

Dante Biography

In Sanskrit, Chitta is mind-stuff or mental substance. It is the ground floor, in a manner of speaking. From it proceed the three types of Vrittis: they refer to different tendencies, or psycho-physical propensities, which give scope for the Mind to express 'emotions' in response to demands of the five senses; and Intellect to express a variety of Feelings. Samskaras result from past actions and experiences that have left an imprint on the Mind. The "watermark" is embedded with impressions, recollections, and psychological imprints from past lives lived. The result of this mix from Manas (mind), Buddhi (intellect) and Ahamkara (ego) as Chitta.

Chitta or 'personality' is a Raja Yogic terminology of Patanjali. [en.wikipedia.org › wiki › Patanjali](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patanjali). In the **Bhagavad Gita, The Song of God**. [the word chitta occurs several times www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org ›](http://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org)

Subconscious Mind is termed 'Chitta' in Vedanta. Dante's subconsciousness consists of submerged experiences of many lives as memories thrown into the background, but recoverable until he makes the Journey. Dante's Chitta until through his earlier lifetime is like a calm lake and his thoughts are like waves upon the surface of this lake. These waves rise without name and form when he is left to himself in mid-life. His Chitta that does the "Smarana."

A "Yogic" perspective of our existence is based on the understanding that our Mind *vritti* itself is giving rise to the happenings occurring around us. We believe our experiences are our reality but in truth, they are nothing but a cycle of projection and reflection of our own mind.

We discover our own power of changing the world we live in. To be the creator of our existence we get familiar with the unwinding of our conditioned thoughts. The mental processes are not limited to the field of consciousness alone.

The Mind is not conscious. Our awareness while awake infraconscious: its recall is only a fraction of our knowledge at any one moment. Only 10% of our mental activities come into the field of wakefulness. 90% of our mental activities takes place in the subconscious mind. Messages, when ready, come out like a flash from the subconscious mind to the surface of the conscious mind through the trapdoor in the subconscious mind. That is what happens to Dante.

His midlife crisis attempted to solve his life's problems and failed. He tried again and again failed. Precipitously an idea dawns on Dante which led him to the problems and the solutions. His subconscious processes set him to create many works: His subconscious mind remained his constant, trustworthy companion and sincere friend. The "Divine Comedy" is one such example.

Dante is a product of a papal-prescribed “way of salvation” when he enters a life crisis.

What happened?

Beatrice, was the true love of his life when she was nine years old. She remained his ‘love’ when she died at age 24 years but remained his spiritual guide through his lifetime.

He discovered his ‘Marriage’ to pure lust-free Spiritual Devotional Love (Prema) but also lived an ordinary householder’s life as husband and father of Sneha (Self-Love for a **Life** of Well-Being). One would need to understand the persona of Dante himself to realise that he was capable of both types of loving.

Marriages are deeply rooted in all ancient cultures. Traditional marriage ceremonies are performed in the midst of vows and chants from religious scriptures where the bride and groom solidify their union.

The ‘union’ is also the symbol of an eternal promise of companionship that keeps the bride and groom together for seven lifetimes.

Bond between two souls (atamans) is considered so strong that one could even use it to justify same sex marriage.

Marriage is said to last 7 lifetimes.

The universe keeps count.

Marriage (vivaha) between two persons is a sacred relationship that is not limited to this life alone. It extends across seven or more lives, during which the couple help each other progress spiritually.

The adage that marriages are made in heaven is true.

Two souls come together and marry because their karmas are intertwined and they have to resolve many things together upon earth in order to ensure their mutual salvation.

Dante Alighieri was born in 1265 in Florence, Italy, to a family of moderate wealth that had a history of involvement in the complex Florentine political scene. Dante lived in Florence until his early thirties, but died while in exile in 1321.

Shortly before giving birth in 1265, Dante’s mother had a vision. According to the 14th century chronicler Giovanni Boccaccio: “The gentle lady thought in her dream that she was under a most lofty laurel tree, on a green meadow, by the side of a most clear spring, and there she felt herself delivered of a son, who in shortest space, was feeding only on the berries which fell from the laurel tree, and the waters of the clear spring, grew up into a shepherd, and strove with all his power to have of the leaves of that tree whose fruit had nourished him; and as he struggled thereto, she saw him fall, and when he rose again, she saw he was no longer a man, but had become a peacock.”

This dream startled her a great deal that she awoke and quickly delivered a son, naming him "Dante," which means "giver." Dante's mother died only a few years after his birth.

Because of Alighieri family's long-time involvement with a complex violent Florentine political scene, this part of his life would later become a feature in Dante's *Inferno* years. Dante first laid eyes on Beatrice when he was nine years old. She was dressed in a crimson dress, and immediately stole his heart.

"From that time forward love fully ruled my soul." - Dante Alighieri

Though Dante was enamored with Beatrice at first sight, he did not speak to her but admired her from a distance. Only once, nine years after their meeting, did they have another face to face encounter. Beatrice and Dante were walking down the same street, with Beatrice dressed in pure white. As they passed each other, Beatrice raised her head, greeted and smiled at Dante.

Beatrice Portinari (1265–1290), a ***Florentine woman was the daughter of Folco Portinari (a Florentine noble) who later married Simone di Geri de Pardi***.

Dante was a boy in 1274, when he first met the nine-year-old Beatrice at the house of her father. "Already nine times after my birth the heaven of light had returned as it were to the same point," wrote the poet, "when there appeared to my eyes the glorious lady of my mind. Her dress on that day was of a most noble color, a subdued and goodly crimson, girdled and adorned in such sort as best suited her tender age. At that moment I saw most truly that the spirit of life which hath its dwelling in the secretest chamber of the heart began to tremble so violently that the least pulses of my body shook therewith."

He saw Beatrice smile at him only once or twice, but it is likely that his worship was stronger for the remoteness of its subject – or was she a married companion from past lives together? If Dante ever had any doubts of his love for her, they were erased in that one smile.

If the theory is true that Beatrice was indeed the daughter of the Florentine noble, Falco Portinari, she was a married woman, and the mother of a family, who apparently perished without ever knowing her effect on the young poet Dante. The death of her father in 1289 is said to have hastened her own.

On June 9, 1290, at age 24, Beatrice Portinari died. Unknown to her, for 13 years, her mortal love had guided Dante. Her immortal spirit would purify his later life, and inspire his *Divine Comedy*.

Dante's love for her was purely spiritual and mystical, the *amor amicitiae* defined by St. Thomas Aquinas: "That which is loved in love of friendship is loved simply and for its own sake". Its resemblance to the chivalrous worship that the troubadours offered to married women is merely superficial. <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04628a.htm>

Dante married in 1277. She would be a huge influence on Dante later in his life.

Dante's mother was Donna Bella degli Abati: "Bella" for beautiful Gabriella came from powerful political Abati sect (Abbotts.) Dante's mother married Alighieri (Dante's father.) She was kind and pious lady but constant abuse drove her to desperation. The Bella Abati eventually died by hanging, upon discovering her husband's mistress. Alighieri (Dante's father) told Dante she had died of the fever.

This life-episode would later appear in Dante's Circle of Violence, in the Wood of the Suicides, where victims of self-injury, are condemned to the Wood of the Suicides: here Bella is a freakish woody figure hanging from a wooden noose.

Dante meets with his mother Donna Bella when he enters the woods. She is joined with the trees producing Suicide Fruit. Dante is attacked by Bella – she continues until he batters it back.

Bella then reveals to Dante that she did in fact kill herself. She also admonishes him for saving Beatrice, **Dante's childhood** and lifelong **love** and future guide through Paradise.

She admits she did in fact kill herself, and admonishes **him** to save Beatrice. **Bella begs Dante to absolve her**, and when **he does she grants him the Suicide Fruit magic**.

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In real life, Bella Abati was the wife of Alighiero di Bellincione and the mother of Dante Alighieri. Bella Abati is met in the Circle of Violence.

She died in 1272, when Dante was about 5 or 6 years old, and Alighieri soon married again to Lapa di Chiarissimo Cialuffi. She bore two children, Dante's Brother Francesco and sister Tana (Gaetana).

Not much is known about Dante's education, but is presumed to have studied at home. He studied Tuscan poetry, when the Sicilian School – a cultural group from Sicily, was becoming known in Tuscany.

His interests brought him to Latin culture with a particular devotion to Virgil, the ancient Roman poet of the Augustan period.

When Dante was 12, in 1277, he was promised in marriage to Gemma di Manetto Donati, daughter of Messer Manetto Donati, daughter of Messer Manetto Donati. Contracting marriages at this early age was common, and was an important ceremony, needing formal deeds signed before a notary. Dante had several sons with Gemma.

Jacopo, Pietro, and Antonia were his children. Antonia became a nun with the name of Sister Beatrice.

Dante met Beatrice, the true love of his life when she was nine years old. He experienced love at first sight. The pair was acquainted for years, but Dante's love for Beatrice was "courtly".

Its expression showed as a deep love and admiration from afar but remained unrequited. Beatrice died unexpectedly in 1290.

Five years later Dante published *Vita Nuova* (The New Life), which details his tragic love for Beatrice. When Beatrice died in 1290, Dante tried to find a refuge in Latin literature.

When he was 18, Dante met Guido Cavalcanti, Lapo Gianni, Cino da Pistoia, and Brunetto Latini. Together they became the leaders of *Dolce Stil Nuovo* (The Sweet New Style). Brunetto received a special mention in the *Divine Comedy* (*Inferno*, XV, 82), for what he had taught **Dante**.

When Dante was 35, he then dedicated himself to philosophical studies at the **Santa Maria Novella** a church in Florence, situated opposite, the first great basilica in Florence, and city's principal **Dominican** church. He took part in the disputes of two principal monastic orders (Franciscan's explanation of doctrine of the mystics and the San Bonaventura's Dominican theories of Saint Thomas Aquinas). This "excessive" passion for philosophy would later be criticized by Beatrice, in *Purgatory*.

Beatrice died at the young age of 24. **Dante** never recovered from the **death** of his one true love. Dante's love for Beatrice was "courtly" and unrequited. Beatrice died unexpectedly in 1290, and five years later Dante published *Vita Nuova* (*The New Life*), which details his tragic love for Beatrice. Beyond being Dante's first book of verse, *The New Life* is notable in that it was written in Italian, whereas most other works of the time appeared in Latin.

This is when he began immersing himself in the study of philosophy but also involving himself in the manoeuvrings of the Florentine political scene.

When Dante was 37, Florence was then a tumultuous city. There were groups representing the papacy and groups for the empire. They were continually in disagreement. Dante then held several important public posts.

In 1302 **Dante** now 37 year old who by a White Guelph affiliation, along with the Gherardini family, was condemned to exile for two years and ordered to pay a large fine. **Dante** did not pay the fine, in part because he believed he was not guilty and in part because all his assets in Florence had been seized by the Black Guelphs.

He fell out of favour and was exiled for life by the leaders of the Black Guelphs (among them, was Corso Donati, a distant relative of Dante's second wife). The Donati political

faction was in power at the time and they were in league with Pope Boniface VIII (1235-1303).

In 1294 Dante had already witnessed a leadership conflict of church and state, which broke out between the pope and King Philip IV of France who wanted the Knight Templar assets for himself. Philip IV started to collect new taxes from the clergy and pope Boniface VIII forbade imposing taxes on the clergy without papal consent. In fact, the pope, and many other figures from Florentine politics were incarcerated in the most unpleasant hell.

This incident instigated Dante to create 'Inferno.' Dante was driven out of Florence by then, but this would be the beginning of his most productive artistic period.

During the Dark Middle Ages (500 and 1000 AD) Italy was a mosaic of small states. The regions did not share a language, culture, or easy communications.

In 1301 Dante is exiled: While in exile, Dante travelled and wrote, The Divine Comedy. He withdrew from all political activities.

In 1304 he went to Bologna, where he began his Latin thesis "De Vulgari Eloquentia" ("The Eloquent Vernacular").

He urged courtly Italians to embrace the fixed Italian of serious literary language in their every spoken dialect.

The created language would as a result be one way to unify the divided Italian territories. The work was left unfinished, but it was influential nevertheless.

In March 1306, Florentine exiles were expelled from Bologna, and Dante ended in Padua.

Dante now withdrew from all active participation in politics. In one of his odes written at this time, the "Canzone of the Three Ladies", he finds himself visited in his banishment by Justice and her spiritual children, outcasts even as he, and declares that, since such are his companions in misfortune, he counts his exile an honour.

Dante's whereabouts for a few years between 1307 and 1309 remain unknown.

Perhaps he spent those years in France.

Dante's travels abroad: To complete his education, Dante travelled abroad, visiting Universities of Bologna, Padua, Cremona, Naples and Paris. He became familiar with prominent Minds and their thoughts of the time. He learned Eastern Ideas from Asiatic monarchies of the 13th Century already present in Rome. He met missionaries and Greek writers. This curiosity was nurture his inborn tendency for mysticism and symbolism. He combined his prevailing and past knowledge with history in his publications.

Dante became the lover of Philosophy, that mystical lady whose soul is love and whose body is wisdom, she "whose true abode is in the most secret place of the Divine Mind".

Dante's Religion and Spiritualism:

Humans first find in their full maturity the general conception of the nature of man, of government, and of human destiny. It is afterwards transfigured, without being transformed, into the framework of the Dante the Seeker.

"Man is ordained for two ends: blessedness of this life, which consists in the exercise of his natural powers and is figured in the terrestrial paradise; blessedness of life eternal, which consists in the fruition of the Divine aspect in the celestial paradise to which man's natural powers cannot ascend without the aid of the Divine light. To these two ends man must come by diverse means: For to the first we attain by the teachings of philosophy, following them by acting in accordance with the moral and intellectual virtues. To the second by spiritual teachings, which transcend human reason, as we follow them by acting according to the theological virtues." <https://www.newadvent.org/>

The Divine Comedy:

The Divine Comedy is a tale poem describing Dante's imaginative life journey. Midway on his journey through life Dante realizes he took the wrong path.

The Roman poet Virgil searches for the lost Dante at the request of Beatrice. He finds Dante in the woods on the evening of Good Friday in 1300 AD.

He thereafter serves as Dante's guide. They begin a religious pilgrimage to find God. To reach his goal, Dante must pass through his self-created Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise.

The Divine Comedy is made up of three parts, matching with Dante's three journeys: Inferno, or "Hell"; Purgatorio, or "Purgatory"; and Paradiso, or "Paradise." Each part has a prologue and around 33 cantos.

Dante and Virgil enter the wide gates of Hell. On an Easter Sunday, Dante emerges from Hell. From end to end, his travels are about finding his way to God so he can once more, to look at the stars.

At first glance, the poem describes Dante's make-believe invented travels through Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven but on a deeper level, it represents metaphorically and symbolically the state of a materialistic soul after death.

How should we understand the mortality of all living things and, closer to home, how should we understand our own mortality? It is reasonable to hope and to consider whether this life is the only life there is and, if there is reason to believe that there is an afterlife. The Mind of the mind wonders about dualism and materialism. If there is an

afterlife what are the reasons advanced for thinking the reasonability of such beliefs? Dante depends on the reasonability of his personal metaphysical convictions.

At this deeper level, Dante draws from medieval Christian theology and philosophy, especially of Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), who disputed questions and commentaries on Aristotle.

The *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas was the best-known compendium of all of the main theological teachings of the Catholic Church, intended to be an instructional guide for theology students, including seminarians and the literate laity.

The philosophy of St. Thomas became the foundation of both natural and spiritual sciences during the Life of Dante. Therefore, the *Divine Comedy* is called “the *Summa*” in verse. The work was originally simply titled “*Comedya*” and was later christened “*Divina*” by Giovanni Boccaccio. Written in the Middle Ages, Dante Alighieri’s poem is a study of Western Church philosophy, astrology, and sciences during the 13th and 14th century.