

Essay

Some Thoughts on Samapatti

Alan J. Oliver*

ABSTRACT

In the Yoga tradition, buddhi is consciousness in its own right and has been defined by some writers as acognitive knowing. My view is that acognitive knowing means knowing without the mind, and of course that is what Samapatti provides to the seer. And what this means in our seeking to understand consciousness is precisely what I referred to. There are possibly a number of models we could posit to accommodate this position, all of which would be counterintuitive for science. I will simply offer one which arises from the acognitive model.

Key Words: Samapatti, acognitive knowing, Consciousness, seer, science.

A recent article in *New Scientist* put forward an interesting view from recent research on the uncertainty around outcomes in quantum experiments [1]. Essentially, what the author said was that the uncertainty is due to our inability to have access to the whole information related to the experiment. This led me to think about my experiences in the state of Samapatti where two minds will coalesce. I have had this happen often during counselling people, and scholars of the Hindu tradition have agreed that I was in that state of Samapatti.

Looking back on some of those events I can accept that this will happen in that state; what is not so straightforward is that there is obviously not just a coalescing of the mind of the seer and that of the subject. I do not imagine anything in the sense of having a mental picture or visual image, and yet with just a narrative of thought that I would like to remove the distress in bone marrow in the case of a person with a fracture, the subject reported 'seeing' me remove a dark blob of energy and replace it with a bright golden light.

In another case I was asked to help a 'disturbed' cat. I mentally saw the cat's dream, which was a garden scene in which the plants, although recognisable, were much larger than I see them and were not green but shades of yellow, brown and red. I was also aware that I did not know this particular garden. At that point I was aware of two different streams of information and was able to differentiate between them.

To return to my original theme, Samapatti is something that can happen only in the Samadhi state, and I am suggesting that in that state we see and know beyond our normal experience of seeing and knowing. A person established in Samapatti takes in a whole lot more information than we encounter in the normal everyday conscious state. Yoga says that in the Samapatti or Samadhi state we are not using the mind because the mind, by definition, is at rest, empty if you will, and what is conscious is buddhi. In the Yoga tradition buddhi is consciousness in its own right and has been defined by some writers as acognitive knowing.

* Correspondence: Alan J. Oliver, Port Elliot, South Australia. E-mail: thinkerman1@dodo.com.au

Some researchers accept that the notion of using the mind to understand the mind is not a particularly scientific pursuit, but when the evidence from the conventional technology, such as fMRI and other cutting edge approaches, is accepted as proof that what we measure is activity of the mind, it is not surprising that most researchers would naturally assume the mind is all we have at our disposal. I admit that all of the images of brain structures responding to inputs such as speech and thinking make a pretty compelling case for the brain to be what produces consciousness. It might be more accurate to say it produces conscious awareness.

My view is that acognitive knowing means knowing without the mind, and of course that is what Samapatti provides to the seer. And what this means in our seeking to understand consciousness is precisely what I referred to earlier. There are possibly a number of models we could posit to accommodate this position, all of which would be counterintuitive for science. I will simply offer one which arises from the acognitive model.

Firstly, the information being communicated in Samapatti is not intentional because there is no defined sender or receiver, and I think intention is something we already assume to be driving the processes in the cognitive world. Second, since the seer is the one in the Samadhi state it would be reasonable to say that the seer, at least in my experiences, is a witness or detached observer without physical connection to the subject. From these two points I am inclined to say that what we call consciousness in living forms is really a conscious awareness, as distinct from consciousness, which is a property of the whole reality, very much akin to Bohm's Implicate Order.

Neuroscience has found that between a sensory external input to the brain and the corresponding signal to act there is a time gap of some tens or hundreds of milliseconds. This is time taken by the processes in the brain to decide the how, what, when and why of the response, and these categories of the response can be part of what becomes present in our conscious awareness. From a consciously aware perspective, we respond immediately when we recognise the input because we are unable to recognise intervals of less than 20 milliseconds or thereabouts. I believe it is reasonable to suggest that what we call conscious awareness is the observation by the higher level of consciousness observing this process of mentation.

From what I observe in Samapatti, particularly in the way a subject can have a visual image of my narrative thought, there is a process of interpretation of what I have thought within the mind/brain of the subject. If we accept the acognitive model then the information at the level of the detached observer is obviously available to the subject for that to happen, and so far as I can understand, the only way that can happen is if both seer and subject are in a common field, or a different level, of consciousness. And if both are operating within a common field/level of consciousness it is also likely that the brain responds to that common entity and that response is what we are aware of and we call that consciousness. I recall sitting beside my daughter who was in a coma. As I entered Samapatti I became established in an intense state of bliss. So perhaps what communicates to the brain elicits the same state of the subject as one would expect and there are times when that is a surprise as well as a gift. Perhaps, for the sake of clarity we may have to resort to having some name or category for this particular field or level.

In short, I believe this essay does support the initial viewpoint in the New Scientist article that perhaps we do not always have the full spectrum of information involved in a particular experiment or experience [1]. It also supports the view from the Hindu traditions which appear to accept the position that there are a number of levels of consciousness and mind is one of the basic levels. We can say however, that on the subject of Samapatti, the flow of information is there for those who can expand their terms of reference to be able to see it. For my part, I know that more thoughts will arise about this issue and I will continue pursuing these questions. I find that I can know mostly by being asked to answer a question; for most of the time I am just waiting for the next question.

Reference

1. Anil Ananthaswamy (2015), Path to enlightenment. *New Scientists* 226: pp. 35-37.