

WHAT IS CONSCIOUSNESS?

By Bjørn Pettersen

Everybody knows what consciousness is but can anyone describe or explain it? At present when we are reading this we are in what we call ordinary 'awake consciousness'. It is always connected with an active physical body and it is on this level of consciousness that we spend most time during each 24 hours (about 16 hrs or 2/3). When we sleep and only our automatic body functions are at work, the mind is in the dream state and we are on what we call the 'subconscious' level. On both these levels of consciousness our mind is active. Then in the deep, dreamless sleep which we experience in one or more short periods during sleep, our mind is inactive and we are on what is called the 'unconscious' level. All of us experience these three mind states and levels of consciousness every day throughout life. That means that about a third part of our lives are lived on sub- and unconscious levels and consequently not on the level which we normally consider as conscious, i.e. awake. And how conscious are we really in the usual awake state? Don't we always feel that there are certain degrees here, depending on outer influences and circumstances?

Still, there is a consciousness in all of us that perfectly passively observes all this. This consciousness is the passive witness to all the three levels of consciousness which are experienced through the mind. It is the perfect, unattached and independent observer to your mind and your body, to your life and to your death, and to your life again ... Nothing ever happens to it because it is self-dependent – free from every duality and identity – free from all bonds or conditions and fully without any attributes or modifications. This is what we may call 'the static Consciousness in Itself', which is the basis of all dynamic consciousness and thus the source of all life. This one, all-encompassing Consciousness is the same in all of us and in all life – it is omnipresent in the whole manifested Cosmos. The dependent and limited dynamic consciousness is dancing on its surface much like ripples on a small forest lake. What we call 'dynamic consciousness' is 'static consciousness' put into motion, just like ice melting into water. We all know that water may appear as solid (ice), liquid or gas (vapour) depending on its temperature. All these three forms of water have completely different character. But whatever be the form of water the chemical formula is always H₂O. And so also with consciousness. It has two main forms or modes: static and dynamic, but remains unchangingly the same regardless of mode.

If we can comprehend what consciousness is we can comprehend everything! Then the big questions of man, God and life are no longer riddles or mysteries to us!