

Chapter 3

PERCEPTION AND REALITY

Reality is all that exists but not what exists in the mind.

1. Reality with Substance:

Reality includes all things with a physical shape and composition. It is all that the eye can see and the sense of touch can feel, such as, books, chairs, soil, water, plants, rock, glass, etc.

2. Reality without Substance:

Reality also includes things without a physical shape and composition, such as the invisible air, smoke, sound, time, colour, nothingness, void, vacuum, etc. These things are not tangible (something that can be touched). Yet they are a definite part of reality.

3. The Reality of Events:

Here events mean any changes in the relationships among the parts of reality. For example, suppose a car moves from the Himalayan mountains (over 12000 feet) to the Mahabharat range (9000 feet), and comes down the Churre hills (5000 feet) and goes to the Terai (300 feet), the car changes its relationship with the background or parts of reality that surround it. The changes are the aspects of reality. Other examples are a fist striking a tabletop, a breeze moving the leaves of trees, a person slipping on a banana peel, etc.

4. Position Relationships:

Even the static position is a part of reality. A man caught another man with his wife. The husband told the second man what he was doing there. The second man replied, "Everybody's got to be some place." The anecdote is a basic truth of reality. Everything must have space relationship with other things, such as, a book is kept on the top of a table, a box is placed on the top of another box, etc.

5. The Infinity of Reality:

Reality is infinitely complex because there are just too many details in reality. To illustrate the infinity of reality, let us look at a blank sheet of paper of our notebook. What do we see? We see double horizontal red lines at the top of the page, and double vertical red lines at the left hand margin. Next, we see about 28 horizontal parallel blue lines on the page. Now let us take a closer look at the page. What do we see? We see the paper is not equally white at all places. The blue lines are not so straight, and there are little flecks of dark

matter at some places. Now let us observe the paper under a microscope. Now we see there are more irregularities on the paper. We can see that the paper is made up of thousands of compressed fibres. Also the edge of the paper is not so straight, and it has a ragged edge of loose fibres. Now let us look at the paper under an electronic microscope which magnifies by a thousand times. We see that the paper is made up of millions of atoms and molecules. The atoms are a whirling mass of electrons with a nucleus composed of protons and neutrons. Where does it end? Reality is infinite in its complexity. There are two reasons why we cannot perceive infinity in reality:

1. Our sense organs are limited:

Our five sense organs cannot detect all the signs, symbols and stimulus in the communication environment. Our sense organs detect only a small part of reality. There are too many details in reality, and our sense organs are too limited to pick up all the details. Our eyes cannot detect all the minute details of reality. Our ears cannot hear all the sound around us. We cannot perceive everything of anything. We can only perceive only a small part of the whole.

Suppose you are watching a football game at the stadium. How much reality of the event can you perceive? The game starts and there is action everywhere. The players are running around the field and the crowd roars. Yet did you see the player's muscle twitch, his face grimace, and each bead of perspiration on his forehead? You did not see all that had happened. In fact you missed most of it because our sense organs are inadequate or too limited to see all the details.

2. Perception Differences:

No two perceptions are exactly the same. People sitting side by side witnessing the same vehicle accident will give conflicting account of the same accident. A husband and wife walking along the road see a well-dressed lady coming from the opposite side. The husband notices the lady's good figure, but his wife notices the lady's blue eyes, costly dress material, lipstick, and bag and shoes made of alligator skin. We never communicate about the same reality.

Reality is also unique. There are no exact duplicates. Each grain of sand, snow- flakes, hail-stones are all different. Even identical twins are somehow different. No two events are identical. Some differences in reality are quite clear. Other differences have to be seen under a microscope. In business communication, we should condition ourselves to stress on the differences in what we perceive. Oral and written reports, business letters should emphasize on the uniqueness of reality.

A third characteristic of reality is its changing nature. All things in reality are forever changing, such as, a chair, table, tree, house, our faces, etc. Some changes in reality are easily seen, such as, milk turns sour when it is stale. Living things change too. Our minds change. Compare your mind of today with the mind you had when you were a school student.

Perceptions that view reality as static are not correct. There are many examples in human communication. For example, a major reason for war has been to avenge wrongs committed by one nation against another generation, earlier. In other words, nations have often looked at past relationships with other nations as if they were in the present. Thus they have blamed current inhabitants for their ancestor's wrongdoings. Statistical comparisons are another source of perception errors. Compare the price of gold about a hundred years ago, fifty years ago, twenty five years ago, etc, and your perception will find a vast difference and calculation will be wrong. We all commit perception errors with respect to our acquaintances. People change, but our perception of a person is based upon what we knew of him or her at one point of time. The failure to communicate can be a major cause of errors in business communication.

Our perceptions of reality differ because our positions of reference differ. Up is not the same from different locations. Reality is real only from where we perceive it.

Truth and Reality

Complete Truth is a myth because

- 1) We do not perceive all of reality
- 2) We perceive reality differently