

How to Wake Up to Reality

The Core Teachings of Advaita Vedānta

The Diagnosis: You Are Already Asleep



The Dreamer

In an ordinary dream, the dream-tiger feels entirely solid and terrifying. You do not know you are dreaming.



The Somnambulist

In this waking life, you take the world of objects, relationships, and problems to be solidly real. This is *mahā svapna*—the super-dream of *saṃsāra*.

You are not the dream-creature suffering in the world. You are the dream-creator.

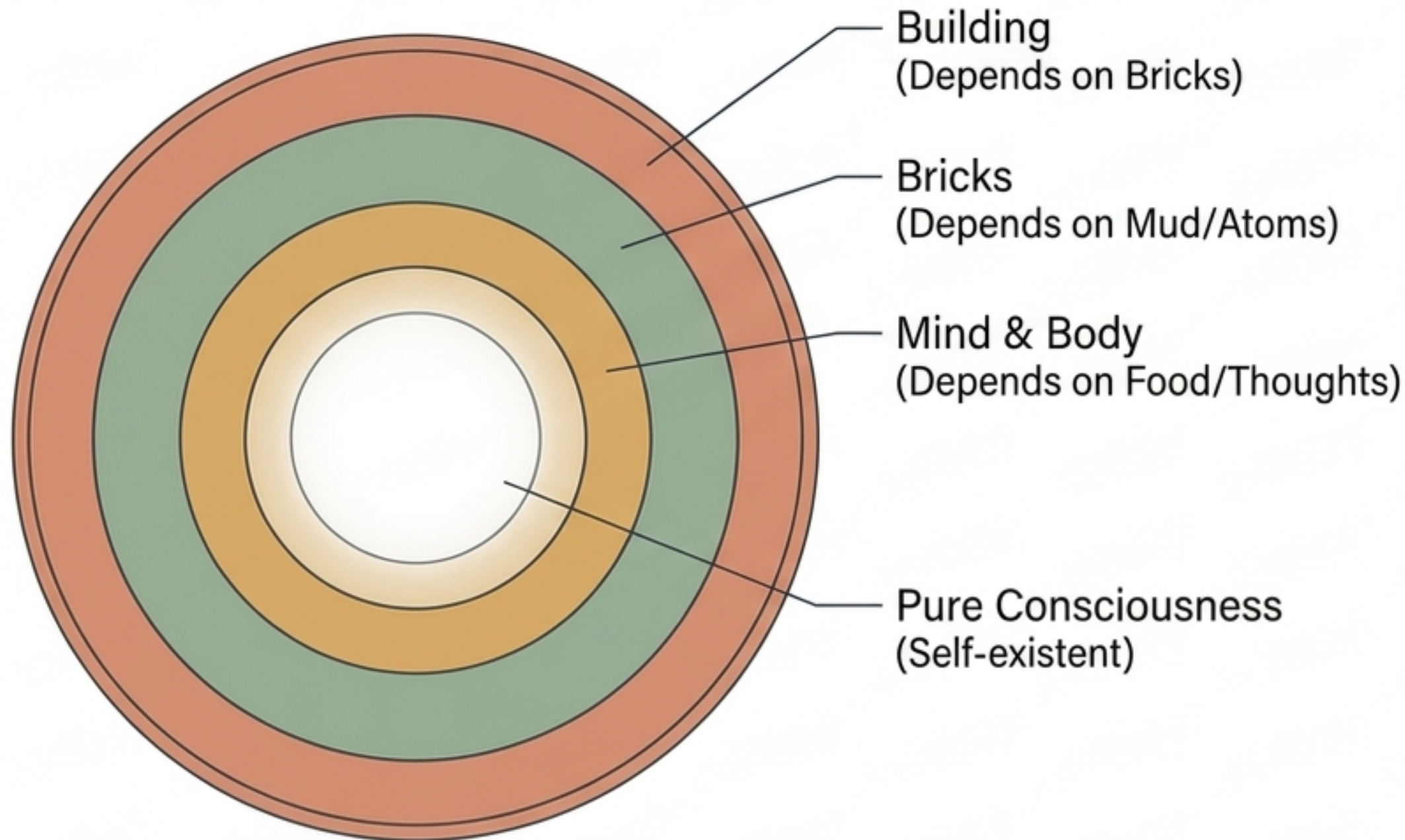
The Two Types of Dreams

	Ordinary Dream (alpa svapna)	Super Dream (mahā svapna)
Waking Process	Happens naturally when sleep ends.	Never happens naturally; requires deliberate effort.
After Waking	The dream world completely disappears.	The world continues, but its order of reality changes.
Cause of Waking	Anything can jolt you (noise, alarm).	Only the teachings of a Guru and Scripture (Guru-Śāstra-Upadeśa) can jolt you.

Note: Spiritual awakening is not a mystical event where the world physically vanishes. It is a profound shift in mindset.

The Litmus Test for Reality

Before waking up, we must define what reality actually means. Advaita Vedānta offers a razor-sharp criterion: “That which has existence of its own.”



The Object is Mithyā:

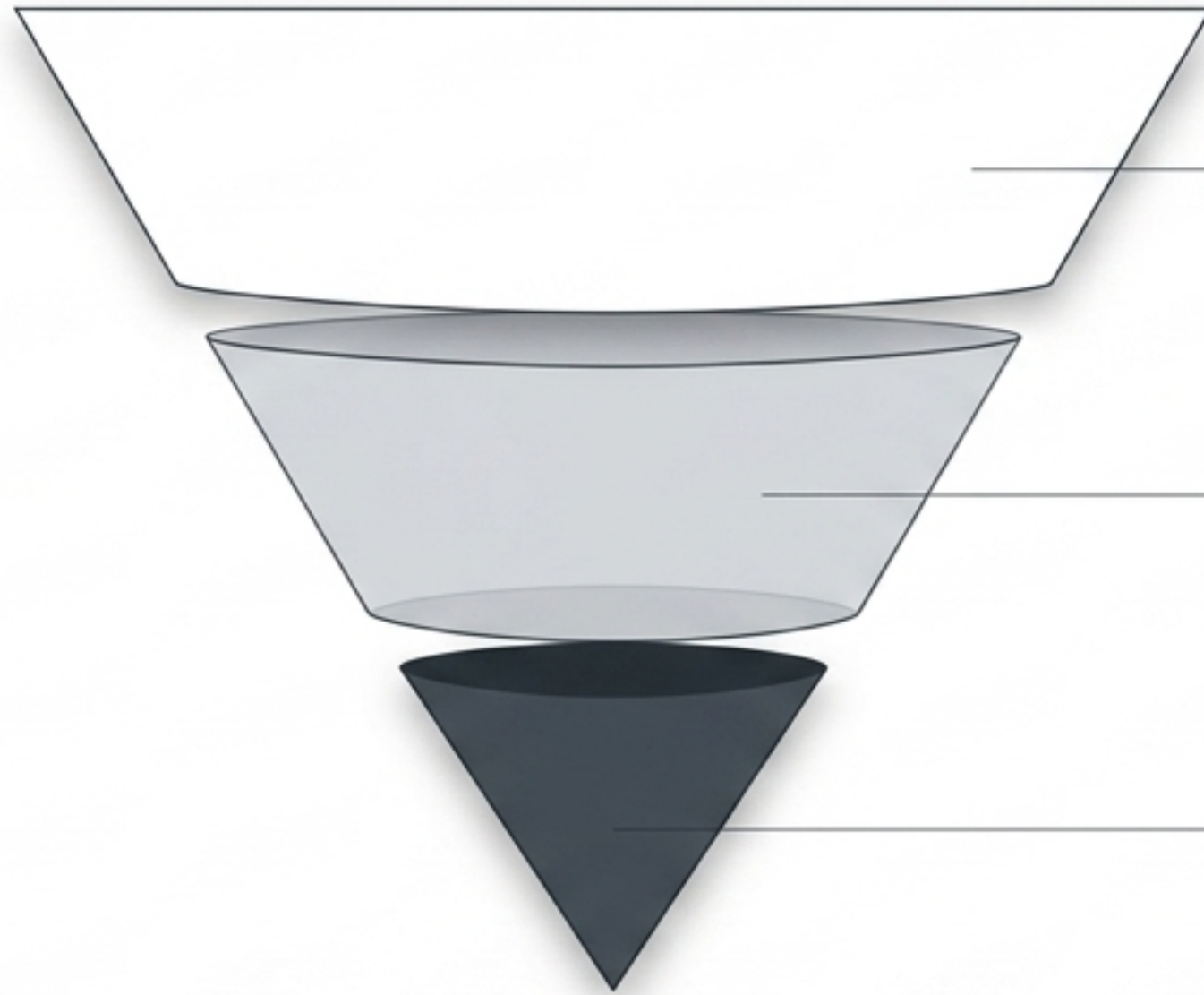
Anything that comes and goes, changes, or borrows its existence is mithyā (apparently real, but factually unreal).

The Subject is Real:

The one thing never negated is the Witness (Sākṣī). You can never see your own awareness, yet it is the most intimate reality.

What is unreal is temporarily available; what is real is permanently available.
— Śaṅkarācārya

The Three Orders of Reality



Pāramārthika (Absolute Reality)

Pure Consciousness / Brahman.
Has existence of its own; never negated.

Vyāvahārika (Empirical Reality)

The waking world. Experienced, predictable,
and transactionally useful—but ultimately
dependent on Brahman.

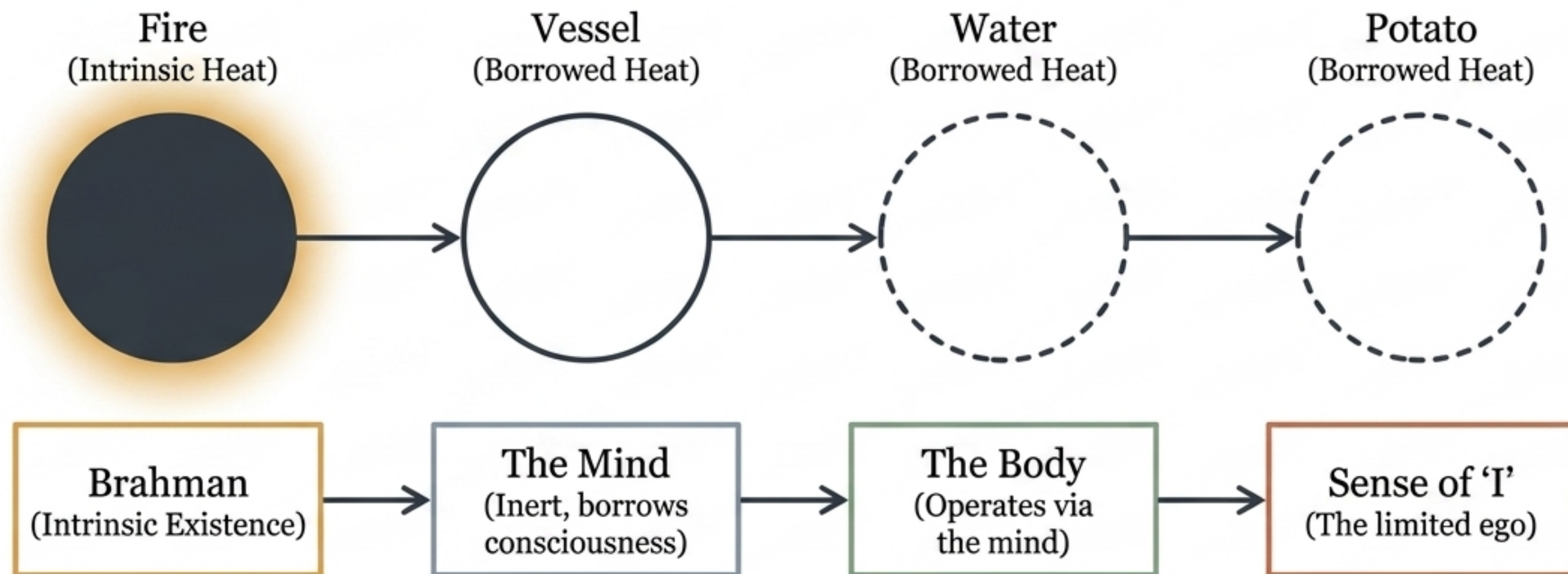
Prātibhāsika (Apparent Reality)

A dream tiger or mirage. Experienced but
factually non-existent; negated upon waking.

Advaita does not say the world is non-existent. It says the waking world is more real than a dream, but less real than Brahman.

The Principle of Borrowed Existence

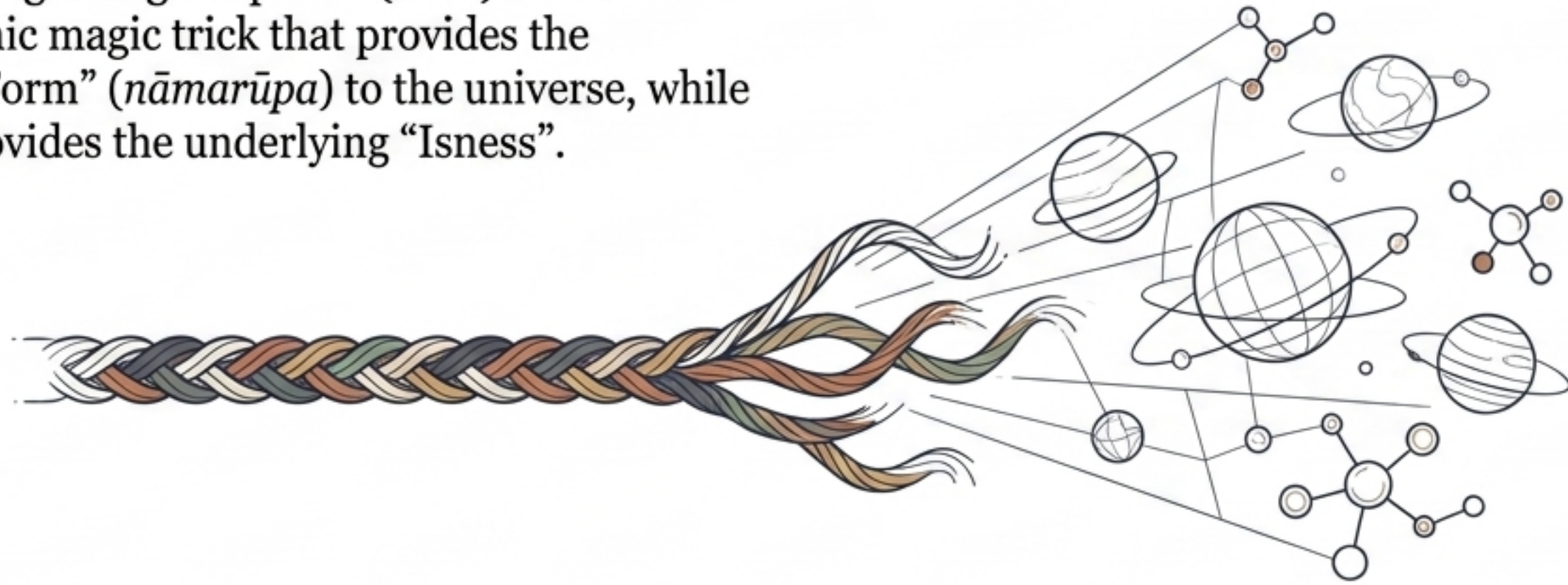
How does something unreal appear so real? Through the transfer of properties. When you boil a potato, the heat in the potato is not intrinsic—it is borrowed from the fire through the water and the vessel.



Your limited sense of self is a borrowed consciousness.
You are the fire, not the potato.

What is Māyā? The Mechanism of Illusion

Māyā is the beginningless power (*śakti*) of Brahman. It is the cosmic magic trick that provides the “Name and Form” (*nāmarūpa*) to the universe, while Brahman provides the underlying “Isness”.



Anirvacanīya (Inexplicable)

Neither truly existent (it vanishes upon enlightenment) nor nonexistent (it is intensely experienced).

Trigunātmikā

Composed of three strands: Knowledge (Sattva), Action (Rajas), and Inertia (Tamas).

Mithyā

It has no independent existence; it borrows entirely from Brahman.

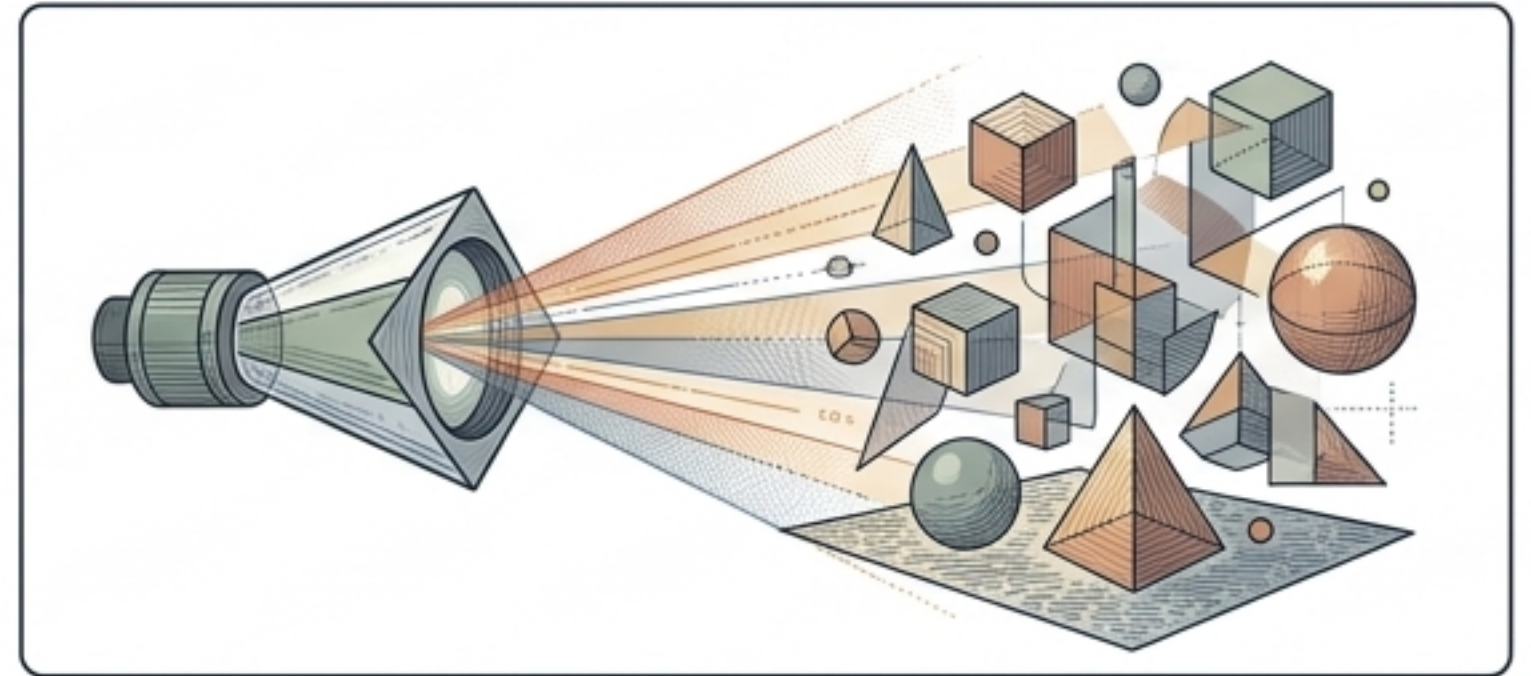
The Twin Powers of Delusion

On a personal level, Māyā operates as Avidyā (ignorance), trapping the mind through two distinct functions:



1. Āvaraṇa (Veiling)

It covers your true, limitless nature (Sat-Chit-Ānanda) like a cloud covering the sun. Because of this, you feel an artificial sense of lack.



2. Vikṣepa (Projecting)

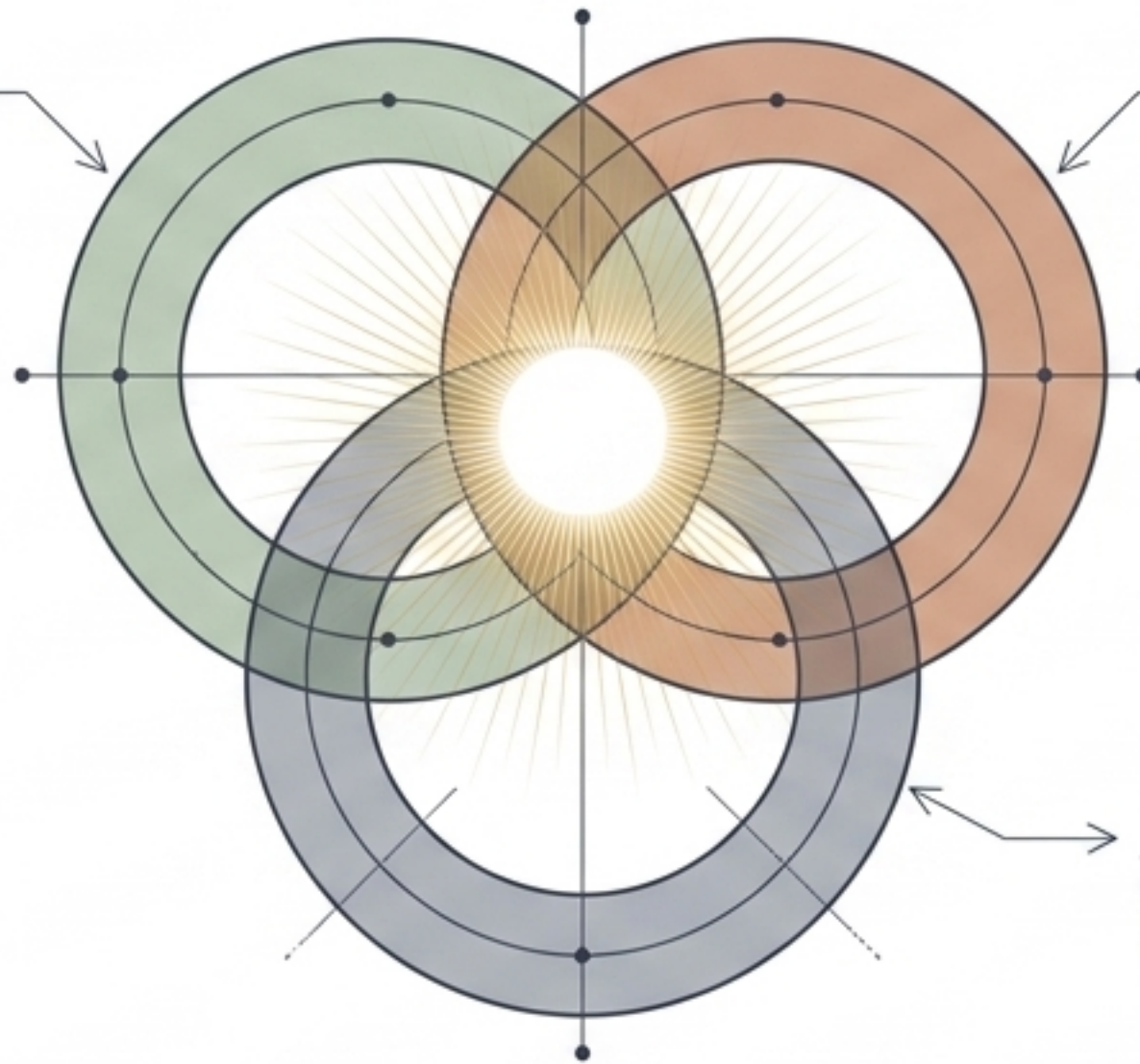
It projects the world of objects and compels you to seek happiness within them.

The Trap: Because you cannot see your own fullness, you are projected outward, running endlessly after sense objects to fill a void that doesn't actually exist.

Unveiling Your True Nature: Sat-Chit-Ānanda

The Self (*Ātmā*) is not a combination of parts or adjectives. These are three names for the same indivisible substance, viewed from different angles.

Sat (Pure Existence)
Existence as a noun. That which is never negated across past, present, and future.



Cit (Pure Consciousness)
The unchanging witness (*sākṣī*) that illumines everything, even the absence of thought.

Ānanda (Pure Bliss)
Limitlessness (*anantam*). Total fulfillment and freedom from want.

They are not parts or attributes, but the very substance itself.

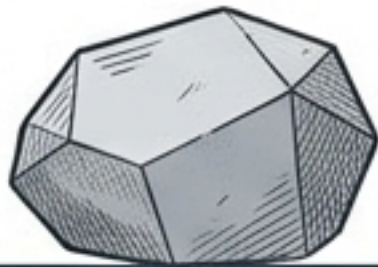
The Spectrum of Manifestation

Every object in creation is undergirded by the exact same *Ātmā*. The difference is only in how much of that nature the specific form (*nāmarūpa*) is capable of reflecting.



Inert Objects (Stones)

Manifest only Sat (Existence).
You cannot perceive consciousness
in a wall.



Step 1

Step 2

Lower Living Beings

Manifest Sat + Cit
(Existence + Consciousness).

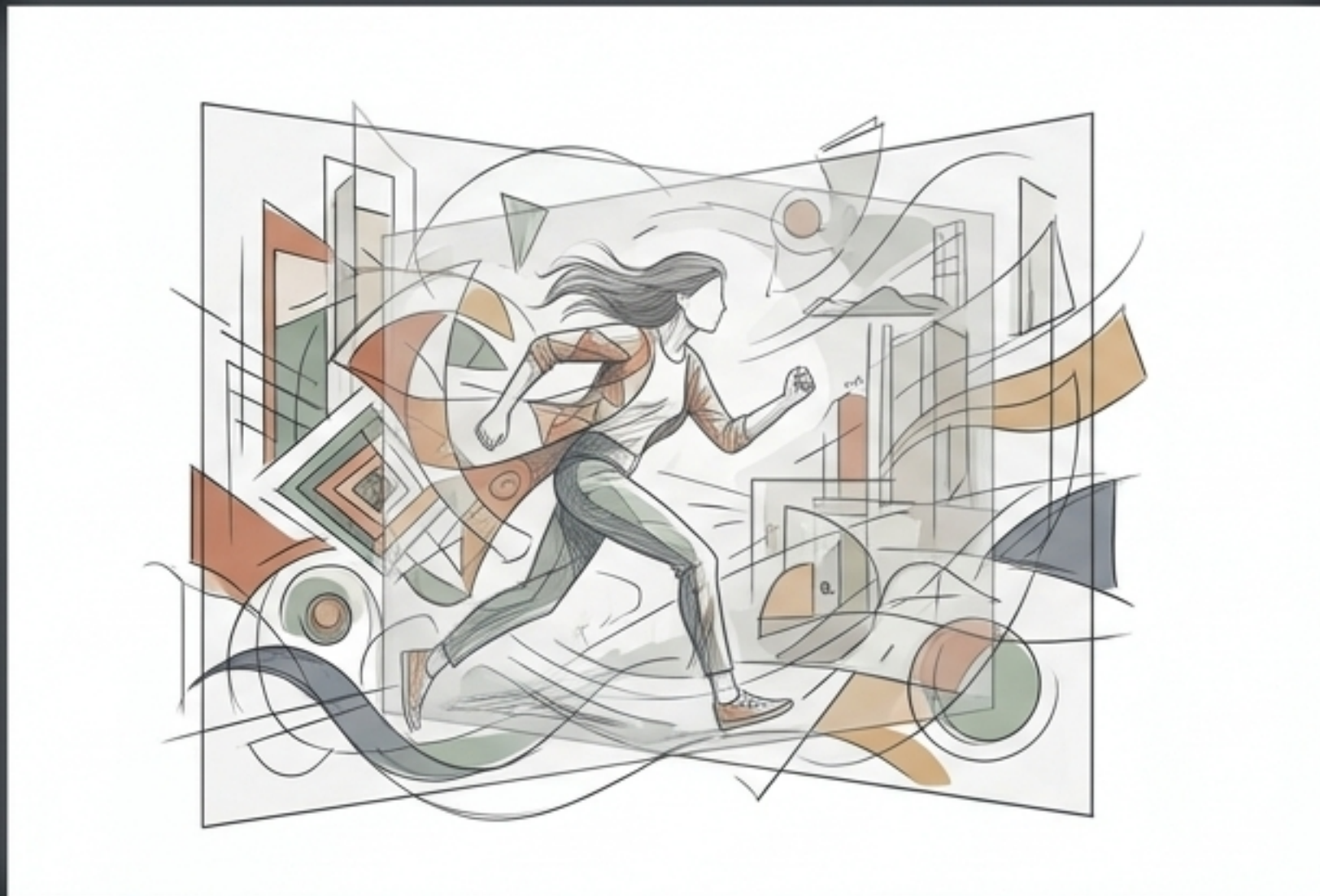
Step 3

Human Beings

Manifest Sat + Cit + a reflection of
Ānanda. The refined human mind
is uniquely capable of reflecting
the limitlessness of the *Ātmā*.

Ātmā

The Ultimate Metaphor: The Movie Screen



The Screen (Ātmā):

Ever-present, pure, actionless, and completely unattached (*asaṅga*). It accommodates the fire and the flood but is never burned or wet.

The Movie (World/Mithyā):

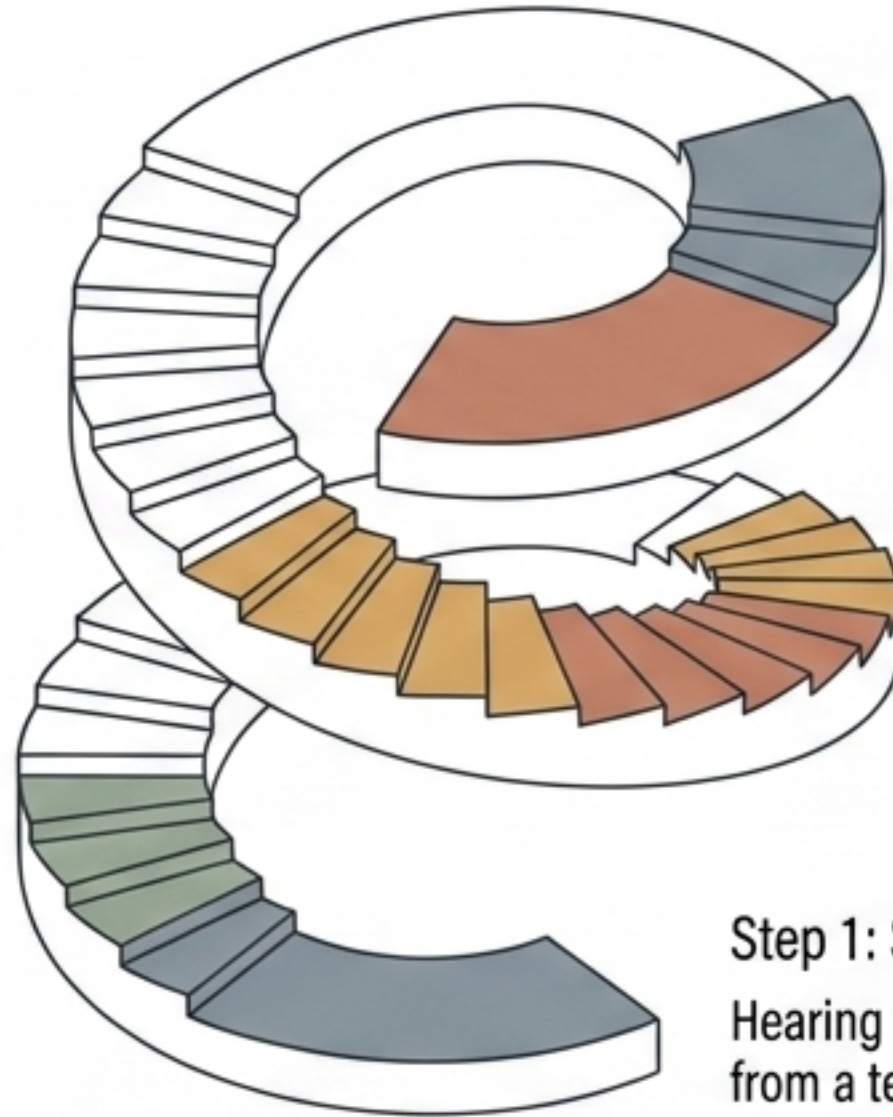
Changing, superficial, borrowed existence. It is intensely experienced but has no independent reality.

The Superimposition (Adhyāsa): Suffering occurs when you forget the screen and become completely absorbed in the plot. You transfer the movie character's pain onto yourself, the observer.

The Solution: Turn your attention to the motionless screen, recognise the screen, and then enjoy the movie.

The Mechanics of Awakening

You cannot wake yourself up through mere willpower. You require the "alarm clock" of a qualified teacher and scripture (Guru-Śāstra-Upadeśa), followed by deliberate, sustained practice.



Step 1: Śravaṇam (Listening)

Hearing the great truths (like Tat tvam asi - You are That) from a teacher. The alarm rings.

Step 2: Mananam (Reflection)

Removing all intellectual doubts through rigorous reasoning. Proving to yourself that the waking world is as conditionally real as a dream.

Step 3: Nididhyāsanam (Assimilation)

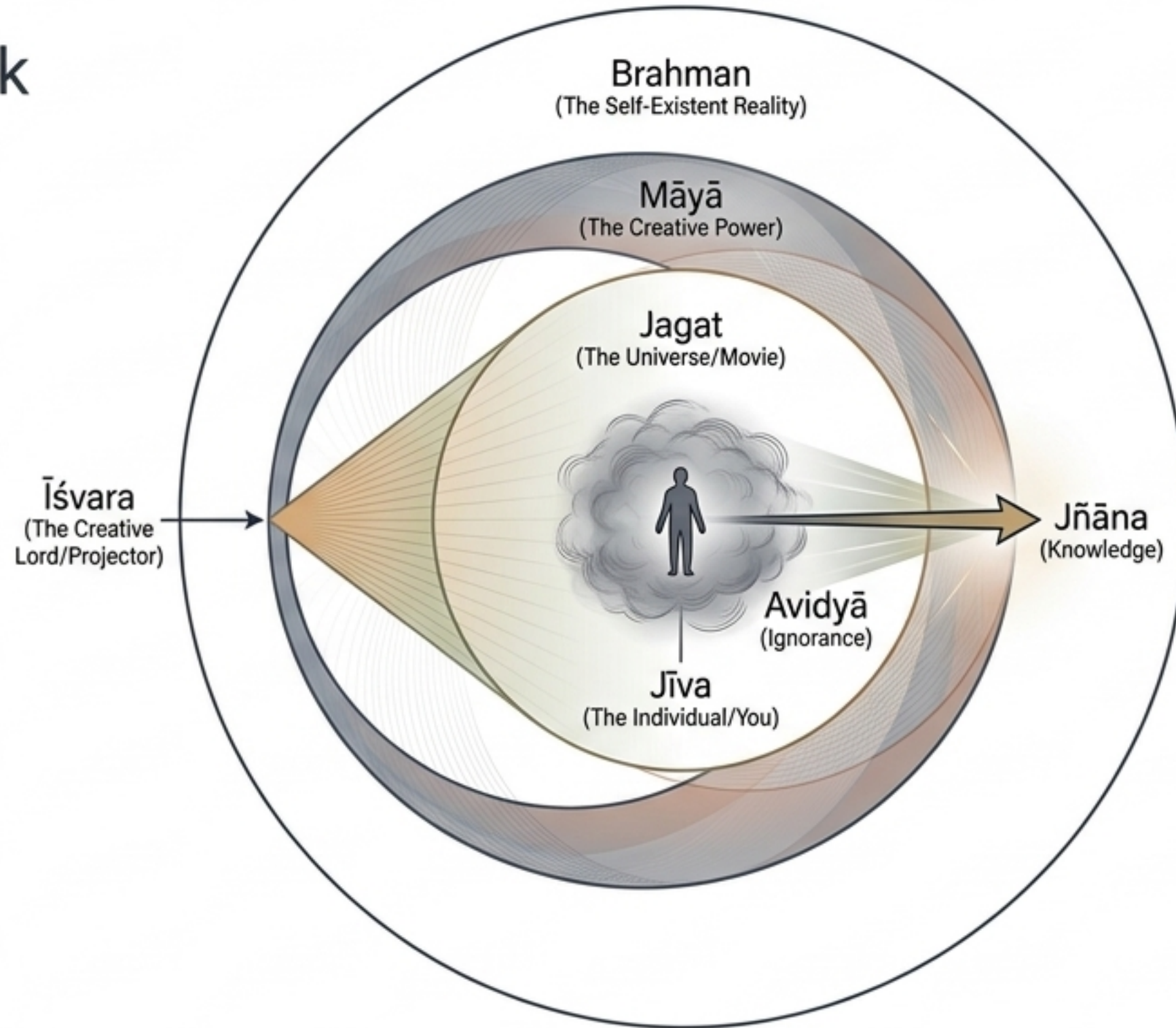
Internalising the knowledge daily. Overcoming the deep mental tendencies (vāsanās) that constantly pull you back to sleep.

The Paradigm Shift: Waker vs. Super-Waker

	Ajñānī (Ignorant)	Jñānī (Wise)
Identity	Identifies strictly with the body/mind complex.	Identifies as the unchanging <i>Witness (Ātmā)</i> .
Source of Happiness	Seeks it endlessly in external objects.	Knows it is their intrinsic, baseline nature.
Experience of Pain	“I am unhappy.” Pain creates deep suffering.	“The mind is unhappy.” Employs <i>Titikṣā</i> (endurance) without emotional scarring.
View of the World	Solid, absolute, and binding.	<i>Mithyā</i> . A magnificent play (<i>līlā</i>) or movie.

The Unified Framework

Brahman and Māyā together project the universe (Jagat). You (Jīva) are caught in the projection due to personal ignorance (Avidyā). Knowledge (Jñāna) dissolves the personal ignorance, revealing that the Jīva was the pure Brahman all along.



You Are Already Awake

You are not a bundle of body, mind, and emotions endlessly seeking happiness in the outside world. The world is the movie, and you are the screen. You are Sat-Chit-Ānanda right now—existence absolute, consciousness absolute, bliss absolute.

Arise! Awake! Having approached the great ones, know the Ātmā.
— Kaṭha Upaniṣad