

*Swamiji, please give us simple definition for “awareness”? Also, if the mind is an object, what is the subject? What is it that is aware?*

To define awareness, we can only use another word—Consciousness, for example. Awareness means you are aware of something; it is opposed to inertness or non-awareness. What is opposed to inertness is that which is not inert—awareness.

Awareness, therefore, can be defined as what is manifest in all forms of perception, in all forms of knowing. Awareness is qualified by different objects. When I say “I am aware of the pot,” for example, there is pot awareness. Similarly when I say “I am aware of the cloth,” there is cloth awareness.

Whenever you are aware of something, that something becomes the qualifying for awareness. This awareness can be defined in terms of knowledge as such. What is basic in all forms of knowledge is pure existence (*satyam*). Therefore, knowledge is defined as existence, and existence is defined as knowledge. One helps to define other. The basis for all forms of knowledge is what we mean by awareness.

When you are listening to me, you are aware of me and of these words. The fundamental principle in which these words are heard is awareness. The words, “I do not hear you,” are also said within the same principle. The not-hearing also takes place in the same awareness. What is common in all forms of perception is awareness: I hear that I don’t hear, I see that I don’t see, I think that I don’t think. All are nothing but awareness.

If, as we say, the mind is an object, what is it that is aware? The word “mind” means “thought.” What is it that is the awarer? You are the awarer. You are aware of thought. Opposed to the thought, therefore, there is subject—you.

In fact, both the subject and the object are awareness. But, in the beginning, to help you find out what are you are, I generally say that a thought is an object and you are the subject. Then, when you ask “what is this I that is the subject?” I reply, “You, the subject, are a witness.” And what is the nature of the witness? Awareness.

The witness, then, is awareness and the witnessed object cannot be away from awareness. Therefore, the witness and witnessed are both awareness. Even the witness is not there, awareness remains. Similarly, thought is awareness and the thinker, the knower of the thought, is also awareness.

With reference to thought, however, awareness assume two statuses, corresponding to two types of thought in mind—subject thought and object thought. These two types of thought can be seen in the dream, where you are both the subject and the object of the dream. You are the object in that you are the one who participates in the dream world. And you are the subject, the one whose dream it is. The subject and the object are therefore one and the same. Both types of thought—Subject thought and object thought exist—in awareness and are, in fact, nothing but awareness.