

# The Mind: Its Nature and Function

Jacqueline Watts

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## Summary

The mind plays a vital role in the evolution of man. This article draws upon several sources, western and eastern, to examine the structure and functions of the mind and understand its role in the evolutionary process.

## Introduction

In *The Mental Body*, A. E. Powell says: “Manas comes from the Sanskrit word *man*, the root of the verb *to think*. It is the Thinker in us, spoken of vaguely in the West as mind. Manas is the immortal individual, the real “I.”<sup>1</sup>

Alice Bailey’s *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* states that “man is Spirit or the Self, working through matter or the Not-Self, by means of intelligence or manas.”<sup>2</sup> Therefore, manas or mind, as previously stated, is incorporated in or works with the spirit, which is the individual man. This supports the statement that “individualization is literally the coming together (out of the darkness of abstraction), of the two factors of Spirit and matter by means of a third factor, the intelligent will.”<sup>3</sup> Viewing this in terms of the Trinity, one can say that the First Aspect (Father/Spirit) works its way through the Second Aspect (Son/form) by means of the Third Aspect (Holy Spirit/Intelligent Activity). Manas or mind is this intelligent activity.

## Layers and Functions of Mind in Human Beings

In *Kosas: The Structure of the Mind*, the Ananda Marga philosophy explains the mind by dividing it into layers called *kosas*.<sup>4</sup> Using this model, let us explain human beings in terms of the functioning of the mind. That which we call the physical body is the outermost or sixth layer of the mind according to the Ananda Marga model; but since I know that the mind can exist independently of the form body, I reject this description. Alice Bai-

ley says that the physical body is the vehicle through which the mind functions. Bailey’s description is more acceptable for me. My continuing reference to “layers of the mind” means “layers where the mind functions.” The functioning of the other five layers of the mind determines the condition (health) of the physical body because mind works from within outward.

The fifth layer of the mind, called the *kama*, or astral layer, presides over our relationship with the exterior world. The *kama* layer of the mind is the “conscious mind.” It senses the exterior world and helps our sensory and motor organs to react to it. All of average man’s actions and reactions to stimuli in the physical world are functions of the *kama*/astral layer of the mind.<sup>5</sup>

Progressing further inward, the next layer of mind known as the “subconscious mind” governs the storing of memory. This subconscious mind, which functions in the lower mental body, is equipped to process and recall stored data. The subconscious mind is active during our periods of sleep. It witnesses our dreams. It is also the subconscious mind that experiences pleasure and pain.<sup>6</sup>

The average person functions only on the physical, *kama*/astral, and lower mental layers of the mind. Yet, there exist other layers that are collectively known as the “causal mind” or the “unconscious mind.” This innermost part of the mind is rarely experienced by ordinary beings because the functions of the conscious

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## About the Author

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and subconscious mind override the unconscious mind. Thus, the unconscious mind is in a quiescent state for most of us.

The causal mind, which is the mind functioning in the higher mental or causal body, deals with intuitive capabilities. It is also the storage facility for all knowledge (past, present and future). For this reason, it is sometimes called the “collective unconscious.” The information stored in the “collective unconscious,” or causal mind, is not limited to the experiences of one individual, as is the memory data in the subconscious mind. The causal mind houses the data for all places, times, and experiences.

The existence of our causal mind accounts for the omniscience of the monad, a higher aspect of our self.<sup>7</sup>

The Ananda Marga model recognizes three layers of the causal mind. In the first layer, the desire for spiritual realization originates. True discrimination (the ability to know what is permanent and what is transitory) is located in this first layer. The renunciation of and non-attachment to transitory physical objects resides in the second layer of the causal mind. The third and final layer houses the pure “I” feeling.

At this point of awareness, the aspirant knows that only a thin veil separates him from Atman, the pure witnessing consciousness (God).<sup>8</sup>

### **Evolution in Terms of Functioning of the Mind**

**W**e have traced the essence of a human being back to its source (God). Man’s evolution necessitated movement of his spirit essence away from the originating source. This movement is made possible by manas/mind using the physical body through which to grow. Humanity is now at a stage in evolution where, having attained new heights in physicality, the human kingdom is ready to

return to its original spirit nature, thus ushering in a new kingdom of existence. This kingdom is new and improved because the returning spirit, on reaching its destination, will be endowed with the consciousness of divinity. It will be aware of, and prepared to use, the powers of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence.

Let us reflect for a minute on the return trip to the source. Manas/active intelligence is the energy propelling this effort to completion. The object of the trip is to become more and more aware of the working of the mind within

the individual; in other words, to expand consciousness. Beginning with the physical body, man stretches to become aware of his connection to the source. Due to the heaviness of the bodies encasing him, he must work hard to move the coarse matter and allow finer energies to come forth and replace them. This process of changing the coarse energies of the physical, astral and mental bodies to fine spiritual energies is called “transmutation” and is brought about by the descent and movement of manas in the

aforementioned layers of the body. As each layer is purified, consciousness is gained on it and man becomes more powerful.

The results of the movement of manas explain why Edgar Cayce considered mind to be the builder in evolution. The movement of manas leads it to blend with other elements. When manas (the Third Aspect of the Trinity) blends with other Aspects of the Trinity, man makes massive leaps forward in evolution. The blending of manas (Third Aspect) with spirit (First Aspect) produces love (Second Aspect) which gives rise to form. The blending of manas with both the First and Second Aspects

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will liberate man from the physical plane existence that we know, and enable him to live free of the body. Man will live wholly as a spirit being, thus completing this stage of his evolution. Alice Bailey explains the synthesizing of the Aspects of the Trinity in terms of the blending of three fires: fire by friction (Third Aspect), solar fire (Second Aspect), and electric fire (First Aspect). The results of this blending are expressed by Sarah Leigh Brown as follows:

Toward the end of this (third) solar system the three fires will blend as one; the human being takes the fifth initiation; matter and spirit are at one and the spirit can slip free of the form at will.<sup>9</sup>

Brown offered a comprehensive but simplified description of evolution in *Cosmic Fire Revealed*. As you read the following description, please note that in humanity manas, or mind, is the vibratory energy or fire which effectuates the adjustment of matter by the spirit. On higher levels, a planetary Logos, who is perfected manas, works through wisdom or *buddhi*, and a solar Logos works through will. In Brown's words:

Evolution is simply the continuing adjustment of the form/matter by the Life/Spirit so that the form may serve ever more adequately as an expression of this Spirit within. Each succeeding life cycle brings the form under greater control and to a capability of higher serving. In the final cycles the form is perfected and the fusion of Spirit and matter is completed, thus achieving the goal of the entire scheme of evolution.

A human being, a planetary Logos, and a solar Logos must each attain this mastery and union. Each unit of consciousness, whether human, planetary, or logoic, has its place within a higher consciousness, evolving within its own vehicle.

Evolution, then, is merely a term expressing the gradual development of the potential of that particular unit, until mastery of heat and light brings about perfected relationships with its kind.<sup>10</sup>

## Closing Statement

In closing, I affirm the truth of the saying: "As Above, So Below." It is clear to me that the evolution of man is only one small step in a vast evolutionary scheme. Yet, each step follows the same pattern as the step above it. If God is at one end of the evolutionary spiral, Earth's humanity is in the middle, and the lower kingdoms are at the other end. Having evolved using the same pattern and substance as God, man is made in his image and likeness, as the sages have proclaimed throughout the ages. BECAUSE GOD IS, I AM.

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<sup>1</sup> Powell, Arthur E. *The Mental Body*. Wheaton, IL, USA: The Theosophical Publishing House, 2000, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Bailey, Alice A. *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*. Lucis Publishing Company, 1925, pp. 397-398.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 345.

<sup>4</sup> "Kosas: The Structure of the Mind." Articles on The Spiritual Philosophy of Ananda Marga. [www.anandamarga.org](http://www.anandamarga.org): 2000.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Brown, Sarah Leigh. *Cosmic Fire Revealed*. Tahlequah, Oklahoma: Sparrow Hawk Press, 200, p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

