



Your perception of me is a Reflection of You; My Reaction to You is an Awareness of Me

Awareness is a Simple Act of Acknowledging the Reality as it is.

— Swami Vivekananda

Perception is an assumption made by individuals about others based on their own interpretations. A variety of factors contribute to the development of perception, including internal and external influences such as thought patterns, life experiences, and the way one is treated by others. Perception may involve **preconceived ideas** or other **self-conceived notions**. Often, it is understood as an organized experience derived from the sensory information received by the five senses. People tend to make connections between what they see, hear, and touch, and their current experiences. This process requires reflection and understanding of **inner feelings, needs, thoughts, and viewpoints**. In this way, perception serves as a bridge between one's inner and outer worlds, shaped by past encounters and experiences.

A person's internal environment and personality greatly influence how they perceive others and form opinions about them. Perception is a universal phenomenon that crosses **cultural and societal boundaries**. However, it can disrupt relationships and situations when individuals rely on it as a way to protect themselves from **inner turmoil** and **discomfort**. Over time, these perceptions can become **ingrained and rigid**, narrowing one's perspective of the outside world. Consider the people in one's immediate surroundings such as family members, friends, or coworkers. How do their responses influence interactions, and how do these interactions reflect each person's inner thoughts and emotions? In essence, interactions with others often serve as mirrors, reflecting personal experiences and perceptions back to the individual. This presents an ongoing challenge: **internal struggles** often manifest as **external conflicts**, and **mental deadlock** can appear as **physical and practical barriers** in everyday life.

A person's actions are deeply influenced by their awareness of themselves. The **conscious practice of self-awareness** significantly affects behaviors and responses to others. How others perceive and treat an individual is often a reflection of that individual's character, self-awareness, and authenticity. Many people spend considerable time and effort trying to change their personalities, ideals, or ways of living to fit in with societal norms and avoid the judgment of others. However, true fulfillment comes from embracing one's true self and acting in alignment with one's values and beliefs.

One of the most widespread misconceptions is the notion that other people's opinions should hold significant weight. Constantly worrying about what others think detracts from **inner peace** and stability. Life is full of challenges, and these challenges can only be effectively countered with a calm and **composed mind**. Allowing the perceptions of others to disrupt mental stability indicates a weakness that can be overcome. Instead of focusing on the uncontrollable thoughts and opinions of others, individuals should focus on how they can control their own actions and state of mind. If a person remains confident in their path, others' perceptions may change over time.

It is helpful to remember that everyone has their own story and unique perspective. A person's words and actions reveal their character and aspirations far more clearly than the opinions of others. Ultimately, what others think and how they perceive an individual is irrelevant since it cannot be controlled. **Self-awareness**, the ability to objectively observe and reflect on oneself is crucial. According

to self-awareness theory, individuals are not their thoughts; rather, they are the observers of their thoughts. They are separate from the mental processes they experience.

For example, consider two people looking at the same painting of a sunset. One might interpret the image positively, while the other, feeling sadness, might see the painting as dull or unattractive. Although both are viewing the same scene, their interpretations differ greatly due to their **emotions, thoughts, and mental states**. This highlights how perception is influenced by one's feelings and internal mindset. Even the most beautiful sight may seem underwhelming to someone facing inner turmoil. Likewise, judgments about others often reflect one's own feelings and thoughts rather than objective truths. A positive opinion of another person, for instance, often stems from a sense of confidence within oneself.

While others may have preconceived notions and assumptions about a person's personality, these perceptions do not necessarily represent reality. Individuals cannot control how others view them, but they can control how they respond. Acting ethically, with openness and inclusiveness, ensures that one's actions align with moral values. The pursuit of **self-knowledge** and the cultivation of **self-awareness** are key to overcoming internal conflicts. In such circumstances, it is important to follow the voice of conscience, as it is the best guide in navigating life's challenges.

Individual's thoughts on **acting ethically** and **cultivating self-awareness** are profound. The **teachings of Buddha** offer valuable insights into these concepts. One notable example is the **Perfection of Ethical Self-Discipline (Shilaparamita)**. Buddha emphasized the importance of ethical behavior, which involves refraining from destructive actions and engaging in constructive ones. This discipline is not about restricting oneself but about creating the freedom to benefit oneself and others.

Buddha also taught that self-awareness and **mindfulness** are crucial. By understanding the causes of suffering and practicing ethical behavior, one can achieve a state of **inner peace** and **clarity**. This aligns with the **Four Noble Truths**, which outline the **nature of suffering** and the **path** to its cessation.

As **Lord Krishna** teaches in the **Bhagavad Gita**, uncontrolled desires can destroy the **intelligence, knowledge, and skills** that a person has worked hard to develop. These desires often lead individuals to act impulsively, seeking immediate gratification at the expense of long-term goals. To lead a stable and fulfilling life, it is **crucial to master self-control** and resist the temptations of fleeting desires.

The **philosophy of the Gita** emphasizes profound truths and timeless wisdom. True transformation begins within; revolution must start from the inside. Practicing self-control and mastery over one's senses is essential for success in the inner battle that every person faces. According to the teachings of Lord Krishna, **desires are the greatest obstacles to intellectual progress and self-control**. These desires can take many forms, from the craving for instant pleasure to the distractions that pull people away from their primary goals.

Serenity of Mind, Good-heartedness, Silence, Self-control, Purity of Nature These Together are Called Mental Austerity.

—Shrimad Bhagawad Geeta