

ATTITUDE CAN BE CHANGED



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CHAPTER 1

Human Mind

The human mind is an amazing creation of the Almighty. While eye, a sense organ, can see only gross objects, the mind can see or imagine even subtle and distant invisible objects and can move in all directions. The mind can reach even the farthest corner of the universe in the twinkling of an eye at a speed faster than that of light. Common people, in general, do not put in much of efforts to understand how the “mind” really works; as a result, to them, it still continues to be the least understood faculty of the human soul.

Three broad levels of consciousness in which human mind generally operate are known as follows:

- ✓ conscious mind,
- ✓ subconscious mind and
- ✓ super conscious mind.

Conscious mind and subconscious mind are aligned with the physical body. When food is eaten by people, it is done at conscious level. But the conversion of food to blood and then strengthening of the different parts of the body by blood are performed at subconscious level.

Super conscious mind, however, is super physical. It exists at a level extending beyond the space–time continuum. While people are engrossed in listening to music or watching movies or reading books or even engaged in taking bath and so forth, there are occasions when some thoughts leap into their mind. These thoughts may not have relevance to the activities people were involved in at that particular point of time, but often these thoughts provide the answer to long-standing problems they have been

dealing with to find appropriate solutions. Here the super conscious mind is in play. The famous Archimedes' principle that states that a body immersed wholly or partially in fluid experiences a buoyant force equal to the weight of the amount of fluid displaced had been discovered by the scientist when he was taking bath; his super conscious mind provided the answer to the problem that his conscious and subconscious minds were searching for long.

Super conscious mind is all pervasive and is within everything and exists everywhere. It basically exists as an infinite field of potential which knows no boundaries or limitations. Within itself, it contains all the possibilities as well as the probabilities of creating anything and everything from the infinitely small to the infinitely large. It encompasses all things from the microscopic to the macroscopic and beyond. It comprises all things physical as well as non-physical. Apart from making access to all the information available in the conscious and subconscious minds, the super conscious mind has the ability to access the experiences, knowledge, ideas and intelligence that had ever existed, or will ever exist. Inspiration arising out of super conscious mind is "timed" and "dated"; they warrant immediate attention, action and follow-up.

Defining "mind" in terms of its physical existence in the body is very difficult. It is something people cannot see, touch or measure with any scientific gadgets; yet, its effects are felt through human expressions, actions and the way people behave. While describing it, Swami Sivananda said, "Between the atman (self) and the organs of the senses, a connecting link is necessary. We acknowledge the existence of an internal organ, the mind, through which perception takes place". Since all human actions spring from "perceptions" about something, understanding of the process of perception is of utmost importance.

Perception is not to be confused with sensation. Even though both these mental processes involve all the five basic senses, they perform entirely different functions. **Sensation** is the process of bringing information from the outside world into the body and to the brain by the senses; it is passive by nature since people do not have to be consciously engaged in the "sensing" process. Sensation occurs when sensory organs absorb energy from a physical stimulus in the environment, and the sensory receptors convert this energy into neural impulses and send them to the brain.

Perception, on the other hand, is an active process of selecting,

organizing and interpreting the information brought to the brain by the five senses. Perception occurs when the brain organizes the information and translates it into some meaningful thought. In other words, perception can be defined as a process in which people take in sensory information and convert it into some meaningful ideas and thought in order to interact with the environment. It plays important roles in human safety too. For example, before feeding food to their babies from a microwave oven, parents generally check through their perceptions by testing the food by using their sense of touch and sense of taste to ensure that the food will be acceptable and it would not cause any harm to the infant. While crossing a busy street, people rely on their sense of hearing and sense of sight to make sure that they are not run over by a running car.

Perception is not an automatic process. It takes place only when atman (soul), the mind and the senses are integrated. In absence of any of the above components, perception is incomplete or impossible. For example, whenever a person concentrates deeply on a thought and is engrossed in it, he/she may fail to notice people moving in front of him even if his/her eyes are open. This happens because at that point in time, his/her sense of sight is not connected to his/her mind; he/she, therefore, cannot perceive anything through his/her sense of sight.

In the process of perception, the “mind” derives its power from the soul and activates the senses. There are five basic senses with corresponding organs:

- ✓ sense of touch—corresponding organ is skin, also known as tvak;
- ✓ sense of taste—corresponding organ is tongue, also known as jivha;
- ✓ sense of sight—corresponding organ is eye, also known as chakshu;
- ✓ sense of smell—corresponding organ is nose, also known as ghrashtra;
- ✓ sense of hearing or sense of sound—corresponding organ is ear, also known as srotra.

In the process of perception, Swami Sivananda says, “The senses are the gatekeepers of the wonderful factory of the mind. They bring into the mental factory matter for manufacture. Light vibrations, sound vibrations and the like are first converted into percepts by the mind, which then presents these percepts to the intellect. The intellect converts these percepts

into concepts or ideas”. He further said, “Just as crude sand is turned into beautiful glassware of various sorts in a glass factory, mere light vibrations, sound vibrations, etc., are turned into powerful ideas or concepts of various descriptions in the factory of the mind”. In this context, it is worthwhile to mention that the human mind functions through different functional components; the details of which have been discussed in detail in later sections.

Sense organs: tongue and skin responsible for the sense of taste and sense of touch, respectively, require direct contacts with objects to perceive them. Thus, their power is localized and confined to a small area. The sense of smell has a greater area of perception; it too, however, has limitations. People cannot smell something that is far away from them. Eyes and ears that are responsible for the sense of sight and sound, respectively, can perceive objects in the close proximity as well as in a great distance; hence, they are more powerful.

Perception embraces three broad components:

- ✓ the perceiver,
- ✓ the target and
- ✓ the situation.

The **perceiver** is the individual who tries to interpret some of his/her observations or inputs from his/her senses in any given situation. There are many factors that directly or indirectly influence perception. The perceiver’s needs, values and desires at the time of perception influence his/her perception of the target. How a perceiver feels at the time of perception also directly as well as indirectly influences the perception of the target. It is a fact of life that most of the human mistakes in thinking arise out of “inadequacies of perception” rather than mistakes of logic. With the change in perception, thinking changes drastically. This explains why some people like certain things or other people at some point of their life and start disliking those things or people in some other time and vice versa.

Some people have the tendency to see things the way they want to in order to protect themselves from unpleasant emotions. Such a tendency is known as perceptual defence. Such tendencies in the long run act as dampers to growth and progress.

The **target of perception** is whatever the perceiver is trying to make sense of. It can be:

- ✓ another person or a group of people;
- ✓ an event, a situation or an idea;
- ✓ a noise or anything the perceiver focuses on.

The amount of information gathered by the sensory organ of the perceiver affects the interpretation and understanding of the object/subject. Lack of information is mostly filled up through imaginations. This often leads to distortion of the perception and gives birth to “misconception”.

The “**situation**” is the context in which perception takes place. The context in which the perception occurs can change the perception of the situation. For example, criticism by the boss a few days before he/she is due to get a promotion (which he/she finally gets in time) may cause a person to think at that moment that he/ she is unlikely to get the promotion. Different situations can call for additional information about the target.

Perception can differ in each perspective. This is illustrated best through the expressions of feelings of a deaf who says, “For all of you, I am a deaf, but for me, all of you are dumb”. Seeing a glass half-full of water, one person may exclaim, “Half of the glass is empty” (a negative vibe) while another person may say, “Half glass of water is still there” (a positive vibe). Differences in perception about specific circumstances or people often lead people to adapt different approaches towards certain circumstances or people in their life.

“Perception” differs from people to people and also from time to time for the same person or persons because it can be influenced by numbers of factors like:

- ✓ past experience,
- ✓ motivational state,
- ✓ emotional state,
- ✓ belief,
- ✓ memory,
- ✓ people and
- ✓ situations and so forth.

Out of all the above factors, beliefs and experiences of individuals have maximum influence on the formation of perception. All emotions like kindness, hate, love, like, dislike, etc. originate from a person's perception of something. It can change under different circumstances or at different periods of time.

CHAPTER 2

Powers of Mind

The mind has tremendous power reserves within. With awareness, when mind powers are controlled through self-discipline, it can be used as a positive force to create wonders, but when undisciplined mind rules the life of individuals as masters, it can act as a negative force and bring devastation in their life. The architect of all great or terrible things that have happened or are still happening in this world is the “human mind”. This made poet John Milton say, “The mind in its own place and in itself can make a heaven of hell and hell of a heaven”. Mind powers are like the muscles of the human body; they stretch or shrink depending on how often or how little they are being utilized. In view of the above, awareness of various mind powers plays an important role in human life. Mind powers can be classified into the following two broad groups:

- ✓ principal mind powers and
- ✓ other mind powers.

Principal mind powers embrace the following:

- ✓ Iccha-shakti (will power),
- ✓ Gnana-shakti (power of knowledge) and
- ✓ Kriya-shakti (power of action).

Iccha in Sanskrit means “will” and shakti means “power” or “strength”. So, **iccha-shakti** means will power. It is the power of an individual’s consciousness that is responsible for triggering a desire within to create, build or even change things within the universe. It basically is the power of an individual’s intentions.

Gnana-shakti can be defined as the power that enables a person to plan, scheme and find out methods, etc. in order to approach towards achieving a desired object/subject. It basically is the knowledge bank of an individual's experiences of research works done and the expertise gained in different aspects of life. When gnana-shakti of a person backs the iccha-shakti to work out any scheme, it sets the right direction for **kriya-shakti** to follow.

Kriya-shakti can be defined as the power that helps a person to operate and build. In other words, it helps in the implementation of action plans worked together by iccha-shakti and gnana-shakti to make things happen. Kriya-shakti eventually gets the desire gratified.

“**Other mind powers**” as discussed above embrace the following:

- ✓ Vedana-shakti (power of perception),
- ✓ Smriti-shakti (power of memory),
- ✓ Bhavana-shakti (power of imagination),
- ✓ Manisha-shakti (power of judgment),
- ✓ Sankalpa-shakti (power of determination, conviction, etc.) and
- ✓ Dharana-shakti (power to hold).

Vedana-shakti (power of perception): It is the power of grasping, i.e. obtaining knowledge through senses. It works in association with smriti-shakti. Every individual not only has the ability to perceive the world in his/her own way; for his/her betterment, he/she also has the ability to alter his/her perception by changing the manner in which he/she looks at certain things, events or situations. This, however, calls for introspection (discussed in the later section).

Smriti-shakti (power of memory): It embraces the power of grasping of information, holding of information in the memory, retrieving from the memory and furnishing any of those information to the conscious mind as and when needed. Power of memory can be enhanced through more and more of usage. How an individual uses his/her power of memory depends on his/her preference. People, in general, remember those which they like or those which make an impression on them; whatever they do not consider to be a priority, they quickly and easily forget. This explains why some people have sharp memory in the matters of remembering lyrics of songs, some have sharp memory in remembering sport-specific information

and some have sharp memory in retaining study-specific materials.

Bhavana-shakti (power of imagination): It is the bhavana-shakti, the power of imagination which enables people to foresee something in the mind's eye that has the possibility of manifesting into reality. History reveals that all big achievers have strong bhavana-shakti; they imagine (dream) and then convert the imagination to reality through hard work, persistence and never say die spirit. Ace cricketer Sachin Tendulkar once said, "Life is flat without dream. I think it is really important to dream and then chase those dreams. It is the dreaming that makes me work so hard.... It is the dreaming and chasing the dreams which keeps me going". More and more of usages expand the power of imagination.

Manisha-shakti (power of judgment): It comprises the power of comparing and contrasting, drawing inferences or conclusions on discussion, etc. As per Indian logic, nyaya (justice) is done by manisha-shakti with the help of nirnaya (ascertainment) and tarka (logical reasoning). Tarka again has two subdivisions—*anumana* (inference) and *paramarsha* (discussion). All these powers can be enhanced through introspection backed by "exchange and cultivation of knowledge".

Sankalpa-shakti (power of determination, conviction, etc.):

The Sanskrit word *sankalpa* can be translated as determination, conviction or resolve. *Sankalpa-shakti* has the power to convert the dynamic mental force of will power, i.e. *iccha-shakti*, into a living entity. The form that is given to the mental force depends on the command or direction given to it by the one making the *sankalpa*. No successful journey in any endeavour can be made without strong *sankalpa-shakti*. It was the *sankalpa-shakti* that enabled Abraham Lincoln to pursue his efforts in spite of repeated setbacks in his life and eventually led him to become president of America.

Dharana-shakti (power to hold): When it plays prominently, it is difficult to change the views or decisions of a person; he/she can confidently stick with his/her views and decisions. The power to hold onto a chosen course of action in the face of unforeseen hiccups is essential for achieving success in any human effort. This power can be developed through culture. Talking about *dharana-shakti*, a wise man rightly said, "If you believe you are right but still people criticize you, hurt you, shout at you, don't bother. Just go ahead with your mission".

There are correlation, coordination and cooperation among all the

different mind powers discussed above. Each power depends on another to become effective. Though each of the above mind powers has separate attributes, it is essential that all the powers, especially the three principal powers, are made to work in unison with iccha-shakti taking the lead. The following factual incident demonstrates how things are made to happen when all the three principle powers of the mind are in harmony and work together towards a common objective backed by sankalpa-shakti. It refers to a young steel plant engineer in India. He was a family man with an addiction to “gambling with cards”. Beyond his normal duty and sleeping hours, his thoughts were mostly centred on “gambling with cards”. On principle, however, he never used to borrow money from others. As days progressed, breaking all the laid down systems and rules of his family, he often started returning home late nights from his gambling sessions. One day when he returned home after midnight, his father told him, “It seems you are losing all controls on yourself. Remember you got a wife and a daughter. You have no right to neglect them the way you are doing”. He was saddened and felt very low. The whole night he could not sleep. He took his father’s remarks very seriously. While introspecting, he self-talked with his conscience and was convinced that he was causing harm to himself as well to his family through his habit of regular gambling. He took a resolve within himself that happen what may, he would never touch cards again in his life. **Here, the self-ignited iccha-shakti created within him the desire to come out from the clutch of gambling addiction.** Immediately, he approached the administrative wing of his organization and applied for a car loan on urgent and immediate basis. While applying for the loan, he was very clear in his mind that with monthly repayment of loan (in case he was granted it), his subsequent take-home salary would go down. Additionally, he would also have to keep provision of fund for monthly running and maintenance of the car. These he thought would certainly restrict his fund availability for gambling. Since he would not borrow money from others on principle, the above actions he thought would literally create a situation that would force him to give up gambling. **This is how the gnana-shakti of the engineer supported his iccha-shakti to chalk out proper action plans for kriya-shakti to move towards fulfilling his desire.** Once the loan was sanctioned, the combined effect of iccha-shakti, gnana-shakti and kriya-shakti backed by the sankalpa-shakti led the engineer not only to implement his action points on priority but also

persuaded him to remain stuck to them under all circumstances till his desire was gratified. He eventually got over his habit of gambling and settled down peacefully in his life thereafter. He never gambled again.

It is often seen that in spite of being aware of what is good for them and will help them to progress in life, many people fail to pursue their decided required courses of actions. It is also a common observation that there are people who in spite of being aware what is harmful to them fail to avoid being involved with those activities that eventually are likely to cause harm to them in the long run.

All the above generally happen when people lack in will power. Will power is the creative function of the mind, which impels people along a chosen course of action and enables them to carry out planned activities in a definite way irrespective of whether they face any discomforts on their way or not. In any field of human effort, for success, will power is the most common factor. In absence of it, talent or any other quality or qualities of people often become insignificant. Directing the already existing power of the will to positive uses is the way to move forward in life.

Contrary to the perception of many people, it is to be noted that will power can be developed. In order to develop it, people need to:

- ✓ first, understand and have a belief that it can be developed;
- ✓ stop thinking about the past and the future;
- ✓ focus their attention towards giving direction to the will;
- ✓ have passion towards carrying out chosen activities;
- ✓ be persistent with high degree of consistency.

Understanding and believing that will power can be developed is very important. In this context, it is relevant to quote Mahatma Gandhi who said, “If I believe I cannot do something, it makes me incapable of doing it. But if I believe I can, then I acquire ability to do it even if I did not have it in the beginning”. Those who consider themselves to be weak and helpless can never improve their will power. Doubts or delusions about self-capabilities must be shunned or else they will weaken the resolve and make people feel that they are incapable of developing themselves. Doubts about self-capability arise mostly out of ignorance or thoughts of limitations. Swami Vivekananda rightly said, “You are the creator of your own

destiny. All the strength and succor you want is within you”. Thoughts of limitations, on the other hand, are all self-created. History reveals that there is no constraint in the human mind, no walls around the human spirit and no barriers to the human progress. Thoughts of limitations should never be allowed to make their home in the mind; they only sap energy and weaken the mind from inside. The possibility of achieving anything in life becomes possible only for those persons who foresee them as “possibilities”.

To avoid thinking about the past as well as the future is very important. Regrets about the past and worries about the future are enemies of “will power” development. They simply consume time and drain physical and mental energy. Since nothing can be done about the past and nothing can be known for sure about the future, utilization of the present is the best option. There was an ill-tempered boy; he would often lose his temper even over small issues. After sometimes, people were surprised to notice that he was behaving normally with total control over his anger outbursts. On being asked how he could bring about such a dramatic change in his behaviour, he would reply, “Every morning when I wake up from sleep, I say to myself that I have two choices before me—to get angry when situation provokes or not to get angry even if the situation provokes me. I choose the latter. Throughout the day, I keep on reminding myself that I must remain true to my choice. Come what may, I must not lose my temper, at least for this particular day. People may not treat me properly, things may not turn out the way I want them to be, but this one day, I must never get angry. I might get angry tomorrow but surely not today”. The boy eventually could achieve his goal.

Focused attention gives will a direction. Human senses of values give direction to will and prevent external events from causing internal disturbances. People may develop strong will but unless the will is utilized in a positive direction, such will can be misused and eventually invite only misery in the long run. For example, Hitler had a very strong will, but in the long run what he could achieve was the death and destruction of many lives all over the world and he himself died in the most wretched condition.

People may intellectually resolve to undertake particular tasks towards achieving specific goals, but unless they have genuine passions towards carrying out the activities that would lead them towards the goals, their resolves will never last long enough to enable them to be successful; it will

simply remain in their lips. Without passion for whatever they are performing, people are mere latent forces and possibilities only. The secret of success in life lies not in doing what people like but in liking what they do. When people do not like what they do, they do not do it with much conviction, optimism and enthusiasm. Even easy tasks become difficult when they are done with reluctance. Once people are passionate about activities to be carried out towards achieving their goals, all doubts that may arise in the mind or difficulties that may surface on their way from time to time will vanish. Nothing needs to motivate passionate people; all their actions and follow through are smooth and natural. They don't even feel the ordeal of hard work. Thomas Alva Edison who was extremely passionate about whatever he did in his life rightly said, "I never did a day's work in my life. It was all fun".

Will power gets enhanced when backed by persistent efforts with high degree of intensity to achieve an objective. Albert Einstein in his own words would often say, "Finish whatever you start. It is not that I was smart; it is just that I stay with the problem longer". Most of the people struggle with persistence because it warrants significant investment of time and energy. When people decide to do or achieve something, they are aware of the direction in which they have to move and also where they want to go. They, in fact, are prepared to give their best to start with. However, after a while, even the most motivated person starts to feel less enthusiastic and often, in the end, gives up; especially, if things do not keep on happening as desired. Here persistence plays a big role. Those who continue their efforts towards achieving their objectives in spite of facing obstacles that may come on their way are usually those who, in the end, achieve success. The intensity of effort decides how hard a person is trying. It reflects on the concentration and vigour of people while they pursue their goals. The intensity of effort to make things happen separates those who are good and those who are great. Dale Carnegie rightly said, "Most of the important things in this world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all".

All attempts to develop will power shall fail unless people

- ✓ follow discipline and
- ✓ adhere to commitments to follow a certain course of action.

Every human effort needs to be punctuated with **discipline**. Discipline teaches people to follow certain norms and systems; the absence of which brings disorder and chaos in life causing the will power to perish. In this respect, people must take lessons from nature as it provides the best example of “discipline”. In nature, all the planets move in their orbit; the seasons change in accordance with a set order, day and night follow each other at regular intervals and so forth. Some of the positive influences of discipline on will power are as follows:

- ✓ development of ability to refrain from indulging in anything nonsensical;
- ✓ development of ability to handle multiple tasks;
- ✓ development of ability to command respect from others;
- ✓ exercising self-control.

Discipline teaches people to be more organized, which in turn enable them to prioritize their priorities in life. It sets in a mechanism that makes people to be alert, more cautious and keep themselves in check to ensure that they stay away from indulging in anything nonsensical. They become more focused and dedicated towards any task in their hand. For being organized, they have more time available at their disposal. This helps them to become capable of handling multiple tasks with more peace of mind.

Discipline enables people to command respect from others. This, in turn, disciplines others and helps in the achievement of common goals with more ease.

Discipline generates enthusiasm and confidence from within that keep people active. With discipline, people generally exercise more self-control and use chosen words to maintain better relations with others.

Will power gets diluted when commitment to follow a certain course of action is not adhered to. **Commitment** can be described as a force that binds an individual, a team or an organization to a course of action of relevance to one or more targets. It is a conscious pledge or an understanding without any written documents to stick to something in spite of having other options. Defining commitment, a wise man rightly said, “There are only two options regarding commitment, you’re either in or you’re out. There’s no such thing as life in between”. Commitment is not to be confused with promise. A promise basically is a statement of

intent and commitment transforms the promise into reality irrespective of circumstances. Commitment produces a character with integrity and empathy that

- ✓ gets people out from the bed,
- ✓ moves them into actions and
- ✓ disciplines them to follow through till their goal is achieved.

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