


THE ELEMENTS OF SOUL



A COMPLETE INTRODUCTION TO THE ULTIMATE
BUILDING BLOCKS OF BODY, MIND,
AND CONSCIOUSNESS

A GUIDE TO HIGHER INTELLIGENCE AND LOVE

SAM ADETTIWAR

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* * *

Preface

Just as you are beginning to read this book in search of the truth, several years ago I began my search, which led to a long journey of self-study and intense spiritual practice that continues to date. On this journey, I was fortunate to experience something extraordinary that I feel is worth sharing with you.

A Personal Story of Awakening

June 21-22, 2005, was the night of the full moon, the last night of a seven-day retreat on the banks of the Indrayani River near Alandi, India. The air was unusually silent except for the soft sound of gentle breezes coursing outside the meditation area, which was flooded with clear, cool moonlight. In the midst of this environment, I was sitting still in deep and prolonged meditation. Then my body was pervaded by bliss. It was an experience of incredible grandeur.

At that moment, I realized that the gentle breezes had transformed into strong winds and were now making whirling sounds. I did not know why the winds had become so strong, but it felt as if there were only those winds and nothing else. There was no sensation of

heaviness in my body. There was no feeling of physical presence. No me. There was just awareness of wind.

Suddenly a delightful shiver pierced through me, awakening me to my physical presence. Even though I sensed the body again, it felt weightless and empty. This was peaceful, liberating. As I was experiencing it, I began smiling spontaneously. The smile remained for a long time and simply would not go away. In fact, even though I tried to relax my face, the expression persisted. It was the most pure and natural gesture I had ever been aware of experiencing. It came from the realization that the ultimate mystery of the soul had been solved.

What followed afterwards was amazing. As I was experiencing the peacefulness of liberation, somehow I dropped into a contemplative mode. Questions sped like a blazing inferno through my mind along with literal flashes of answers. Many years of contemplation and meditative effort were rewarded in those moments. Most interesting to me was the wonderful sequencing and rhythmic pace that the questions and answers took.

A question would arise in my mind and immediately an answer would appear for it, as if there was nothing separating them. It felt like countless mental knots were opening up and then the ropes were vanishing, one after the other. It actually felt as if the heaviness of mind was being evaporated as these tangled concepts were releasing and dissolving.

Sitting amidst the whirling winds in the meditation room by the banks of the Indrayani on that auspicious moonlit night, I knew for sure that all the answers to my questions about the soul, the self, and the world had been delivered to me in a single rush. I knew with absolute certainty what I knew. I also felt that what I knew in that moment must be true beyond doubt. I had never felt such confidence and certainty about anything before. It was the peak moment of my life.

I was awakened!

Call it what you want. No matter what, words don't fit the bill. Moments of realization cannot actually be labeled. Nor is it important to do so.

How This Book Came to Be

Since the night of my awakening, I have never forgotten the answers that were revealed to me. I soon discovered that I had developed the ability to pose any spiritual question and have the answer revealed instantly in my mind. For certain, my transformation occurred due to years of persistence in practicing the highly influential teachings of the Buddha, an ancient enlightened master (living roughly around 500 B.C.E.) who was the source of teachings contained in the Tipitaka, and Patanjali, an Indian sage (living roughly around 300 B.C.E.), known for being the compiler of the Yoga Sutras.¹

Having reached the level of purified intellect, I subsequently developed intense compassion and a desire to help guide the spiritual journey of others. I began writing down everything about that initial flood of questions and answers. Often when I was writing, it felt as if I was not able to stop. Writing simply went on for quite some time, as I recorded on paper whatever came to mind. On occasions when the flow of information did not spontaneously occur, I would ask a question or two and it would start again. Like that, I wrote several modules of question-answers at different times on various topics. Later, I added sub-topics to simplify and make the concepts more easily graspable by a larger number of people. I then removed the question-answer format to make it sound more like a discussion, and re-edited it so that it would encompass a gradual process through a practical series of meditations. What resulted from these efforts is this book, which I now present to you.

Based on the most purified and perfected spiritual knowledge available to me, I hope many readers will appreciate this book as a definitive guide on how to awaken to the ultimate reality of the soul and apply this ultimate knowledge to generate real happiness and peace for themselves and for others. My intention is also to provide the

non-religious, non-spiritual community of health care practitioners, personal growth experts, philosophers, psychologists, life coaches, scientists, and modern evolutionary thinkers an authoritative source for understanding the ultimate building blocks of the soul, so that the ultimate human power—*perfect intelligence*—is awakened. Perfect intelligence is the highest level of intelligence, which arises through soul realization. Otherwise known as *soul intelligence*, it ranks higher than IQ, emotional intelligence (popularly known as EQ), and spiritual intelligence (SQ). Perfect intelligence is synonymous with mental perfection, pure awareness, enlightenment, nirvana, and so on. As such, these terms are used varyingly throughout the book to mean the same thing.

This book is the outcome of years of ardent and consistent spiritual practice on my part. You may find the ideas I am sharing with you frustrating, exhausting, intimidating, or even frightening at times. No matter how you feel about them, I guarantee that if you take whatever you need from my spiritual discoveries and continue to practice these techniques wisely until you make them your own, you will come closer to awakening and the attainment of perfect intelligence. How close you get and whether or not you ever arrive depends upon you.

It is the process of living our lives in search of perfection that matters, not whether or not we can call ourselves enlightened masters. Fortunately, we now have a tool (this book) not just to live happily, but also to live perfectly.

* * *

Part I

Soul Introduction

Let us now begin a journey of self-purification and perfection—a journey I am confident that you will find most rewarding. This journey begins with an introduction to the phenomenon of soul.

Any subject matter is not understood thoroughly unless we understand what it is as well as what it is *not* and what is *beyond* it. In chapter 1, you will come to understand what soul is in terms of its three key elements: consciousness, mind, and body.

In chapter 2, you will be introduced to how these three key elements constitute a reality and how everything else (concepts and mental constructs) constitutes non-reality. You will learn that what is not real is not soul. Also you will learn why it is so important to understand what is not soul.

Then, in chapter 3, you will be invited to comprehend the phenomenon of enlightenment—that which lies beyond soul.

Having been introduced to the nature of soul in the first three chapters, in chapter 4 you will discover how soul works. Concepts explored there will take you on a journey beyond quantum mechanics. These include the mechanics of soul, volitional energy, the phenomenon of karma, free will, choice, fate, destiny, luck, and so on.

You will study the phenomenon of intelligence and learn what soul intelligence is in chapter 5. In addition, I will explain why the development of soul intelligence is crucial for attaining perfection.

In chapter 6, you will learn a unique meditation technique called *soul meditation*, which serves as a vehicle for the development of the state of higher intelligence known as *meditativity*. Once you have developed meditativity, you will be ready to further explore the phenomenon of soul in Part II.

* * *

Chapter 1

What Is Soul?

Have you ever wondered who you are? When you look in the mirror, do you ever ask who the person reflected there is? If you do, and if you begin to contemplate your true nature, you'll go through a process of realization that will eventually lead you to the deepest possible answer to the question "Who am I?" First, you'll realize that you have a body (a material structure that sees, hears, tastes, smells, and feels). Second, you'll realize that you have a mind that feels the body, perceives the world, and thinks. If you are persistent and lucky, you may also realize that you are actually *experiencing* the body and the mind. This third, experiential aspect is consciousness.

Next, the following three realities will dawn upon you:

1. Body, mind, and consciousness are not separate. Your body cannot function without your mind. Your mind cannot function without your body. And you cannot have an experience

without possessing a body-mind, which means there is no consciousness without the body and mind. In other words, body-mind-consciousness is a single bundle composed of three interconnected and mutually-functioning components.

2. Body, mind, and consciousness are not fixed components, but constantly changing. The body grows and then ages. The mind fluctuates between happiness and sadness, from attentiveness to distraction, and so on. Whatever can be experienced through body and mind doesn't last forever. No matter what you do, your experiences change. None remains the same.
3. Because body, mind, and consciousness are observable *and* experiential, they are a phenomenon or a process, or—if you like—a group of phenomena or processes. Body is a material phenomenon. Mind and consciousness are non-material (mental) phenomena.

So far so good!

Then will come the tricky part. Because the experience of body-mind-consciousness is so intimate, it is easy—almost natural—to perceive the body as *your* body, mind as *your* mind, and consciousness as *your* consciousness. If you're like everyone else, with the rare exception of sages, you have ended up attaching yourself to the phenomena of body-mind-consciousness.

Soul

There is no such thing as your body, your mind, or your consciousness. There is only body-mind-consciousness, a unified phenomenon. This unified phenomenon is what *soul* really is. I humbly invite you to consider this possibility as I present my case in this book. In doing so, I promise you will eventually experience immense spiritual joy, a rapturous feeling of deep understanding.

Soul is simply a term used to denote an impermanent, impersonal phenomenon arising from the interaction of body (matter), mind, and

consciousness. Soul is not something that belongs to any one person. It does not to you or me, or to anyone else.

Figuratively speaking, just as the elements of hydrogen and oxygen interact with each other to generate water (H_2O), matter, mind, and consciousness interact with one other to generate the soul. While soul is obviously not a substance like water, its presence is dependent on matter, mind, and consciousness in the same way that water is dependent on the elements hydrogen and oxygen for its existence. To be precise, the existence of soul, as you will soon discover, is dependent on 28 elements of matter, 52 elements of mind, and 121 types of consciousness (see figure 1.1).¹

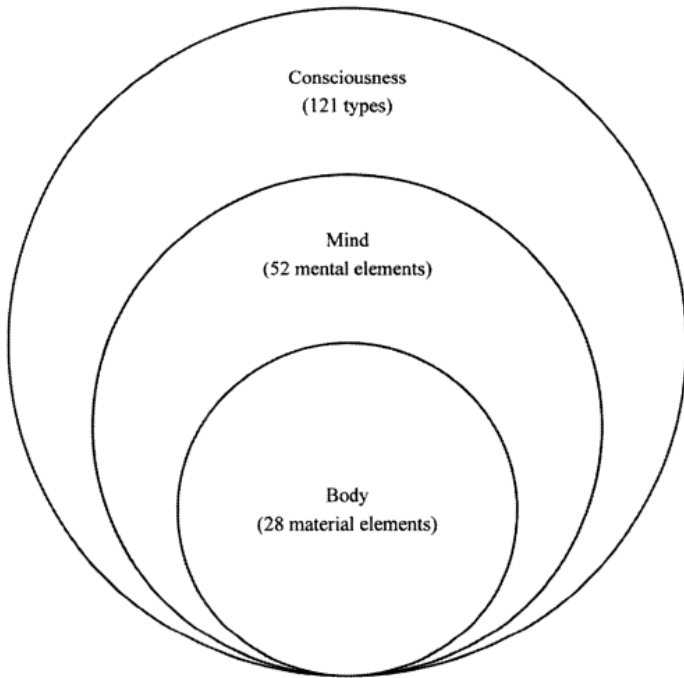


Figure 1.1. The elements of soul: body (matter), mind, and consciousness.

As a reality that continuously and rapidly arises and subsides, the phenomenon of body-mind-consciousness creates an illusion of a separate individual if its unified nature is not understood as soul. This illusion is the “ego” —the source of attachment.

Ego is the perception, “I am . . . some person separate from others,” “I am an individual apart from others,” “I am a separate *self* who *owns* this particular body, mind, and consciousness,” and so forth.

Why It Is Important to Understand Soul

The ego separates us by hiding the reality of soul. It makes us ignorant. It keeps us from experiencing the world in its full, unified grandeur. It imprisons us by deluding and delimiting our intellect, thereby generating attachment, stress, pain, and a sense of imperfection and dissatisfaction. When we understand soul, our intelligence is purified and perfected, and ignorance is eradicated. When ignorance is eradicated, the ego dissolves and what arises naturally is everlasting happiness and peace. Understanding soul solves the problem of human suffering thoroughly and perfectly, because it eradicates the *root cause*: ignorance, the ego.

Right now, you may have a strong point of view about the concept of perfection and intelligence. Throughout this book I hope to guide you to expand your perspective and crack open the door to your ultimate potential, which is the attainment of *perfect intelligence*.

With that in mind, let us now embark upon the journey of understanding the soul—our soul journey—starting with an introduction of its elements.

Consciousness, the First Element of Soul

Fundamentally, consciousness can be defined as the phenomenon of knowing, cognizing, or experiencing.

Consciousness is that activity which knows or becomes aware of an object. It is the act of knowing. At the level of pure consciousness, there is no knower behind knowing. In other words, there is no knower separate from knowing. Knowing knows. Similarly, there is no seer behind seeing. Seeing sees. In this way, consciousness should be understood strictly as a phenomenon without any doer, actor, or agent performing it.

When we see an object, no person is seeing an object. Seeing is simply a phenomenon that can be understood as *eye consciousness*.

When we hear sound, there is no person hearing. Hearing is simply a phenomenon that can be understood as *ear consciousness*. In an ultimate sense, all types of sensing and experiencing (encompassing seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, tasting, and thinking/knowing) can be understood as the phenomena of consciousness.

Consciousness cannot exist or arise by itself. It always arises alongside and is conditioned by mind and matter. This is a profound law of the universe.

Eye consciousness cannot occur without the presence of a physical eye (the matter) and the volition to see (the mind). Consciousness cannot see by itself. Otherwise you would be able to see through the walls of your home, since consciousness is distinct from both the senses and material resistance.

Just as consciousness cannot see without the physical eye, the physical eye cannot see without consciousness. An eye has no thought, no volition, and no desire to see. Nor does a physical eye have any way of knowing. When consciousness arises with the support of our physical eye and volition, we are able to see. Three distinct phenomena of consciousness, mind, and matter must arise together to constitute an experience of seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling, or thinking. Consciousness, however, is the forerunner of all of these activities.

From the realm of matter, the physical eye consists primarily of two types of matter: non-organic matter and organic matter. Non-organic matter (not to be confused with *inorganic* matter) is known as *eye sensitivity*. Organic matter is known as the biological eye (all its components, including the eyeball, retina, nerves, and so on). Eye sensitivity is not something that can be detected under a microscope. It is *subtle* eye matter. Without it, a physical eye cannot function even if the eye is perfectly healthy, as in the case of a blind person by birth.

From the realm of mind, volition consists of a will or a desire to see. In order to see—to have the human experience of seeing—eye consciousness, eye sensitivity, at least one biological eye, and volition must arise together and be united. In short, there is no consciousness

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without mind-matter, no mind without consciousness-matter, and no matter without consciousness-mind.

Here is an analogy. An electric light bulb is made of a filament, a glass enclosure, and an inert gas contained within the enclosure. It glows when someone turns on a switch that provides it with electricity. It would fail to glow if there were no electric current, no filament, no inert gas, or no glass enclosure. All four of these components must be present for the phenomenon of an electric light bulb to be lit. In this analogy, consciousness is like the electric current, the mind is the volition or desire to turn on the switch, the non-organic or subtle matter is like the inert gas, and the organic matter is like the filament and glass enclosure.

Of the three elements of soul, consciousness resembles a head of state, for instance the president of a country, and mind and matter are like that president's cabinet member and soldier, respectively. Just as the president could not function without cabinet members and soldiers, consciousness does not function without mind and matter (see figure 1.2).

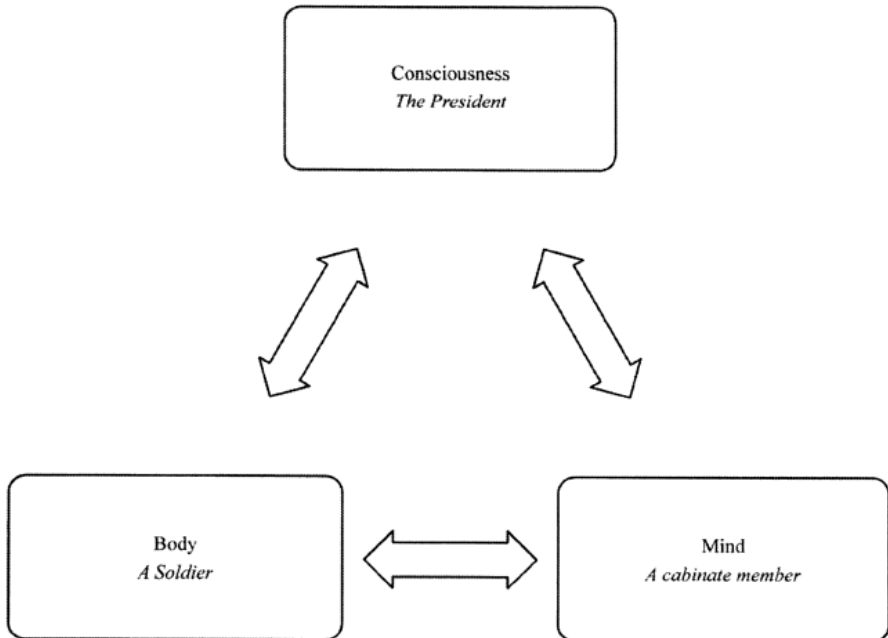


Figure 1.2. In the domain of human experience, consciousness serves as the president, mind as a cabinet member, and the body as a soldier. All human experiences occur when the elements of soul arise together and act interdependently.

The phenomenon of consciousness is in a continuous state of flux. However, it is arising and ceasing with such immense rapidity that it creates a false impression of continuity and permanence. When “seeing” occurs, we feel that we are seeing because of our ignorance and this false impression. This illusion emerges with everything that we experience.

The flow of consciousness is similar to the flow of a river. The continuity of flowing water creates an illusion of one entity, a river moving from one location to another. We give this illusion an identity, such as the Mississippi River, the Nile, or the Ganges. The underlying reality is not the Nile, Mississippi, or Ganges, but the flow of water, a phenomenon of coming and going of water.

The flow of consciousness is also analogous to a lit candle. When a candle is burning, light energy arises and ceases at such rapid rate that it looks as if the candle is a giver of light. But in fact, it is the phenomenon of arising and ceasing energy that is responsible for the experience of light. While the flux in this analogy is consciousness, the candle represents the material reality that is present and the flammability represents the mental reality that is present.

Consciousness, the Ultimate Reality

Analytically, consciousness is the ultimate component of human experience. Our experience cannot be reduced further into any subtler reality. Whatever reality exists beyond consciousness cannot be experienced in the normal sense (meaning with the body or with the mind), as it is *beyond experience*. Thus, the phenomenon of consciousness is the ultimate essential component or reality of the soul. It is, however, a non-absolute ultimate reality because without the presence of mind and matter it does not arise in the realm of human existence.

As the ultimate reality of soul, consciousness is the ultimate object of both experience and knowledge. Beyond consciousness, nothing remains to be known. Consciousness is the *supreme* object of knowledge in an investigation. And although it is inseparable from mind and matter, it also exists by reason of its own intrinsic nature, which is distinct from mind and matter. That is why it is possible to know

consciousness directly through experience. Hence, consciousness is the *correct* object of knowledge in an investigation.

Knowing consciousness directly through experience means experiencing it as *it is* and not knowing it through reading, studying, or thinking. There is nothing superior to experiencing consciousness as it is. Everything else falls into the realm of thought.

Here's an example. If you were investigating the taste of mango, the experience of mango taste would be the supreme object of knowledge in that investigation. Reading a book about the taste of mango, referring to an encyclopedia, or discussing the flavor with others and finding out that it is sweet cannot bring you the experience of the mango flavor. When you actually eat a mango and experience its sweetness, you'll have no confusion about what mango is.

Experiential knowledge is beyond thought because it is simply an experience. Sweetness is a name—a verbal construction—used to communicate the experience. Once the actual taste, the ultimate reality, is experienced, nothing remains to be investigated. That's pure knowledge. In writing *The Elements of Soul* I am attempting to guide you to have pure knowledge of who you are.

You could call the experiential knowledge of mango *taste consciousness* or something else. The point I am making is this: Any knowing, knowledge, cognition, or experience is essentially a phenomenon of consciousness and it is the ultimate reality.

Is it possible that there is an experiencer behind the experience? No. Experience is the arising and ceasing of consciousness in extreme rapidity. If you feel that *you* are someone tasting mango, then you are creating an "I" (the ego) out of the perception of continuity. The feeling of "I-ness" simply occurs because of not knowing that the experiencing of taste is taste consciousness.

When the feeling of "I-ness" occurs many times over, it becomes a mental pattern, a deep mental impression, or a memory. These types of mental construction influence or condition the consciousness unwholesomely and unprofitably, as will be shown later in this chapter. Genuine spiritual practices primarily focus on processes for

the removal of this sense of I-ness or ego, as purification of mind ultimately leads to understanding and experiencing soul.

Around now you could be wondering if it is possible that consciousness itself is a universal being, a fixed entity that experiences or knows everything. No. Consciousness is not a being that performs the act of knowing. It is not a universal intelligence or an almighty figure in the conventional sense. It is a simply a *phenomenon* of cognition, an experience of awareness.

If you contemplated the examples of a light bulb, a river, and a candle, you would realize that if consciousness were a fixed entity, then you would never get an electric bill, there would never be changing water levels in the river, and the candle could never be exhausted.

Throughout this book, we will always approach consciousness as a phenomenon, as a flow, like the flow of a river, rather than as a fixed entity.

Types of Consciousness

Foremost, consciousness is a phenomenon of experience. However, depending upon the uniqueness, the utility, the manifestation, and the immediate cause of a given experience we could say that there are many kinds of consciousness we are capable of experiencing. As we have discussed, eye consciousness is the experience of seeing. This experience is functional and manifests as vision when the physical visual apparatus of a human body is sufficiently close to an object of vision. Depending upon the nature of the mind that arises with it, many types of consciousness can arise along with eye consciousness.

If the nature of your mind were hateful, then the consciousness that arises in you would be unwholesome consciousness. If the nature of your mind were compassionate, then the consciousness that arises in you would be wholesome consciousness. The ethical quality of the mind that arises gives us our two primary types of consciousness: wholesome and unwholesome. The fruit or consequence of these two ethically-variable consciousnesses gives us a third primary type of consciousness: resultant consciousness. Then there is an ethically-neutral type of consciousness: functional consciousness.

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Right now we're laying groundwork. Although we will use this classification system to understand the technicalities or the mechanics of soul, remember that it is a basic system. Unwholesome, wholesome, resultant, and functional consciousness cannot be strictly defined in separate categories. For example, wholesome consciousness can also be wholesome-resultant or wholesome-functional consciousness, and so on. Thus, considering all the various possible combinations of the four primary types of consciousness, up to 121 kinds of consciousness can be derived.² The only exception is that wholesome and unwholesome consciousness cannot be combined (see figure 1.3).

The fact that there are 121 types of consciousness does not mean that we have only 121 types of experience. If you combine various types of mental and material elements with various types of consciousness *and* numerous conditions that exist between the three phenomena of soul you will find that our experiences can be numbered in the hundreds of thousands.³

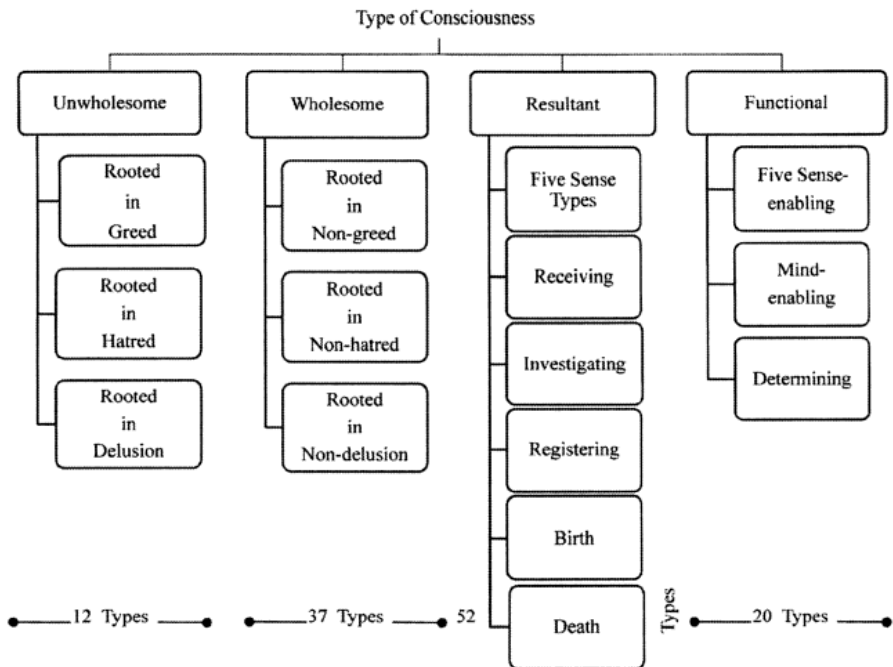


Figure 1.3. Types of consciousness: Four primary types and 15 subtypes give rise to a total of 121 sub-subtypes of consciousness. All partake in the phenomenon of cognition.

Whatever classification system you use, it's important to understand that there is no single consciousness behind all the others. No permanent, universal consciousness, almighty-father consciousness, universal-mother consciousness, or eternal consciousness exists. Many different types of consciousness are rapidly arising and passing away, thereby creating the phenomena of continuous existence. Note that all types arise and pass away.

Mind, the Second Element of Soul

If we look at a beautiful flower and then feel pleasant, we might exclaim, "That flower is so beautiful!"

The element of soul that sees the flower is consciousness. The element of soul that feels, perceives, thinks, judges, or qualifies the flower as "pleasant" and "beautiful" is mind.

Principally, mind can be defined as a non-material phenomenon made up of various *mental elements* that assist consciousness in the process of cognition by imparting qualities to the consciousness that is present. Feeling, perceiving, and thinking are some of the mental elements that make it possible for consciousness to know the flower as a flower that is beautiful and pleasant. The same is true for knowing anything else in the world.

Mind always arises and ceases together with consciousness. Mind always experiences the same object as consciousness. Just as the President of the United States could not manage the affairs of the nation without a cabinet, consciousness cannot rule its domain without mind. Consciousness cannot perform the function of cognition without mind.

Mental Elements: The Ultimate Building Blocks of Mind

Mind is really nothing other than a bundle of mental elements. Each mental element is a distinct mental phenomenon, a process or a flow. Feeling is a distinct mental phenomenon. Perception is a distinct mental phenomenon. Thinking is a distinct mental phenomenon. Other examples of mental elements are attention, greed, hatred, delusion, faith, compassion, loving-kindness, and so on. These combine with various types of consciousness to produce different human experiences.

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Mental elements, such as feeling, perception, and attention, assist consciousness in essential cognitive functions such as feeling objects, perceiving objects, and attending to objects in order that they can be known through cognition. Mental elements, such as greed, hatred, and compassion, assist consciousness in ethical cognitive functions such as liking or disliking an object. When mental elements arise together (for example, hatred arising along with perception) the resulting cognition becomes hateful. When compassion arises together with perception, it assists consciousness in compassionately knowing the object of perception. In this manner, mind conditions or colors consciousness through various combinations of mental elements, which give rise to a variety of wholesome (good), unwholesome (bad) experiences, and neutral experiences.

Imagine you are in a flea market and spot a wallet lying abandoned on the ground. If greed arises at the moment you see the wallet, you will consider it an easy source of money. Here, a simple act—seeing a wallet—is colored by the mental element of greed and becomes a desire for easy money. If compassion and non-greed arise instead of greed, then the wallet becomes known as a cause of concern for its owner. It does not give rise to a desire for easy money.

In the first example, consciousness is conditioned into an unwholesome state. In the second example, consciousness is conditioned into a wholesome state.

Note that the two states cannot coexist. Either consciousness is wholesome or it is unwholesome. You may experience wanting to keep the money and you may also experience wanting to give it back to the owner. But this does not mean that the wholesome and unwholesome states are coexisting. It simply means that the wholesome state is rapidly arising and passing away followed by the unwholesome state rapidly arising and passing away. The wholesome and unwholesome states are alternating.

Depending upon the strength or potency of mental elements (greed versus non-greed) that are arising in consciousness, you will either take the wallet or give it back to its rightful owner.

Your current state of consciousness depends upon your mental activity—the nature of mental elements that are arising in consciousness. If you saw a dirty, destitute person begging at a railway station, you might consider his appearance “disgusting” if the mental element of hatred arose in consciousness. But if the mental element of loving-kindness arose instead, your cognition would be different. Because of the element of loving-kindness, most likely you would consider the beggar as a lovable individual in desperate need of assistance.

Of course, the preceding examples are highly simplified versions of what happens. In reality, whenever consciousness arises, numerous mental elements arise with it. Several mental elements would arise with eye consciousness at the moment of seeing a wallet. Greed does not arise by itself. It always arises with elements of sensation, feeling, perception, volition, attention, delusion, restlessness, shamelessness, moral recklessness, and so on. Out of these numerous mental elements, greed and delusion act as the most prominent elements. While assisting consciousness in the process of cognition, each of these prominent elements is like a chief cabinet member of the president. All other mental elements function like lower level cabinet members.

Mental elements are distinct realities with their own intrinsic natures. Just as fire is intrinsically hot and water intrinsically wet, a mental element of hatred is intrinsically unwholesome and a mental element of non-hatred (or loving-kindness) is intrinsically wholesome. However, mental elements are not matter and do not have physical natures. They also are not energy modules, electromagnetic fields, or anything like that. They are without identity, and being non-physical they are without boundary. In addition, they are impersonal. They do not belong to any individual or entity. In fact, mental elements are ultimate realities, meaning they cannot be evaluated further than their own intrinsic natures. Because they are ultimate and impersonal we use the word “element” to denote their phenomenal nature.

As we saw earlier, because consciousness has its own intrinsic nature it is considered an ultimate reality. Similarly, because men-

tal elements have their own intrinsic natures, they are considered ultimate realities.

Through investigation, it is possible to discover and know the mental elements as distinct in the same way that chemists and physicists can reduce matter to the elements of the periodic table (hydrogen, oxygen, carbon, iron, and so on). All of the elements appearing on the periodic table (material substances) have their own intrinsic nature.⁴

The elements of the periodic table can be studied and known through external observation. However, that is not the case with mental elements since no matter is involved in mind. The only way to discover and know mental elements directly and thoroughly is through experience. So, if you want to understand mind, meditation is necessary, as it facilitates experience. External observation does not suffice. That is why meditation is explored as a primary tool for understanding mind in this book.

Classification of Mental Elements

Just as chemical scientists have discovered a total of 118 elements of matter (as noted on the periodic table), ancient “spiritual scientists”—the enlightened masters Buddha and his foremost disciples—discovered a total of 52 elements of mind.⁵

Mental elements are subtle and the differences between them can be even subtler. Therefore, they are delimited using the following criteria.⁶

- *Characteristics*: The most unique and prominent qualities of the element
- *Functions*: The performance of specific tasks by the element
- *Manifestations*: The ways that the element is experienced
- *Proximate causes*: The main conditions leading to the occurrence of the element

Depending upon the four preceding criteria, I have classified the 52 mental elements into seven categories of mind, as shown on The Chart of Mental Elements (see figure 1.4 on page 26 and 27).

CHAPTER 1 WHAT IS SOUL?

- *Group I:* The universal mind (elements 1–6)
- *Group II:* The special mind (elements 7–13)
- *Group III:* The unwholesome mind (elements 14–27)
- *Group IV:* The wholesome mind (elements 28–45)
- *Group V:* The divine mind (elements 46–48)
- *Group VI:* The noble mind (elements 49–51)
- *Group VII:* The wise mind (element 52)

It is utterly impossible to thoroughly understand mind without experiencing all 52 of these mental elements, which are the ultimate building blocks of mind. But for now, as an example, let us briefly look at the universal mental elements to get a taste of how we are going to prepare the ground for understanding mind.

THE ELEMENTS OF SOUL

GROUP I Universal Elements	GROUP II Special Elements	GROUP III Unwholesome Elements	GROUP IV Wholesome Elements	GROUP V Divine Elements
1 Se Sensation			28 NGr Non-greed (Root)	29 NHa Non-hatred (Root)
2 Fe Feeling	7 Tk Thinking	14 Gr Greed (Root)	15 Ha Hatred (Root)	47 Cm Compassion
3 Pe Perception	8 Th Thoughtful ness	16 De Delusion (Ultimate Root)		30 Mi Mindfulness
4 Vo Volition	9 Ra Rapture	17 Rs Restlessness	22 Rm Remorse	31, Cs-Sh 32 Conscience Shame
5 At Attention	10 Co Concentration	18 Shl Shameless ness	23 Su Superstitious ness	33 Fa Faith
6 Ml Mental Life	11 Re Resolution	19 Mr Moral Recklessness	24 Ss Suspicion	34, Tr 1,2 35 Tranquility
	12 Vi Vigor	20 Cn Conceit	25, Sl-To 26 Sloth Torpor	36, Li 1,2 37 Lightness
	13 Bd Bare Desire	21 En Envy	27 Av Avarice	46 Eq Neutrality of Mind
				38, Fl 1,2 39 Flexibility
				40, Pl 1,2 41 Pliability
				42, Sk 1,2 43 Skillfulness
				44, Rc 1,2 45 Rectitude
			52 NDe Non-delusion (Ultimate Wholesome Root)	48 Gl Gladness
				49, 50, 51 Na, Ns, No Noble Action, Speech, Occupation
			GROUP VII Wisdom Element	GROUP VI Noble Elements

- i. Six universal elements always arise together as a group (1-6). They are present in all mental activities.
- ii. Special elements (7-13) are ethically neutral. When they arise along with greed (14) or hatred (15), they become unwholesome. When they arise along with Non-greed (28) or Non-hatred (29), they become wholesome.
- iii. Four unwholesome elements always arise together as a group (14-19).
- iv. Greed (14) or Hatred (15) can not arise by itself. It is always accompanied by elements 16-19.
- v. Delusion (16) is ultimately responsible for all unwholesome mental activities.
- vi. Sloth and Torpor (25-26) are twin elements. Conscience and Shame (31-32) are pair elements.
- vii. In varying degrees of intensity, nineteen wholesome elements (28-46) always arise together as a group. They are present in all wholesome mental activities.
- viii. Tranquility (34, 35) are pair elements. Tr1 primarily refers to tranquility of the mind. Tr2 primarily refers to tranquility as a distinct element present within that mind. So is the case with other five pairs (36-45).
- ix. Loving-kindness is a highly evolved form of Non-hatred (29). Therefore, element number is not assigned.
- x. Equanimity is a highly evolved form of neutrality of mind (46). Therefore, element number is not assigned.
- xi. Non-delusion (52) is ultimately responsible for the occurrence of all wholesome, divine, and noble mental activities. Therefore, it is shown as their base.
- xii. Just as a chemical substance is made of various elements of the periodic table, a mental activity (such as a thought or an emotion) is made of various mental elements of the chart above. Some examples:

Craving, Lust = 14 + (16-19) + (1-6) + some of special elements (7-13)

Anger, Fear = 15 + (16-19) + (1-6) + some of special elements (7-13)

Happiness = 9 + (1-6) + some of special elements (7, 8, 10-13)

Generosity = 28 + (1-6) + (29-46) + some of special elements (7-13)

Empathy = 47 + (1-6) + (28-46) + some of special elements (7-13)

Awakening = 52 + (1-6) + (10-13) + (28-46)

Figure 1.4: The Chart of Mental Elements illustrating the ultimate building blocks of mind. These elements arise in groups giving rise to various mental activities.

THE ELEMENTS OF SOUL

1	Se	Sensation: That which facilitates contact (touch) between senses and object.
2	Fe	Feeling: That which feels the sensed object as unpleasant, pleasant, or neutral.
3	Pe	Perception: That which interprets, recognizes, and identifies the felt object.
4	Vo	Volition: That which provides direction and gives ethical quality to perceived object.
5	At	Attention: That which takes on the direction provided by volition and guides the mind.
6	Ml	Mental Life: That which provides sustenance and maintenance to the mind.
7	Tk	Thinking: That which builds on attention to unfold and unravel the object.
8	Th	Thoughtfulness: That which examines the object more thoroughly.
9	Ra	Rapture: That which gives rise to delightful interest in the object.
10	Co	Concentration: That which unifies and fixes the mind on an object.
11	Re	Resolution: That which settles the mind on an object.
12	Vi	Vigor: That which provides reinforcement and energy to mind.
13	Bd	Bare Desire: That which intends or inclines the mind towards an object.
14	Gr	Greed: That which grasps or bonds or attaches the mind to an object.
15	Ha	Hatred: That which pushes away the object from the mind.
16	De	Delusion: That which hides the reality of object and thereby blinds and eludes the mind.
17	Rs	Restlessness: That which agitates and distracts the mind.
18	Shl	Shamelessness: That which makes the mind non-apprehensive about immorality.
19	Mr	Moral Recklessness: That which makes the mind apathetic about immorality.
20	Cn	Conceit: That which corrupts the mind by generating pride and vanity.
21	En	Envy: That which makes the mind resentful and jealous of other's successes.
22	Rm	Remorse: That which generates worry and repentance.
23	Su	Superstitiousness: That which interprets the object unjustifiably, wrongly, and unwisely.
24	Ss	Suspicion: That which generates distrust and negativity.
25	Sl	Sloth: That which makes the mind stiff and sluggish.
26	To	Torpor: That which makes the mind lethargic and clumsy, generating boredom.
27	Av	Avarice: That which makes the mind covetous and mean, making it hard to share.
28	NGr	Non-greed: That which makes the mind generous. It is the absence and the opposite of greed.
29	NHa	Non-hatred: That which generates loving-kindness. It is the absence and the opposite of hatred.
30	Mi	Mindfulness: That which makes the mind aware of phenomenon by bringing it to present moment.
31	Cs	Conscience: That which generates disgust for immorality out of self-respect and honor.
32	Sh	Shame: That which generates apprehension for immorality out of respect and honor for others.
33	Fa	Faith: That which clarifies the mind and illuminates it about an object. It trusts.
34	Tr1	Tranquility of mind: That which makes the mind calm and still by crushing restlessness.
35	Tr2	Tranquility as a distinct element: That which has the quality of making the mind calm and still.
36	Li1	Lightness of mind: That which makes the mind non-sluggish, free of heaviness, sloth, and torpor.
37	Li2	Lightness as a distinct element: That which has the quality of making the mind non-sluggish.
38	FI1	Flexibility of mind: That which crushes rigidity and makes the mind free of superstition, conceit.
39	FI2	Flexibility as a distinct element: That which has the quality of crushing mental rigidity.
40	PI1	Pliability of mind: That which facilitates crushing hindrances and makes the mind workable.
41	PI2	Pliability as a distinct element: That which has the quality of making the mind workable.
42	Sk1	Skillfulness of mind: That which crushes disability and makes the mind proficient.
43	Sk2	Skillfulness as a distinct element: That which has the quality of making the mind proficient.
44	Rc1	Rectitude of mind: That which crushes mental tortuousness and generates straightforwardness.
45	Rc2	Rectitude as a distinct element: That which has the quality of mental straightforwardness.
46	Eq	Neutrality of mind: That which makes the mind balanced and impartial, freeing it from craving.
47	Cm	Compassion: That which makes it possible to see suffering and promotes eradication of suffering.
48	Gl	Gladness: That which removes envy and jealousy and promotes appreciation of other's successes.
49	Na	Noble Action: The quality of unconditional and deliberate refrain from unwholesome action.
50	Ns	Noble Speech: The quality of unconditional and deliberate refrain from unwholesome speech.
51	No	Noble Occupation: The quality of unconditional and deliberate refrain from unwholesome work.
52	NDe	Non-delusion: That which eradicates delusion or ignorance and generates wisdom.

Figure 1.4 (continued): List of 52 mental elements. A unique symbol is designated for each. For example, Fe represents the element of feeling.

Universal Mental Elements

Sensation, feeling, perception, volition, attention, and mental life—these six elements perform universal or essential mental functions. They are present in every type of mental activity and in all types of consciousness. Without their presence, consciousness cannot perform the act of cognition. Without their presence, there is no mind, no consciousness, and no experience. Universal mental elements are neither inherently wholesome nor unwholesome. Rather they acquire the ethical qualities of other prominent mental elements that arise with them. For example, the element of *feeling* simply performs the function of directly experiencing an object. However, it becomes unwholesome when it arises with the mental element of hatred, at which point it manifests as a hateful-unpleasant feeling. If we see an enemy, for instance, we might feel hatefully unpleasant because hatred coexists with feeling. When we see our children, we might feel joyfully pleasant because loving-kindness coexists with feeling.

Similarly, the element of *perception* performs the function of interpreting, recognizing, or identifying the quality of objects. However, it becomes unwholesome when it arises with the element of greed, as in the case we previously discussed of perceiving someone else's lost wallet as a possible source of easy money.

Here's how the universal mental elements could arise and function in a typical cognitive process. Let us go back to the example of spotting a lost wallet in a flea market. When you notice the wallet, you decide either to keep the cash or to find the wallet's owner. In this cognitive process, the universal mental elements assist consciousness as follows.

The moment you see the wallet, eye consciousness arises along with the six universal mental elements. *Sensation* makes eye consciousness *touch* the object, because of which consciousness (the internal world) impinges upon the object (the external world). The process of cognition begins at the moment of contact between the internal and the external world.

Once contact is established through sensation, a feeling arises and consciousness feels the sensations, resulting in the appearance of the object.

Perception then assists consciousness in interpreting the object based on the sensations and feelings. The object is thus understood as a wallet, based on its appearance (the sensation and the feeling). If it is not the first time you have seen it, then the object is interpreted as a wallet based on your memories of previous experiences.

Volition then kicks in and decides whether to have easy money or to find the owner. Through coordination among all other mental elements, volition determines your further course of action about the wallet. Volition thus gives rise to wholesome or unwholesome mental action depending upon whether it combines with wholesome (non-greed) or unwholesome (greed) mental elements, respectively.

Attention, which is present along with all the other mental elements the entire time you are engaged in this episode, bonds all the other elements to the object so that consciousness will remain in contact with the wallet throughout the cognitive process. Attention thus assists in constantly turning consciousness towards the object to carry out its volition.

The sixth element, *mental life*, maintains and sustains all the other mental elements during the process of cognition. Without mental life, consciousness cannot conclude the process of cognition. While considering the wallet, if you were to suddenly go into coma or die due to a fatal heart attack, you would not be able to take any mental action.

In the above example, eye consciousness rules a visual experience, such as seeing a wallet. Mental elements are always subservient to consciousness.

The six universal mental elements are always present in all cognitive processes. They combine with the remaining 46 elements in different permutations and combinations to give rise to a variety of experiences. How that happens and how such knowledge can be used to minimize unwholesome experiences and maximize wholesome experiences, increase happiness and peace, awaken higher levels of intelligence, and so on will be discussed in later chapters.

Having articulated the elements, I am going to add that the exact number does not really matter much. If you looked long and hard at

the phenomena of mind you might come up with more elements, such as sub-elements and super-elements. The range or spectrum of mental elements would remain the same as we have discussed. This is akin to the spectrum of colors. There are only six basic colors even though there are many shades of those colors.

Whatever names or number we use to describe the elements, we are just labeling various unique mental phenomena. In developing your understanding of mind, the key is never to let go of the thought of it as a phenomenon. The key is to never make “something” out of names and numbers. Names and numbers do not have much significance in comparison to the intrinsic and phenomenal (impersonal) nature of mental elements.

From this brief discussion, I hope you now have at least an intellectual understanding that mind is not a single fixed entity, a unified field, an exotic energy field, or a unified super-intelligence, but simply a bundle of various unique mental phenomena (mental elements) that arise and pass away with consciousness.

As you’ll discover for yourself, when understanding of the elemental and phenomenal nature of mind comes through actual meditative experience, mind is not clung to as *my* mind. It is simply looked upon as an impersonal phenomenon. Such spiritual vision makes it possible to experience soul.

Matter, the Third Element of Soul

As we have discussed, human experience involves a combination of matter, mind, and consciousness. The most tangible component of this equation is matter. Like mind and consciousness, matter is phenomenological. It is also elemental, although not necessarily in the way that you may be anticipating. Let us return to using the example of observing a flower to demonstrate the elemental nature of matter, specifically as it arises in the human body.

You have already learned that consciousness sees a flower and mind feels, perceives, thinks, judges, or qualifies the flower as “beautiful” or “pleasant.” You also have learned that consciousness and mind

cannot see without both organic and non-organic matter being present. The consciousness that sees a flower (eye consciousness) can function only when it arises using eye sensitivity (non-organic or subtle matter) and a biological eye (organic matter). In this case, both types of matter are situated in the eye socket of a live body, however subtle matter cannot be seen under a microscope or detected by mechanical devices. Similarly, ear consciousness hears sounds only when it occurs using ear sensitivity and the ear. Taste consciousness tastes flavors only when it occurs using tongue sensitivity and the tongue. Smell consciousness smells odors only when it occurs using nose sensitivity and the nose. Touch consciousness feels touch only when it occurs using body sensitivity and the skin.

When we talk about subtle matter (the five sensitivities) we are not referring to nerve centers, biochemicals, genes, or atoms, but rather to a phenomenon called the *material base*.⁷ It is called a material base because consciousness arises using it as a material support. These material bases can be envisioned as the five invisible antennas situated in the five sense organs of a live body. These five invisible antennae detect five types of respective sense consciousness, and channel them through the five respective sense organs.

However, that is not still enough for the occurrence of a sensual experience. For example, eye consciousness cannot see unless a unique type of functional consciousness known as sense-enabling consciousness arises simultaneously with it. This functional consciousness cannot arise strictly using the five material bases that we have discussed so far. It takes support of another material base called *mind sensitivity*, which is the sixth material base (or we could call it the sixth invisible antenna). The sixth material base is situated within the cavity of the heart of a live body. It is also known as the subtle heart matter.⁸

Just as the antenna of an AM/FM receiver in your car detects radio waves from a radio station, our six invisible antennae (eye sensitivity, ear sensitivity, nose sensitivity, tongue sensitivity, body sensitivity, and mind sensitivity) detect various types of consciousness and channel them through our six physical organs (the eyes, ears,

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nose, tongue, body, and heart, respectively). And just as the receiver in your car decodes and converts radio waves it has detected into sounds, the *brain* decodes and converts the arisen consciousness into experiences.

In short, I propose that the six material bases and the six physical organs work together with the brain to facilitate cognition. We cannot hear sound in our car without an antenna *and* a receiver. Similarly, we cannot experience anything without the six material bases, the six physical organs, *and* the brain (see figure 1.5).

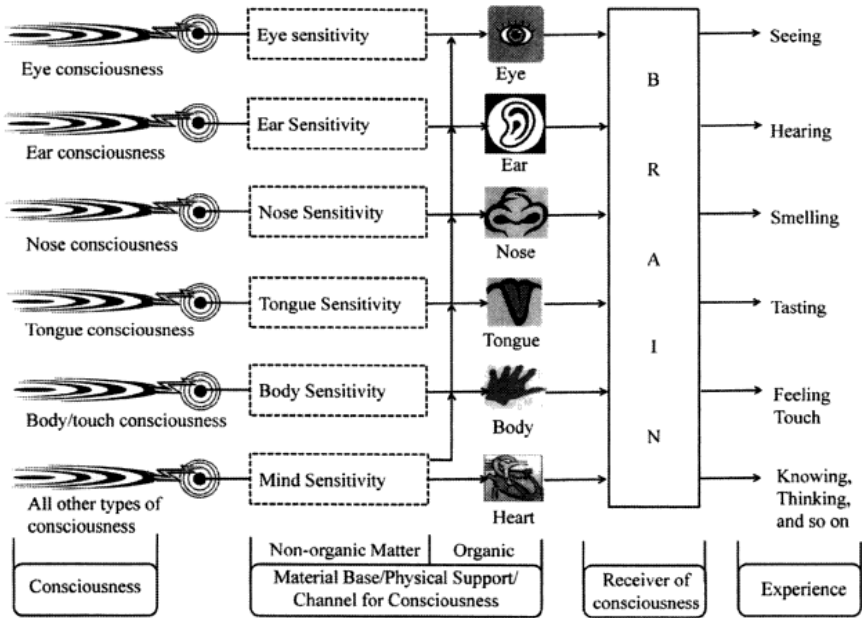


Figure 1.5. Matter is the physical support for consciousness. In addition to five sensual organs, consciousness needs the support of the heart and the assistance of the brain.

All six material bases form at conception. As the fetus grows, the six organs take shape around their respective bases. The heart is the first organ to fully form and function. This might be because it is associated with mind sensitivity, the sixth material base, which is the most important material base when it comes to having an experience. Note

that mind sensitivity is not situated in the heart organ *per se*, rather in the blood-filled cavities inside the live heart.

This is a simplified version of how consciousness arises with the support of matter.

The Brain

Let's go back to the analogy of a radio. It is a scientific fact that radio waves are made of sine frequencies loaded with information, such as the voice of a DJ or music. The process of loading information is known as AM or FM modulation. We hear the DJ in our car because our car's receiver is capable of receiving the information through its antenna, demodulating (unloading) the information, and converting it into sound.

Mind (or a group of mental elements) is like the information that has been loaded onto consciousness. Similar to an AM/FM receiver, the brain unloads this information, which results in various neural activities. However, there is a huge difference between an AM/FM receiver and the brain. While the AM/FM receiver receives, it cannot transmit. The brain not only is a receiver, it is also a transmitter. Moreover, the brain is not just an electrical device or a computer. It is also a learning device—and much more than that.

Although the brain is essential to cognition, it is only a receiver and not a *source* of consciousness, as many neurologists and psychologists believe. But although the brain is not its prime material component, cognition cannot happen without the brain. Some spiritual scientists and thinkers tend to neglect the brain. The wise ones among us neither give the brain too much importance, nor do they overlook it.

Material Elements, the Ultimate Building Blocks of Matter

What are the five sense organs, the heart, and the brain (or any other organ in the body for that matter) made of at the ultimate level? Four primary material elements.

Think about them in light of the body. A physical organ has some softness and some hardness, and it is supported on something without

which it cannot stand. Where do the softness, hardness, and support come from? If, for a moment, we could set aside our materialistic viewpoint and look at the *experiential* qualities of softness, hardness, and support as phenomena, rather than as *something* arising out of *something* else, then we are obviously reaching the ultimate reality of matter. As we have discussed, experiential knowledge equals ultimate reality.

Let's call these phenomena characteristics of the element of *earth*. Why call it "earth"? Softness, hardness, and support are recognizable qualities of soil mass.

A physical organ has fluidity and cohesion, qualities without which the organ would fall apart. Let us call these phenomena characteristics of the element of *water*.

A physical organ has a certain temperature. It grows and matures. Let us call these phenomena characteristics of the element of *fire*.

Finally, all organs have some motion, distention, and pressure without which there would not be any conveyance of fluids, movement of breath, or any movement of muscles, bones, limbs, stomach, and so on. Let us call these phenomena characteristics of the element of *air*.

If you were to contemplate these phenomena, you would eventually realize that there are no other experiential qualities of matter. In other words, the elements of earth, water, fire, and air are the ultimate realities of matter. In the human body, these are the foundation of the sense organs, the heart, and the brain. They are the essence of everything we experience as matter.

The elements of which I am speaking are not visible subatomic particles, such as electrons, protons, and neutrons, or objects that have size, shape, weight, or mass. Material elements are not mysterious or invisible primordial substances, nor are they particles or packets of energy. Rather they are fundamental material *phenomena of experience* manifested in form as visible or invisible matter.

The words "phenomenon" and "experience" have great significance in coming to understand matter as the element of soul, since they help

us to remove our ignorance related to physical notions of matter as being a fixed, solid substance that is separate from us.

Perhaps you are wondering how all the organs and the brain (which seem to be incredibly complex) can be made of earth, water, fire, and air. Well, there is a caveat. Earth, water, fire, and air cannot produce complex material phenomena unless they combine with four causal factors and give rise to a total of 28 material elements (see figure 1.6, on page 36 and 37).⁹ We shall discuss causal factors and material elements in future chapters.

THE ELEMENTS OF SOUL

<u>GROUP I</u> Essential Elements	<u>GROUP IIA</u> Derived Essential Elements	<u>GROUP IIB</u> Derived Sensual Elements	<u>GROUP IIC</u> Derived Sexual Elements	<u>GROUP IID</u> Derived Life Element	<u>GROUP IIIE</u> Derived Subtle-Heart Element	<u>GROUP IIIF</u> Derived Sound Element												
1 Ea Earth	5 Nu Nutriment	9 EySe Eye Sensitivity	14 MaSx Male Sexuality	16 Mal Material Life	17 MiSe Mind Sensitivity	18 So Sound												
2 Wa Water	6 Ta Taste	10 EaSe Ear Sensitivity	15 FeSx Female Sexuality	<p><u>GROUP III</u> Abstract Elements (Attributes of Real Matter)</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">19 BoIn Bodily Intimation</td> <td style="text-align: center;">20 VoIn Vocal Intimation</td> <td style="text-align: center;">21 Cn Continuity</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">22 Lt Lightness</td> <td style="text-align: center;">23 Fl Flexibility</td> <td style="text-align: center;">24 Pl Pliability</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">25 Pr Production</td> <td style="text-align: center;">26 De Decay</td> <td style="text-align: center;">27 Im Impermanence</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">28 Sp Space</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>			19 BoIn Bodily Intimation	20 VoIn Vocal Intimation	21 Cn Continuity	22 Lt Lightness	23 Fl Flexibility	24 Pl Pliability	25 Pr Production	26 De Decay	27 Im Impermanence		28 Sp Space	
19 BoIn Bodily Intimation	20 VoIn Vocal Intimation	21 Cn Continuity																
22 Lt Lightness	23 Fl Flexibility	24 Pl Pliability																
25 Pr Production	26 De Decay	27 Im Impermanence																
	28 Sp Space																	
3 Fi Fire	7 Fo/Co Form /Color	11 NoSe Nose Sensitivity																
4 Ai Air	8 Sm Smell	12 ToSe Tongue Sensitivity																
		13 BoSe Body Sensitivity																

- i. Material elements are experiential (and not experimental) in nature.
- ii. Elements 1-4 are the most fundamental and essential building blocks of matter. They are inseparable.
- iii. Elements 5-28 are dependent upon the elements 1-4 and cannot arise by themselves.
- iv. Elements 1-8 always arise together as a group. This group is known as the soul-atom. It is present in all material phenomena.
- v. Element 9-28 cling to soul-atoms to form new groups. These groups of elements give rise to various material phenomena occurring in human body.
- vi. In general, all material elements always arise in distinct groups forming matter due to four causes:

Consciousness
Volitional Force (Karma)
Temperature
Nutriment

Essential matter = 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = (1-4), forms due to all four causes

Soul-atom = (1-4) + (5-8) = (1-8), forms due to consciousness

Sound = (1-8) + 18, forms due to consciousness and temperature

Life matter = (1-8) + 16, forms due to karma

Eye matter = (1-8) + 9 + 16, forms due to karma

Ear matter = (1-8) + 10 + 16, forms due to karma

Nose matter = (1-8) + 11 + 16, forms due to karma

Tongue matter = (1-8) + 12 + 16, forms due to karma

Body matter = (1-8) + 13 + 16, forms due to karma

Sexuality matter = (1-8) + 14 or 15 + 16, forms due to karma

Heart matter = (1-8) + 16 + 17, forms due to karma

Figure 1.6: The Chart of Material Elements illustrating the ultimate building blocks of matter. These elements arise in groups giving rise to various types of matter. A unique symbol is designated for each. For example: Ea for the element of earth.

THE ELEMENTS OF SOUL

1	Ea	Earth: That which characterizes hard or soft, and provides foundation to matter.
2	Wa	Water: That which characterizes fluidity, cohesion, and holds matter together.
3	Fi	Fire: That which characterizes heat and cold, and digests, ripens or matures material states.
4	Ai	Air: That which characterizes distention, causes movement and pressure, and conveys matter.
5	Nu	Nutriments: That which characterizes nutritive essence, upholds, fortifies, and consolidates matter.
6	Ta	Taste: That which impinges upon the tongue and becomes an object of taste consciousness.
7	Fo/Co	Form/Color: That which impinges upon the eye and becomes an object of eye consciousness.
8	Sm	Smell: That which impinges upon the nose and becomes an object of nose consciousness.
9	EySe	Eye Sensitivity: That which springs from desire to see and picks up visible datum as an object.
10	EaSe	Ear Sensitivity: That which springs from desire to hear and picks up audible datum as an object.
11	NoSe	Nose Sensitivity: That which springs from desire to smell and picks up odor as an object.
12	ToSe	Tongue Sensitivity: That which springs from desire to taste and picks up flavor as an object.
13	BoSe	Body Sensitivity: That which springs from desire to touch and picks up tactile sensations.
14	MaSx	Male Sexuality: That which springs from desire to propagate species and shows masculinity.
15	FeSx	Female Sexuality: That which springs from desire to propagate species and shows femininity.
16	Mal	Material Life: That which springs from desire to live and maintains and sustains matter.
17	MiSe	Mind Sensitivity: That which springs from desire to know and provides material base for mind.
18	So	Sound: That which springs from consciousness and temperature and becomes a sense object.
19	BoIn	Bodily Intimation: That which communicates ideas and feelings, and causes bodily movements.
20	VoIn	Vocal Intimation: That which communicates ideas and feelings, and causes voice.
21	Cn	Continuity: That which characterizes the occurrence, and anchors the continuous arising of matter.
22	Li	Lightness: That which characterizes non-sluggishness of body and crushes heaviness in matter.
23	Fl	Flexibility: That which characterizes non-rigidity of body and crushes rigidity in matter.
24	Pf	Pliability: That which characterizes workability of body and crushes physical unwieldiness.
25	Pr	Production: That which characterizes launching of matter and makes it arise for the first time.
26	De	Decay: That which characterizes aging of matter and leads it towards termination.
27	Im	Impermanence: That which characterizes breaking up of matter, makes it subside and cease.
28	Sp	Space: That which characterizes voidness, delimiting of matter, and enables distinctness in matter.

Figure 1.6 (continued): List of 28 material elements. A unique symbol is designated for each. For example, Ea represents the element of earth.

THE ELEMENTS OF SOUL

Having read this far, you have a basic theoretical understanding of the three key elements of soulful phenomena: consciousness, mind, and matter. There is a good deal more to be said about each. However, if you grasped their phenomenological nature in the context of human experience, you have received a complete sketch of the terrain we're going to explore together in the pursuit of understanding soul and thereby attaining perfect intelligence.

* * *

Chapter 2

What Is Not Soul?

When we study any subject, it is important that we understand not only what it is but also what it is *not*. Since it leaves no stone unturned, such knowledge facilitates mental perfection.

Having explored what soul is, let us now explore what it is not. In order to do this, we must understand the nature of reality as well as non-reality.

Reality

Reality is that which is universal and which exists as a distinct phenomenon possessing its own intrinsic nature. It is not something that is conceptual, mentally constructed, or conceived. It is the object of real experience, meaning, it is that which is not imagined but experienced.

Hydrogen and oxygen are real because they are universal and possess unique characteristics that make them two distinct elements of the periodic table. They are experienced universally as gases and as water

when combined. Similarly, the elements of soul (matter, mind, and consciousness, as we discussed in the previous chapter) are real because they can be experienced and they are universal. They are the same for all beings. However, the elements of soul have an important distinction. Since these three elements consist of the *subtlest* phenomena that underlie all other phenomena (experiences and things), they are not simply a reality but an *ultimate* reality.

When you see something, eye consciousness is the subtlest reality in the experience of seeing. In fact, eye consciousness, which has the intrinsic nature of seeing an object, is itself experienced as “seeing.” In other words, nothing subtler than eye consciousness can be experienced in the phenomenon of “seeing.” Similarly, nothing subtler than the element of hatred (the mind) can be experienced in the phenomenon of anger. And nothing subtler than the element of fire (the matter) can be experienced in the phenomenon of temperature.

The elements of consciousness, mind, and matter do not perform their functions for any living being yet they are distinct, experiential, *and* universal. Eye consciousness will perform the function of only seeing (and not hearing). The element of hatred will perform the function of generating only anger (and not love). The element of fire will perform the function of generating only the experience of heat and cold (and never the experience of hard or soft, wet or dry).

If one does not understand the nature of reality as experiential, universal, and intrinsic, then one starts imagining that it is he (or she) who sees, who hates or loves, who feels hot or cold. The sense of separate self (the ego) is formed out of the ignorance about reality and non-reality.

The ultimate reality of consciousness, mind, and matter is *conditional* because all three are conditioned by each other and occur interdependently, as we discussed in the previous chapter. Then there is a fourth ultimate reality: enlightenment, which is *unconditional* and beyond soul, as we shall soon discuss.

There are only four ultimate realities in the universe.¹ In the ultimate sense, everything else is a non-reality, not soul (see figure 2.1).

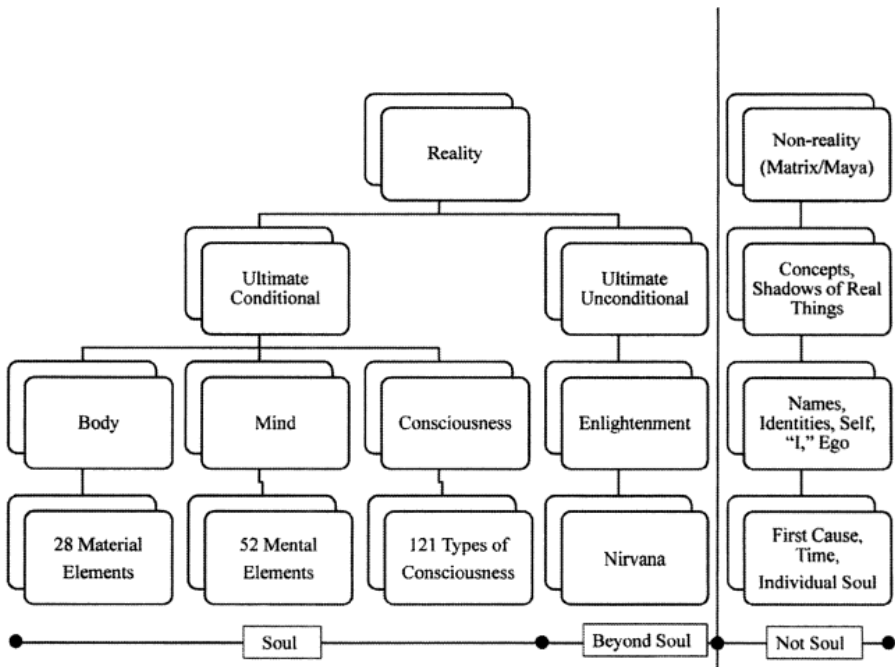


Figure 2.1. Types of reality and non-reality: In order to realize soul, understanding what is not real is as important as understanding what is real.

Non-reality

After having understood what reality is, it is quite obvious that non-reality is that which does not exist as a distinct phenomenon possessing its own intrinsic nature. It is that which is conceived, but that which cannot be experienced. It is non-universal.

Water is real. The phrase “Colorado River” is not. It is a name, a geopolitical *concept* denoting a body of flowing water. We can experience flowing water just as a fish or a bird can. But we cannot experience “Colorado River,” which is a mental construction and linguistic tool so that we may communicate with one another. A fish and a bird obviously do not know what “Colorado River” is. In other words, “Colorado River” is not only *not* experiential it also is *not* universal. So it is not real.

Similarly, a “table” is not real. It does not exist. What really exists is wood (or metal, or plastic). Table is the name given to a particular form or assembly of wood. It is an abstraction.

Please understand that conventions and concepts are not universal because they do not exist by the virtue of their own natures. There is no experiential evidence for them. “Table” does not have universal existence because it does not mean anything to an ant or to a woodpecker. But wood is the same for all beings, whether human, ant, or woodpecker.

This may sound a bit dimwitted right now, but bear with me a while longer so I can prove to you the profound implications of what we are discussing.

A tree, man, woman, nation, and so on are additional examples of non-realities—mere words, mere names, mere concepts. A man or a woman actually does not exist. An Israeli, a German, or a Palestinian does not exist. What actually exist are bundles of consciousness, mind, and matter conventionally called a man, a woman, an Israeli, a German, and a Palestinian.

A nation does not exist. What actually exists is a piece of land. A national boundary is simply a line drawn by politicians on a piece of paper. It does not exist by its own nature because it is not universal. Otherwise a camel or an earthworm crossing the border between Israel and Palestine or India and Pakistan would experience it just as (deluded) humans do. The land is the real thing (and not a nation) because it is experienced *as land* by all beings, including camels, earthworms, and people.

The demarcation of land as various nations might be necessary for political, economic, and cultural convenience, however, when a nation itself becomes an identity or a subject of pride for some, there is fighting and killing over it, which leads to immense suffering for millions of innocent people at large.

If Hitler had not been driven by national and racial concepts, the world would not have endured the Holocaust. If these types of non-reality did not blind recent political, social, and religious leaders and their followers we would not have experienced bloodshed in Israel-Palestine, India-Pakistan, Iran-Iraq, and Sierra Leone. New York would not have been attacked on September 11, 2001. The list is long.

Two easy qualifying tests help us to identify and understand the world around us and ourselves so that non-reality is not mistaken as reality. These are “experience” and “universality.” Anything that fails these tests is only a concept or a network of concepts, which in Sanskrit is known as *maya* (see figure 2.2).

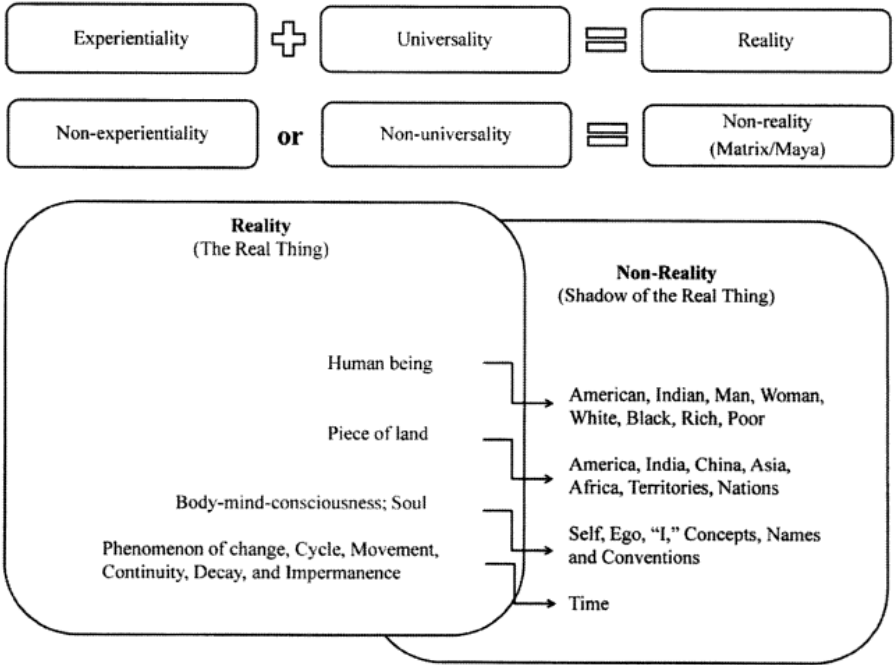


Figure 2.2. Tests for identifying reality and non-reality: experience and universality.

Maya: A Network of Non-reality

In some ancient eastern philosophical discourses, the word “maya” has been incorrectly used to describe the material world or the world of the senses. The material world exists, as it is composed of the elements earth, water, fire, and air. Inanimate matter exists. Animate matter exists. Our senses also exist. What do not exist are the various concepts that we derive from these real things: the shadows of real thing (see figure 2.2).

We live in a vast and layered network of conventions, or shared concepts, which is somewhat like the computer matrix depicted in the 1999 movie *The Matrix* about the enslavement of mankind in a virtual world. Although limited in scope, that fictional proposition was a good simulation of maya. The matrix I'm referring to is primarily responsible for the imprisonment of our intellect and the consequent human suffering on an unimaginable scale.

Due to maya, we have developed various layers of delusion, such as nationalities, religious affiliations, social affiliations, occupational identities, family relationships, personal images, and so on. None of these forms of identification is real. These layers of delusion have only led to conflicts between nations, between races, between communities, between businesses, between family members, between sexes, and so on. When a person says, "I am Hindu," or Christian, an Indian or an American, black or Caucasian, a trader or a doctor, a father or a mother, a brother or a sister, and the person genuinely means it, then that person is blinded by maya. You could also say that person is "plugged into the matrix."

Let us look at couple of examples that illustrate why maya works adversely at all levels, starting with a fictitious organization that we'll call TransWorld Inc.

TransWorld Inc., a multinational company, does not actually exist (and not just because it is fictitious). TransWorld Inc. is a name adopted by a group of people who work together in an organized manner to achieve common goals. What really exists is a group of people. That is the actual reality of TransWorld Inc.

What usually happens in today's corporate world? People are forgotten or rated second while the company name or its image is treated as the real matter of importance. The name of an organization is necessary for the convenience of doing business, however when the name or the company itself becomes an entity, the employees who make up the company suffer.

If the owners and managers of the company were to realize this, the employees would not be treated simply as a "resource" (human

resource) to be utilized for generating profits and establishing a brand. Employees would be given top priority and treated as the real company—because that’s what reality is—rather than the name, image, or brand of the company.

An Indian cricket team or an Australian cricket team does not exist. These are just names. What really exist are two groups of people who play the same game. But what happens when people watch the game? People who identify themselves as Indians tend to cheer for players on the Indian team. People who identify themselves as Australians do the same for the Australian team players. Instead of watching the game, people watch to see if their team will win.

If all the sports fans of all sports were to realize this, they could learn a great deal about human skill and athletic power by simply watching a game, which is a real thing, rather than focusing on the unreal: names, nationality, league, image, affiliation, or identity of the players. Wouldn’t it be lot more beneficial to sports fans if they were to watch the game because they love the game, and then learn and derive inspiration from it? Why develop a craving for one team and an aversion for another? That’s beneficial only to the owners and organizers of the teams.

Non-realities are skin-deep. A New York Yankee and one of the Red Sox, a white man and a black man, an American and a Japanese all look the same when X-rayed.

If you simply “look through” them, it is obvious that sports media, marketing media, political media, religious media, and the entertainment industry thrive on the matrix for the most part. Without the popular perceptions (such as leagues, rankings, awards, lists, memberships, charts, associations, names, brands, and so forth) and herd mentality that they create and promote, they cannot make fortunes off you and me. Pop culture and the paparazzi could not function without the consumers who fall for maya or get carried away by the matrix.

Competition, trends, peer pressure, stress, and hysteria are but a few examples of the byproducts of maya or the matrix. Although we have to apply specific means of identification, qualification, and quantification to function in this world, we don’t have to get hooked on it

THE ELEMENTS OF SOUL

as if it is the real thing. We don't have to swear or be driven by it. We don't have to become crazy about anything or develop aversion to anything. We only have to give importance to real things (the skill, art, fineness, and excellence demonstrated by extraordinary people from all walks of life) in order to learn from it.

It is important to understand that whenever we are under the spell of unreal things we are blinded by craving and aversion. Why is this important? Craving and aversion are two great evils that support, strengthen, and protect the ego and cover up our true nature: soul. This is the reason why we suffer and cause suffering for others. Layers of identification (maya) have to be peeled off so we can expose and eradicate the ego (the subtlest of all identifications), which is at the core of all human conflicts and suffering (see figure 2.3).

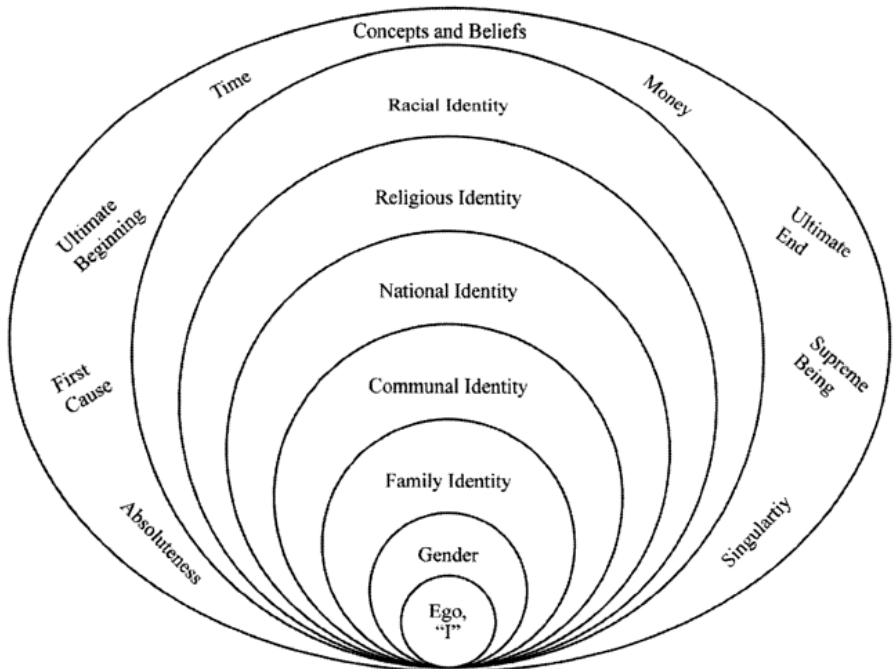


Figure 2.3. Layers of non-reality (maya): the source of human conflict and suffering.

There is huge significance to the realization of the existence of delusions created by maya. As you remove delusions, intelligence is

purified and developed, which leads to removal of the ultimate delusion: the delusion of the separate self, or the ego, which is hidden behind names, conventions, and concepts. Maya is the ego's protective layered armor, which must be shattered and removed in order to awaken the ultimate human potential.

The Ego: A Non-reality

Psychologically, we could say that ego is the manifestation of various unwholesome mental elements, such as delusion, greed, and hatred. In this sense, ego is an attribute of the ultimate reality of mind. However, the ego really does not exist itself as an ultimate reality with its own intrinsic nature. As you'll learn in upcoming chapters, it is simply an attribute of a deluded mind.

Philosophically, we could say that the ego is an expression of ignorance or mental blindness. Here, ignorance means not knowing or not understanding the real nature of body-mind-consciousness. It means choosing to ignore or deny the truth about the nature of reality. Because of ignorance, the interaction between the reality of body, mind, and consciousness and their seemingly continuous co-existence is not experienced as *soul* but imagined as a separate *self*.

You might be questioning, "If ego is a non-reality then how can we eradicate it? How can we eradicate something that does not exist?"

Eradicating the ego is like eradicating the darkness in a room by turning on the lights. Darkness is essentially the "absence of light," meaning it is an attribute of light, so light overrides darkness. Ego is the "absence of wisdom (or perfect intelligence)." In order to override ego, we develop wisdom. As wisdom emerges, eradication is automatic. Nothing else is needed.

The point is: We do not try to eradicate the ego *directly*. Instead, we develop wisdom, which automatically removes layers of identification and then ultimately results in the eradication of the ego. It is just like turning on the lights to remove darkness in a room instead of trying to shovel out or erase the darkness.

Time: A Non-reality

Time is a concept. It is not real, as it is neither universal nor experiential. We cannot experience time like a sensation of heat or cold, or a feeling of joy or sorrow. Time is just a name given to the phenomenon of movement, cycle, change, continuity, decay, and impermanence. These phenomena are real because we can experience them and they are universal. They are the same for everything that exists in nature. Time is a conceptual means to measure and quantify these phenomena.

Time is an illusion in the same way that the idea of “separate self” is an illusion. Time, even as an illusion (clock time), is not the same for all—meaning, it is not universal. Time is different depending upon people’s locations within different time zones.

Time also is not the experience of the past and the future. The past and future exist only in our memories, conceptions, thoughts, and imaginations. We can only remember the past. We can only think about the future. Our thoughts about past and future always occur in the present. Only the present moment is real and can be experienced. Past and future are mere conventions.

Aim to live in the real moment, which is the present. It is a more empowered approach to life to rule your memories than to allow them to rule you. Plan, arrange, prepare, and be proactive, but do not become attached to the deadlines or results that you may or may not see in the future.

Aim to be punctual, but do not go time crazy. Meet your commitments while working without being pressurized by deadlines. By this I mean work on Monday in the same manner that you work on Friday. Did you know that besides human beings no other living creatures see any difference between Monday and Friday?

The Non-reality of Ultimate Beginning and End

Human beings have a tendency to think in a linear manner. Due to the spell of time, we tend to think in terms of beginning and end. Therefore it is easy to believe that ultimate realities would have a beginning and an end. However, the word “ultimate” does not relate

to the beginning of the world or a primordial reality. It simply means “the subtlest mode of experience.” If you imagine that consciousness is subtler than mind, you are thinking linearly.

In this sense, there is no such thing as the ultimate beginning or end of the world. These are mental concepts that arise due to the habit of linear thinking and the illusion of time as a linear entity. Ultimate beginning and end actually do not occur in nature. There are no such things. Trying to find a beginning or an end always results in an infinite regression.

What is the beginning and end of the physical extent of your country? Where another country ends, your country begins, and where your country ends, another country begins. Because we live on a sphere, if you continued pursuing this question from country to country you would eventually arrive back at your own country. The beginning is the ending. Time-space works just the same way. The true “beginning” is where you begin. The true “end” is where you begin again. There is no absolute or first beginning, no absolute or last end.

Can we point out the beginning of the surface of Earth and the end of it? Can we locate the beginning and end of space? We cannot, because beginning and end are mental concepts. They are conventions. They do not exist. They are not intrinsically real. They do not have essential natures that can be realized.

Many intellectuals get bogged down and discouraged when they do not find answers to the questions of ultimate beginning, ultimate end, first cause, absolute reality, and similar concerns. Some then unknowingly pick up a religious or doctrinal path in search of the answers, which then hampers their spiritual growth. Some theologians and religious pundits spend their lives conceptualizing, theorizing, and dogmatizing in a vain effort to provide answers. But these questions are not valid in the first place!

God: A Reality or a Non-reality?

One of the biggest challenges many people have had—also the biggest challenge I experienced years ago in studying the four ultimate realities (matter, mind, consciousness, and enlightenment)—is an

attachment to the idea of a deeper unconditional and absolute reality underlying them. Why is it not possible to have one single ultimate reality or principle, like an ultimate being, such as God, that underlies everything else?

My conclusion is that the term “God” can be used to denote all ultimate realities in union. You may also use this word to denote enlightenment, which means, “perfect intelligence” or “pure awareness.” But you cannot say that there is something beyond the four ultimate realities or that some single underlying *absolute* or *separate* entity exists.

Notwithstanding, I must suggest that you do not abandon the idea of God. Instead, try to explore it. Try neither to believe nor to disbelieve in a particular concept of God. Believing or not believing is the same thing: a belief! Just keep an open mind until you know all four ultimate realities *experientially*.

Become an explorer rather than a believer or a non-believer. Investigate rather than accept or reject, and, most importantly, keep exploring and investigating without ever ending the quest. The questions related to God and such matters are best dealt with as open-ended questions in order to avoid human conflict and the suppression of truth.

Imagine what would have happened if all people simply believed in ancient religious texts about the origin of the Earth and life and did not care to explore further. Because some humans did explore, today we know so much more about the origin of the Earth and life. Not that these explorers were disbelievers or anti-religious, they simply went beyond to find the truth for themselves. Many eminent scientists (such as Einstein) have been deeply religious, but that did not stop them from exploring ultimate realities of the world.

The Importance of Understanding Non-reality

Understanding non-reality matters significantly, because the aim of genuine spiritual endeavor is to purify the intellect, which means penetrating and destroying layers of belief: religious views, perspectives, affiliations, doctrines, dogmas, conventions, and traditions. It is the first and foremost step for an authentic spiritual practitioner.

Your intellect (and my intellect) cannot comprehend anything beyond what you (and I) already believe in. If your religious view is that you can go to heaven by killing another human being in God's name, or if your religious perspective is that your sins are cleansed by accepting someone as your savior, or if you follow a tradition that says that only a guru can purify your mind and give you salvation then you can never reach the depth of reality—the soul—because your intellect is covered with layers of belief: non-reality.

Unless we dissolve these layers, it is not possible to know the soul experientially. Why is it not possible? The intellect has to be freed from the clutches of non-reality before it can recognize reality as it is.

There is no choice but to know the soul experientially. Without this, we simply cannot eradicate the ego. Unless we eradicate the ego, we cannot attain perfect intelligence. Without that, everlasting peace and happiness are not possible.

To you, my reader, I would respectfully throw down a challenge to cross-examine your *beliefs* so that you can develop *faith*. As I said earlier, beliefs are nothing but layers of concepts. Faith, on the other hand, is the understanding that is derived from exploring, investigating, studying, contemplating, *and* experiencing.

In order to develop faith in the message of this book (or in anything else for that matter) may I humbly request you to set aside preconceived notions, to neither believe nor disbelieve, and to simply stay open to all possibilities?

Unless we study, contemplate, and make an effort to experience, we cannot remove preconceived notions or wrong views or beliefs about the nature of reality. Some people believe that there is no such thing as a phenomenon of body-mind-consciousness. Some believe that there is only matter and there is no such thing as consciousness. Some believe that God has created them and there is nothing one can do about it. Some believe that they should not try to do anything about the way they are because they are the children of God. Some believe that there is no such thing as ego. Some believe that there is no

imperfection and everything is already perfect. Such preconceived notions have to be removed (or at least set aside for the time being) or else we simply cannot open up the intellect to make it a guiding and clearing force in our soul journey.

The impure intellect misleads itself and becomes a roadblock. When that happens, it becomes very difficult even to embark upon the soul journey or to continue the soul journey without losing the track and getting lost in a jungle of wrong views and beliefs.

Wrong views and beliefs are like weeds that grow wild. Just as the farmer has to first remove weeds from the field prior to cultivating a profitable crop, a spiritual aspirant has to first remove wrong views and beliefs from the intellect prior to cultivating right views and faith, which are necessary conditions for the attainment of perfect intelligence.

* * *

Chapter 3

What Is Beyond Soul?

In our discussion so far, sincere efforts have been made to introduce you to the various phenomena that make up the ultimate building blocks of soul. By now, I hope you have developed a basic understanding of what is and is not soul. Let us now talk briefly about what is beyond soul: enlightenment.

If you are seeking perfect intelligence, gaining a theoretical understanding of enlightenment is an appropriate beginning goal.

Enlightenment

Enlightenment is the reality that transcends soul. What I mean is that it is a reality independent of the realities of our human experience. It cannot be conditioned by consciousness, mind, or matter. In other words, enlightenment is an *unconditional reality*.

Unconditional reality cannot be properly explained in words or in terms of experience since words and experience are phenomena of body-mind-consciousness. Nevertheless, let me try, using an analogy.

Space—meaning the room around us, the distance between objects, and the emptiness of outer space—is not conditioned by anything that exists within it. Yet it appears to exist and encompass everything within it. We cannot say we are experiencing space, yet it is the most fundamental aspect of experience because all events and things happen within space. We cannot imagine or conceive anything beyond space because it seems endless. It is always there, without a beginning and without an end. Everything arises and ceases within space without affecting it. We cannot even prove the existence of space without naming what lies within it. It has no substance because it is nothing, a void. Space is free from all that is conditioned, making it identity-less and changeless. It cannot be desired because it is always there, omnipresent.

Unconditional reality shares these qualities of space. However, we should not think that the actual space we see or the vastness of outer space is an unconditional reality.

Silence is another analogy for understanding the nature of unconditionality. Nothing can change or condition silence, and yet all sounds arise out of silence and ultimately cease into silence. There is no beginning to silence, nor will it ever cease to exist.

Space and silence are like two sides of the same coin—the coin of unconditional reality. Space and silence are always present; therefore we cannot say we experience them. For experience to occur there has to be a beginning and an end.

Space and silence cannot be expressed. We cannot actually point out, “This is space,” and obviously we cannot express silence. Similarly, enlightenment itself cannot be expressed or experienced. It is just not possible to make *something* out of enlightenment while trying to explain what it is. It is a different dimension altogether.

Psychologically, we can say that egolessness is the expression of enlightenment. Philosophically, we can say that pure understanding is the expression of enlightenment. Spiritually, we can say that oneness or pure consciousness is the expression of enlightenment. Even though they lay in the realm of experience, these expressions are the

closest thing we can experience to enlightenment. They are like the last pointers or flag posts denoting its arrival.

Principally, what I am saying is that the transcendental quality of egolessness, pure understanding, and pure consciousness must also be transcended to realize enlightenment.

Enlightenment is not an achievement or an accomplishment because it is a state of no cognition and no experience. It is beyond action, beyond good and bad, beyond time and no time, beyond existence and non-existence, beyond any support, beyond any identification, and beyond everything else we could imagine.

Enlightenment is the cessation of everything, yet it is not death. An enlightened master does not die at the moment of enlightenment. Consciousness, mind, and matter remain since the enlightened master still lives after enlightenment. But there is no “enlightened master” left, no person or being left. There is no identification, separate self, ego, or “I” remaining after enlightenment. Thus enlightenment implies the death of the ego but not of the live body of an enlightened master.

Enlightenment leads to a state of non-being known in the Eastern world as *nirvana*. When the body of an enlightened master dies, there is ultimate unconditional liberation, known as *parinirvana*.¹

If You Are Seeking Enlightenment

Does the idea of enlightenment sound mystical to you? If yes, this may be because you have not experienced soul or your mind is trying to make something out of the word “enlightenment.” You could be thinking about enlightenment as some magical thing or as some spiritual destination. If so, you are only trying to “figure it out” intellectually.

It is not possible to thoroughly understand enlightenment exclusively through using the intellect. The intellect is necessary, but not sufficient. In addition to intellectual understanding, we have to experientially understand the egoless aspect of our existence, which means, we have to experience the soul, at least momentarily, now and then. Real understanding of enlightenment is possible only after that.

Neither thinking only, nor non-thinking only can bring about enlightenment. Not even meditative absorption or deep contemplation can, especially if we are striving for it. One key thing to know about enlightenment is that exertion does not make it happen. We cannot chase it. We can't acquire it. We cannot achieve it. We cannot arrive at it.

How does someone become enlightened?

Enlightenment is the result of tireless efforts directed towards the purification of body-mind-consciousness and the perfection of intelligence. The best strategy is to let go of the desire to attain enlightenment and simply to walk the path of purification and perfection, consistently and ardently, without leaving any trace behind, like a bird flying in the sky. Sooner or later the path ceases and the one on the path also ceases—completely. What then gradually unfolds is the dawn of enlightenment.

Enlightenment ultimately results in the state that is beyond soul: the state of perfect intelligence. This state is none other than the pure awareness of the laws of the universe, as they are. It is *pure* because it arises without clinging to a separate self or to anything in the world. Once you experience the soul in its genuine egolessness and go beyond it you will automatically know enlightenment.

For all practical purposes, becoming enlightened can be understood as a two-step process. Step one is theory: to explore and understand philosophically, psychologically, and phenomenologically the nature of soul and the nature of intelligence. Step two is practice: to use the theoretical knowledge and, through relentless, but gentle spiritual practice, develop intelligent attitude, body, senses, mind, and heart (in that order of attainment), so that eventually soul can be experienced as it is *and* transcended, to arrive at the final destination: the state of perfect intelligence.

* * *

Chapter 4

How Soul Works: A Journey Beyond Quantum Mechanics

So far, we have been primarily discussing the “what” questions about soul: what it is, what it is not, and what is beyond it. I hope these questions have been adequately answered. If they have been, then my guess is that you are now wondering about the “how”: How does it all work?

The purpose of this chapter is to begin answering this new question as simply as possible without being dry. However, let me caution you that although the answer is simple (as in plain and clean) it might not be simplistic (as in crude and basic). So, please bear with me during moments of ambiguity and just keep moving forward. By the time you

are done with the whole chapter (and subsequently with the whole book), I promise you will find clarity.

Soul Mechanics: A New Scientific Frontier

In theoretical physics, “how” is generally answered with the help of “mechanics” —the rules of how physical objects behave when subjected to force or displacement, as well as the subsequent effect of their behavior on the environment. Classical (Newtonian) mechanics tell us about the behavior of macroscopic physical objects, ranging from pebbles to planets. Quantum mechanics tell us about the behavior of microscopic physical objects, ranging from molecules and atoms to electrons. But neither explains the full workings of the universe. Scientists believe they would be able to solve the remaining mysteries if they could find a force that unifies all the known forces described by the two existing mechanistic theories. Popularly they are searching for a theory of everything (TOE).¹

In order to solve the mechanistic mysteries of the universe (or to understand the workings of the soul), we need to go beyond classical and quantum mechanics, both of which describe only the mechanics of physical objects. We need to start thinking about the mechanics of non-physical objects (if I may), such as mind-consciousness. The formulation of soul mechanics is such an attempt. In fact, this might be the only way to formulate the TOE. I say so because scientists have not succeeded so far in their TOE efforts despite several decades of intense research. Even Einstein failed in his attempt, despite working consistently on TOE for more than 30 years until the end of his life.²

The theory of soul mechanics, which I am going to introduce here and throughout the book, might provide clues for a breakthrough in formulating TOE, as it describes the workings of mind-consciousness. It may also transform existing theoretical and experimental physics into experiential physics, and thus instigate a third revolution in physics (the first being the revolution of classical mechanics and the second being the revolution of quantum mechanics). Soul mechanics may even earn the status of being a new scientific frontier.

Volitional Action: Karma

Just as the ideas of physical action (force or motion) and space-time are pivotal to describing the mechanics of physical objects, the idea of volitional action is pivotal to describing the mechanics of non-physical objects.

Volitional action means mental action, but not just any action, such as thinking or feeling. It is a mental action that has an ethical quality of wholesomeness (good) or unwholesomeness (bad).

As we discussed in chapter 1, all mental phenomena involve volition, the universal mental element that is ethically neutral. When volition combines with wholesome or unwholesome mental elements, it gives rise to either unwholesome mental action or wholesome mental action: the two types of volitional action. Thus, a volitional action is always ethical. Here, ethical does not mean moral, but having the mental quality of being good or bad.

Water is colorless. When you add blue or red color to it, it becomes blue or red water. Volition is like water and volitional action is like blue or red water.

As volitional actions occur they accumulate and form volitional patterns due to grasping or clinging by a person's mind. These are known as volitional formations. For example, non-greedy actions done over a period of time give rise to a formation of generosity. Non-hateful actions done over a period of time give rise to a formation of love and kindness.

Karma is a popular Eastern term primarily used in regard to volitional action, but also in regard to volitional formations. Many people wrongly assume that there is an individual soul that generates karma. Many also misunderstand karma as a storehouse of things or deeds possessed or owned by an individual soul. Contrary to these beliefs, you don't carry around good or bad karmas (volitional formations) in your spiritual suitcase. Karma is simply a volitional (mental) phenomenon that underlies the mechanics of soul.

Volitional Force

Together, three non-physical phenomena—the element of volition (which can be considered as the seed of volitional action), volitional action itself, and volitional formations—give rise to a non-physical force known as the “volitional force.” The difference between the three non-physical phenomena lies in the difference in their potency to generate the volitional force.

The volitional force is the result of karma. It lies at the heart of soul mechanics (see figure 4.1).

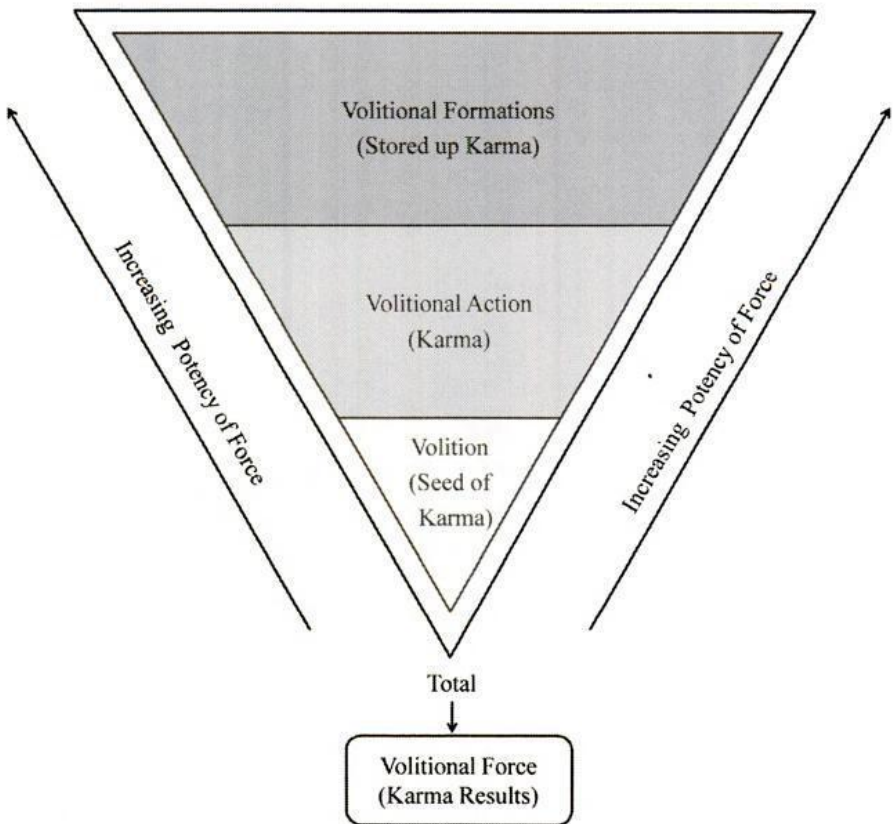


Figure 4.1. Volitional force and the karmic phenomena: the heart of soul mechanics.

Volitional force may also be known as ethical force or mental force. There is a difference between a physical force, such as gravity or

electromagnetic force, and a mental force. Physical force arises out of physical energy which simply *conserves*.³ Volitional force arises out of volitional energy which *evolves*. Volitional energy (or force, as will be discussed later) evolves because it *learns* from its effects on the environment and vice versa. Moreover, it does not directly cause motion of any kind, but gives rise to physical energy (or force), which in turn causes motion (effects) in space-time.

Our evolution is the proof that volitional forces exist. Without volitional forces, a monkey could not have become a man. Without volitional forces, a man could not have stepped out of the cave and reached the Moon. The presence of volitional forces is what makes the human brain different from a computer. A computer works only on physical forces. Our brain works not only on physical forces but also on volitional forces, making it an evolving and learning machine.

You cannot wiggle your toes unless there is volition to do so. If you contemplate and go deeper, you will realize that, similar to a voluntary action, an involuntary action, such as a heartbeat or breathing, could not occur unless there was volition to live. If you go even deeper, you will realize that volition to live itself cannot arise unless there are additional underlying volitional forces.

On an individual basis, volitional force causes motion expressed as individual life. On a universal basis, it causes motion expressed as universal life. Just as you are alive, the universe is also alive! Just as various parts of your body (from the whole body all the way to cells and subatomic particles) are moving, various objects in the universe (from the whole universe all the way to galaxies, planets, atoms, and subatomic particles) are moving, *ultimately* due to volitional forces.

At least, on an individual basis, we experientially know that without volitional action there is no physical action. We cannot personally move or exert force on an object without the underlying force of volition. As we become more and more intelligent, one day we may realize that on the universal basis the same is true: Celestial bodies cannot exert force on each other and move without the underlying (and unifying)

force of volition. That day of realization will bring forth a new, third revolution in physics.

The above paragraphs may sound like bunch of audacious reductionist statements right now. But if you contemplate what I'm communicating with an understanding of the interdependence and interconnectedness of matter and mind-consciousness, you will begin to see its depth (individual application) and breadth (universal application).

I strongly feel that volitional force is an attribute of the grand unifying force that has eluded scientists for so many decades. Exploring and understanding the nature of this force has tremendous scientific value because, one day, it may help us confirm that ours is a volitional universe, an ethical universe, a thinking universe, a living universe and not just a void filled with material/physical objects.

Volitional Energy

As stated earlier, the element of volition is not entirely volitional action. It is the most important factor responsible for generating volitional action because it is the mental element that facilitates the grouping of various unwholesome (bad) or wholesome (good) mental elements. Thus it causes good volitional action or bad volitional action. So, always think of the element of volition itself (and not "you") as being the seed of volitional action (or karma).

You might be wondering, "If it is not me, then where does the seed come from?" The answer: It comes from volitional energy. Note that volitional energy is nothing except for a term used to express the potentiality for generating the volitional force.

Think of a dam with a reservoir of water behind it. The potentiality of this dam (known as potential energy) to generate a downstream flow of water depends upon how big a reservoir it has created. Analogically speaking, a reservoir is like a storehouse of volitional formations and the potential energy of the dam is like volitional energy. The reservoir's essential content or seed— water—is like the element of volition and the force of the downstream flow coming from the spillway is like volitional force (see figure 4.2).

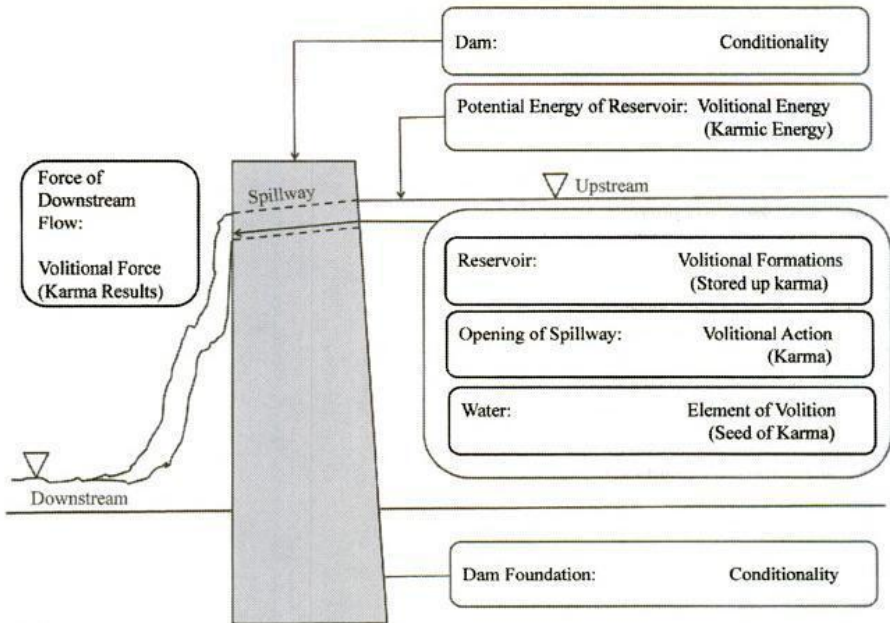


Figure 4.2. Soul mechanics: an analogy.

Just as the force of the downstream flow of water coming from a spillway depends upon the potential energy of the reservoir (the dam), the efficacy of a volitional force depends upon volitional energy. Just as the force of a downstream flow of water can generate electrical force due to specific conditions of turbines and other hydroelectric power apparatus, the volitional force can generate physical force due to specific conditions of matter, mind, and consciousness. Generated physical force manifests as physical actions and, we could also say, as physical objects and their motion.

All volitional actions do not necessarily lead to physical actions. However, they always lead to the creation of volitional formations, which in turn generate volitional energy. For example, if you are a heterosexual man and see a barely dressed woman on the beach, a lustful volition may arise in your mind. You may fantasize about things but not follow up with a physical action of chasing her and fulfilling your lust. In this case, because you did not follow up with a physical action does not mean you have not caused any harm to yourself or not done

anything wrong. Mere lustful fantasizing (a mental act) has enough potency to generate bad volitional energy.

Similarly, just because you are not verbal about your hatred towards a competitor, this does not mean you are not generating bad volitional energy. The mere thought of hatred is enough to generate it. All mental actions generate volitional energy with or without the occurrence of subsequent physical actions. Therefore, being vigilant about the quality of mental actions (which always precede physical actions) is of utmost importance for those who want to avoid generating volitional energy, especially a bad one. Such a vigil is necessary because volitional energy determines the probability of the occurrence of good or bad actions in future.

Note that probability (a mathematical term) or potentiality (a mechanical term) is always a function of energy. "The unmanifest" is a philosophical term for describing the same thing. Therefore, we may consider volitional energy as the unmanifest non-physical phenomenon that expresses itself through volitional action as well as through volitional force. Such understanding will soon come handy as you dive deeper into the ocean of soul mechanics.

An artist cannot paint a picture unless he is alive (meaning, he has the volition to see, hear, and so on) and unless he has an artistic mind (volitional formation). Due to these two conditions, a third condition, the volition to paint, arises in his mind (volitional action). Due to these three conditions, he is able to visualize (volitional force) a painting he plans to create. The energy (volitional energy) required to visualize the painting depends directly upon the three conditions. Then the artist starts painting using physical energy. A completed painting is thus an outward expression or manifestation of the volitional and physical energies. Similarly, our world and the human experience of it are the expressions of various volitional and physical energies.

Understanding that our world is the expression not only of physical energies *but also* of volitional energies can have a significant impact on how we abide in it as a species. For example, realizing that it's not just carbon dioxide (CO₂) but also our greed that is

responsible for global warming, may help us develop regulations that will not only minimize CO₂ emissions but also our greed. Such understanding can also serve as a foundation for personal development, especially if we take the following four laws of soul mechanics into consideration.

The First Law of Soul Mechanics: Accountability of Mental Action

Wholesome volition produces wholesome volitional force. What are the effects of this force? Fundamentally, it results in states of wholesome consciousness such as contentment, generosity, loving-kindness, faith, tranquility, happiness, and peace.

Similarly, unwholesome volition produces unwholesome volitional force. What are the effects of this force? Fundamentally, it results in states of unwholesome consciousness such as craving, aversion, stupidity, vanity, pride, pain, suffering, misery, and ego.

Wholesome or unwholesome volitional force is like a particular mould of the mind. They are a bending of mind. They bend a pure mental phenomenon by imparting their qualities to it, thereby giving rise to wholesome or unwholesome states of consciousness.

This is the first law of soul mechanics, which accounts for the ethical quality of action.

A seed of mango can only generate a mango tree that bears sweet fruit. A seed of lemon can only generate a lemon tree that bears sour fruit. A seed of lemon cannot generate a mango tree. A seed of mango cannot generate a lemon tree.

We cannot perform unwholesome deeds, such as murder, theft, lying, and slander, and get away with them. Such actions will always lead us to misery and suffering, even if these outcomes might not be obvious or show up right away. Similarly, we must not stop performing wholesome deeds, such as meditation, service, giving, reverence, and virtuosity, even if they do not produce immediate benefits. Good deeds will eventually lead us to happiness and peace although we might not feel those states right away. So do not stop being nice to someone

although your kindness might not be reciprocated or you might be taken disadvantage of. Sooner or later, the benefits will come.

Just as a mango seed cannot generate a mango tree unless there are favorable conditions (soil, water, minerals, warmth, and so on), a volitional force cannot produce results or states of consciousness unless favorable conditions of matter (body) and mind exist. A seed of mango, a mango, or a mango tree does not take its form instantly. It acquires a particular form due to the accumulation of matter. Similarly, the effects of unwholesome volitional force are formed due to the accumulation of greedy or hateful reactions over a vast period of time, and the effects (the benefits) of wholesome volitional force are formed due to the accumulation of generous or faithful actions over a vast period of time.

The law of accountability of mental action is a perfect accounting system. If you develop faith in it, it will automatically give rise to fear for wrongdoing and strong will for right doing.

The Second Law of Soul Mechanics: Mental Action-reaction

A volitional force generates further volition bearing the same qualities as it, just with higher intensity. That volitional force augments as it cycles is the second law of soul mechanics.

A seed of mango generates a mango tree. This newly generated tree can only produce mango fruits that contain mango seeds only. Moreover, one seed generates many. Similarly, the volitions of greed or hatred can only generate greedy or hateful actions. These actions result in states of unwholesome consciousness that will cause the volition of greed or hatred to arise again with greater intensity. Thus the unwholesome always begets and augments the unwholesome, and the wholesome always begets and augments the wholesome.

You can't say, "Let me be greedy just for few years, make some money for my kid's education, and then I will stop and become generous" or, "Let me lie and cheat a bit for now and once this situation is over, I will become honest; after all I am doing it to help someone,"

without repercussions. If you are greedy at this moment, you are bound to become greedier the following moment. What I am trying to say is, “Change begins now, no matter what. If you cannot do it now, then most likely you will never do it because it is going to get increasingly difficult.”

Every time we perform a greedy or hateful action, we produce a brick, which self-replicates and forms more bricks. Soon these bricks of action-reaction-action-reaction turn into brick walls that imprison us. However, due to delusion, we do not see these walls as prison walls but as the walls of a castle. We even color them gold and proclaim that we are living in a golden castle. This phenomenon of “gilding the walls” is most obvious in self-righteous people who justify their greedy and hateful actions in the name of personal responsibility, family obligation, a social cause, fighting for justice, public service, a commitment, duty, honor, and so forth.

The second law of soul mechanics is a form of imprisonment that all human beings live in. But it is a self-imprisonment. We can break the walls and gain freedom from imprisonment if we take the following three steps.

1. Realize that not only bad actions do not go unnoticed (the first law) no matter what kind of curtain or cover we put on them, but also they replicate, accumulate, become stronger, and make the prison walls thicker (the second law).
2. Based on the above realization, immediately start minimizing bad actions and start performing good ones.
3. If bad actions do not subside or if good actions do not produce results right away, do not be discouraged. Keep maximizing good actions until the force of wholesome volition starts crumbling the prison walls.

If there is greed, continue performing generous actions. If there is hatred, continue practicing loving-kindness. Continue until you nullify the unwholesome forces. You cannot extinguish fire unless you first realize that it is fire, second you stop adding fuel to it and start hosing it with water, and third you do not give up.

The Third Law of Soul Mechanics: Perfect Action

When the first and second laws of soul mechanics are properly implemented and continuously practiced, a time consequently comes when unwholesome volition no longer arises due to purification of mind. Mechanistically, you could say, the force *evolves* from unwholesomeness to wholesomeness.

As the force continues to evolve due to established wholesome actions, a stage eventually comes when volitional actions no longer give rise to volitional formations. There is no longer mental clinging to anything or mental grasping of any kind, due to the arising of non-delusion. If you recall, volitional formations arise only when clinging occurs due to person's mind (the presence of delusion, sense of separate self). Non-clinging or non-forming is somewhat like escaping a prison and becoming a bird that flies in the sky without leaving a trace behind. This is the state of selflessness, the highest state of mental evolution. From this moment onwards, there is only action. There is no reaction. Because there is no reaction, selfless actions are perfect actions and selflessness is the perfect state of being.

Not generating volitional formations means that a person's actions are not rooted in the specific cravings and aversions that arise due to having a sense of separate self. Any action that arises without craving or aversion liberates us from self-imprisonment and leads us in the direction of mental evolution. For attaining the highest state of evolution, the necessary condition is performing selfless actions from moment to moment.

Selfless action sometimes is misunderstood as self-sacrifice or ignoring oneself. In fact, self-sacrifice is not much different from selfishness. Both are contaminated with the sense of separate self. People who are attracted to sacrifice and self-annihilation must do the following if they are truly interested in attaining selflessness. They must:

1. Consider the welfare not only of others, but also of themselves (in other words, they must aim to create win-win rather than lose-win scenarios).

2. Remove the barriers between themselves and others by getting rid of the egoistic sense of duty or responsibility and by eradicating the delusion of being a leader or a servant.
3. Transcend the self, as if shifting their attention from inside their body to being part of the surrounding space and then looking at all beings (including themselves) from a bird's eye view, and acting from that perspective. This enables them to look at all beings (including themselves) as worthy of loving-kindness and compassion.

Transcending the self always gives rise to effortlessness and non-striving in action because there is no burden, no guilt, no competition, no power struggle, no goals, and no finish lines to reach. You are in it for one and all, *including yourself*.

Enlightened masters perform selfless actions, which is what makes them effortless functionaries. There is no striving in their actions. They do for the sake of doing that which benefits one and all. Effortlessness or non-striving is the hallmark of selflessness. Selfless action is the hallmark of perfection in action.

Ultimately, selfless action means performing an action without ego. If you help someone thinking that “you” are helping, then your action is rooted in ego. If you help someone thinking that a wholesome volition to help has arisen and is manifesting itself, then your subsequent action will be egoless. Try this out and pay attention to how you feel. In the first case, you will notice a sense of striving and in some situations a subtle expectation of reward or appreciation. In the second case, you will always feel at ease. In the first case, there is subtle self-interest (which is extremely hard to detect). In the second case, there is selflessness. Whenever there is no sense of doer, performer, achiever, executor, and so on in your actions, you'll observe that the actions become easy, flowing, smooth, impeccable, flawless, immaculate, and perfect.

The law of perfect action is subtle and profound. It becomes crystal clear only if it is applied in daily life, wakefully. As an experiment, try performing all your actions selflessly perhaps an hour a day for one

week. You will soon notice how your actions become more and more playful and delightful and how you get better and better results from your actions ultimately leading to perfection.

The Fourth Law of Soul Mechanics: Emptiness and Timelessness

As we have discussed, volitional force (the force) arises out of volition, volitional action, and volitional formations (the three). However, the force and the three are entirely distinct phenomena. Although the force depends wholly upon the three for its creation, the three neither remain inside the force, nor is there any force inside the three at the beginning. In other words, the force is simply the outcome of the three having undergone a transformation. There is no outer or inner fixed entity, a force creator, which creates the force using the three as ingredients. Let us try to understand this with the following analogy.

In order to make ghee (a highly distilled form of butter from India), one has to first make milk into curd and then curd into butter. One has to then heat the butter for a long time until it turns into the liquid called ghee. Analyzing this process, we could say that milk is a basic ingredient and curd and butter are other ingredients in the manufacturing of ghee. However, no matter what you do to the ghee, you cannot retrieve milk (or curd or butter) from it. Similarly, no matter what you do to the curd or butter, you cannot find milk in it. It is so because neither milk, nor anything else is a permanent entity underlying the milk-curd-butter-ghee phenomenon. There is no unchanging substance that is transmigrating from milk to curd to butter to ghee.

Now, in the soul mechanics context, volition is the basic ingredient in the creation of action, formation, or force. However it cannot be retrieved or separated from them. There is no unchanging entity that can be found in the three and in the force. If there was an underlying fixed creator, we would be able to identify it in all of them.

If you apply this in a human context, you will realize that childhood-youth-adulthood-old age-death is merely a phenomenon of transformation. You cannot find a permanent, unchanging being (an individual soul) that is growing from childhood to adulthood and then dying. There is no entity transmigrating through different stages of life. There is no “you” being born, maturing, degenerating, and dying. At the same time, there is no maturation, aging, and death without birth. These conditions are just mutually interdependent phenomena driven by volitional and physical forces and the conditionality of matter, mind, and consciousness.

Even though we live with a sense of linear time, nothing fixed or permanent (such as a time entity or a self entity) is moving from past to present to future. The “past” is a term used to describe *conditions* that existed before the present. The “present” is a term used to describe *conditions* that currently exist. The “future” is a term used to describe *conditions* that are probable based on the present. There is no present without the past and there will be no future without the present, like the milk-curd-butter relationship.

As a thread between the conditions of past, present, and future, the volitional force creates the illusion of continuity (known as time) between past-present-future. In actuality, only the phenomena of soul fueled by the volitional force flow on—not time. Soul phenomena underlie everything in existence and yet they are empty (of self) and timeless. You and I neither have eternal life nor time-bound existence. Body, mind, consciousness are simply transforming in accordance with the laws of soul mechanics.

The four laws of soul mechanics are fixed, meaning they cannot be changed. No outside or inside power ensures their efficacy. The laws themselves are supreme (see figure 4.3).

THE ELEMENTS OF SOUL

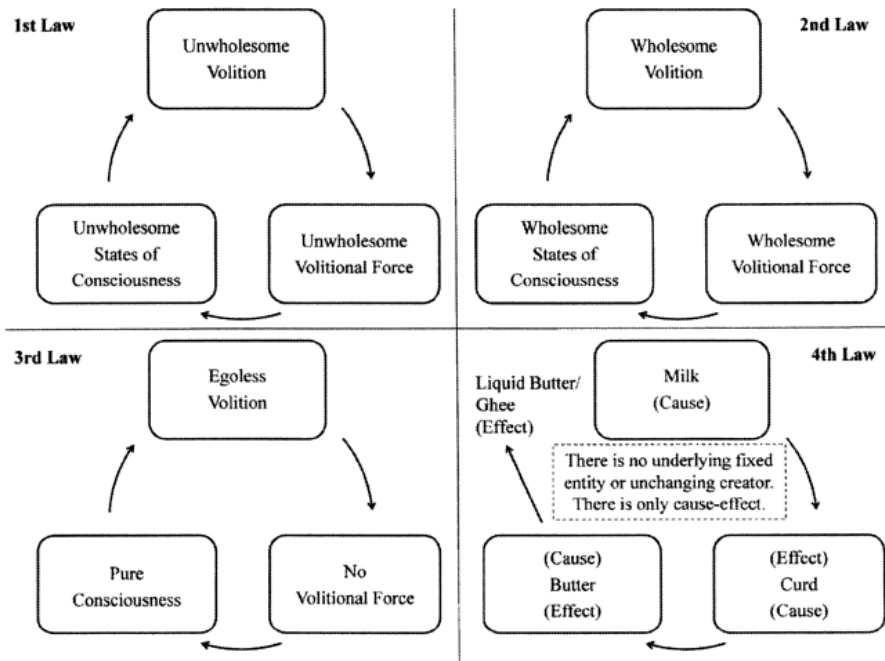


Figure 4.3. The four laws of soul mechanics.

What about Choice or Free Will?

You might be wondering, “If the laws of soul mechanics are supreme, then what is the nature of choice? Don’t we make choices in our lives? Are we only living machines run by these laws?”

Choice is nothing except for a volitional phenomenon. All choices arise at the climax of the cognitive process of consciousness. I cannot discuss this in detail just yet, but if you were to simply understand choice-making as a climactic volitional activity, you would appreciate the crux of it. However, there isn’t a choice maker behind choice.

A choice is an action or a reaction. It is primarily a reaction when unwholesome volition arises and it is primarily an action when wholesome volition arises during the cognitive process. Because of delusion (ego), we feel that we have made a choice. In both cases, whether action or reaction, what is actually happening is a volitional activity.

Let us say you were extremely hungry and you were asked to choose between a healthy salad and a less healthy double-cheese pizza. Even

though you prefer eating pizza, in this case you ignored it and *chose* the salad. What happened was as follows: The moment you saw food, there was a desire to eat. This desire was nothing but the arising of sense-consciousness rooted in greed, a manifestation of impulses caused by the volitional force that arose at the climax of the cognitive process. Assuming you were mindful and non-reactive, a strong wholesome volition for nourishment and health arose and counteracted the impulses. It reduced the strength of the volitional force and overcame it. That's why you ended up ignoring the unhealthy pizza and chose the healthy salad. Instead of reacting, you acted. If wholesome volition had not arisen, then you simply would have succumbed to the impulses.

The volitional action that overpowered the volitional force is called "choice" in common language. While an impulse is also commonly referred to as choice, really it is just a reaction. So, the correct thing to say would be, "Wholesome volitional action is a right choice and unwholesome volitional action (or impulse) is a wrong choice."

In the preceding case, notice that wholesome volition arose and overpowered the impulse for eating tasty, but unhealthy food because there was mindfulness and non-reaction. In life, we encounter many other impulses (such as lust and anger) that have formidable power. To counteract them, we not only require mindfulness and non-reaction, but also concentration and wise attention. From here on, I shall collectively refer to these four mental faculties as "meditativity." Meditativity can be understood as a powerful wholesome volition or right choice.

We are going to discuss a lot about how to develop meditativity so that more right choices are made and wrong choices are entirely eliminated. If you ardently and consistently develop meditativity, I am confident that a stage will come in your life when you will make no more wrong choices. There will be no more reactions.

It is harmful to live in a reactive mode of life, because all kinds of suffering arise when greed, hatred, and delusion are running the show. It is much preferable to live in the mode of taking actions that are

rooted in non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion. A spiritual practitioner sooner or later realizes beyond a shadow of doubt that such actions cannot arise without the volition of meditativity.

I strongly urge you to develop meditativity. It is, overall, the best choice you can make in life. The soul meditation practices that I will discuss later in the book are designed for this purpose. These meditations are not typical “sitting down with closed eyes” kinds of meditation. They are a lot more than that. They can be practiced with open eyes and while doing chores or anything else. They are designed so that they become a way of life.

Do everything you do in life as a meditation so that meditativity can arise during action. Meditativity can only bring perfection to actions, including actions that may be as trivial as plucking a flower or as significant as saving someone’s life. Meditate! Practice, practice, practice! And then leave the rest to the four laws. The laws are fool-proof. They work flawlessly. In the presence of meditativity, they will surely bring you to a state of perfection.

What about Desire?

It is hard for many of us to accept that choice is a volitional phenomenon and there is no choice maker. We make (or think we do) various choices in our lives in order to fulfill our desires. So many of us wonder how we can have desires and why we should have desires if we are not making choices.

The real issue behind such questioning is that most of us are so self-centered and deluded that we cannot perform actions without self-interest. We cannot even conceive of such a possibility. That is why we suffer and create suffering for others.

In order to attain a high degree of perfection in action, we need to perform desireless and choiceless actions—just as an infant performs its actions, just as flowers bloom, and just as birds fly in the sky—but with awareness and wisdom of the four laws. We need to perform only wholesome actions rooted in the wisdom made evident to us by the four laws.

Actions can be performed without being an actor or a choice maker. Actions can be performed without pursuing a particular desire. When we do something as a hobby, we don't necessarily have any desire to achieve anything, even if we spend hours pursuing the activity. We just play guitar, paint, or make clay pots. There is no wanting in performing the activity, no sense of desiring in terms of achieving or getting something. Desireless, choiceless actions are kind of like that. They arise without having to have selfish desires or goals.

When there are no selfish desires or goals, the *purpose of life* is illuminated in our consciousness. From this perspective, you may realize that the real purpose of your life is invariably rooted in desireless, choiceless actions. If you can discover this real purpose, you can change your life from misery to mastery.

A simple, pragmatic way to find your life's purpose is to start minimizing unwholesome actions and start maximizing wholesome ones. Whenever there is a sense of greed or hatred, you ought to abandon the action. Whenever there is self-interest or delusion, you ought to abandon the action. See examples in the two lists below.

Table 4.1
Unwholesome Actions (To Be Minimized)

<u>Greedy Actions</u>	
Acquiring Accumulating Attaching Clinging Conning Corrupting Craving Dominating Exhibiting Excessive cheering Excessive consuming Excessive entertaining Excessive partying Flattering Gambling	Hoaxing Intoxicating Lying Longing Lusting Stealing Scamming Sexually overindulging Passion Patronizing Pestering Possessing Showing off Stalking Womanizing

Table 4.1
Unwholesome Actions (To Be Minimized) (Continued)

<u>Hateful Actions</u>	
Accusing Aggravating Arguing Antagonizing Being Mean Competing Complaining Condemning Crying Envyng	Fighting Forcing Getting bored Hating Killing Punishing Polluting Regretting Resenting Slandering
<u>Deluded Actions</u>	
Advertising Becoming suspicious Believing Bewildering Celebrating Dogmatizing Endorsing Fearing Feeling restless Forgetting Grieving Holding back Indoctrinating Lazing out	Manipulating Judging Justifying Mystifying Opining Overreaching Performing rituals blindly Politicizing Standardizing Self-mortifying Self-aggrandizing Self-satisfying Worshipping without understanding Worrying

Table 4.2
Wholesome Actions (To Be Maximized)

Admiring Agreeing Appreciating Attending wisely Balancing Befriending Caring Concentrating	Neutralizing Meditating Moderately consuming Neither believing, nor disbelieving Non-adhering Non-discriminating Non-disturbing Non-forgetting
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Table 4.2
Wholesome Actions (To Be Maximized) (Continued)

Contemplating	Non-hindering
Cooling	Non-opposing
Cooperating	Non-resisting
Detaching	Non-wobbling
Developing pure understanding	Observing silence
Devoting	Penetrating
Discovering	Promoting virtue
Empathizing	Promoting welfare
Enabling	Purifying
Enjoying	Rejoicing
Equalizing	Remembering
Establishing faith with understanding	Removing others' suffering
Fearing wrongdoing	Renouncing
Forgiving	Resolving
Gifting	Respecting
Giving	Resting
Gladdening	Serving
Guarding mindfulness	Simplifying
Healing	Smiling
Helping	Studying
Honoring	Sympathizing
Investigating	Thanking
Just being	Trusting
Lightening up	Wielding
Listening	Wondering
Neutral observing	Worshipping with understanding

We need to perform only wholesome actions. Most importantly, we need to perform all actions with meditativity. If we do so, a stage automatically comes when our actions eventually are driven by the real purpose of our lives. This stage comes in the lives of those few people who consistently strive for self-improvement and self-realization. Most often, this stage comes during the mid-life period (between the ages of 35 and 45 years). It is commonly and mistakenly known as a mid-life crisis, because it is often accompanied by emotional pain. But it actually is not a crisis. It's a blessing. We can see the blessing in this period if we develop meditativity. The majority of people miss this golden

opportunity and end up living in a rut forever chasing endless desires that can never be fulfilled.

Once we discover our real purpose in life and act on it meditatively, then our creativity unfolds. The newfound work becomes tireless and delightful. There is joy in what we do. There is bliss in action. And this represents real success. Eventually, through such creative, joyful, and blissful actions, wise people establish themselves in the purity of non-self. This is the way of purification by action.

People often want to own the fruits of all their actions or they want to take no action. They simply cannot let go of the self-identity. They cannot understand the middle way—the perfect way—the *way of performing actions without being attached to the results of action*.

What about Chance, Fate, Destiny, and Luck?

Many deterministic thinkers do not like the idea of finding the real purpose of life because they believe everything is destined. They believe in fate and providence, and so live passive lives. Some who happen to be unsuccessful in life consider themselves unlucky and some who happen to be successful in life consider themselves lucky.

Even great physicists like Isaac Newton and Albert Einstein firmly believed that whatever happened in the universe had to be predestined. According to them, the universe ran like a clock. In classical mechanics, there was no such thing as chance. Everything was bound by fate or destiny as determined by the known laws of physics. This was most exemplified by Einstein's famous statement, "God does not throw dice."⁴

Although later developments in quantum mechanics decisively proved that everything in the microscopic world is probabilistic and happens by chance (based on conditionality), Einstein was not willing to accept this fact. He even modified his theories of relativity to remove aspects of chance (probability) from quantum mechanics. Another physicist, Niels Bohr, once chided him, "Don't tell God what to do!" Eventually Einstein gracefully accepted his mistake with a statement, "I have earned the right to be wrong."⁵

Classical mechanics does not allow chance, and quantum mechanics relies solely on it.⁶ In soul mechanics, on the other hand, chance, fate, and destiny are fundamentally similar except for their potency in generating a particular manifestation of the volitional force. Fate is stronger than chance. Destiny is stronger than fate. On a scale of probability of generating a particular manifestation, you could say that chance is at the lowest level. Fate is in the middle, thus having a greater chance. Destiny is at the top, thus having the greatest chance. Most of the significant events in our lives occur due to fate or destiny, rather than by chance or luck (see figure 4.4). Luck is just another word for *chance taken personally*.

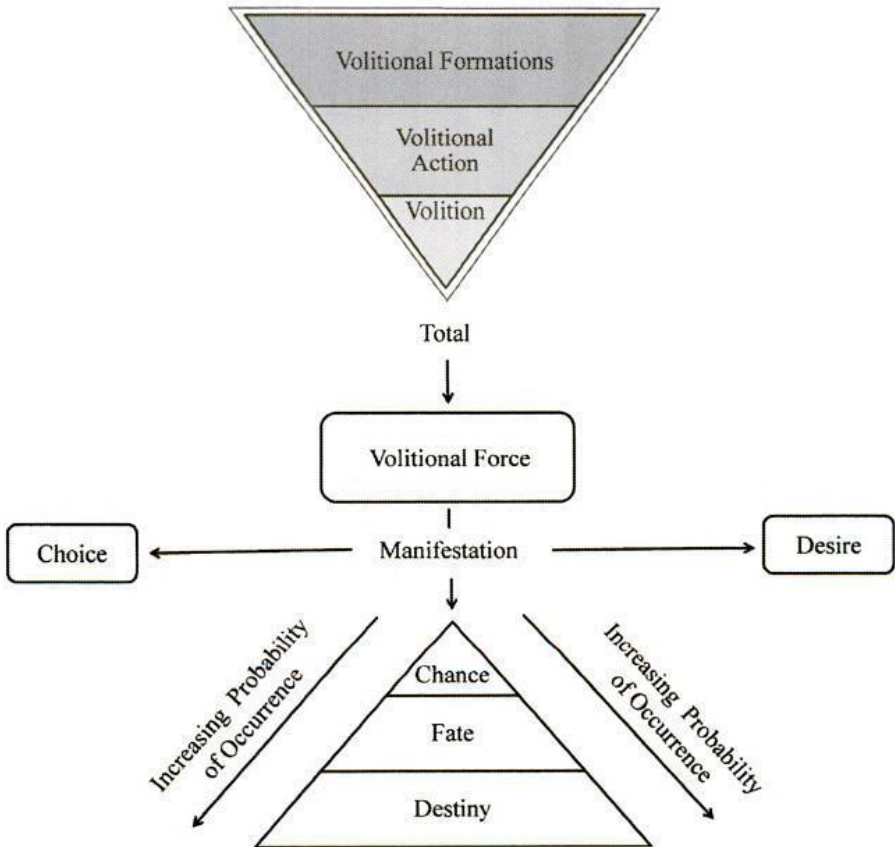


Figure 4.4. Chance, fate, destiny, and luck: The manifestation of the volitional forces (karma).

ARE YOU SEARCHING FOR REAL ANSWERS TO FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS LIKE:

- Who am I?
- What is consciousness?
- What is intelligence?
- What is love?
- What is the ultimate truth about matter and mind?
- What is real and what is not?
- What is life, its origin, its ultimate purpose?

If you are, then *The Elements of Soul* is for you. The purpose of this ambitious book is to take you on a phenomenal journey to the ultimate depths of soul—a journey that will bring you immense joy and peace due to newfound wisdom. On this journey, you will explore groundbreaking concepts like:

- Soul mechanics (science beyond quantum mechanics)
- Soul-atoms
- I-atoms
- Mental elements
- Types and dynamics of consciousness

The Elements of Soul is spiritual science at its best. At the same time, it is a revolutionary guide on how to perfect human love and intelligence. You are sure to come to the same conclusion after you experience first-hand the profound benefits of practicing various meditation techniques prescribed in the book.

SAM ADETTIWAR is the founder of Soul Research Institute, a non-profit organization dedicated to serving the intellectual and spiritual needs of humanity. *The Elements of Soul* was spontaneously written soon after his experience of enlightenment.

All profits generated from the sale of this book will be donated to Soul Research Institute for conducting research and cost-free spiritual retreats. For more information, please visit www.soulresearchinstitute.org.



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