



## Concept and function of mind in Sanskrit literature and Modern Psychology: Understanding the interrelationship of Trigunas, Tridosha and mind

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### Abstract

Human Beings are indispensable creatures of the Universe and possess a balanced physique and senses, which mark their distinct identity from other species. There is no doubt that the “Mind” forms an integral part of the human body, and its role determines the existence of the human body in this universe. Historically, the evolution of humans dates back a long period, from Australopithecus, during which the mind developed at every stage, culminating in the emergence of Homo sapiens, where the mind reached maturity. In the Indian Knowledge System, our mind and body depend on the Triguna and Tridosha. Our actions depend on the mind. The mind in Sanskrit literature comes alive through vivid imagery, philosophical depth, and practical wisdom, making its understanding both profound and relatable. “Trigunas” refers to three fundamental qualities or energies that make up all of nature (Prakriti), including the human mind and behaviour. The concept of Trigunas has been defined in Sankhya Darshan, Yoga Darshan and Ayurveda, which holds that the universe is composed of three major attributes: Satva, Rajas, and Tamas. The Living Species on this earth, including Human beings, inherit the admixture of ‘Physique’ and ‘Psyche’, which represents the universe, which is composed of these three mentioned attributes of the triguna. Tridosha is a fundamental concept in Ayurveda, describing the three vital energies, or biological humours, that govern all physiological and psychological functions of the body and mind: Vatta, Pitta, and Kapha. Tridosha governs the physiological and psychological functions of the body; Triguna governs the psychological and spiritual dimensions of existence.

In this study, I would strive to investigate the descriptive study of the mind and its characteristics in various literature of the Indian Knowledge System, since there have been different aspects of the mind discussed in various sources that need to be identified. In addition, this study would also showcase the relationship of the mind with Triguna and Tridosha and how these three aspects share an umbilical bond amongst them. This paper will also explore whether there is any reference to this concept in Indian Knowledge Systems, and if so, what methods of treatment are mentioned in Ayurveda for restoring this balance.

However, under this continued discussion, the detailed discussion of the human mind in the modern psychological context would be undertaken and how its characteristics are synchronous with the Indian Knowledge System context. Modern Psychology employs neurotransmitters, neurocognitive and other brain dimensions, along with emotional characteristics to determine the mental status of an individual.

**Keywords:** Mind, Trigunas, Tridosha, mental health, Indian Knowledge System, Ayurveda, modern psychology

### Introduction

Our civilisation and culture are immensely rich. From ancient traditions to the modern era, whether it is knowledge or science, our heritage provides us with wisdom in every aspect. In all of this, Indian philosophy holds a supreme and unparalleled position. The total number of Indian philosophies is nine, out of which six are called Āstika (theistic) philosophies, and three are called Nāstika (atheistic) or non-theistic philosophies. Among them, Sāṅkhya, Yoga, and Vedānta are the systems in which the mind and intellect have been deeply analyzed how our senses, mind, and consciousness (Chitta) function, and how they can control or regulate our mental states.

In Sāṅkhya-Yoga, the mind (manas) is described as a subtle material organ emerging from prakṛti (nature) and is a part of the evolving chain of creation. According to this view, the mind is not consciousness itself, but an instrument of perception and volition: The mind (manas) is considered the eleventh sense organ, alongside five organs of knowledge and five of action. It acts as the supervisor and governor, mediating sensory input and motor output. Sāṅkhya identifies three internal organs: manas (mind), buddhi (intellect), and ahaṁkāra (ego), which are psychical

instruments, interrelated but possessing distinct functions. While the mind, subtle matter, consciousness (puruṣa) is entirely distinct, pure and unconditioned. Mind becomes “conscious” only by the “illumination” of puruṣa.

### Concept of mind Sankhya-Yoga

Sankhya-Yoga philosophy is found in two basic principle Purush is known as: Purush, which is the highest consciousness or spirit and prakriti is, also known as Prakriti, which means mind and relates to emotion, intellect and the core of cultural intelligence. Sankhya philosophy and yoga extend their application to the mental and emotional domain in addition to the idea of manas and chitta, or awareness through Astangyoga, we can control our one’s mind. Sankhya-Yoga offer many implementations of mental health like emotional and psychological treatment.

In Yoga philosophy yoga comes from Sanskrit yuj dhatu, which means connect and unite. This is not a physical practice they teach how to connect or become closer to god through breathing exercise internal practices, moral ideas and the unification of ones awareness with the universal divine. It also recognises as a science that clarifies the best way to control the body, mind and spirit. The idea of yog

come from ancient texts like Bhagwadgita, Upanishad, Vedanta, Patanjali yogsutra impart selfawareness intellectual understanding and spiritual wisdom. To understand the evaluation of mind necessities and awareness of both the physical and sensory organs of the human body. They dispute the results that are not relevant, but his insight on how to modulate the mind through rest, imagination, effective memory, and incorrect knowledge can result in a critical and comprehensive understanding of consciousness it is believed that the mind working with the body and its organ is the portal to the outside of the world.

Yoga is the one of the most holistic approaches towards the cessation of mentalaves and its disorder has been given for the attainment of holistic mental and spiritual health. Patanjali said mental therapy like Abhyas-Vairagya, kriya-yoga and ishwarpranidhan etc. [Rakesh Kumar Ranjan 2015]

The mind, by its very nature, is restless, unsteady, and difficult to control. It becomes easily disturbed by external objects and internal impressions. Although it may sometimes appear steady, this steadiness is not constant it arises only when the mind temporarily focuses on something that naturally holds its attention. The mind's instability may be natural, or it may arise from deeper psychological conditions, past impressions, or disturbances such as disease or fatigue. Recognizing this unstable nature of the mind, Sage Patanjali explains that certain obstacles arise on the path of yoga which distract the mind and prevent it from remaining steady. These obstacles disease, dullness, doubt, carelessness, laziness, cravings, mistaken understanding, failure to progress, and instability in maintaining progress are called "antarāyas," meaning hindrances. Each one creates mental disturbance (vikṣepa), scattering the mind and blocking spiritual growth. Patanjali lists these nine obstacles to help the seeker identify them, overcome them, and continue steadily toward yogic concentration and inner clarity.

### **Sankhya-Yoga: Mind as Material and Instrument**

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### **Function of the mind through Sankhya-Yoga**

The concept of mind in Sankhyayoga is explained as the central instrument between the senses and intellect, governing perception and action <sup>[1]</sup>. In Sankhya philosophy, the mind (manas) is described as the third internal organ, acting as a supervisor and mediator between the organs of perception and action. The mind's proper functioning is crucial for sense perception and voluntary action; it is interrelated with intellect (buddhi) and ego (ahaṁkāra).

Sankhyayoga teaches that the mind is subject to agitation due to desires and emotions, but can be stilled and purified through meditation, detachment, and spiritual discipline. Sankhyayoga's understanding of the mind is intricately described through its shlokas, especially in the Sāṅkhya Sūtras and related philosophies. The mind is seen as a central instrument coordinating knowledge and action, deeply tied to liberation and bondage in classical teachings.

### **Origin and Role of Mind (Manas) in Sankhyasutra**

The Sāṅkhya system describes the mind as one of the eleven sense organs, arising from the sattvika aspect of ahaṁkāra (ego). Its function is supervisory: it processes and directs perception and action, governing both sensory input and motor output. In Sankhya philosophy, Mahat is the cosmic intelligence, from ahaṁkāra and then manas (mind) originate.

"Mind is no other than ahaṁkāra, the idea of 'I'. It is, indeed, difficult to eschew this idea of 'I'. Mind always attaches itself to something objective (sthula).

The sprouting 'I'-idea from ahaṁkāra develops into buddhi (intellect), and then the mind becomes engaged in endless thoughts or "sankalpas.

The Sāṅkhya Kārikā describes the mind (manas) as both an organ of perception and action, originating from prakṛti through a sequence of evolutes: first intellect (buddhi), then ego (ahaṁkāra), and then mind (manas) along with the other internal and external organs. The mind's core role is integration, determination, and presentation it receives input from the senses, generates thought, and presents meaning to both ego and intellect.

### **Types of Senses and Their Functions**

The senses are of two types: cognitive senses (jñānendriyas) and active senses (karmendriyas). The five cognitive senses are the eye (sight), ear (hearing), nose (smell), tongue (taste), and skin (touch). These provide us with knowledge of form, sound, odor, flavor, and tactile sensation. The five active senses are speech, hands, feet, anus, and generative organs. These enable functions such as speaking, grasping, walking, excretion, and reproduction.

### **Inner Faculties and Role of Mind**

The inner instrument (antahkaraṇa) consist buddhi (intellect), ahaṁkāra (ego), and manas (mind). Among these, the mind plays a unique dual role. It is counted both as a sense of knowledge and a sense of action. The mind performs determination (sankalpa-vikalpa) and is called a sense due to its similarity with others. Unlike the external senses, it is tri-temporal, meaning it perceives past, present, and future objects.

### **Diversity and Origin of the Senses**

The diversity of the senses arises from the particular effects of the three qualities (guṇas-sattva, rajas& tamas), expressed as unseen moral forces (dharma and adharma). Just as external objects differ from one another, so too do the senses. Their origin also lies in these guṇas. Situated in ahaṁkāra, the guṇas give rise to the senses, with unseen merit and demerit (adṛṣṭa) acting as auxiliary causes.

### **Process of the Senses' Activity**

The activity of the senses occurs through mutual correspondence and signaling. For instance, when an object

is perceived, the eye grasps its form, the mind deliberates, the ego identifies with it, and the intellect makes the final decision. Thus, all four instruments senses, mind, ego, and intellect contribute. Sometimes this process occurs simultaneously, and at other times sequentially, depending on the presence or absence of the external object.

### Concept of mind through Vedanta

In Vedāntasāra by Sadananda, Manas and Antahkarana are explicitly mentioned and defined in several shlokas. One key passage related to this describes the four-fold division of Antahkarana (inner instrument), which includes Manas (mind), Buddhi (intellect), Chitta (memory), and Ahamkara (ego).

**Manas (mind):** The faculty within antahkarana responsible for processing sensory data, generating thoughts, and emotional reactions. It is the instrument that receives sensory impressions and presents them to buddhi (intellect) for determination. Buddhi (intellect) is that modification of Antahkarana which determines and discriminates. Ahamkara is the sense of individuality or ego. chitta is the faculty of memory and remembrance. Sutras 65-66. Additionally, spiritual practice cleanses the Antahkarana to lead to Self-realization, transcending these mental modifications.

According to Vedanta philosophy, Manas Prakriti refers to the mental or psychological constitution shaped by the interplay of the three Gunas (qualities) - Sattva (purity, harmony), Rajas (activity, passion), and Tamas (inertia, ignorance). This classification influences the behavior, reactions, and personality of an individual. In Vedanta, the mind (Manas) is one of the internal organs or Antahkarana, along with Buddhi (intellect), Chitta (memory or subconscious), and Ahamkara (ego). Manas is a subtle organ that processes sensory inputs and helps in perception, acting as an interface between the senses and the higher faculties of intellect and ego. Manas Prakriti is not static; it can change under various influences, unlike the body's physical constitution, which is fixed at birth. The dominant Guna in an individual's Manas Prakriti determines their mental tendencies

- Satvic Manas Prakriti denotes a kind, truthful, calm, and spiritual mind.
- Rajasic Manas Prakriti is characterized by restlessness, desire, and pride.
- Tamasic Manas Prakriti corresponds to ignorance, laziness, and delusion.

Thus, in Vedanta, Manas Prakriti reflects the mental nature of a person shaped by the balance or dominance of the Gunas, playing a crucial role in perception, cognition, and behavior, ultimately impacting spiritual progress.

### Primary Functions According to Vedāntasāra

- **Perception (Pratyaksha):** Receives and processes inputs from the senses, forming mental images and impressions.
- **Sankalpa-Vikalpa (Deliberation and Doubt):** Engages in considering possibilities, making determinations, and experiencing indecision.
- **Emotions and Desires:** Seat of emotional responses and desires, reacting to sensory inputs with feelings like happiness, sadness, and attachment.

- **Attachment and Identification:** Initiates attachment to objects and experiences, fostering a sense of “I am this” or “I want this”.
- **Cooperation with Other Faculties:** Works in coordination with Buddhi (intellect, discrimination), Chitta (memory), and Ahamkara (ego/identity), but is not the sole decision-maker.

### The Origin of Manas

In Vedāntasāra, Sadananda describes creation as an unfolding from Māyā, the primordial power of Brahman. Māyā is composed of three guṇas:

- **Sattva:** clarity, balance, and light
- **Rajas:** activity and restlessness
- **Tamas:** inertia and obscuration

### The Antahkarana has four functions

- **Manas:** the faculty of doubt and deliberation
- **Buddhi:** the faculty of judgment and decision
- **Ahaṅkāra:** the sense of “I” and ownership
- **Chitta:** the faculty of memory and recollection

From the sāttvic essence of the five subtle elements (ākāśa, vāyu, agni, āpa, pṛithvī) emerges the Antahkarana (inner instrument) the mind's subtle machinery.

The Vedāntasāra defines the essential nature of Manas as: “Sañkalpa–vikalpa- ātmakarmanmanah.” Manas is thus a fluctuating, reflective, and dynamic energy. It never rests; it oscillates between options, desires, and emotions “Shall I do this, or not?”

Its prakṛti is movement like ripples on the surface of water. When the mind is calm, it reflects the Self (Ātman) as clearly as still water reflects the moon. When disturbed, it distorts that reflection, creating illusion (māyā).

Ex-The moon appears to tremble when the water moves, yet the real moon in the sky is ever still.

To move beyond the spectrum of negative tendencies, Buddhism prescribes: Mindfulness and meditative training to recognize and counteract unwholesome states. Spiritual practices such as compassion, ethical conduct, and insight into emptiness. Axiological focus the pursuit of value, virtue, and happiness is seen as contingent on eliminating these destructive mental tendencies, not merely as coincidental biological functions.

The spectrum of negative tendencies, therefore, forms a core part of Buddhist philosophy and practice, directly shaping the possibility of suffering or liberation depending on how these tendencies are understood and overcome. (Lin, 2013)

### Concept of mind through Bhagwat Gita

In the contemporary era, a significant portion of the population is affected by mental distress, as life events profoundly influence an individual's psychological well-being. While physical illnesses can often be treated effectively through medication, mental disorders cannot be completely healed through pharmacological interventions alone. Although modern psychology offers several therapeutic approaches such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) these methods usually provide only temporary relief and do not ensure a permanent solution. In contrast, India possesses a rich heritage of ancient scriptures that offer deep insights into mental balance and inner stability. Among

these, the Bhagavad Gita stands out as a highly revered text. Comprising 18 chapters and 700 verses, the Gita contains the teachings delivered by Lord Krishna to Arjuna during the Kurukshetra war, guiding him out of emotional turmoil and restoring his mental equilibrium. The philosophical paths presented in the Gita such as Karma Yoga, Dhyana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, and Atma Yoga provide holistic frameworks that remain relevant today for enhancing mental strength, restoring self-confidence, and achieving long-lasting psychological harmony. (Chattopadhyay, 2007)

### **Concept of mind through Ayurveda**

Ayurveda presents a profound and holistic understanding of the human mind, describing mental health as a delicate harmony between the body, mind, and soul. Rooted in ancient texts such as the Atharvaveda, Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya, this tradition explains that the mind functions through the interaction of the three gunas (Sattva, Rajas, Tamas), the tridoshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha), and the five great elements. According to Ayurveda, the mind is incredibly subtle, possessing a single-pointed nature that enables us to perceive, think, decide, and connect with our surroundings through the senses. However, this delicate system can easily become disturbed. When we misuse our sense organs such as exposing ourselves to harmful sounds, unpleasant visuals, toxic smells, or extreme temperatures the mind loses balance. Similarly, knowingly performing wrong actions, giving in to anger, greed, fear, or ignoring natural bodily urges leads to intellectual errors, further damaging mental stability. Even natural changes in seasons and time can contribute to mental imbalance if one does not adapt properly. These disturbances manifest as various mental disorders described in Ayurveda, including psychosis (Unmada), anxiety (Chittodvega), depression (Avsaad), obsession (Atavabhinivesha), drowsiness, illusions, hysteria, and alcohol-related disorders.

To restore harmony, Ayurveda prescribes three interconnected treatment approaches. The first, Daiva Vyapashraya, uses spiritual methods such as chanting mantras, wearing healing gemstones, performing rituals, fasting, visiting sacred places, and reading religious texts to build positivity and faith. The second, Yukti Vyapashraya, applies systematic, logical methods involving diet, lifestyle correction, cleansing therapies, and herbal medicines. Herbs like Brahmi, Mandukaparni, Jatamansi, and formulations such as Brahmi Ghrita and Kalyanaka Ghrita nourish the brain and stabilize the mind. The third and most profound method, Satvavajaya Chikitsa, focuses on strengthening mental resilience through knowledge, counseling, self-discipline, memory training, emotional regulation, and meditation. By combining these three approaches, Ayurveda offers a complete, compassionate, and deeply insightful approach to mental well-being. Though ancient, its concepts strongly resonate with modern psychological understanding, proving that mental health requires not only curing disease but nurturing inner balance, clarity, and peace. (Fleischman, 1976)

### **Objective**

This paper aims to explore the various contexts of Mind and its characteristics in various literary sources of Indian Knowledge System. Indeed, the concept of Mind is understood in one framework however varied interpretation of Mind has been mentioned in different literature. Under

this discussion, apart from discussing the concept of Mind in detailed context in addition this paper demonstrate relationship between Mind and Triguna since the latter has intrinsic participation in functioning of Mind and its functioning. Hence this study underscores the varied aspects of Mind and its other appendices in various forms.

### **Methodology**

This study involves the qualitative research method in analysing the varied texts of the Indian Knowledge System and modern psychology. Under this segment, thematic analysis of texts such as Sankhya-Yoga Darshan, Vedanta darshan,

Bhagwat Gita and Ayurveda has been undertaken. Ayurveda explains the relationship between the three Gunas and three Dosha

which effect the Mind and Body. The primary data for the study were drawn from

Sankhya Darsana verses 24, 25, 26, 33, 35, and 42, as well as from Yoga Darśan

(Second Chapter) verses 14, 15, 16, and 18, all of which describe the qualities of

Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas, along with the Tridoṣas.

In addition, explanations based on Vedānta Darśana and the Bhagavad Gītā, focused on mind and intellect, were also incorporated. These secondary sources helped deepen the understanding of how the guṇas and doṣas relate to human behavior and their underlying meanings. Through the integrated interpretation of these diverse sources, the study aimed to highlight the thematic relationships embedded between the concepts of guṇas and doṣas within the framework of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS).

### **Procedure**

This study followed mechanism which consisted of several important phases. Initially, a comprehensive textual and thematic analysis undergone on specific verses from the Patanjali Yoga Darshan, Sankhyakarika, Vedanta Sar, Bhagavad-Gita, Buddhism Darshan and Charak Samhita. To identify and segregate themes and concepts important to the three gunas Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. Subsequently, insights were solicited from specialists in Indian philosophy and positive psychology, integrating their viewpoints to enhance the comprehension of the gunas. Finally, a thematic mapping strategy was deployed to create a comparative framework that aligns the attributes of the gunas and dosha with the body and mind, thus enabling a more profound investigation into their possible interrelations.

### **Results and Discussion**

This study focussing “Concept of Mind” demonstrate the varied aspects of its working, having major contribution in human body and its balanced functioning. It is to mentioned the Mind cannot be understood in isolation and needs to be examined its different interrelationship with philosophical and naturalistic dimensions. Although mind has its own natural traits of functioning however various concepts such as Triguna, Tridosha and other things has also role in human mind. The Triguna theory, which originates from Indian philosophical thought, and the Ayurveda, based on contemporary psychology, share a common focus on fostering positive traits and strengths within individuals. Sattva Guna is primarily linked to virtues and beneficial qualities; however, a closer examination indicates that Rajas

and Tamas Gunas also contain characteristics that can correspond to human strengths when directed in a constructive manner.

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