and not there at all, all possibilities get expressed. And that's all you see.

One interesting result of defining the truth as above is as follows. Since truth is experience, and Self is nothing but experience itself, Self is the truth. Since there is nothing else there except the Self, the Self is the only truth there is. Everything else is false. So when you divide the Experiencing into the experienced and the experiencer, the experienced is false, just an illusion.

But wait, experienced stuff is also an experience an is the truth. So how...? Well,

yes, it is the truth, even if it is false. That's what a paradox is :)

Layers of Ignorance

All there is, is Experiencing. Its pure and perfect. Something interesting happens in the Experiencing - appearance of a Mind, the universal Mind, organizer of all experiences. Mind starts building structures - knowledge. The Self finds itself surrounded by structures. Structures hide the "what-is" or Presence and instead Self gets a "view" that is made-up, artificial. This view is nothing but knowing, knowledge itself. Mind presents that knowledge incrementally. While the structures are still forming, the knowledge appears incomplete and is seen as ignorance. It takes more experiences to complete the knowledge, which is done, but not before incomplete knowledge does its job - of causing suffering.

This incomplete knowledge is Ignorance. In essence, knowledge is ignorance. Mind is limited, it brings in immense amount of knowledge, still it remains incomplete. For a human mind, which is a part of Mind, the situation is even worse. Humans spend their whole life (or lives) under the spell of ignorance, well most of them do.

Origin and End

How does ignorance start?

This is a frequently asked question. In view of the above it starts as soon as the knowledge gathering starts. And when does knowledge start? It starts as soon as Experiencing itself starts, which starts organization of experiences via the Fundamental Process. And when does that start? Well, you can see where this is going. We quickly hit a wall here and encounter something that is unknowable.

Why is it? Because we are trying to apply the concept of time where it cannot be applied. Mind itself creates time, it cannot be applied to "before Mind" or beyond Mind. So the word "start" loses its meaning. Masters would tell you that ignorance is as ancient as Self itself, which is infinitely old. This answer is metaphorical, because Self is beyond time, or the idea of time does not apply to the Self. Experiencing is beyond time too, it is Change, which does not happen in time. So all we can say is - ignorance is, knowledge is.

Why does the all knowing Self get into ignorance, why does it even allow it? Self is not ignorant, Mind is. Mind (and mind) creates knowledge, and hence also creates ignorance. Self does not allow it, nor it disallows it, it merely witnesses the

play, it has no interest and is also highly interested. You will find mystical speak here and paradoxes. Yes that's normal, and we can see that its exactly like that.

When does ignorance end?

Now this one is a more useful question. It ends as soon as knowledge is completed. The completion involves realization that everything is Self. This dissolves all ignorance instantly, and the Mind is freed, ending suffering. A happy ending.

How to end ignorance?

It is simple. Realize who you are. As an individual, when the mind knows that it is nothing but an illusion in Self, ignorance ends. It cannot be done via reading about it, or by hearing it from a master, it can happen only via a direct experience. Why? because, as we know surely now, only experience creates knowledge. The direct experience of Self completes the knowledge.

How to get that experience?

Strangely, you cannot get it. It happens when the time is right. I call it Ripening, some people may call it Grace. A person has no control over anything, as we have seen before, and has no control over when his mind completes the knowledge. A person is only an illusion. Ripening happens, Grace happens, and experience of Self happens.

It can be triggered by a book, teachings, just some words that remind you of Self, some other experience, can arrive via a practice, by introspection, by meditation, energetic manipulation, drug use or perhaps by intervention from universal Mind itself. (Note the similarities with Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, I'm obviously inspired by him, but it can be shown that he is more or less right, by various accounts).

Can the Ripening be quickened?

I don't know. Try it, who knows, it may work. Masters would say that if you are fortunate enough to encounter a teaching about the Self by any happening whatsoever, you are already going through Ripening. In other words, just knowing that such possibility exists is a sign of Grace. So if you are reading this, be sure that you are under the wings, so to speak. Once the Ripening is complete, you will be free. There is no harm in asking for "more Grace", "more Ripeness". It may work, or may not work. Reading about Self, singing its praises, being with wise, attending meetings that discuss it, practices that focus on mind, body and energies are said to quicken it. Sometimes just presence of a master is enough. But as usual, we cannot say if the knowledge is "caused" by such acts, or it merely happens irrespective of these acts to "get it". See the article on effort, for example.

Layers of Ignorance

If you are under the Grace, Self-Enquiry or introspection is the fastest way to get there. Is it a guaranteed way? No, we control nothing, remember that. Once we start questioning, which is essentially what path of knowledge is, we begin dismantling ignorance actively. Who is acting? No one, again this should be noted.

The ignorance is removed in the reverse order of its accumulation. So we go from outer to inner layers progressively. Its of utmost importance to note that we do not destroy the structures that cause ignorance, we merely see past them. In other words, we do not destroy the incomplete knowledge, we just complete it. So removal of ignorance is a process of gaining more knowledge.

The following is my understanding of layers. It matches my own experiences. Some of you may find more or less of them. It doesn't matter.

1. Inert matter is the first layer of ignorance. Inert matter, which is not really inert, but shows incessant activity, is a structure in Mind, and hence is knowledge. One can say that the associated ignorance is huge. Its just gas, crystals and rocks. Self "thinks" its inert, rigid, bound in tight laws. All it sees is highly organized matter, which is itself. There is nothing there to remind the Self of what it is. Self itself is "inert and sleeping". Well, some metaphors there, but you get the picture. Can there be more layers that are "worse" than inert matter? Who knows. All we can experience is inert matter, there is nothing more inert than that, but the possibility remains open. Perhaps a matter which is even less active in some other universe. I am going to ignore non-physical stuff because it may not be in the experience of many.

2. Active matter is highly energized matter, such as reactive chemicals (e.g. fire), or radioactive elements. Sun, water, some planets etc. are active but are still tightly bound by mechanical laws. Laws means organization and hence knowledge. Self "thinks" its nothing but such activity. Here and in layer one, there is no possibility for Mind to know anything else. Its utterly and completely ignorant if you consider only these two layers.

3. Living matter, which is just plain matter but with some interesting and complex organization, is the third layer. DNA, unicellular organisms, plants, fungi etc. are structures of matter that grow, replicate and act in complex ways. They are mechanical and chemical, still bound by laws, but have a tiny bit of freedom. Self "thinks" its life. Its engaged in a play of germination, growth, reproduction and

decay back to inert matter. Its engrossed in it. Here also there is no hope for Mind to know anything more. But we see immense amount of organization, much more than active matter is, a huge variety of actions, and forms. It simply means more knowledge.

4. Rudimentary minds are forth layer, where there is ingrained learning (genetic), basic memory and survival instincts. Insects, fish and reptiles have such minds. Also called reptilian minds. They have much more knowledge and perceive more than mere living matter, and have intricate bodies of living matter to play with. Self is mesmerized by them, its a captivating experience for Self. Again, such mind has no potential to know anything more that what is already hard coded. I can safely put machines at this level, as they currently are (2017).

5. Animal minds are fifth. They have even more knowledge, learning ability, emotions, rudimentary Ego and even some intelligence. Apes, mammals and birds are in this layer. Self is engaged in a survival game here, completely unaware of itself. That's a metaphor as usual. Minds and brains are highly evolved here, but still they have no possibility of completing the knowledge. They lack self reflection. Or in other words, animal minds lack the capability to know the Self. This is somewhat debatable, and some of you may say that there is some potential here. It is ok if that is your experience. Some people may opine that creatures with a vertebral column or spinal cord are well equipped to know their Self. I leave it to you. But know that they are on a brink, they can get that potential any time, things evolve, they don't stay same.

6. Human minds are sixth on the layers of ignorance. We are self aware, Homo sapiens sapiens, and it simply means, we are capable of knowing that which no other creature can know - the Self. So now you know why a human birth is considered most precious of all births. It is special. Human mind can reflect deeply, express and learn effectively, and has higher cognitive functions to override the lower (more ignorant) ones. Teachers, teachings, transfer of knowledge and students appear at this level. This is a miracle. Our pretty bodies with opposing thumbs and notoriously agile vocal cords makes it so simple to survive and leave a lot of time for self reflection. So humans have the needed potential to complete the knowledge.

But wait a minute. Why do only a handful of billions of us know the Self? Aren't we all the same Homo S. S.? Unfortunately, not all are created equal, we are on different sub-layers, ranging from totally ignorant animal-like to totally liberated and enlightened kind. All shades of awakening are in between. The reason is - Ego, which we had discussed in nauseating depths. The ignorant part of the human mind dominates most of us, and higher intellect is rarely seen. We have

devoted many articles for study of extraordinary capabilities of the mind, so you already know how awesome it is. And we have devoted many articles on afflictions of the mind, so you know what a mess it is. That's another reason, no one is same. There is varying amount of ignorance in human kind. Fortunately this is changing, as it must, and the possibility of knowledge is increasing day by day.

So not only the completion of knowledge is a natural process, we humans have devised clever ways to get there quickly. In other words, we try to quicken our evolution by intention and effort. The funny thing is, if you ask anyone, even the most retarded person, if he is aware, and if he is aware of being aware, you will most probably get an Yes ! Which means humans are already there, very little needs to be done. However, Self is engrossed in Egoic stuff for some reason, it doesn't let go of it easily and Ego fights back, it has a mind of its own. So people would say yes, but then blankly stare at you, as if asking whats the big deal?

7. Parahuman minds are seventh. Now what kind of bird is that? They are also known as Angelic minds, non-physical beings or Devas. Just as we humans possess a physical body, these minds possess a non-physical one, which in their view is as physical as it can be. We are in a woo-woo territory now. Those who have direct experiences will agree, and others will simply laugh. So its perfectly ok if you think I lost it all here and its time to close this page. You are sane and intelligent. I'd do exactly that. However, as I said your experience may differ, you may find no evidence of a particular layer, which is fine. I'm on a borderline here, and I'm including these "things" only speculatively.

Going into even more speculation, it is said that parahumans have such a grand mind that they have conquered suffering, they live a heavenly existence, they have everything and can create everything on whim. Bill Gates is peanuts compared to them. Well that was a joke, but you get the picture. There is no motivation for them to remember who they are. For us humans, suffering and bondage is a great motivation, its a blessing. Nothing works faster than a combination of carrots and sticks. Parahumans have only carrots. But I guess they can complete the knowledge in an eye blink just by intention. They already know what Self is, but they are not very interested. Self is enjoying heavenly pleasures here, it is also not interested.

8. Rishis or Buddhas are eight and it would be stupidity to call them ignorant. It is a thin layer, almost non existent. Only thing is - these minds still experience individuality if they choose to. They are liberated and can take any form, from inert matter to humans to Devas. They can create and maintain whole universes. Since they are already enlightened and liberated, there is no proper ignorance

here, except the Self is engaged in a grand game of creation. There are tiny vrittis (desires), and that's all there is, just nominal ignorance.

How do I know that? I don't. If I knew I wouldn't be here writing this blog. Can there be more layers between 7th and 8th, like differently awakened beings? Who knows. I can cook up some, but probably that will be too much for you to swallow.

9. Universal Mind is the ninth layer. Now this one I'm not cooking it up. It is by necessity. Fundamental Process creates one thing and one thing only, which is this universal Mind. It contains everything else, from Rishis to atoms. It is one, no duals here and no individuality, just pure knowledge. It is now familiar Ishwara, the creator according to the ancients. This makes religious people very happy. I don't mean to destroy their beliefs, but it is not an ordinary entity with superduperhuman powers, it is just a vast, almost infinite collection of structures. Our puny human minds cannot comprehend what it is.

That said, it has ignorance. That's a surprise, but remember that wherever there is structure, there is knowledge and ignorance. Universal Mind still dwells in duality, even if it itself is one. It still divides. The first division it creates is that of experience and an experiencer, just like we, human minds, do. Anyhow the ignorance is almost nil. It always knows it is Self. I cannot say anything more about it, except that it has some fundamental limitations. Those of you who know it via direct experience will concur.

So it is obvious now that when the ignorance is removed our mind resembles universal Mind. It does not become yet another universal Mind, it simply merges with it. The ignorance is like barriers which prevent us from seeing what we are, and its removal is like breaking those barriers. At this stage, we not only know the what of Self, but also how, why, when and where of it all.

So this is how, in my limited and uninformed view, the Mind completes its journey to Self. It should be obvious that there are no fixed laws here, it may or may not happen in that order. But there are general predictable patterns. For example inert matter cannot jump to a Buddha, it has to evolve towards it. These are tiny steps, but once in a while there happens a big leap.

If you are on a path, just knowing this landscape eases everything. One can destroy all ignorance in one single blow if one wants to and if conditions are correct. Remember that you can quicken it, if possible, but there is no hurry, you are already the Self.

States of Mind

It appears that Consciousness cycles through states, but Consciousness is changeless, its the mind that changes state. We explore various states of mind here. All of them are highly interesting and educating.

Consciousness vs Mind

Before we jump to the topic, lets clear up some confusions around the words consciousness and mind. There is a tendency to confuse the two, probably because in west the word mind is sometimes taken as a synonym of consciousness, or consciousness is taken as a "property" of mind. Even the word mind has many interpretations ranging from "mind is brain" to "mind is existence". The abuse of these words is too common. So we have sentences such as - "I was not conscious" or "my awareness was dim and now its sharp and bright" or "I practice to grow consciousness, to be more conscious" etc.

Such sentences arise from the misunderstanding that consciousness is an entity that resides in the body and goes through states or has "amounts". If you are a regular reader of this blog, or are on a path of knowledge, you will slap your forehead when you see the widespread confusion on this word.

So to be clear, mind is not the same thing as consciousness. Mind is an object that occurs in consciousness. It is seen, it is experienced. Its a collection of processes - thoughts, memories, imagination, emotions, perceptions, intentions, desires and all that mental stuff. Mind is not same as brain also. Brain is also an object that occurs in consciousness. Mind is non-physical, because it is perceived directly, and brain is physical because it is perceived via senses. Consciousness is the Self (with capital S), the silent witness and background of everything, of every experience. It is not a thing, not physical, not non-physical, not a process, nor any "emergent" property of anything. It has no qualities, and it is "empty and pure". All other stuff is just contents in consciousness.

So body, world, brains, minds and everything happen on the screen of consciousness. In other words consciousness itself becomes these things, which are seen as an temporary illusion. It is unchanging, always the same eternally. It has no states. [1]

States of Mind

So why do our experience seemingly has high/low/wide/narrow kinds of experiences? That's because mind has states. It goes through all kinds of processes and statuses. If you are identified with mind, you will take its states as your own. That's just ignorance and its easy to clear.

Just as when there is anger, you say - "I'm angry" instead of "my mind is reacting with anger now" or "there is an experience of anger". This shows identification with mind and mental states. You are not angry, you are a witness of the state of anger your mind is in, you are consciousness. Drop that identification and it will be crystal clear. Once you see that, you will hesitate to say "I was sleeping" or "I was unconscious" because now you know the "I" is unchanging, only the contents are changing. [2]

In this article we focus on the changes in mind. Please note that we are talking about human mind, not about universal Mind. Universal Mind also has states (and must have them, as it is impermanent too), but that is something beyond the scope of this article.

1. Waking

This is the most common state we find the mind in. Note that you are never in a waking state, your mind is in that state, and you are merely witnessing it. We are going to be precise. Consciousness (Self) is always in a "waking state", but as we now know, that's not very precise, it has no state, not even one. Forget about using the word state with consciousness, its not applicable here.

So what's this waking state? Obviously, it is characterized by a more or less functioning brain, active senses, presence of coherent thoughts, purposeful and intelligent behaviour etc. The body is in "control" of the person, and its actions are intentional. There is also some degree of control over thoughts and desires/impulses and they do not result in instant action. We perceive external objects clearly, recognize them clearly and memory operates reasonably well. This enables proper functioning in the physical world.

So in essence, its a state in which the mind configures itself for an experience of world and body, in other words - of Samsara. As you must have guessed, this state is a tiny part of our whole mental existence, it enables the human experience we call life.

Well, above is an idealization of waking state. It is seldom that perfect, if you can call it perfect. There are sub-states of this state, or variations of it. We will list them from worse to best, all waking states reflecting various degrees of afflictions. *Your waking state defines your quality of life.* That tiny sentence packs a lot of wisdom. Contemplate it.

1.1 Insane mind is a waking state where most of the functions of the mind are in a total chaos. Mind has broken down and cannot function normally, although it is fully awake and senses function normally. However the mind distorts all sense data or ignores it and there is hardly any control over the body or speech or thoughts or emotions.

1.2 Disturbed mind is borderline insanity which occurs in weak and untrained minds because of extreme situations like extreme fear, anger, jealousy or trauma to body or mind. The emotions run rampant and often the person talks nonsense (sometimes aloud) and is extremely unbalanced and fickle.

1.3 Criminal mind is almost insanity, but there is presence of coherent thoughts and actions. The person seems to behave "naturally" and talks sense, but his mind is full of destructive thoughts, negative memories, harmful desires, and his attitude is usually violent. In other words, its a fully awake mind, but has lost all wisdom, control and sense because of ill tendencies and afflictions of all kinds.

1.4 Stupid mind is not so uncommon waking state. The faculties of the mind do not work optimally, there is confusion, lack of comprehension, irrational speech, unusually irrational behaviour and lack of learning. Such a person can be dull or very active body wise, but the mind is slow.

1.5 Egoic mind is a waking state fully under the control of Egoic tendencies. The person is very bright and active. Doing, working, thinking, planning, chasing mates - all hallmarks of an awake and fully functioning mind are present. Only that, whatever he does or thinks is merely survival related. Such a state is very fickle, automatic, mechanical and is often called a monkey mind. Its never steady. Emotions dominate the thinking and overcome logical thoughts. Speech shows all colours of an active Ego. Its safe to say that majority of humanity stays in this waking state in their waking hours.

1.6 Shifty mind happens when a person shifts randomly from a rational or peaceful state of mind to any of the above mentioned states. A newbie meditator knows this state best. There is peace and intelligence for a few minutes and then the state shift backs to some messy state.

1.7 Rational mind is a waking state dominated by rational and logical thought. Well finally a good state, but not really. The mind is restless, always seeking stuff and plotting long rational plots to get this or that or to do this or that. There are just too many thoughts, and less action. Such people are seen absorbed in their head all the time. But they are awake and fully functioning. Speech is very well organized and makes total sense. Actions are intelligent and logical. Emotions are mostly under control. The intelligence may serve Ego sometimes, which makes such people excellent businessmen, professionals, politicians etc.

1.8 Concentrated mind is a waking state where the mind is fully engrossed in a higher mental function. It can be mathematics, arts, performances, or actions (e.g. pilots), that need extreme mental skills. Artists, writers, scientists, engineers are found in such state, but not always. A newbie seeker or meditator also remains in such state for perhaps more time than above mentioned people. Its a very sophisticated state, to say the least.

1.9 Equanimous mind is a state dominated by consciousness, not by mental functions or Egoic madness. The person may do things or talk in an ordinary way, but he is fully aware and abides in Self. There is full control over actions, thoughts and speech. They seem moderately active and peaceful. They can be engaged in complex thoughts or tasks that require extreme skill or concentration, but with a difference - they can see that actions happen, but there is no doer, only a witness.

1.10 Absorbed mind is a waking state where the mind surrenders itself totally and is fully introverted towards the Self. There is no action, very few thoughts, and no speech. However the person is extremely awake, alert and in a blissful state.

You can imagine that there can be in-between states or a continuous interchange of above states. I'm using my own names here, but you will find similarities with traditional description of waking state, such as those by Patanjali or Vyasa. If you are wondering why I'm not mentioning EEG or brain activity anywhere, that's because its a childish way to classify mental states. The EEG or fMRI of a scientist and lunatic would show exactly the same activity in waking state. A seeker needs a finer knowledge than that.

2. Daydreaming

Daydreaming is a common name of states of mind involving imagination, simulation and memory recall. The mind is introverted and attends to non-physical contents. The senses are fully functioning and body is either resting or doing an auto-task (such as walking or cleaning or potty rituals). Many people

spend hours in such state not knowing how disconnected they are from present. They are dreamy, talk less coherently, and are less active, but exceptions are always there.

It can be a very pleasing experience, especially if the imagination is of a pleasant kind, happy memories etc. But when the imagination takes on negativity, such as worry, terrors, or angry fantasies of harming others or recall of traumatic events again and again, it becomes suffering. The only way to come out of it is to bring the mind back into awareness. Be very conscious even if you are daydreaming or recalling.

In extreme cases this state causes hallucinations, especially when the person has an afflicted waking state. On the other hand, it is possible to get some information out of universal Mind for some talented people, when they are in this state.

3. Dreaming

In this state the body is relaxed and inactive. Senses are diminished or bypassed, but still active. The mind is engaged with purely non-physical contents. It creates whole worlds, people, events and experiences out of nothing but imagination, memories and randomness. The perception is less defined, there are mocked up senses of sight and sound, and a very rudimentary body, which appears or disappears on need basis.

The perceived environment is completely volatile and has a very rough story-line to it. The memory is active, as one can recall things in a dream, and some content gets impressed on to it. But as one comes out of this state the memory of it starts fading. This shows that dreams go into a buffer memory, and if not transferred to the main memory, their recall becomes almost impossible.

There are two sub-states of dreaming state - Hypnagogic state and Hypnopompic state. These are transition or borderline states between waking and dreaming. Non-physical explorers use them for launching into non-physical worlds. They have the perfect blend of a waking mind that is more or less disconnected from the usual physical world, and sleep state.

4. Lucid Dreaming

This is a dreaming state with exceptionally better functioning mind. In other words, it's a dreaming state, but the mind has all the abilities of a typical waking state. Now that's fun because now mind can bend the dream in whatever manner

it likes. The memory functions very well and often full and vivid recall is possible.

Anyhow, the content is still imaginary and recalled stuff. It is vivid and "life-like" and some awesome actions like flying are possible. There is a body and fake sensation when they are needed, and its possible to assume any body.

The important thing to note is that such states are more likely when the waking state is unafflicted, such as those in 1.8,1.9 or 1.10 above. A good thing is it is easy to get into this state with regular practice and use of some simple techniques. Search and you shall find, there is a lot of info out there.

5. Astral Projection

Or the state with misnomer "out-of-body". In this state of mind, the contents are purely non-physical, and unlike Lucid dreaming, do not depend on imagination or memory. It is possible that this state gets corrupted by some dream elements, but seasoned explorers can tell the difference. The astonishing thing about this state is that it is as good as an unafflicted waking state, except the sensory content is fully originated in non-physical worlds. So, by definition, the sensory content is as *physical* as that of waking state.

The mind functions fully, there is a body (malleable), senses, worlds that are rule based, and most importantly - other minds can be encountered. In dreaming or lucid dreaming we can encounter other people, but we know they are imaginary, or just our own creation. Especially in lucid dreaming this knowledge is present while it is happening. In astral projection, one can be fairly sure of others as not being their own creation. Similarly, worlds that are stable, more vivid, and independent of one's mind can be experienced (just like our usual physical world).

So where is the fun if its just like normal waking state? Well, there is a difference, there is almost no limit to what one can do or experience in that state. The downside is - one can encounter nasty stuff as well just like in this physical world, so some caution, guidance and experience is needed. Its a vast subject, and much info is available for interested readers. I'd just point out again, that mediators or seekers or people abiding in Self for a major portion of their waking hours are more likely to be in this state. It is obvious why that should happen.

6. Altered states

These are artificially induced states of the mind using substances or mental techniques. One can include some religious experiences or orgasmic experience in this category too, which happen naturally. One can safely categorize hypnotic

states under this kind. So its a vast subject in itself.

In case of substances, one or more parts of the mind breaks down and stops functioning, or its functioning is altered, giving rise to whacky experiences of all kinds.

Sometimes the barriers that separate human mind from universal mind break down, and the person gets a glimpse of what lies beyond mind. The actual experience doesn't matter, what matters is that the fossilized beliefs of that person break down completely, and he opens up for more knowledge. Hopefully he takes up a path and becomes a seeker. However that doesn't happen for the majority, and they simply abuse the substances for fun.

Eventually the substances break down most of the mind and brain/body, and the person enters afflicted states of mind in waking hours. That's hardly any progress. Such people spent their lives in delirium, bad health and relations, deluding themselves that they know something "more" just because they had some whacky experiences. Stupidity at its height.

Substances (or "medicine"), however, are accepted as a valid technique in some traditions (including Yoga), so I do not totally discourage that, but be wise, do not get addicted, and best, do not take up that path at all.

7. Light Sleep

Its a state in between deep sleep and dreaming, lucid dreaming or projecting. The mind is partially active, except senses are functioning reasonably well, so for example, even the slightest sound or light change wakes us up. There is a tiny bit of perception of body state, and mental chatter or barrage of desires and intentions that go on. However, the body is inactive and is completely relaxed.

There is a faint memory imprint of this state, and that's how we can say that we were sleeping. It fades very quickly because the contents are next to nothing. Some people may argue that this state is non-existent, perhaps I'm making it up. Maybe, but I'm just recording my own experience, it is possible that some people don't experience light sleep or have no recall of it at all. I can't find any EEG signature for this state, but then I never looked thoroughly for it. We all know some people who are light sleepers and they are always found complaining that they didn't sleep well. We get such situations when we are tense, stressed, or sick. The sleep feels just like drowsiness, not like sleep.

8. Deep Sleep

Its the most boring and most interesting state of the mind. Boring because there is absolutely no content in this state, and interesting because its the most blissful state of mind and people like to debate it a lot. This state is the reason why sleeping is a pleasant activity (if you can call it an act).

We cannot recall or experience our own deep sleep, because the mind, senses and memory shuts down to a large extent. We can externally observe others in deep sleep and can arrive at some conclusions. An interesting conclusion is that the world doesn't disappear for others and the mind and brain of the sleeper is still active, but not in the same way as that of waking or dreaming states. We can note that a deep sleeper does not wake up easily. But it is possible to bring him back into waking, which means the senses still get into the depths of mind and shake it back into wakefulness.

So we can conclude that everything still functions, but is bypassed and the mind takes a break from its incessant dividing and memorizing process. Its absorbed back into the Self. So deep sleep is as good as waking absorptive state (Savikalp Samadhi), except there are no contents (its Nirvikalp Samadhi).

So what happens to the consciousness in deep sleep? Does it disappear? People ask this often, and some do assume that it disappears, because they believe it to be a product of mind/brain. However, its more correct to say that mind disappears. And if you want to be even more precise - the contents disappear. We get back the usual mind in its waking state with consciousness illuminating contents after a few hours of deep sleep. So obviously nothing disappears, only the contents are not processed for a while.

How would one know that consciousness is still there witnessing nothingness during deep sleep? One cannot know that, because knowledge gathering is a function of mind, and its mostly inactive that time, moreover, no memory is formed, as there is nothing to store into memory, so even if your mind gets a few glimpses of still being conscious, they evaporate from the mind and you can't recall anything about deep sleep. However, you cannot know the reverse too, because you or others cannot see the disappearance of consciousness. Others simply blindly believe that since you are inactive in deep sleep and therefore "unconscious". From the point of view of your consciousness, it was always there.

Another interesting thing that happens in deep sleep is that time "stops". The sense of time is derived from change (in mental or physical environment) and when there is nothing that changes, no time is registered. Your time of going into

deep sleep is same as the time you come out of it. So how do we still have some sense that we slept for x duration of time? That's because there are dreaming, light sleep and waking states interposed with deep sleep. It forms memory, a bit of it, and you can estimate time very roughly.

9. Anesthesia

General Anesthesia is yet another interesting state that is artificially induced. It resembles deep sleep outwardly, but the internal scene is totally different. Well, we don't really know what the internal scene looks like. But we can infer a few things. The mind stops almost completely, except the most vital functions. The main difference when compared to deep sleep is that, one cannot wake up the person under anesthesia by any means. He wakes up only after the anesthetic substance is filtered out of the body by bodily processes.

So obviously it has advantages, like one cannot feel pain, cannot move, cannot remember anything at all, and so this state is ideal for medical surgeries. It is a curious thing, because even advanced yogis, who experience a continuity of consciousness in deep sleep, report no contents in this state. I'm recalling that from memory, but you can search about it.

Some people get unusual experiences under anesthesia (NDEs). It can be understood as a typical state of astral projection. When the mind doesn't receive its usual sensory inputs, it either dreams up something or connects to some other area in universal mind. So that's nothing unusual from a seeker's point of view. The unusual thing is, sometimes vivid memory is retained of such experiences, which shows that since anesthesia breaks memory, there can be some kind of non-physical memory which still remains intact and fully operational.

One can safely put the naturally occurring "unconscious" states, such as fainting etc. under this category. As in deep sleep, the consciousness is still there, only the contents are gone.

10. Coma

This is an afflicted state, where the affliction is physiological (mostly). A lot of study exists for this state and I've not gone into depths of it, so I recommend other sites if you wish to know more. I obviously have not experienced this one, so if I write something about it, it will be from other studies.

What one can infer is that the consciousness remains as usual, but the mind

cycles from deep sleep to waking states, while body remains totally inactive. The waking state may depend on the severity of affliction and can range from madness to full clarity. When the patient is fully aware, with functioning senses, they are called "locked-in". Its an unfortunate and scary state to be, but should resemble sleep-paralysis in terms of experience.

This state shows that the activity of body (or speech or thoughts) is not a good indicator of the state of mind and consciousness. One should not blindly assume the subjective state from outward appearances. A seeker learns that quickly.

11. Death

Well, its a state of the mind to be blunt. Some people may not see it in that way, which I can understand [3]. If its not your experience, its not your truth. Have I experienced the state of death? Well, I'm writing stuff here on earth, so I can conclude that fortunately not yet. So all we can do is infer things about this state.

One important thing to note is that it is an irreversible state of mind. Death is defined in many ways, and there is a lot of confusion about when to call someone dead. Its funny and serious at the same time. The criteria ranges from stopping of heart, flatlining of brain, stopping of energetic activity (Pranic activity) etc., to complete decay of the body. People believing in Cryopreservation would go for the last. So I adopted that criteria for now, its safest to say that you are not dead unless there is absolutely no possibility of reanimation even in theory.

So what happens to the mind in this state? Of course I do not know. However, I can speculate that most of it breaks down completely and irreversibly. The physical structures also break down that are seen as brain and nervous system (and whole body). The perception stops as senses break down. World disappears. Anything that relates to the world or body is gone permanently, including some memories.

There is no evidence that the deeper non-physical structures also break down. So there is a possibility that some boundaries still remain intact and the mind does not completely merge with the universal mind of which it is a part. Those who have direct experiences will concur. And those who do not have them should experiment. But no, do not experiment with ways to die, you may end up dead.

We have discussed death in a lot of detail previously, with all the arguments and stuff, so please read those articles. The beliefs about death range from simple errors to ridiculous fantasies. Its a fun read.

If you ask Self about its experience of death, you will get absolute silence, it denies any such experience, it is deathless.

Notes:

[1] Some masters make distinction between the words consciousness, awareness and Self. There are more words like "absolute" or "oneness" etc. that hints at different "kinds" of consciousness. Needless to say, it is confusing, because if there are not-two and there is only Self, what are those other entities with fancy names? If you dig a bit, you will find that those words that seemingly are synonyms of Self, denote various states of Mind, well very subtle states. So for example "awareness" is Self without contents and "consciousness" is Self with contents, and "absolute" is the unnamable and unknowable beyond Self. (Nisargdatta's terminology. However, I'm not very sure what he means by them. Consult a good teacher please).

[2] But isn't consciousness changing too, since its the only one that exists? We have been digging on this question in various articles here. The short answer is - that which changes is an illusion in an unchanging consciousness.

[3] In some cultures (e.g. in east and especially in India), death as a state of being is taken as obvious and self-evident. People die and are born all the time, nothing unusual happens. But in materialistic cultures, death is a strict no no, no one likes to talk about it, mention of your death is offensive. This is because of ignorance about the consciousness and states of mind. Death is total annihilation for a materialist. Even a thought of that is unsettling. Note that I'm not saying that non-materialists do not feel sadness when their loved ones die or when people are killed in wars etc. The sadness happens because of attachment to the dead person, emotional, financial, survival dependent attachments. So the Ego kicks in and expresses sadness and grief. This behaviour is universal regardless of what philosophy you follow. Because Ego is same in all cases. However, a seeker is a different creature, having mastered the Ego, he feels no sorrow or fear on death of anyone, including his own. The deep knowledge and experience with mental states helps a lot. If you are still moved by death, push your pedal a bit, you need to progress out of it. There is no point in being attached to impermanent stuff like bodies and minds.

Chapter 9

The Flip !

When you start progressing on the path of knowledge, you will notice a strange pattern - your old beliefs will be most of the time an exact opposite of new knowledge. This is quite amusing and enlightening. Everything you "knew" gets reversed gradually. I call this - **the flip** !

As you progress, your views go on flipping and soon the entire picture changes, the foreground becomes the background, and the background jumps forward. This is the figure-ground reversal that you will notice. We will take up some examples to demonstrate this. What's the point? Well, besides fun, it can be a good indicator of your progress. More things you flipped, more you have progressed. What's your score?

Belief: There are many things, and I am one of them, separate and independent of things.

Fact: There is oneness. There is no separation at all. Its an illusion created by the mind.

B: I'm the experiencer, and I'm capable of experience.

F: Experience and experiencer are one and the same, there is just Experiencing.

B: World is separate from my body, and my mind is separate from body.

Consciousness is produced somehow from an arrangement of atoms.

F: Body, brain, world and atoms all are mental structures. Mind happens in consciousness and it can be roughly said that consciousness produces everything.

B: Matter is most real, next is mind, and consciousness is well... some nebulous thing that cannot be seen or proven.

F: Consciousness is most real, next is mind, and matter is flimsy illusion, its also mind.

B: Matter is particles, arranged in an empty thing called space, and it changes with a thing called time.

F: There are no particles. Space and time are illusions created in mind to make sense of sensory data. A kind of "data visualization".

B: Reality is purely material. And there are things like energy, forces and fields.

F: Reality is just information. There are only relations.

B: Brain generates mental stuff and also consciousness.

F: Brain is a structure in mind, perceived via senses. Consciousness is the ground of everything including world, body, brain and mind.

B: All there is, is this physical universe, which can be experienced via senses and instruments.

F: Physical universe, this one, is a tiny part of universal Mind. Areas of universal Mind can be accessed directly.

B: Consciousness "resides" in a body.

F: Body is an object, a content in consciousness.

B: Mind is located in brain, and consciousness too.

F: Brain is located in mind, which assigns it a location in space. Mind is non-local. Consciousness is not local, not non-local and is just a witness of all local and non-local phenomena.

B: Books, mass media and people are reliable sources for all knowledge. I trust it when majority of them agree on something.

F: My own experience is my surest source of knowledge. I believe no one blindly. I do take pointers from wise and try to experience what they teach.

B: I'm ignorant, don't know anything. I must get more and more knowledge.

F: I'm omniscient, I already know everything that can be known. Knowledge is covered up by layers upon layers of ignorance.

B: I'm not free. I need to get liberated asap.

F: I'm already free. All I need to do is get rid of that belief.

B: I was born, and I will surely die.

F: I am eternal, timeless and changeless.

B: Others are independent entities, they have their own consciousness separate from my own.

F: Consciousness (Self) is only one. Others are just structures in consciousness, same as I'm. We are all one at the deepest level, separations are illusory.

B: My path is a series of gains. I get more and more as I progress.

F: My path is a subtractive process. I lose more and more.

B: I'm not happy. Suffering come naturally. I need to do efforts to keep myself happy.

F: Happiness is my real nature. Suffering comes out of ignorance, and it takes effort to hold on to the burden of ignorance.

B: Things and people will stay as they are now. I can keep them that way permanently.

F: Nothing stays as it is. Everything is impermanent by nature. I have a minimal control over things.

B: I must change everyone, turn them into angels. I must turn this world into heaven. We can do it together, if only everyone agreed.

F: Its almost impossible to change others and very difficult to change my environment, except the most immediate surroundings. However, it is easy to change myself and improve tremendously.

B: This world is my home and my loved ones will stay with me forever. My life is long and there is so much time to enjoy it.

F: I'm only a visitor. I'm not of the world. People will leave, some will die and I too can die any day. External things and events are not in my hand. I live as if its my last day here. I try to make best of it.

B: My past was a mess, and I see no hope for the future. Let me try to fix my past and set up a solid plan for the entire life.

F: Past is an illusion. So is future. There is change, but there is no time. Its always this eternal now. Again, I do the best I can now.

B: Happiness comes from external stuff like food, mates, shiny stones/metals, money, power and social status.

F: Happiness comes from within. When above needs are no more present. Only minimum is needed to support a healthy body and an healthy Ego.

B: I need more and more relations and friends. Need and dependency on each other is love, we need support and approval of others.

F: I need exactly 0 people. Freedom from dependency and letting go is love. Love is about giving, not taking. We need to support, not ask for support. We don't need anyone's approval, I am me and you are you.

B: Everything is a mess. Nothing is as it should be.

F: Everything is perfect !

B: I need to run around like crazy until all my desires are fulfilled.

F: I need to do bare minimum to survive and have a cozy life. Desires are unlimited, its madness to try to fulfill all of them.

B: I must get more pleasure and avoid pain at all costs.

F: I can remain equanimous and simply witness both pain and pleasure.

B: I must do everything I can before I die.

F: I am not the doer. Actions happen. I let them happen as best as I can.

B: Everyone is equal. I need to show people that I'm one of them. I must conform.

F: Everyone is unique and different. I can be whatever I want to be. I'm free.

B: I must do what others tell me to do. Politicians and leaders dictate what's right and wrong.

F: I can use my brain ! I know what's right and wrong.

B: The whole point of life is - to hoard as much money as I can, to get a partner, reproduce, go on vacations, consume as much as I can, get shiny stuff, show them how great I am, save for old age and die in a hospital screaming and kicking.

F: The point of life is to live. Walk on the path of my own heart. That's all.

I'm sure there are more flips. The above list is not complete obviously. I keep finding them. Most of them happen naturally as you gain experience and knowledge by just being alive. The mind blowing thing is that this can be done in only a few days/months. A seeker is a person who knows this art of intentionally flipping things around.

The Ultimate Truth

The Ultimate Truth is that there is experience and an experiencer. There is nothing beyond that, and even this apparent duality is an act of mind. When merged together, the experience and the experiencer are reduced to just Experiencing, a dynamic Presence.

Why am I so certain?

Well, that's big claim, big words - ultimate and truth. Perhaps I'm making some mistake, something so big and profound cannot be so simple - an ordinary everyday experience. Can it be?

But that's what it is. One cannot deny that there is nothing, which means - there is something, an obvious fact, that's what I call Presence. Now all that remains is to find out the nature of Presence. One can do that by just observation - a direct experience of what is. So what do we see? We see something, something exists, and we immediately call it as an experience. Without going into what kind of experience it is, we can simply say that there is an experience. We do this by not analyzing the contents of the experience, of what is. Instead we synthesize it. So we arrive at an undeniable statement - there is experience.

Now the immediate question arises - what is it that is witnessing the existence? What knows it? or in other words - what is it that is experiencing? And not so surprisingly, we find an experiencer. We immediately identify it as "I" or the Self, the consciousness. There are two - the experience and the experiencer.

This is an undeniable observation. Let's deny that there is any experience. Well, the act of denial itself is an experience, so the denial itself proves it. Now let's deny that there is any experiencer. Again, that raises the question - who or what is denying this? And we are necessarily left with an experiencer. This fact of there being the two, is so solid that even denying it establishes it firmly. What can be more solid than this? It's a direct observation, needs no assumptions, needs no theories, needs no logic. It passes all criteria of the truth - self-evident, logical, repeatable, consistent and so on.

It is the most certain of knowledge, and hence can be as well called as the truth.

But why is it the ultimate? Is it possible that there can be more beyond merely an experience and an experiencer?

Well, that's a good question. A seeker always double checks. So let's check it out. If you say there is this thing called "X" that underlies all experience, it immediately gives rise to a question - how do we know that? To know X, we must experience it, but as soon as we do that it becomes an experience. It can not be anything else. So we are again left with an experience, doesn't matter of what kind.

Let's see what can be beyond the experiencer. If you say that there is this thing called "Y" that lies beyond the experiencer, then we can question it - what or who is experiencing that Y. And then the Y itself becomes a new experiencer, and the original experiencer is reduced to an experience. But, again, we are left with a experiencer ultimately.

So we see that no matter what you do, you are ultimately left with two - the experience and the experiencer. And that's why it's the **Ultimate Truth**. There is nothing beyond that, there can be nothing beyond that, it is an impossibility. Try proving, disproving or twisting this fact in any way you can, and you will find that it elegantly re-establishes itself, not as a mere truth, but as the ultimate truth.

Experience, Experiencer and the Mind

Wait, there is a third thing here. What knows that there are two? If there is just experience and the experiencer, these two are busy with the act of experiencing, and there is no way to even arrive at a statement about these two unless there is a third thing that is catching them in the act of experiencing. This third thing is the Mind. But only apparently, it can be experienced, and hence falls into the category of experiences. The mind is an experience that conveys the knowledge of both the experience and the experiencer to the experiencer itself.

So, it's not really a separate third thing that is independent of the experience. Mind can be experienced, and hence is not experiencer itself, but is a part of the experience. So we are again left with the two - the ultimate two.

So the mind is just a shadow of the experiencer, that separates itself from the experiencer and acts as a middleman stating that there are two. It is the holder of the knowledge, this knowledge and all knowledge. The experiencer experiences the knowledge also. So the mind is certainly not an experiencer. Many people make this mistake that it's the mind that experiences, no it only organizes the experiences. Organized experience is knowledge. Knowledge appears as a

structured memory. Knowledge is then experienced by the experiencer.

There are no two

So we can reduce the mind, the third thing into an experience and then we are left with two things. Right? No actually...

Take a look, observe carefully. What remains when the mind is reduced to an experience? All we are left with is Presence - the happening known as Experiencing. Its a dynamic something, and is not really dynamic, it is changing stillness. Yes, hard to put it in words. There is no mind there to codify it in words. So we merely say that there is suchness, or the Presence is present. Its intensely conscious, but empty and eternally flowing.

But how to reduce the mind to an experience? Wouldn't that mean that the mind reduces itself to an experience? Yes, that is right. All you (the mind) needs to do is get out of the way, silence itself. How is that achieved? Its done by stopping the tendency of the mind to divide what is, into two - the experience and the experiencer. It divides Presence into two by flipping attention from the experience to the experiencer back and forth. This switch of the attention creates the illusion of three - experience on the one side, experiencer on the other and the "invisible" mind in the middle. Once this dividing act of the mind is stopped via will or intention, only Experiencing remains.

When the activity of the mind is stopped, the experience and the experiencer merge. They become one. The mind is still present, but the experience is not separated from the experiencer. There is no experiencer there, and there is no knowledge of two too. So how do we know about the state of oneness?

So actually, the mind, the holder of knowledge, cannot really say anything about the oneness, and the most accurate thing it can say is that - there are no two. That's the most it can say. And that's the story behind the word - Nondualism or Advaita.

Oneness

So is the ultimate truth ultimately false then? There are no two, just one?

No, its still the ultimate truth. The mind cannot know the oneness. It merely concludes the oneness. When there is no experiencer, what can witness the oneness? You see, its impossible. As soon as you say that the oneness is being experienced, an experiencer is implied, which means the oneness is now divided

into two - experience of it and experiencer of it. No matter what these two remain. Oneness is beyond knowledge, so all one can say about oneness is - "I do not know". Or even better - remain silent. Because you know but you do not know.

The two imply that the oneness is being divided into two by this third thing - the mind. So practically and strictly speaking, we are always left with three. There cannot be the two without the third, so we see the importance of the mind here. The mind is the agency that provides us with this ultimate truth of two. Without it - there is no knowledge, there is just experiencing. It can be as well called as undivided oneness or wholeness.

So what convinces the mind of the oneness even when it cannot know it? Logical deduction. There are many ways to arrive at oneness. One way is as described above - to reduce the dividing acts of the mind into an experience. The mind blowing thing is - the mind is still present there but it knows without any doubt that in its absence, all that would remain will be oneness. Other way is to just look. Observe that the experience and the experiencer always appear together. You cannot have an experience without an experiencer and cannot have an experiencer without an experience. This suggests that they are just one thing, seen as two separate things, thanks to the mind.

Its the mind that divides, and its the mind that unites. It is paradoxical, but that's how it is. Mind cannot know the oneness, but mind can conclude that there can be nothing but oneness. A seeker's mind sees right through these paradoxes and is filled with wonder and mystery. A seeker on the path of knowledge chooses to call it as not-two, the best and most accurate description of what is.

Foundation of Knowledge

So now you know the answer to the question - "what is the ultimate truth?". You can show it off to your friends and argue about it, think on it, contemplate it. However, this simple observation, simple truth, is not merely a matter of answering a random single question or is not merely a passing curiosity, it actually forms the whole foundation of all knowledge.

Now, that's mind blowing. All the knowledge there is, is based on this simple truth. But hows that possible? When you say that there are only two, all you need to know is the nature of these two, and the result is - you know everything that can be known.

How to know the experience and the experiencer? That's the obvious question,

and the answer is - by direct observation. All you need is a working mind. Observe, question it and know. It is that simple.

How much can you know? Depends on how much you are willing to dig into. If you go on digging, there is no end, however the essence of it all can be known in minutes. You don't really need to know everything to the last detail. The experiencer is simple enough to know. It has some strikingly awesome characteristics. It is very obvious and directly accessible, right here, right now. The experience part is more involved, it is almost infinite, but essentially it can be reduced to simple facts, that are, again, very obvious and can be confirmed right here right now.

When you really start going into the details, you will find this astonishing thing - the mind. It will be revealed to you as an infinite creation, a collection of structures and patterns, and it will be seen as the Universal Mind, of which the human minds are tiny parts. The physical universe will be reduced to a speck of dust, one among countless universes, all just parts of the Universal Mind. And now, as you can imagine, gaining all that knowledge becomes a tedious task. The good news is, all that is not worth knowing, those are details and details of details. A seeker is mostly concerned with essence and goes into details only when absolutely needed.

This is how we start on the path of knowledge. We start at home, the oneness, the not-two, and when we finish the journey, we again find ourselves at home, although armed with a ton of knowledge. This blog has already gone into depths of the experience and the experiencer. However, in coming articles, we will move into it more systematically. It will be essentially a rewrite of old stuff, but I'll try to make it more concise and comprehensible.

The Experencer

The Ultimate Truth is that there is experience and there is an experencer. Everything else is details. We can now descend into the details, not much, just the important ones. We will start with the Experencer and note some of its characteristics by direct observation.

What is it?

As you know very well now, most of the enquiries start with a "what" question. It reveals the most basic and fundamental description of the subject under the question. So we apply it to the Experencer also. So what is an Experencer?

Pretty simple to answer - its the sink for the experiences. All experiences end in the Experencer. Another way to describe it is - its the unchanging part of the Presence. Presence being all that is. So the changing aspect of the Presence becomes an experience and the unchanging aspect becomes the Experencer. This is also our direct observation, and it satisfies all criteria of the truth.

Its easier to point to it by stating what it is not. That's a strange way to describe something, but it works. Firstly, you will notice that it is not a "thing", its not an entity, because all things can be experienced, and the Experencer is at the receiving end of all those experiences, so it is impossible for it to be a thing. You can deny that by saying that its a thing, but you can then immediately question it - if its a thing, what is it that experiences it? And you will left with only one explanation - the Experencer cannot be experienced.

Secondly, its not a quality. Only things, or objects have qualities. So when you try to know it using the mind - the knower of all qualities, you will find that the Experencer has no qualities at all. Its invisible, has no colour or shape, no sound, no smell etc. Its not even a mental object or quality. Its not a thought, not a memory, not an imagination or emotion. Its not physical and its not non-physical. All these things can be experienced, and hence cannot be the Experencer itself.

To the mind, it appears to be just nothingness, but since it is something, a better word is - Emptiness. It appears empty of everything, nothing can fill it, it is very-very pure, nothing can make any impression on it. It merely witnesses, it does nothing at all.

In essence, it is not all those things that can be experienced or form the part of the Presence called experiences. So when you discard all that can be experienced, you are left with only one thing - the Experienter.

The Experienter is also called the Self, consciousness, observer or Atman. Perhaps there are many more names.

More questions

Now we can ask more questions of the fundamental nature and get the knowledge about the Experienter via direct observation or logical deduction. So let's know it more.

Where is the Experienter?

Let's check where it is. If you say it's inside the world, you will end up with trouble because the world appears to be inside it. Take a look. The world is being experienced by the Experienter and the Experienter is not an object, not a part of the world, so it must be outside the world. World is just a collection of objects, placing it inside a world doesn't make sense, it's not one of the objects or processes in the world.

You can say it's inside the body, perhaps in the head. But take a look. The body is inside it. The body is perceived and experienced, and the body is an object, so the Experienter cannot be a part of the body, or head or any other organ. So it's outside the body too.

Perhaps it's in the mind? Well, the mind can be experienced too, and hence the Experienter cannot be a part of the mind. Mind being a collection of mental or non-physical objects - thoughts, emotions, memories, imaginations, desires and so on. So the Experienter is not even non-physical. Take a look, the mind is inside the Experienter.

Is it in some other "dimension" or magical realm? A seeker stays away from such fairy-tale-ish fantasies. You can ask that question only if you can experience the thing you call a "dimension". Anyway, if there is such a realm, it has to be a part of the experience of some kind, and hence it cannot contain an Experienter.

Now we have run out of places, so the only conclusion left is - the Experienter is not located anywhere, it is **non-local**. All locations are experiences experienced by the Experienter, the location of the Experienter cannot be experienced, and

hence is an impossibility.

This is a strange result indeed. But that's all you get, no matter how you twist it. It may as well be called a truth. The consciousness is non-local, its not in space, cannot be found at a place. In fact where ever you go, where ever you look, you will find the Experienter already present there. Have you ever experienced a place where the Experienter was not? Obviously no. Else there wouldn't be any experience of that place. So yet another conclusion is - the Experienter is **omnipresent**. Its everywhere.

So we end up with seemingly paradoxical statement - the Experienter is nowhere yet its everywhere. That's puzzling. Experienter itself seems to be perfectly ok with this situation.

When did it begin? When was it created?

Lets assume the Experienter began in past at a particular time. This assumption quickly puts us in trouble. What or who witnessed this beginning? The beginning, being an event must be an experience, so who experienced it? Moreover, if it was an experience, how can it be an Experienter? If something witnessed its beginning, that witness must be an Experienter, and that means it was already present even before it began. So we arrive at this impossibility that the Experienter had a beginning. We can only say that the Experienter is **eternal**, it has no beginning, and hence no end, since only that which begins, ends. If it ends, there must be something to witness it ending, which will be none other than - the Experienter. And hence its impossible for it to end.

Lets assume it was created. We again invite trouble. What or who created it? If it was created, the creator must have witnessed its creation, but the the creator itself falls in the category of the Experienter, and hence creation means that the Experienter was already present before its creation. Hence we arrive at this impossibility that it was created. The Experienter is **uncreated**, it exists by itself.

Assumption of a beginning or a creation from something also means that the Experienter evolved out of something that existed prior to it. One can argue that perhaps there was a proto-experienter with no capability to experience anything before this Experienter came into being. But that implies some kind of change in the proto-experienter, which changed into the Experienter. And if there was a change, this change falls in the category of the experience, since it must be witnessed for it to be a change. Without any witness, there is no change. And if there was a witness, it implies that it was the Experienter that was witnessing the change, the change in proto-experienter being reduced to an experience.

So we find that any kind of change if witnessed is just an experience, and it cannot be an Experienter. As soon as we assume that there was a change in the Experienter, the change becomes the experience, and the Experienter becomes it witness, standing apart from the change. So we arrive at this strange conclusion that the Experienter cannot change. The Experienter is **changeless**. This again strengthens our observation that it cannot begin or end, since both beginning and end imply a change in it.

How does the Experienter experience anything?

This question implies that we are asking for an explanation or mechanism of the experience. We notice that an experience and the Experienter always appear together. One never exists without the other, and this indicates that they are simply two parts of one whole. They are one and hence same. Therefore, there is no requirement for a mechanism.

But why do they seem to be different then? They are perceived as two by the mind, which divides the oneness into two by calling the dynamic part as the experience and the static part as the Experienter. In the absence of the mind, this division disappears.

How many Experiencers are there?

If you check your own experience, you will find that you never encountered more than one Experienter ever, which you refer to as "I". So there is only one Experienter.

You do see others, but you see only bodies. Perhaps you can deduce that they have minds too, from their behaviour, but you never see their consciousness, the Experienter. So at most, it is just an assumption that others have their own private Experiencers.

Lets assume that there are just two of such Experiencers. Now, how will one Experienter know the other? Obviously, it has to experience it, and as soon as it does that the other Experienter is reduced to an experience, and hence we are left with just one in the end. Same from the point of view of second Experienter. And therefore, it is impossible to witness another Experienter, and one must conclude that one and only one Experienter can exist.

Lets assume that there are two Experiencers being witnessed by a third Experienter. Now, where are the two? Obviously, they are just experience of the

third one. So the third one encompasses the first two and we are left with only one Experiencer again. You can go on and on with scenarios and you will find that you are always left with only one Experiencer. The consciousness that you are, is identical to the consciousness that I am. How amazing is that?!?

Is it possible that the Experiencer is just a fantasy of the mind, since mind creates all the illusions, probably its creating the illusion of the Experiencer too?

Ya, we can't trust mind, so lets check it out. If the Experiencer is an illusion created by the mind, the question is - who or what witnesses this illusion? Oh no, we are again left with one answer only - the Experiencer. It won't go away. So the Experiencer cannot be an illusion, its the witness of all illusions, and of the illusion-maker, the mind.

The mind does create a thing called "separate self" or identity or a person. It is a label it assigns to everything it is directly related to - a body, actions, thoughts, emotions, relations, professions and so on. The label itself can be witnessed as an idea, and hence the identity is not really an Experiencer.

Why does the Experiencer exist?

Well, that's the mother of all questions. When we say "why" we are trying to find a reason or purpose of it. For example, why does a knife exist? Obviously, to cut up stuff. Why does a chair exist? Someone created it for sitting down. So on and so forth. But you we see something amazing when you extend the "why" to things beyond your daily use. So why does a lake exist? Well, probably it formed because the area was low and water collected there. But that's an answer to "how", not to "why". You will never find the purpose of it. Same for the mountains, or birds, or sky and planets. You may find "how", perhaps some theories, but never a reason. Try it.

Almost always, you can ask a "why" again to the answer and you will soon see that it leads to infinite series of why questions or to silence or it will just irritate the one who is trying to answer. You will be asked to shut up.

So "reasons" are a creation of the mind, which is simply an explanation it assigns to the things it can use. The mind finds it impossible to come up with a reason for things that do not really aid in survival or social situations. So we will never find a reason for existence of the Experiencer. There is no reason, and there is no reason for anything really. Things simply are.

People do come up with reasons and purposes. But then, there are millions of

reasons, which one is true? Obviously, none, they are all beliefs, fantasies. The good news is - you can make up your own reason, if it pleases you.

Given the unity of the Experienter, how should be our conduct?

This is an easy one. If everything and everyone is me, I treat everything and everyone as I treat myself. You do not need ethics or brainwashed concepts of good and bad to operate from. This knowledge of the Self, the consciousness, is enough and best to arrive at a reasonable conduct. So the answer is - we try to cause minimal harm to everything and everyone around us. In other words - we naturally love everything and everyone. When we embody this knowledge we become nonviolent and compassionate naturally.

When we see that the separation is an illusion, we try to liberate ourselves from this illusion, we try to be free from it. Its a result of the ignorance, and hence our goal becomes - gaining knowledge and becoming free. We find that its the mind that causes this illusion of separation, but its again the mind which brings knowledge and frees itself from this illusion.

On the path of knowledge, we use mind as a tool to become free. You will notice that it is very simple, quick and straightforward. Everyone of us has this potential to be absolutely free.

The Experience

After dissecting the Experienter, we take a look at the other aspect of the Presence - the Experience. We immediately find that the Experience part is much more exciting, happening, rich and very mysterious. It is all that is manifested.

What is an Experience?

The fundamental question, as usual. There can be a few ways to describe it without being circular. Obviously, it is whatever that is left when we isolate the Experienter part. It is something that the Experienter is presented with. It is the dynamic aspect of the Presence (aka existence) that the Experienter is aware of or is witness to. It is a knowing in the sense of "there is this". It is the isness. It is also the "not-I" part that remains when the mind identifies with the Experienter as "I". It is everything that is not the Experienter.

As you must have noted, its pretty difficult to define the Experience, but it is very easy to understand what it is. It "stands out" apart from the Experienter or the consciousness. It is what the consciousness is conscious of. We can firmly say that the only thing an Experienter is capable of doing is Experience, because, by definition, there is nothing else apart from these two.

Experience is not being used here in the sense of accumulated knowledge, training or expertise that comes after a long period of doing some particular task or job or exercising some skill repeatedly. So a baby experiences equally well when compared to a grown up person, and so does an animal.

We can immediately note some interesting characteristics of the Experience. Firstly, no two Experiences are same, so there is **Change**. If there is no change, there is no Experience and when there is no Experience there is no change. So change is the essential nature of the Experience, its actually as good as a synonym for the Experience.

Secondly, we see that the contents never remain same. They change and sometimes change into something else totally. In other words, the patterns are changing, one pattern changes into another, and that is being Experienced as a change in contents. They do not last, and hence everything is **impermanent**. We can be pretty sure that if something can be Experienced, it will not last. In other

words, everything ends somewhere, sometime.

Third thing, which is really interesting is - the Experience is not a random happening. There is some order and **structure** to it. Events or contents do not randomly appear and disappear or do not randomly change into unexpected things. There is some predictability or deterministic qualities to any Experience. Not only are contents organized, they change in organized way. Not all, but most. And hence we have a spectrum of Experiences ranging from completely random to completely deterministic. However, the random stuff is not even registered by the mind. The mind is usually pulled to structured stuff. So most of our Experiences are well structured and make sense. In fact, all **knowledge** is just structured Experience.

Fourth observation that you can make is - an Experience is nothing but consciousness of patterns and there is no limit on the number of patterns there can be. So the contents of the Experience are infinite in number. But we can reduce those contents into qualities or **Qualia**. So for example, there are infinite number of objects, but all objects are just colours and shapes. There is nothing to an object except a colour and a shape, as far as vision is concerned.

So each sense assigns a "quality" to the contents of the Experience. There are non-sensory qualia too - such as emotions, pain, feelings and everything that appears as "mental" kind.

More questions

So now we can start introspecting and answering more questions. There can be uncountable number of questions, so I will take up only a few.

What is really being Experienced?

If you take a closer look, you will find things or what we call as **contents**. Contents form parts of an Experience. It's the mind that divides the Experience into separate contents. The examples of contents are: thoughts, memories, perceptions, body, objects, people, mountains, oceans, planets, stars, universes and so on and so forth. Anything that can be named and recognized as a familiar pattern is a content. But ultimately what we Experience is just **patterns**, changing patterns.

What are the contents?

They are mind's interpretation of patterns and processes. The patterns are pure

information without any substance or substrate. In other words the stuff that underlies the contents is metaphysical in nature. What we experience is essentially an iconification of metaphysical patterns. That is, those patterns are turned into identifiable icons before they are presented to the consciousness as an Experience.

The mind does that, and the **mind** itself is, again, just a collection of patterns and processes.

What causes an Experience?

Let us assume a cause, but then that cause must be experienced in order to be known certainly, and as soon as you experience it, it becomes an Experience. So the Experience exists even before it is caused, which is absurd. We can only conclude that the Experiences have no cause, they are uncaused.

We can surely see one content causing the other, but Experiencing itself is uncaused, it just is.

How many kinds of Experiences are there?

We can categorize the Experiences into two kinds, broadly speaking. They are - physical and non-physical. Physical ones correspond to the Experience of the world - objects, people, creatures, planets etc, and non-physical ones are Experiences of the mind, they are mental contents - thoughts, feelings, emotions, desires, memories, imaginations etc.

You will find that the physical Experiences appear distinct from non-physical and they are presented/mediated via senses. Non-physical or mental Experiences are directly perceived. Apart from this, the physical ones are shared Experiences, we share them with others, while mental ones are private.

Why are there two kinds when the underlying patterns are just one kind?

If you take a closer look, the physical contents are perceived as happening "outside", and mental ones are seen as "inside" you, but when you ask the question - where is outside? where is the boundary between outside and inside?, you will find that the boundary is arbitrary. You can place it anywhere, let's say, at the body, but then you will see that the body is outside too, it is an object. Now you place it at mind, but then you will see that the mental events are outside "you" too. You are witnessing them happening, so "you" or the Experiencer must be outside them, and that is exactly your Experience. So ultimately everything,

physical or non-physical is "outside" the consciousness. There is no boundary, or the boundary is only an illusion that exists because it is our conditioning, or ignorance.

So that answers the question - *where are all Experiences taking place?* They are taking place outside consciousness. Given the unity of the Experience and the Experiencer, that is also an illusion, there is really no separation, the Experience of anything is exactly identical to consciousness of that thing. Just take a look!

For convenience, and as a half-truth we say that the Experiences are happening "outside" the Experiencer. Which implies that all Experiences are happening as a whole, there are no two kinds. The difference of physical and non-physical is merely a creation of the mind. All that is Experienced via senses is labeled as physical and all that comes directly is labeled as mental or non-physical. If you observe closely, we never see anything physical, we always see (or sense) qualities of stuff "out there". The qualities themselves are not physical, for example the color red. The qualities are fundamental and mind makes up everything using them. So all we perceive is mind's creation of stuff, not the stuff itself. It cannot be perceived, it is emptiness, just information patterns.

If you take a look at a dream or an Astral Projection Experience, you will find that objects, people, world and everything that is supposed to be physical appears without any intervention of senses. This shows that the physical stuff is also merely mental stuff. However, even though essentially the same, the physical and mental contents have different qualities in waking state. This is a very useful trick of the mind and helps a lot in survival.

So we find that the physical Experiences can be reduced to mental Experiences and we are left with only one kind. Therefore it makes sense to call everything as mind. In this blog, a collection of all structures is being called a Universal Mind.

Can the Experiences end?

Although there is a continuous flow of change, we can draw arbitrary boundaries and define the start and end of an Experience. Particular Experiences may end, but Experiencing never ends, there is always another Experience that follow the preceding one.

But don't they end when we are in deep sleep?

The Experience follows the sequence - perceptions & thoughts & dreaming & thoughts & perceptions. This is what is registered in the memory starting

from waking to going to sleep to waking up again. Since there is no memory formation in deep sleep, it appears as if no Experience happened for that particular mind. But the Experiencer is busy Experiencing through other minds while that particular mind is inactive. So from the point of view of the Experiencer, the Experiencing never ends, but from the point of view of the mind all that can be said is that there is no memory of any Experience during deep sleep, which is assumed to have happened for some duration, although nothing about it is retained.

Since the mind is shut down (most of it) during deep sleep, when it comes back up, it assumes that the consciousness must have disappeared too. But it has no way of knowing that. So, as an aside, it is an assumption that a person is "unconscious" during deep sleep. In the strict sense of the word conscious, the mind cannot know anything about its status, during the period of its own disappearance.

But won't they end after death?

Let's find it out. Let's assume that all Experience comes to an end at some point. But how will we know that? It is the mind that stores knowledge, and since it is also an Experience, it will end too. So it cannot be known by the mind. The mind knows only presence of Experience, nothing else.

From the point of view of the Experiencer, all Experiences come and go, and that does not happen in time, all Experiences are here and now. So there is no start or end of them.

Can't we simply ask others who witness the death of a person about it? Well, no one can witness the status of Experiences, they witness the status of the body only, which obviously turns into dirt and smoke. We cannot rely on others to know what happens to Experiences (including that of his mind) after death.

But from the point of view of the Experiencer, the Experiencing continues via other minds anyway. So we find that the belief that all Experience will end just after death is just that - a belief, an unfounded assumption. Death means end of a particular kind of Experience - one that involves a body. End of it does not imply end of all Experiences. This is an extremely important realization and has huge implications. But then, what other Experience can be had in absence of a body? Well, that depends on whether the mind survives the destruction of the body and this needs to be Experienced by that particular mind itself.

We will go into the details of Experience in the next article.

Chapter 13

The Creation

One of the strange thing about experience, we noticed, is that it is ever changing. In fact, no change means no experience. So change, even though not existing independently from experience, is fundamental. It deserves the title of Truth. When we observe closely, we find that what is changing is patterns, all kinds of patterns. That gives us some clues about the manifested reality, because, manifestation is nothing but patterns, all kinds of patterns.

Take a closer look

We will now take a closer look at the experience, especially, its aspect of change.

What is changing?

You will notice that everything is in flux, it is flowing. One form changes into other, in physical domain, and in mental world, one activity or thought is replaced by other. It never ceases. Some things change very slowly, e.g. a rock, but some changes are so fast, they just blur past us. But everything changes. You will notice that all forms, physical or non-physical are just **patterns**. They are sometimes simple, sometimes intricate arrangements of something, in other words - they are **structures**. Everything is a structure from the highest point of view. So even scattered dirt is a structure, and so is a clay pot. Just that, in everyday life, we tend to call less organized structures as random or unstructured. But there is nothing out there which is not structured or is not a pattern of some kind.

So one structure is changing into another. A clay pot when it breaks, simply changes structure and becomes fragments of clay. The clay then becomes dirt, another structure. Similarly, some structures arise from less organized patterns, such as a plant and its flowers and fruits. They are structures organized out of simpler forms - air and soil. Finally our bodies are structures too, organized out of food, organic matter, and obviously, they are ever changing, and finally change into dirt. A pattern cycles through less organized to more and back to less, and so on. That is all there is to change.

Where is the change happening?

You may be tempted to answer that it is happening "outside". But take a closer

look. Where is "outside"? That word is just an assumed boundary and what we take as outside, depends on our perspective. So for most of us, everything that exists outside the body is changing. But then you can shift the perspective to mind, and now the body appears outside the mind, and it is changing too. But wait a minute, the mind is also seen, we can experience it as "outside", the collection of thoughts, memories, imaginations, emotions and desires appears "out there" in non-physical domain. And of course, it is also changing. So there is no "outside" and hence there is no "inside". All that is changing and is being experienced is "here" and it is being experienced "now".

The only thing that does not change is the Experienter, as we have already seen. Everything else is "outside" it and changes. And that everything is exactly the Experience. But since they both are actually same, identical to each other, (jointly called as Presence), it follows that the change is happening in Presence. It gets divided into changing and unchanging parts as a result of dividing tendency of the mind. And it is exactly the mind that localizes stuff as being either outside or inside, as and when it pleases.

So all that can be said is - the change is happening **here and now**, and I, the experienter, the consciousness, is witnessing it as happening in myself. There is nothing apart from consciousness, and hence all change appears in it. A good metaphor is - the consciousness or Experienter is the screen on which the movie of change or Experience is played. When you look closely, they are just one, not separate. The movie cannot be separated from the screen.

Have you ever witnessed a change that is not happening here and now?

Never. In the light of above, and as a direct and pure experience, all that is changing is me and all that is not changing is also me. The "me" is defined as that which witnesses and is always here and is always present. **Presence** is an apt word for it, and it has this strange dynamic quality which appears as change.

So what are these changing patterns made up of?

You may be tempted to say - they are made up of matter, atoms, substance. But wait, that's a small fraction of our experience. What are mental patterns made up of? Now that's a tricky one, isn't it?

Take a closer look. All physical forms or patterns (including the atoms and "particles") appear ultimately in the mind, going via the channels of senses. Whatever is perceived via senses is classified as "physical" or material. The things that are perceived directly (e.g. mental contents and activities) are classified as

non-physical. The mind itself does the classification and localization. In other words, things are not really physical or objective or out there, these tags are used by the mind for convenience, it is its way of organizing perceptions. These are mere words - assumptions.

All patterns appear in mind, and all patterns are mental in nature. How would a pattern not seen by the mind appear? Well, the answer is simple - it won't appear at all. So there is nothing there that exists apart from the mind. So all there is, is mind. We never witness anything independently of mind. The patterns that are mental are in mind and the patterns that are named as physical are also in mind. But that does not really answer the question of what are those patterns made up of, except it does answer the question of - how many kinds of patterns are there? Only one kind - the **non-physical** kind.

When you take a closer look at these non-physical patterns, you will find that they are made up of nothing at all. There is no substance to it. It is merely change, a pure change. So patterns are just change. The change appears in consciousness, or in other words, it is just witnessed by the consciousness. It demands no substance, it is capable of witnessing change purely without needing a substrate. In the end, consciousness itself is the substrate and substance of all patterns. See it clearly. Take a look.

How many kinds of patterns are there?

We revisit this question. It's a fun question, and also very important. It seems there are infinite kinds of patterns. We see them all around us and they keep changing into infinite other kinds. However, there is some uniformity or stability there, at least in essence. So a dog does not change into a cat when we blink in and out. It does change from a puppy to a big dog to an old dog and to dirt. The pattern called dog changes, but our mind assigns it a continuity, it classifies it as the same thing. When it changes beyond recognition (like the dog's organic matter becomes grass for example), only then it gets declassified as that particular thing.

So mind has this capability to group the patterns together and form objects or things. In reality, there are no things, no objects, just patterns. It's all a doing of the mind, and hence the mind creates this world of objects and forms out of thin air, just from patterns. Mind is an amazing thing in itself. You cannot be not impressed by it.

We can classify all patterns into essentially two kinds - physical and non-physical. As we saw above, this is merely a convenient way to separate sensory and non-

sensory perceptions. There is only one kind - the non-physical. And they have no substance, i.e. they are made up of nothing. A convenient way of stating the same, and without making it sound so embarrassing is to say that all patterns are **metaphysical**.

The essential nature of stuff is metaphysical. Mind classifies it into physical and non-physical. Then it goes ahead and classifies them into recognizable patterns that happen more predictably, and calls them objects or things or people or dogs. By calling everything metaphysical, I'm actually trying to hide my ignorance of what these patterns actually are. My current opinion is - this cannot be known by a human mind. It falls into the category of unknowables. Why? Because mind itself is a pattern, a metaphysical one, and a pattern cannot know its source, it can only know another pattern.

So are all patterns, and hence everything is made up of "nothing"?

By metaphysical I don't mean that it is nothing. It is something. The patterns have a meaning, in other words - there is information content in patterns. Whenever there is some kind of organization, there is information in it. So all patterns, whether highly organized or not, are just information. The worlds and minds are made up of pure **information**. How amazing is that?

This can also be stated in the terms of information technology, and we can say that all experience is just **simulation**. Patterns of information. If you prefer ancient terms, which are just as valid and intelligent, then everything that changes as patterns is illusory or **Maya**.

What is the simplest pattern?

A simplest pattern is obviously the simplest change that is possible, and that is change from one state to a second state. There cannot be a change simpler than that, as it would be a change from one state back to the same state, which, as you must have guessed, is not really a change. A change of three states is obviously not simplest, and so is change involving millions of states.

The interesting thing is - we can always break up a complex change into a combination of changes of two states. So all change, however complex it is, can be broken down into a binary change. If you are getting a picture of a computer conjuring up a whole virtual world just out of binary changes of 1's to 0's and vice versa, then you are hitting it on the head.

Sound engineers must be getting a picture of all sound being just a combination

of fundamental and harmonics of waves. A wave is nothing but a binary change. Its a change of two amplitudes, high to low and back. Any sound can be broken down into binary change. So can be any picture, anything at all.

So the most basic change is binary. A wave, or a vibration. All patterns are just vibrations. It all starts from a vibration - the simplest change possible.

How are physical things vibrations? Isn't it solid matter?

Physical stuff is structured. Which means there is pattern. There are shapes, then there are crystals, molecules, atoms, if you dig down in it - all arrangements of patterns. Then there are particles, which are, strangely - patterns or vibrations or waves. What is waving or vibrating? Surprise ! You won't find anything there. Matter is not made up of "another matter", the vibrations are of exactly "nothing". There is just change without substance.

We arrive at the same conclusion via deep investigation of Physics. Patterns, patterns of patterns, happening in nothing. Experiments and direct observations of matter will tell you that these vibrations or particles are not really present in absence of a conscious observer. Who is a conscious observer? Of course, he is not a watchman who dutifully remains awake at night, it is our old friend - the consciousness.

What about mental stuff? Is it vibrations again?

It is a lot easier to see that the mental contents (non-sensory type) are merely patterns of information. You don't need to do anything, no experiments are needed. And you see that these patterns are made up of nothing too. In other words, the mind is metaphysical too.

What organizes simple patterns into complex ones?

A process.

What is a process?

A process is a pattern that proceeds in a very regular way. Hands of a clock is one good example of a process. A car engine is another example, but it is a complex process. A computer program is a much more complex process. But all these are just regular and structured change of patterns. A process does one thing, and only one thing, and does it neatly, predictably and without fail.

A **process** is a regularly changing pattern that acts on other patterns or produces more patterns.

How many processes are there?

There can be infinite kinds. After all they are just changing patterns. But we can always take out their essence and classify them in broad categories.

How many types of processes are there?

I can think of these:

Cyclic process: A patterns repeats over and over. The simplest vibration is one simple example. Seasons, motions of planets and atoms, light, births and deaths. Your job, may be.

Organizing process: A pattern acts on less organized patterns and produces a more organized structure. A plant producing a flower out of air, water and salts is a good example.

Self-organizing process: These add more structure to themselves. Knowledge feeding on knowledge resulting in even more knowledge is a good example. A computer database is another example.

Replicating process: It takes a pattern and makes copies of it. DNA is a good example. So is a queen bee or ant. Human body is also seen making copies of itself, probably too many copies are there already.

Destructive process: It destroys the structure and returns the patterns to simpler forms. The name sounds awful, but these are important processes, without them there would be a lot of rotten forms, which we wouldn't want to see around us.

Fractal process: It is a large process who's part look like itself. A big corporation where the CEO is organizing his managers for some project and the managers in turn organizing their subordinates, who in turn are organizing their workers etc. is an example. But mathematical fractals are best examples of it.

Constrained process: Its a process that gets limited or biased by other processes or patterns. For example the flow of river is determined by the pattern of the terrain. So a river is a process constrained by the terrain.

Algorithmic process: Its a constrained process that obeys a specific algorithm or

logical sequence. That happens when the constraining pattern is highly ordered. Examples are - motion of planets, light and sound, motion of objects under forces etc. As you must have guessed, they produce very predictable actions, we can even write a mathematical formula to predict it.

Of course, a real process can be a combination of any or all of above processes. That would form another category, if you will - the complex or compound process. You can easily recognize the component processes in a complex process.

That sounds too technical, why would I even mention that?

Because all these processes organize simple patterns into complex ones and produce patterns that we see around us everyday. In other words, you just saw the wheelwork or source code of creation !

The patterns and processes, which in turn are moving patterns, create everything - matter, objects, worlds, universes, bodies, minds, thoughts, persons, creatures and every kind of experience that is possible.

Which process out of these is responsible for creation exactly?

All of them. Perhaps there are more. You take one of them away and all creation fails. Nothing gets created. I usually club them together and call it the **Fundamental Process**, the mother of all processes. So the Fundamental Process resulting out of change creates everything there is. I talk about it at many places in this blog.

So in short, processes are born out of the simplest pattern which is also the simplest process and simplest change (aka binary states) and they go on to form almost infinite variety of patterns and processes in various combinations and permutations. Some of these are necessarily of above kinds and result in more structured patterns. So creation happens as a result.

I need more details on these processes and how they work, where can I get the info?

Read around in this blog. Although its scattered, some articles go into enough detail of it. Anyhow, I will write about them in detail someday. Its a vast subject, can take up many books. So its best to learn by example, try to see what processes are in action around you. Observe carefully, how things get created. Take an object and trace down the patterns and processes that created it.

Didn't creation happen only once a long time ago? What are these processes good for now?

Creation is just structuring of patterns. It is going on since forever, actually there is no start of it and hence no end of it. Things get created in "now", not in past. All creation is happening now and here. It is a ongoing process. We as a mind, are a product of creation and hence cannot know its start or cannot experience its end. It is timeless anyway.

If you see it closely, the creation never happened, and is not really happening. What is getting created? Nothing exactly. It is just change. And it is virtual change. Nothing ever happened, in the sense of usual meaning of the word "happening". If you are confused, you are doing just ok. Question everything.

Isn't it two processes - one creating and one destroying?

We can choose to see it in that way. But if you look closely, there is just moving patterns, so just processes. In other words there is only one process - the Fundamental Process. It creates everything. Destruction is also creation - a creation of simpler forms out of complex ones. Don't let your mind fool you into thinking that the destruction is bad or anti of creation. Everything is needed for creation. Things are destructive only from the perspective of the mind, which is a pattern desperately trying to sustain itself, fighting against its own dissolution. Mind creates duality and opposites, no wonder, it needs that.

If mind is a pattern, how can it know or see other patterns?

Well, it is a special pattern, and as we know it is very complex. It has a process called knowing which results in structures called **knowledge**. Essentially all patterns are just mind. More on minds in next article, where we will see how minds are produced and what they do. We know all this just via direct observation and introspection. Just sit down peacefully and look !

The Origin of Mind

We saw that all manifestation is essentially metaphysical patterns and movements of patterns aka processes. One of the interesting pattern is that of a mind. The mind is a collection of metaphysical patterns and processes that has properties like memories, knowledge, thought and perception. A mind is a system that is not only affected by other patterns, it also affects them back in a meaningful way. This capability is the capability of **action**. Usually actions are meaningful in the sense of self-preservation, growth and perpetuation of the mind itself.

What is mind?

As usual we start with a *what* question. A mind is a collection of patterns and processes, all metaphysical. Or in other words, it is just information, a content in consciousness.

How do I know its just patterns?

Via direct observation. The mind appears as a collection of movements of patterns of various kinds - memories, desires, impulses, emotions, imaginations and perceptions. All of these forms or patterns do not have any substance, they are not made up of anything. These are witnessed by the consciousness (Self) as nothing but consciousness of patterns. So the consciousness is witnessing nothing but itself in the form of ever changing patterns.

But there are infinite other patterns of all kinds, so what distinguishes this pattern from others?

Its **memory**. Ability to form impressions using other patterns is the single most important distinction between a mind and other patterns. So a mind is essentially memory - a pattern that takes on impressions from other patterns, and also provides them back to other patterns.

What is memory?

Just another pattern, however, it changes in response to other patterns in such a way that those patterns create a unique signature on it. For example if you press your hand on wet sand, the sand takes on an impression of your hand, which resembles the actual hand more or less.

What is memory made up of?

You will be tempted to say that memories are made up of perceptions, visions, sounds, your feelings or actions, your likes or dislikes etc. But those are just kinds of patterns, not substance of memory.

If we say it is made up of patterns, it is not entirely wrong. But, as defined here, it doesn't exist to start with, it must be created from another pattern, so what is it that turns into a memory? In other words - how is a memory formed and what substance is used to form it? As we know, there is no substance to any pattern, except consciousness itself, which is seen as nothingness or emptiness. So we can as well say that a memory arises out of nothingness, just like any other pattern. But in case of memory, there is an organizing process that shapes the nothingness into a pattern that resembles the source pattern. This is the memory formation process. It reads information from the source and creates more information that corresponds to the source meaningfully.

It all sounds too far fetched. So let's go to our own experience of memory. Recall what you ate in breakfast today, see that it just appears out of nothing. Memorize a word, and notice that it disappears into nothing when you are not trying to recall it. It again appears from nothingness as soon as there is an intention to recall it. It's like magic. See that whatever is written above applies to your memory too. That's a good subject for introspection.

What is the function of a memory?

To store experiences. Experiences are happenings, changes, they are fleeting, momentary. A memory takes on the impression from an experience and preserves it for later. So it records experiences.

Obviously, without a memory all experiences are just fleeting changes, nothing gets known, nothing actually happens. That gives us a clue about what consciousness "achieves" via a mind, it witnesses itself in its full glory via the agency of the mind and memory. Without a mind, the experience/witnessing is not really there, even though the change can still be there. Memory is the device which points towards change, because now the present experience can be compared to the last memorized one, and we immediately see the change. Without this comparison, the change is abstract, not a reality.

Notice that the recall of a memory is also an experience. You can memorize yourself recalling a memory. I don't know how useful that would be, but I just

noticed that it is funny. So a recall is a play back of original experience.

Now its a common knowledge that the recall is never so vivid and lively or high resolution as the original experience. That sounds like a flaw in the whole system of the memory, but it is not. Note that there is also forgetting, which again sounds like a flaw, but it is not.

Why is the recall such a bad copy of the original?

In my experience, one can actually make the recall as vivid, lively and lifelike as one wishes. Its a matter of being in a right state of mind. Recall that some of your memories are very faint, hard to perceive, but some are vivid, and when you recall them, it is as good as its happening right now.

The best examples can be songs (at least for me). When you recall them, they play back in the voice of the artist with all instruments, sometimes you can hear them as if its being played here and now. The distinction of the memory and perception disappears. Sadly, it happens only for some memories not for all.

What's the reason? Well, perhaps there is some fault in the recall process. But I've noticed that when you memorize something with great interest and give it more importance, it can be recalled back as good as original. So the memory has no limits actually in terms of fidelity. It is possible that all impressions get recorded in high fidelity. The play back depends on a particular state of the mind for some reason.

What is forgetting? Why does it happen?

One might expect that the mind, as great a thing as it is, would have solved the problem of data storage by now. But we immediately see that the memories are very unreliable. That becomes so obvious during school exams. It also seems to dislike passwords for some odd reasons. Everyone has cursed their memory at least once in their life.

That is our familiar experience of forgetting. It may look like that forgetting means that the memory has been erased completely, like wiping out black board or clean formatting your hard disk, but in my experience, I couldn't find any evidence of that happening. Not only that, sometimes the forgotten memories come back vividly, as if they were magically restored. How is that even possible if forgetting is like erasing?

Surely, forgetting involves an inability to recall, it has less to do with total erasure

of impressions. Now, that is mind blowing. It may mean that we store everything, every minute detail of our experience is being stored. So why is recall faulty? As I said, its not faulty, you just need a good state of mind, and every minute detail can be recalled.

Mind has a tendency to recall only very important stuff, the rest is not really useful, perhaps from the point of view of survival. That makes sense actually. Its just that, recalling everything in fine detail would put the system under immense load and moreover, the distinction between a recall and real time perception would disappear completely. Now such a situation is undesirable for obvious reasons. Thanks to low fidelity recalls, we are not in a madhouse.

But why am I splitting hair on the topic of memory?

Because memory is the single most important element in the structure we call mind. All other processes, abilities and actions of the mind are arranged around memory. When you understand memory, you understand mind. It is very important to note that. Mind is essentially memory with associated processes.

As we noted above, without memory all experience reduces to nothing.

As a mind, what we are essentially, is nothing but memory. You are a bundle of memories, impressions of events, experiences that happened in your life. Wipe out memories, and "you" disappear. Well ponder on that for a moment. Have you ever paid attention to memory? Had you ever imagined that it can be the single most important thing for the thing you call as "you"?

You can have new stuff, you can have a new house or clothes, you can even have a new body. You still remain you. Throw out your old memories and you are no more you. Interesting....

Where are the memories located?

Some people think that they are in the brain, perhaps coded in connections of neurons. My experience is a little different, memories, just like anything that is in mental domain, are **non-local**. That means they are not located anywhere. The whole mind structure is non-local.

Location, position or space are just concepts our mind uses to organize sense data. Such organization is very useful for survival. These concepts are useless for mental objects, so they are not localized by the mind. Where is imagination located? where is anger or fear? One may be tempted to answer that they are in

the body. But where is the body located? Think about it.

Secondly, if you consider that all of our experience, every millisecond of it is being recorded in high fidelity, then it would be impossible to store them in physical form. There is simply not enough space in brain or in body.

Thirdly, in order to ascertain if something is located, we need to actually perceive it as located in space at some distance. So let's check. How many meters away is your memory or mind from you? I bet you cannot answer that.

What are these other processes I speak of that surround memory?

There are many processes and structures that exchange information to and from memory and also process them, that is - they convert or interpret the memorized patterns. For example, the process of perception starts at a sense organ, goes through sense data processing structures and ends up in memory. Recall of perceptions starts from the memory and ends up in sense data processing structures. So it is interesting that same sensory structure is used for both perception and recall. That explains why we can almost hear a song when we recall it vividly, or can almost "see" an event when its recall is vivid.

We have enumerated and discussed a lot of capabilities of the mind. Each of them can be one process, or even more. We can as well call them as programs. So for example, there is a program that is running which takes stored patterns of muscle movements and sends proper signals to legs, so they move in a particular cycle and that makes a body walk from one place to another. Surely there are many programs, but we can bundle them in some broad categories. We already discussed them under the title of extraordinary gifts of mind.

The following figure gives a rough idea of what a typical mind looks like:

You may need to view the full size image to make sense of it. I've not shown all the connections and arrows or labeled them all because it would make the drawing a bit messy. But I'm sure you can connect everything simply by looking at the drawing and checking your own experience. You will find that the memory is always involved in anything the mind does. Processes may have their own custom memory or sub-processes. It can all get very-very complex, but essentially its memory with some activities around it.

Is there really a central memory?

More accurately, a central memory is only a metaphor, it makes it easy to

understand. But we never experience a central memory, all we experience is non-local and non-physical events and objects in the mind. There is no left-right or center there.

Another way to show that the mind is structured around a memory is to consider memory as the substrate on which processes run. Again, it should not be taken too literally. Check the diagram below:

How did the minds start? How did it originate?

From the above, it is now obvious that as soon as you have a structure that can form impressions, you get a memory, and other processes then evolve around it and that creates a rudimentary mind.

So a simplest kind of mind would be just a memory and one more process which reads it and does one thing. It reminds me of a simple computer program. Actually computers are just another kind of minds, they are also a memory and processes. No wonder, they work in a similar way to our own mind.

How does a process originate and connect to a memory?

Since there are almost infinite possibilities. An uncountable number of processes keep appearing and disappearing, but only those processes become a part of the mind which assist in its survival, that is - those that keep the memory intact (or make it grow). Anything that does not keep the whole structure going simply gets destroyed. Everything is impermanent, and hence only things that are dynamically maintained can continue for a while. So just like in natural selection, processes evolve around the simple memory that organize it more, keep it going and generally are beneficial for it.

We can see the organizing processes, or more generally the Fundamental Process in action here. So such processes create a mind from metaphysical patterns. Now you can appreciate why I dedicated a big chunk of last article to processes and their kinds. It would be worthwhile to study that again.

So now you know how a mind comes into being. It never stops evolving, it gets more and more complex. In the case of a human mind, it is an extremely complex and sophisticated structure. Only when you study simpler minds, you will start knowing how it could have originated.

Why do minds have a tendency to get complex and big?

Anything that does not evolve, gets destroyed. This is the law of impermanence, to put it a bit poetically. Its not that the simple minds are wiped out entirely, actually they persist, but we tend to notice the complex ones, they have far greater ability to resist external changes and do not go extinct very easily.

So the biological evolution we see around us is actually evolution of the mind. The bodies are merely external appearances. What is changing, growing and evolving is mind. That surely flips the whole picture.

Why do minds need a body?

I don't think it exists because it is needed, it is an outcome of self organization. It happened that it worked well and hence there it is. A body is a structure, whose sole purpose is to host senses and to act. It is a mental structure, a collection of processes, however bodily structures can be perceived via senses and hence they appear physical.

The body, as an extension of the mind, takes impressions from environment and makes changes in the environment around it. All this is done only in order to perpetuate the mind. This is our familiar organs of perception and organs of action, aka the body.

There is a possibility that many different kinds of minds can exist without a physical body, and live as purely non-physical beings. Or they may evolve non-physical interfaces to get outside impressions, to filter them or to act in some manner. In fact, the minds that have a gross body are a tiny fraction of the almost infinite number of minds there can be.

Body is interesting, it can be perceived, it is an object and is located among other objects, it can make copies of itself, it can grow, and last but not the least - it disappears when it gets old and worn, and breaks down. We have studied the body in detail previously.

Would the mind disappear when the body is destroyed?

If you consider the above description of the mind, you will see that the body is a small part of the mind. Small in terms of significance. Its destruction, it follows, does not imply destruction of the mind. When the body is gone, aka death, the mind is **disembodied**. It still functions, but is without any senses or actions. It may grow back a body like an Amoeba grows a tentacle or can simply attach to some new body, if it matches and if the mind likes it.

Now the existence after death and reincarnation makes more sense.

It may happen that some processes that depend on a body or maintain a body get destroyed too along with the body, but the essence remains. The essence is a large bundle of memories, or impressions, with some necessary processes. Traditionally this has been named as Jiva or Causal body containing Samskaras or Karmic impressions.

It looks like the body is more like a part of the world, not of the mind. Which comes first - world or bodies?

As this article is getting too long, we will continue with this question and many more in the next article. Stay tuned.

Origin of the World

We saw the mind in detail in last article - a very important part of the manifestation or creation, that we call Experience. We can now go deeper into the Experience and see what else lies there and how it all originated.

The metaphysical patterns and processes not only form minds, they form all kinds of structures. Minds happen to be a special kind. So what are those other structures? We see them all around us, they are things, objects, systems, physical or non-physical, we are surrounded by all kinds of patterns. A collection of objects is called a **World**. So we are going to take a look at the world in this article.

What is a world?

As always, we encounter the "what" question. As mentioned already, it is a set of objects, a huge collection of them. And what are objects? If you look closely, they are patterns, ever changing patterns. You will immediately notice that there is a mind boggling variety of them. But you will notice that they are just structures - organized patterns.

The word world is usually used for this planet Earth, but here we use it in a more general and philosophical sense. So everything that surrounds us is world. Not only this planet, everything in the universe is our world. Every non-physical experience is also world or worlds. In general, everything we experience which can be marked as "not-me" is world for the purpose of this discussion.

What's the difference between mental patterns and worldly patterns?

There is no difference at all, they are all metaphysical patterns. Mental structures arise via the agency of organizing processes and worldly patterns also arise in the same way. Their origin is not really any different. So how come some patterns are mind, and others are world? That is an important question. Let's take a look.

Mind creates a structure known as **Identity**, it is container for all actions originating from that mind. So all actions coming from a particular mind get a tag of identity or "I". Identity is usually what we call as *me*. It's the person, an individual. In most of the cases, the actions happen through yet another structure,

known as a body, and the identification happens with the body too. So for many, their bodies are their identity, they call their body as "I". Now, the mind draws an imaginary line between the structures that it labels as I and remaining structures, and calls everything that lies beyond this line as "not-I". And everything that is not-I becomes the world. This dividing act of the mind creates the world. So we find that the world is not actually a separate independent thing or collection of things, it is just structures which the mind chose to classify as "not me".

Its amazing to see that the whole world is just a concept in the mind, a belief, an idea. Actually there is no significant difference between the mind and the world. And that is why this blog refers to everything that is manifested as the **Universal Mind**.

What are the criteria the mind uses to classify structures as "me" and the world?

Its easy to see - whatever aids in the survival of the mind gets highest priority and is given more importance than the rest, so structures that ensure continuation of a mind get classified as "this is identical to me" or "myself" or "I". Minds also labels structures that are ever changing and are "not-I" as "mine", claiming ownership of them, only and only if they aid in the survival and maintenance of its own structure.

So it puts a tag of "I" on all memories of it, because as we have seen, memory is the central element in a mind. What I am as a person is just a collection of memories. Then it tags thoughts, imaginations, feelings, emotions, pleasures, pains and whatever happens in the mind as "I". Mind then goes ahead and tags the body as "I" too. Obviously, a body is an instrument of action and perception, and is an important part of the mind and enables it to function in the world.

However, identity is not so stable, it keeps shifting and fluctuating, it is not sharp, it is very fuzzy and malleable concept. So the mind can also identify with whatever aids in survival of the body, such as, other bodies of its own kind aka genetic structure, that would be your family, race, tribe, caste, nationality, and even language or culture. So the statements like - "I'm an Indian" are very common. "Indian", here, is only a concept, not even a real structure. That's how fuzzy and nebulous identity is. Sometimes, a person is not a body anymore, now he owns a body and calls it as "my body". That's a very common scenario where the perspective of the mind makes the body as an object instead of a person. It can happen in case of the mind itself, where it sometimes calls itself as "my mind" or "my thoughts and memories". So "I" keeps shifting depending on the situation and hence parts of the mind keep changing into parts of the world and parts of the world become mind again if mind wishes so.

But parts of the world or objects are clearly seen as solid things made up of matter. Isn't that a major distinction between the mind and the world?

It is one of the distinction apart from the "I" criterion. However, again we are in a fuzzy territory. So the body is not world, it is "I", but as soon as you shift your perspective to the mind, or take a look at the mirror, the body becomes an object, a part of the world, it seems to be made of matter too. But we rarely say that I see an object in the mirror, we usually say I see myself there. So I guess, solidity or matter is only secondary when it comes to drawing a line between mind and the world.

The body is a very special structure if you see it from this angle. It is objective yet subjective, it is a material thing, yet it is me. It is the only interface to whatever that is "not me". The interface with the world is implemented via two familiar kinds of structures - the sense organs and the organs of action. Both kinds of organs are material in nature. This is also a very convenient place to draw a line between the world and the mind, and the mind does it often. But its not the only division it performs.

Whatever is perceived via the sensory structures is classified as physical or material and whatever is perceived internally as mind processes and structures is classified as non-physical (aka mental or mentations). This is another line, another distinction which is artificial and is a creation of the mind, it is just an idea. However, it is very important, so lets take a closer look.

What are senses?

Senses are metaphysical structures that interface with other metaphysical structures. These define the boundary of a mind. Actually they filter out any unwanted changes that may reach the mind and also convert the incoming stream of changing patterns into a memorizable format. This format is specific to a sense. For example vision produces shapes and colours and hearing produces sounds and tones. These are what are commonly called **qualia**. I call them **irreducibles**, because we cannot reduce them to anything else, they have no parts. Interestingly, all the experience of the world is just an experience of irreducibles or qualia. All we perceive via senses is formatted information, we do not perceive any objects, the objects are made up by the mind using this information that arrives via senses. As we know all information is just metaphysical changes, so objects do not really exists, except as metaphysical patterns. Moreover, we do not even perceive their actual pattern, the mind gets a

filtered and specially formatted pattern which represents the object in the memory.

Now that is mind blowing. Senses do the magic, it seems. The physical world is due to senses. How amazing is that !?!

On one side of the senses, there is matter, on the other side there is mind. One side is seen as physical, other as non-physical. What do the senses actually do to enable such magic? They don't do much. Processes in the mind tag any experience mediated via senses as "physical" or material. Actually, its all mental, the division is for specific reason. The reasons have evolutionary basis, it helps in survival if the mind tags some things as "not-me", adds qualia and places them neatly in space and time. Non-sensory perceptions (e.g. a memory recall or an emotion or imagination) gets tagged as non-physical or mental. Apart from this tagging there is really no difference between physical and non-physical, everything can be placed under the class of non-physical. Its all mind. There are not two kinds of experiences, and senses have only one kind of patterns on their both ends - metaphysical patterns.

So is the world a part of the mind or is mind a part of the world?

Both are structures that are a part of a huge ocean of metaphysical structures - the manifestation. A human mind and this universe are a tiny part of this ocean of patterns. The ocean of patterns is almost infinite. We have a name for it - the Universal Mind. It is ok to call it mind because there are only one kind of patterns and since physical ones are more illusory compared to mental ones, its more accurate to call everything as mental aka non-physical or just "mind" in short.

If its all one, why does it appear as many to me?

The divisions and classifications are done by the mind. This is what it does, its the job of the mind to divide. The "many" are just ideas, thoughts, "one" is what actually is.

But I see forms, I do not see patterns, and I see many, I do not see one. Why?

One word - **Maya**. Mind creates stuff and then gets entrapped into it. This is ignorance. It goes very-very deep, however, it is easy to see. Anyhow, the Maya or illusion does not simply go away when the mind realizes what is going on. It persists. We do not magically become something metaphysical and start seeing patterns instead of the usual illusory world. However, now there is this knowing, which overshadows the illusion. This kick-starts the journey of the mind towards

the Universal Mind, towards absolute freedom.

What should be our conduct and actions in the light of above knowledge?

Seeing the world as illusion should not mean denial of the world. Some people take it to mean that the world does not exist, which is illogical to say the least. It exists, and it exists in the form of an illusion. Thanks to the mind and its processes, we witness the creation in glorious technicolour instead of scrolling patterns on the screen.

Denying the world is like saying the files and pictures on my PC do not exist because there is only data there - patterns of two states of something aka 1's and 0's, there are no pictures, the processes in the PC aka software displays the data as pictures, words and movies - which is an illusion. Well, we do not simply wipe out our hard disk, even if we know this, do we?

Knowledge of the world broadens our perspective of it, it does not make it disappear or make it less important, or turn it into something that needs to be discarded immediately. A seeker simply accepts what is, instead of building a few more layers of opinions on top of it. One thing that happens is that we lose most of our worldly attachments sooner or later. The material stuff loses its luster, I am already everything, created or uncreated, so why would I want to own it, hoard it or destroy it? Doesn't make sense.

It does make sense to use it. A wise seeker knows that it all being an illusion does not mean that we cannot use it. All experience can be turned into a means to learn and gain knowledge.

As usual, knowledge results in perfect action automatically. The harmful actions are a result of ignorance, and they fall away on their own. Just know, and the actions will take care of themselves. It is easy.

Chapter 16

Going Home

A question that is often asked is - where does the path of knowledge or any spiritual path take us? Or in other words - what do I get from it all in the end? The short answer is - we do not reach anywhere, we return home and we do not get anything, we just lose many things.

Sounds awful, doesn't it? Lets unpack this answer and see why this is so.

Goals vs Path

We have talked about goals, life-goals and perhaps bigger things like path of the heart. We make efforts to achieve these goals and when we get there, its the end of the story. Now we have reached somewhere and we have something more - we got what we wanted. Very good, but if you try to weigh the path of knowledge in a similar way, you will be surprised. Ask yourself - what do we gain when we walk the path of knowledge and where do we reach?

An obvious answer is - we gain knowledge, isn't that a big thing? Not very surprising at all. But knowledge of what? The most essential knowledge we get is that of the Self. Our nature and essence is revealed to the mind, which is - pure emptiness, just witnessing. Well, doesn't sound like a big gain, it is underwhelming actually, and the mind often asks - is that it? is that all there is to know? The answer is yes. It can be done in a few seconds.

Knowledge of the Self

Now lets see how do we gain this essential knowledge aka Self realization. When we see clearly that we are not the experiences, namely that of a world, body, ego or mind, we reach the experiencer, which is just another name for the Self. Note that we reach there by discarding our beliefs that I'm a body or a mind or anything else. Then we are left with the Self. In essence we did not gain much, we only lost, lost some beliefs. The beliefs were that I'm something material, impermanent, a doer or a separate self - aka the person. We lose the person, a big loss indeed.

The person or identity or "me" loses its solidity and is seen as a bunch of memories, beliefs and concepts. The ego is just a bot now, a bunch of survival

programs, and the body is a nicely organized pile of organic matter. In short, we lose a lot of ignorance when we arrive at the Self. Now we are pure, eternal, unchanging, unborn and uncaused consciousness ! Everything else disappears, except this witnessing emptiness.

So the knowledge of the Self is actually a loss of ignorance, tons and tons of it. You can make a long list of what else is lost as a consequence - fears, pride, uncertainty, anxiety, greed and what not. The Self was already there, since the start, we realize that we do not "gain" it back, it was just covered up by clouds of ignorance. Just as we do not get a new Sun, when the clouds covering it disperse.

Knowledge of the World

Lets look at the brighter side - we still have the whole world or universe or whatever we experience. We did not lose it, we have a better understanding of it now. But wait, we are just fooling ourselves here. Take a look again - the world or the experiences are just the Self. The entire experience is just a movement, a vibration in the Self, which is illusory to say the least. Dreamlike, impermanent. It never actually happened (to say the most).

The solid reality of the world and experiences disappears as soon as you know what it is. It is just virtual or metaphysical patterns and processes that seem to happen and when interpreted by the mind through its mechanisms, produce this great mesmerizing illusion of there being something. The mind itself being a collection of patterns and processes, e.g. memory or senses etc. Moreover, the mind cuts off the experience from the experiencer cleanly, making the illusion more "real". Once seen as it is, the world and all experiences are nothing but just the Self, having no substance, pure emptiness, just a play on the screen of the Self.

So we lose the world too. It is now less appealing, lost its charm and no more a serious matter. So is the mind/ego and its melodramas. What is left? Nothing, if you ask me.

You are empty

So are you... and so is everyone. Just in case, you had some hope that at least people are what we are left with. There are no people, they are just me.

You see, we are left with nothing when we take up the path of knowledge (or any other such path). We gain nothing, nothing new actually, the Self and the sense of "I" being everything were always there, waiting to be recognized. Once

recognized, its done. Everything else, that was unnecessary and a burden falls away.

And we reach back there from where we started. Actually we never "reach" there, because we realize that we never even left. The Self is seen as always being there, where it is now, which is nowhere and everywhere.

Spiritual evolution is a backward process, we leave behind everything, its like going home. But then we realize, we never left home. We went on an imaginary journey of ignorance, realized that it was a dream (kind of nightmare, if you like) and now that reverie is over. It is lost and forgotten. Going home is like remembering that we are still at home. It is the Self remembering itself.

Memories

Memory is a pattern. It is a very special pattern. Without it there would be nothing but a chaos of random patterns everywhere and nowhere. There would be no universe, no stars, no worlds, no minds and no bodies. One can see that all experiences are nothing but a memory of one or the other kind. In this article I present this rather unconventional way of looking at an experience - it is a memory.

What is a memory?

For an average person, it is an ability to remember things, faces or names, for a neuroscientist it is a network of neurons, for an electronics engineer, it is a sophisticated piece of hardware, and for a spiritual seeker, it is the essence of all existence.

When a pattern leaves an imprint on another pattern, we call it a process of memorization. Just like your hand leaves an imprint on wet sand. The sand has now a memory of your hand. When many people imprint their hands on this sand, it is a database of hands now. It has experienced something, there is knowledge here. If this sand creature were given an ability to read those memories or imprints, and communicate them, it would tell us what happened. It could share its experiences. Without those imprints, it is nothing, just sand, just randomness. No amount of sophisticated abilities can convey anything, except more randomness. Now that there are these imprints, we can see that there is a structure, there is information here, and more accurately speaking - we have an reduction in Entropy of the system.

From the mentioned metaphor of sand and hands, we can already learn a lot about what a memory is. Firstly, it is a copy of another pattern. Secondly, it is a structure, has information, and thirdly, it has a lower Entropy compared to its immediate environment. And, last but not the least, a system can evolve around it that can communicate and pass on those imprints to other systems. Information sharing means even lower Entropy. Entropy decreases, randomness decreases, meaning arises, minds are formed, life arises, evolution towards complexity begins.

Metaphysical Memories

What causes a memory? An ability to change in accordance with another pattern. It need not be an exact copy, it needs to be simply consistent. There can be errors in copying, but as long as these errors stay in margins and the resulting pattern gives a positive match with similar patterns, the job of memorization is done well. It also, need not be the same substrate, it also need not correspond one to one with the original.

What happens when a copy is made? Entropy reduction happens. It need not be a specific pattern, it can be any random pattern, but now it has a copy or many copies and it has acquired a meaning, it can be recognized by some other process. When this pattern gets arranged in a regular, predictable manner, it forms a structure. The structure can repeat itself by imprinting on neighbouring patterns and the structure grows. Suddenly, we have a thing now, an entity or an object is born.

Why would it do that? Memory happens because it is a possibility. Patterns interact in many ways. They are change themselves, and hence pass on the change to other patterns, which in turn change the first one. It is an exchange. The exchange results in modification of one or both patterns. The patterns can merge, one can get destroyed or can change in a random fashion etc. If one of them is not changing much, or is almost "blank", the other can induce a change in it which corresponds to its own. And thus, an imprint is produced. It then reproduces. The patterns grow in population. More of them means that the probability of other patterns that interact with them taking on that particular imprint goes up. We see more and more of them. They compete, and various structures are formed. Patterns are pure change, and hence lose their imprint sooner or later, if not reinforced by repetitive imprinting by their own type. These patterns turn into randomness again. The structure is lost in the sea of chaos. Hence, only those structures survive which have evolved processes to keep them going. We can see the seed of life and matter itself here. It happens because it must happen, it is by necessity, when a memory happens structures are formed. Mutually or self reinforcing structures are the only ones that continue, rest dissolve back into randomness.

We haven't yet reached anything non-physical or physical here, we are still at the metaphysical level. These patterns are pure information, pure change on the screen of consciousness. They are a dance of emptiness. They are potentialities. They have no substance. Still, we can see a lot happening here, in this sea of almost nothingness, of infinite chaos and possibilities. The play of memories has just started.

Non-physical Memories

Once a memory is formed, a process of protecting it evolves around it. This is also by necessity, because a memory can form without such a process, but it will not last given the continuous change, nothing remains because all is change. So we are left with only those memories that have an adjoining process of protection. This is the seed of natural selection. Memories that copy themselves and keep the pattern intact are selected out of a pool of randomly changing patterns. We have a start of a rudimentary mind here.

How would the protection work? It needs at least two components - one that checks for any corruption in the original pattern, and another that restores it back, in case any major corruption is detected. People who are in IT can see what I mean. This is the foundation of any information system. You'd need a process that continuously monitors or scans the memory for changes. It does so by keeping its own copy, which takes on precedence in case of a dissimilarity and there is another process which overwrites the original memory, reinstating it back. What if the reference copy itself get corrupted? Nothing can be done, it is a case of mutation. The original gets overwritten and whatever happens, happens, it is no more the original memory. Note that the actual pattern is not important, anything that can survive the constant erosion of change will persist. However, too much mutation means a loss of valuable information, which has been accumulated in the core memory and took a very-very long time. Fortunately, there is a solution - error correcting codes (**ECC**). Sophisticated algorithmic processes evolve to check whether the reference has any corruption, and they correct that. One of the ways would be - to have three copies, and when one of them gets corrupted or changed, and the other two still match, the non-matching one can be overwritten, since the probability of two copies getting corrupted in such a way that they match exactly is very low. ECC, as you can guess, relies on some or other kind of redundancy.

Luckily for memories, there is one more way to ensure purity, that is even more resilient. Make as many copies as you can, spread them far and wide. In this way even when the individual patterns get corrupted, there are enough of them to continue the structure building process. Individuals keep disappearing in the sea of chaos, but the overall structure is very resilient, it endures. A simple mind is born in this way. It has a process of central memory, protecting processes, correcting processes, copying processes and probably some more. The whole structure can be copied and reproduction begins. We get first non-physical structures - they are minds, mental entities, just memories.

What if the adjoining processes falter, break down? They do, as must happen if

there is nothing but incessant change. The structure, which is now a simple mind, can do one thing, among many possible strategies, which is - to store a mechanism to reboot the failed processes. It recreates those processes. How? Obviously you will need a blue print of that process stored somewhere in the memory itself. So, a part of the memory also stores the information about the processes it needs, all the processes actually. A process is nothing but an algorithmically changing pattern, a process is just memory in motion - a pattern that proceeds in a certain way. When you have a copy of this process pattern, it can be regenerated and starts processing again, replacing the faulty process. Of course, you need a process to detect if one of the process has faltered. This introduces the need for more error detection and correction, and you can see how complex the system can become. In this way, a complex mind is born. It has a huge array of processes that monitor its health, and a huge amount of memory that stores not only the original impressions, but also the information blue print of the whole mind and all of its processes. It is amazing to see this structure in operation.

Note that not all memories take this route and become minds, some are happy with replication and formation of structures that change in simpler ways. These become non-physical worlds, terrains of memories or patterns that are rule bound. Lack of rules simply means dissolution back into randomness and increase in Entropy for that part of the sea of patterns. This sea is almost infinite, as it is zero dimensional and non-local. It is like a huge mind - the Universal Mind begins forming.

Physical Memories

You must have guessed by now, a complex mind would look like a non-physical creature, an entity that is purposeful and has a meaningful behaviour. We are still at a very primary level. Things get really interesting when this mind can not only scan itself, but can also scan its "surroundings" for various purposes and can exchange information patterns with other minds, perhaps of its own kind.

The sea of ever changing patterns means that the memory of a mind is still very vulnerable as the external patterns impinge upon it incessantly, so some sorts of barriers start forming around that mind to protect it better. The barriers are nothing but more patterns that take the hits from outside change and shield the inner memories. However, a barrier means that this mind now cannot interact with outside and cannot recruit new patterns into its structure. When left closed like this, eventually the internal memory errors take over and the whole structure falls turning into a wasteland of randomness. So a better solution evolves, which is - some openings are left in the barriers and changes from outside can now

enter the mind. But, the mind makes it double sure that these changes do not affect it adversely. There are guardian processes that filter the incoming changes and allow only the useful ones to enter. These processes form substructures that we are very familiar with - **senses**.

Senses are memory structures with adjoining processes that allow change to enter the core memory of the mind. The restriction on what enters inside means that it will be distorted and reinterpreted in ways that serve the mind well. Senses do not provide the mind with exact information of what is outside its barriers, they simply provide a formatted information about what the mind needs in order to grow and replicate. In this way, the experience of a physical world is born. It is just change imprinting on the memory in the mind through a restricted and distorted portal of senses. The mind now "senses" a world out there.

Senses do not send data directly into the core memory, that'd be dangerous. So they have their own memory, a buffer. The information patterns of outside are copied into these memory banks. A whole array of new processes are developed to process them into their essential meaning, and the unneeded stuff is discarded. This is the whole process of **perception**. The core memory and its adjoining processes then decide what to do with this filtered information provided via perception.

The patterns arriving via senses are assigned very peculiar qualities that are essentially non-physical and irreducible to any other pattern. This whole experience gets labels of "outside" and physical **world** is born. It is a collection of all patterns, however filtered and distorted, that are not the original system of memory, or in other words, it is all that is not "me". **Identity** is born out of this division.

What does the mind do with sense data? It uses it to perpetuate its original agenda, which is by necessity - lowering of Entropy via replication and growth. Now that everything is so tightly structured, it becomes an involved process in itself, it is no longer a simple copy and paste of patterns. The mind has one more use of this data - manipulation of outside patterns. This is something big, something important that happened in the evolutionary journey of the mind. It developed structures to not only process the patterns that come in contact with it, it also developed structures to manipulate them, stop them from causing harmful changes or to integrate them into its own structure by suitably modifying them. These structures are nothing but a **body**. When seen via mental processes, a body is a collection of non-physical patterns and when seen via senses, it is an object, a collection of organs which is seen as one of the object "outside" the mind.

The senses provide the mind a narrow slice of an almost infinite variety of patterns that the mind considers as "not-me". This highly distorted narrow view is what is known as the physical world. It is a collection of objects, although it is just a thin slice of sea of patterns, the variety and range of those objects is overwhelming. Objects are patterns that are tightly structured and bound by processes that we call physical laws. They are just non-physical patterns which happen to be in the range of senses and are useful for some minds in some ways. Non-physical patterns are in turn a thin slice of metaphysical patterns, only a few of the latter are of concern for a mind. All non-physical patterns are essentially metaphysical - change in nothingness, just probabilities. So the reality is only of one kind, it appears in three kinds because of these three kinds of memories.

Senses are interesting structures. There are some, the exteroceptory ones, that interface with external world and there are some that interface with the internals of the body itself and convey its status, its needs and health. We can call them interoceptory senses or sub-physical senses. There is yet another class of senses - the non-physical senses. I do not have a collective English name for them, they convey the happenings inside the mind itself. There are many - recall, imagination, emotion, desires, thoughts and so on. These are perceived as internal events in the mind.

A body is an interesting structure indeed. It is what gives a mind the ability to perform actions. It is a part of the mind that interacts with patterns and processes that the mind considers as external to its own. It is interesting because, bodies are memory structures themselves, just like senses, and have physical and sub-physical senses as their substructures. Bodies are within the sensory range of physical senses and appear as complex and ever changing objects. The mind connects to a body at the point of senses. It can disconnect from it as easily also. Bodies have their own core memory, its the DNA, where the whole pattern of a body and its processes is stored. It is also called the genetic memory, as it can generate the whole body. Like a true mind, DNA can replicate, make copies of itself, has error detection and protection/correction etc. RNA transcription is the process through which generation and growth happens. This process produces proteins which form cells and cells self-organize in many ways to form various creatures. So creatures are just structures formed around a complex of memories of various kinds. We humans are one of them, very unique but a minuscule part of whole.

A mind is a struggle against rising Entropy and parts of the mind routinely erode out and are replaced again using blueprints. Body is perhaps the part that erodes faster than any other. It can be due to its direct interface with the physical world, which is largely a domain of high Entropy. Body is also the most distant part of

the mind, its not well protected from degradation. Body has a mind of its own in this complex of memories. It is the **Ego**. This part is non-physical but totally dedicated to the survival and procreation of bodies. While the mind goes through an experience of a body, the Ego remains its most active part. The core of the mind is largely hidden behind the noise of the Ego and activities of the body. The Ego is shed as soon as the body is shed. However, the mind can create more kinds of bodies and more senses on demand. It has these blueprints at its core. These are beyond my current knowledge and moreover cannot be shown easily while the experience of the physical body is in progress.

The Universal Memory

It turns out that in spite of barriers around a mind, it is not totally isolated from its environment, which is a sea of patterns and structures, and from other minds, similar in structure or utterly different from its own. Combined in such a way, these form a collection of minds, or a collection of memories of all minds and objects, which are nothing but memory patterns. All these, collectively, can be thought of as a gargantuan mind, which I am calling as the **Universal Mind** (UM) in these blog articles. It is nothing but a collection of all the memories that ever existed. It has all the minds, all the objects, all the universes, physical or non-physical. We cannot imagine how huge it can be, it is not in space, it is not in time, for it is the minds that create space and time out of memory. UM is essentially unknowable for an individual mind. We can know some things about it via inference. The most essential property of UM is that it is nothing but a memory. Individual universes or minds are virtually isolated regions of the UM memory having their own mental processes or physical processes, aka laws. Secondly, we can say that it is almost infinite, but not actually infinite. Thirdly, everything evolves out of the UM and dissolves back into it. UM is essentially eternal, but it may have a start and an end, as it can be experienced, however its start/end cannot be known and is necessarily unknowable. And finally, the agenda of UM is nothing special, it is the same as that of any self organizing information system - Entropy reduction, which is not a "chosen" agenda, it is what must happen, it is by necessity.

Experiencing

I introduced this seemingly innocent term in the past articles. It turns out that it is a very enigmatic process. It is not even a process, it is something that is the cause behind all processes and patterns. It can be best described, in my opinion, as a continuous shift of the consciousness through a field of possibilities. This field is nothing but Presence - All-that-is.

Experiencing can be roughly understood via the metaphor of a movie, the kind which is a series of images/frames printed on celluloid, not the digital ones. The frames of the movie are nothing but possibilities. The frames move in front of a light and a lens projects the images on a screen. The light and the screen can be compared to the consciousness, it gives rise to an experience. It seems that the screen is changing, displaying all sorts of patterns and images, but all that is happening is a movement of reel, which is a collection of all possibilities. When current frame is compared to the last one, it gives rise to an experience of memory and hence change can be experienced. When there is no memory, no change is experienced. No change means no experience too. All experience is just change, it is our direct observation. All we see is impermanence, nothing is absolutely static here, except the experiencer itself. So all experience is due to memory.

Experiencing, a metaphysical process, is seen as experience of memories. There is nothing more to know after this is known. The contents of the memories and the associated processes or laws are merely details. Everything is possible and hence all memories and patterns are possible, and hence knowledge is an endless process, it never ends, we are never finished. Knowledge itself is a pattern in a memory which resides in a mind. Can something be known if there are all possibilities? It stops making any sense as soon as we know that all can be known or nothing can be known, they are one and the same thing. Knowledge makes sense only in a narrow range of limited knowledge which displaces a limited ignorance.

Experiencing, given all possibilities exist, is also never ending, but does not suffer with the difficulties knowledge suffers from. So, everything can be experienced and is actually being experienced right now right here, as there is only one experiencer and only one Presence.

Experience of a memory

Let us return to our own human experience of memories. Knowledge itself is nothing but well organized memories. These memories are acquired via experiences of various kinds. Knowledge gaining is an organizing and structuring process that operates in a mind. Obviously, it is operational in a human mind too. Knowledge lowers the Entropy of memories to a minimal value, and is therefore, a favoured process. It is a process of forming meaningful inter-relations among experiences. More organization and interrelations in memory mean less Entropy and more information.

We can have knowledge regarding memories themselves. We can study a narrow

range of memories that yield to the knowledge. The way we can do it is to classify them, observe their nature, what they do and how they function, how are they interrelated etc. This will form the knowledge of the memories from a human mind's perspective.

Inert memories - Physical things are memories, patterns that change in the universal mind. Objects have a structure, we call it matter. Inert memories are not totally inert and inactive, they change. They change very predictably as they are rule bound via algorithmic processes. They have simple structures. Predictability means that these memories are most suitable for interpretation via senses. Senses filter out the noise of mostly random changes, and present us with inert memories that are more consistent. So the physical world is experienced in the form of objects that change slowly compared to the mind itself.

Bodies - As mentioned above, a body is a result of a complex memory and associated processes. When a mind connects to a body, it owns it, a person is born. Bodies change faster and in more complex ways compared to objects. But they change slower than the mind does. Bodies are disposable, they are just interfaces with inert memories.

Perceptive memories (PM) - These are fast changing memories that store ongoing perception. These are responsible for the experience of "now", the present moment. Recognition happens in these memories, which is its associated process. Without such memories, which are fleeting, nothing can be perceived or recognized.

Short term memories (STM) - They store recent events and experiences, and give rise to the sense of time. Time is the distance between two memories. The arrangement of memories determine the amount of time. This is done in short term memory, and hence it is a very important part of the mind. This part is also known as the working memory. Decision making, thinking, imagination, recall and many more processes are associated with this memory.

As the name suggests, this memory is temporary and is refreshed by other kinds of memories, as and when needed. It also stores our current mood, the state of emotions. Emotions colour and bias the processes in the STM and also in PM. Memories affect our mental states, but are also affected by them in turn. Mood can alter the sense of time or can affect decision making. Intense emotions, like fear etc, can distort the PM and can affect recognition.

Recall happens in STM. It is a process of copying from long term memories and reprocessing them to produce results. Recall projects the copied information back

into PM. Thus, we find that recall of events appears as a faint perception of them. Anyhow, the mind can recognize the recalled objects just as well. Other processes are affected by recall, such as decision making or choosing. For these processes, there is no essential difference between PM, STM and recall. Hence, a recall of happy event makes us happy, and recall of fearful event makes us afraid, and even the body is affected as if the event is being really experienced. The face expresses the recalled memory as faithfully as it expresses the PM.

Imagination happens in STM. It is a process of mixing of various memories and experiences. We can imagine only that which we have experienced, the novelty is a result of mixing of memories, not a result of creation of them. The imagined result, however, can be committed back to memory, as a "creation". Hence a human mind cannot create, it can only mix and match from a huge range of memories. The imagination affects all processes as usual, so a pleasant imagination sends waves of pleasure in the body and a negative imagination can make us cringe.

For a mind, the contents of STM is its "reality", it does not matter how the contents got there. They can be from senses, can be from recall, or imagination or even from non-physical memories or the UM itself. We can say that the word *reality* is a meaningless word for the mind. That said, there is logical structure of memories and processes, which alerts the mind by detecting the source of memories in STM, that in turn helps the decision making processes to carry out an act. It is obviously a high level process, the result is sanity - we do not act on imagined or recalled events. For some humans, this process gets afflicted in many ways, resulting in odd behaviours ranging from insanity to destructive actions, to biases and to mild ignorance.

Actions arise out of STM. Our current actions are a result of contents of STM. There is a part of memory that holds the blueprint of this action, it is the **intention**. Details of this subject are fairly involved, so I will simply skip them for now.

Medium term memory (MTM) - This stores experiences and patterns that are of some importance for the mind, but it may not need them immediately. MTM gives rise to the experience of near past and near future. Examples can be your appointments, your plans to visit a store, buy something, your recent fight with someone or a romantic meeting that happened a few days ago. These are stored as not very immediate causes of action, but as causes that will result in action, if situations allow. We experience the first occurrences of **desires**. Desires arise out of MTM as motive forces that propel the mind into actions. Usually, the desires fade out with time, or get fulfilled or become irrelevant or are replaced by other

desires.

A process keeps copying the contents of MTM into STM, in a sorted order based on their priority. Of course, the survival related issues take precedence over other. Next in the line are memories that resulted in pleasure and so on. Thus a mind is constantly bombarded with intentions and desires, and an untrained mind keeps acting on them without much discretion. The result is a nonoptimal state of affairs called suffering and pain. The cure is to train oneself to become aware of the contents of STM and MTM, and choose wisely, from knowledge, not from compulsions caused by automated processes.

Long term memory (LTM) - It is yet another kind of memory that is very important and spans a wide range of experiences, giving rise to the sense of past. It can be of many years, perhaps whole lifetimes. Significant events from the above mentioned memories get copied to LTM routinely. It is an archiving process. This memory stores the personality, the identity of a mind. Long term desires are stored here as wishes. This forms the story of an individual - a series of events that happened in his life, his *past*. All of the mind, and other memories are coloured by and are affected by LTM. This is what we call as **conditioning**.

The overall behaviour of a person is determined by the contents of the LTM. In other words, we can say that you are a sum total of your experiences. These contents are fetched into the STM whenever needed and various processes compare and evaluate the current situation in the light of LTM data. Our past affects our present in this way. Our conditioning largely determines our actions and preferences, not our perception or logical abilities.

All learnt skills are stored here. So LTM is important for survival too. All our relations with other people are stored here, and hence LTM is responsible for our social actions. A young person is seen as immature and "green" because of the low information content in LTM. Children are innocent, energetic, flexible and learn fast. Longer a person lives, greater is the weight of LTM, and hence a very old mind is heavily burdened by its own memories, its own conditioning. A time comes when this results in an increase of Entropy instead of a decrease of it, and very special processes in the mind kick in. Perhaps the body is also a pile of high Entropy patterns now, and the mind starts a process of discarding the entire LTM along with other memories. This is the experience of **death**. So we see that the death is an Entropy reduction process, or a creative process, not a destructive one.

Greater memory (GM) - These are just memories as usual but they store our non-physical experiences, when the mind happens to be in a different state. The states

can be of meditation or Astral Projection - a disconnection from usual experience of a person/body and a physical world. One must wonder why is there a need for a completely separate memory in this case. Actually, a mind is always in non-physical environment, the physical environment is special and has dedicated memories. GM is the norm, other memories mentioned above are needed for survival and experience of a body/world.

We get to access GM when we are less involved in the worldly actions and thoughts. It is not very inaccessible. It is just another memory, we choose to forget as it is less important for survival. We are in a survival mode most of the time, unless you are a spiritual seeker. GM is a collection of our non-physical experiences that are happening here and now, and happen all the time. A non-seeker is simply unaware of them. GM stores communications and experiences with other minds - embodied or disembodied, present in this universe or any other. It also stores the adventures of the mind in non-physical worlds. One can say that our minds have a parallel life. Thus we encounter the **greater mind** for the first time here, in the form of GM. Thus we know we are more than mere humans.

It is not that the GM is completely isolated from usual memories such as PM or STM. Its contents do affect the latter ones more or less depending on the *openness* of the mind. A seeker, having gone through various non-physical experiences is more open for such influences from GM. These usually are experienced as **intuition**. However, intuition can also result from purely physical experiences. For a mind, there is no difference.

As can be guessed, GM can also generate desires and imaginations. These look like inspirations to an unawakened mind, when they trickle into usual memories. GM, like LTM stores knowledge and they look like insights that arise out of no cause, or exceptional talents, that defy all explanations. In the altered states of the mind, which means a disconnection from physical world and sensory perception, the GM comes into foreground. A different "story", personality and a totally different body with strange senses can be experienced. One can suspect that GM can be broken down in similar ways as described above. GM gives us a first glimpse of our ancient and greater mind, it shows what continues as we transmigrate from death to death.

Karmic memory (KM) - Also known as causal memory, is the core of the mind. Not surprisingly, it is ageless and stores experiences that span many thousand years, or perhaps millions of years. It stores the experience of all lives. We can see the KM as our tendencies. Of course the most powerful tendency is to be born in some or the other world. This is the essence of Entropy reduction agenda of the

mind, that is a result of necessity.

Our entire life is determined by the KM, not only this one, all other lives as bodies or *bodiless* existences. An ordinary person is in firm grip of the conditioning and tendencies that exist in KM. These are as old as time. Only a seeker is free from KM, only to a certain extent. If you have a body and a mind now, you are in the grip of KM. I put it as if it is a bad thing. It is not. This is how a mind must be - memories that are well protected. What is bad is that sooner or later, such mind gets identified with the contents of the memory. The "I" gets too strong and becomes an affliction, as there is an imbalance now. This gives rise to a repetitive existence, a run of a mill like circular process that results in increased Entropy eventually. The good news is - this can be corrected. The answer is **liberation**. It is a state of the mind where it is dis-identified with all memories including the KM.

It sounds simple, but it takes aeons for a mind to come to a totally free state of existence. But the evolution ensures that it will happen, because that is by necessity. Those minds that cannot get to the liberation or resist liberation due to some or the other affliction in them, eventually de-evolve and degenerate into randomness and chaos from where they arose. Luckily, the actual situation is not so bad and this rarely happens. The minds that are already liberated are so capable and powerful that they lift their fellow minds up from the darkness into liberation and freedom. This is also by necessity, as it should be obvious, a group of mind in which such cooperation is not present would be reduced to randomness faster. We see that the **love** is a fundamental act of the minds. Love is nothing but a tendency of caring and unconditional favouring of other minds. Love is an action that is giving instead of wanting and is directed towards the benefit of others. Eventually the mind performing the loving acts is also benefited for obvious reasons. The good for whole always is good for an individual. Here we can grasp the importance of freedom, love and cooperation. It is not that the minds are eating each other on their way to the "top", it is more like a process of co-evolution, love and cooperation. We do see some competition and dog-eat-dog kind of behaviour initially, but that is a temporary lower phase in the evolution of the minds.

Having realized that the goal for any mind is nothing but Entropy reduction, a mind identifies with the consciousness instead of memories, which is the reality of all minds. It operates consciously with full awareness of its goal and is not affected by its primitive tendencies, conditioning and programs or processes. It takes its evolution in its own hands. This is a state of **enlightenment**.

Akashic memory (AM) - It is nothing but a combination of all memories. In other

words, it is the memory of the UM. Actually, there are no separate entities called an UM and its AM, they are one and the same. $UM=AM$. It is not that the combined experiences of UM are being hauled away and are being stored in a separate place called AM, remember, the mind is nothing but memory itself and hence UM is nothing but AM. AM stores the eternity, experiences of all the minds with all of their lives, structures of all universes. It is all of the manifested Presence.

It is a memory, as it is just patterns, but not any patterns, nicely ordered patterns, low Entropy structures. So what is left when we subtract UM from the Presence? - a vast and unimaginable sea of non-existence, an ocean of potentialities that is beyond any knowledge. UM can be known, by only one thing - the UM itself. Any other mind, which is obviously is a small part of the UM in this scheme, will be incapable of knowing UM completely, although, it can get an abstract idea of what UM is. So I do not claim to know the UM, it exists as a tiny concept in my memory, which is, as you must have guessed, does not come even close to what UM is.

The part cannot grasp the whole, which is yet another law of the minds. We will never know what UM is unless we become UM. Having realized that a mind can go nowhere but in the direction of lower Entropy, which is where the UM is heading, the mind joins forces with the UM. In other words its destiny is to be aligned with the direction of the UM. There cannot be any other goal for any mind whatsoever. This is the state of **dissolution** or unification. I will not be able to comment further on this subject.

AM is the memory that has all the memories. It has all the past, present and future. Actually these terms are undefined for the AM, as it is beyond time. Time is a concept in an ignorant mind, which is born out of memory of external change. What is time for AM, when all change happens within it? It is all change, all experiences and all events. They are all eternally there in the AM. However, new experiences are continuously being generated out of random nothingness, and the creative/evolutionary processes keep creating structures, so the UM is expanding. It is almost infinite, but not actually infinite, as there is always a scope of accommodating new memories and structures. It never runs out of space, it is beyond space, it has exactly zero dimensions and is non-local. Now we can appreciate how our humans minds, and all minds for that matter, are a fractal copy of the UM. They are baby minds in UM, low resolution fractal clones of it.

It surely sounds like religious teachings, which is not a surprise. Humanity has uncovered this knowledge many times and at many places in the history of civilizations. As civilizations fall, the knowledge is destroyed, is corrupted and its

reminiscence survive as teachings of one kind or the other. This knowledge of AM is as ancient as AM, obviously who knows it better than AM itself.

AM is a store of all events, down to the picosecond levels. You can scan through it in the format of time - as successive events in the past through future. It does have a lower limit on its resolution, as it cannot be infinite if it wants to manifest. Only consciousness can be infinite, as it is just emptiness, it is very pure, has no information or Entropy, and hence it is beyond infinity or finity. How is it even possible for AM to do that? Because it is all already there as potentialities, it does not need to do much except manifest one of them at a given moment. As we know from above discussion, it is being done through the process of Experiencing. So Experiencing is a process that is even beyond UM, it is a metaphysical process, just like patterns and other processes are. In fact, our minds are actually scanning through the AM right now. Any mind cannot do more than that. Experiencing presents a slice of Presence to the consciousness in the form of contents of the AM. This last sentence says everything that needs to be said about everything.

~ .o. ~

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