

PYS is focused upon the nature of the mind and how we perceive reality, providing us with some valuable insights.

Vrttis

Thoughts are called **vrittis** in Sanskrit meaning 'wave' or 'whirlpool' or 'modification'. These suggest movement or change and this is highly suitable because the nature of the mind is movement and change, with thoughts coming and going across (or modifying) the mind space. Indeed you can see your mind as an activity, so much we are running and jumping we are thinking, although the activity of the mind is much harder to stop! We should note however that this concept also relates to emotions as well as thought because the two are part of the same spectrum!

READ: BOOK ONE VERSES 5 TO 12

Here we are given the five kinds of vrittis or thoughts which we are told in verse 5 can be either painful or painless. These are:

1. Right knowledge (Pramana) of three types: Direct Perception (Pratyaksha)
Inference (Anumana)
Scriptural Testimony (Agama)
2. Misconception (Viparyaya)
3. Verbal Delusion (Vikalpa)
4. Sleep (Nidra)
5. Memory (Smritayah)

Bk 1 v5 What does it mean to say the vrittis can be either painful (klishta) or painless (aklishta)?

Perhaps you can see ways in which this occurs for you, for example do you use your imagination to day dream or escape from what is happening around you or perhaps you use your imagination to solve problems and be creative. How do you use your memory? Do you tend to keep drawing upon past situations you still find painful, being unable to let them go or can do you primarily use your memory to help you learn something new? Is your sleep of a good quality so you feel rested each morning or is it troubled in some manner! In these ways we are either moving away from the state of yoga where suffering (duhkha) is being created or towards yoga where ease (sukha) is being created through the control of the fluctuations of the mind. In this way we can start to see how we use the mind.

In the Sutras we are given many ways in which to calm these thought-forms or vrittis so the mind becomes steady, clear & peaceful, so we can have clarity of perception and see things as they really are. So we can control the mind rather than the mind controlling us!

"Just as the naturally pure crystal assumes shapes and colours of objects placed near it, so the yogi's mind, with its totally weakened modifications, becomes clear and balanced and attains the state devoid of differentiation between knower, knowable and knowledge. This culmination of meditation is samadhi." Book 1 v41 PYS

Here we are told that as our vrittis weaken the mind becomes clear like a crystal so that it sees what is placed before it with absolute clarity.

Unfortunately however normally the mind clouds our perceptions but why? A useful diagrammatic representation from the book Yoga for Body, Breath and Mind by A.G. Mohan is shown below:

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Here we see a representation of how when the mind is coloured then the Perceiver, the Purusha, cannot see an object of perception clearly rather we see it through the colouring of the mind instead. The mind is 'conditioned' by our **samskaras, the kleshas, and is subject to the changing gunas**, colouring everything we look at, distorting it. If we believe we are the mind and take our perceptions to be the truth then we are only ever seeing reflections of ourselves.

Why is the mind coloured?

Book Two v15 is a very significant verse which gives us some clues as to why the mind is coloured:

"To one of discrimination, everything is painful indeed, due to its consequences: the anxiety and fear over losing what is gained; the resulting impressions left in the mind to create renewed cravings; and the constant conflict among the three gunas, which control the mind."

Here anxiety & fear refer to the kleshas; the resulting impressions refer to the samskaras; and of course reference to the colouring created by the gunas of sattva, rajas and tamas.

The Kleshas: The Five Afflictions (BK2 v3-17)

'The anxiety and fear over losing what is gained' refers to the **kleshas** which are the underlying motivations shared by us all that create our own sets of mental and emotional responses. For instance the desire for something or the dislike of something which will certainly colour our view of it. We shall look at the kleshas in more detail later on.

The Samskaras: The Subliminal Impressions

The second statement '*the resulting impressions left in the mind to create renewed cravings*' relates to the concept of the **samskaras**. Our samskaras are our deeply ingrained impressions of past experience where we have not been able to fully 'show up for something' meaning that impressions of this are set down in our psyche; these then act as subliminal activators propelling consciousness in action, as projections of our mind colouring what we see. As such they are very dynamic forces within our psyche dictating how we act and react; they form our conditioning, our physical, mental and emotional patterns. The word samskara translates as 'sam' meaning 'together or joined' and 'kara' meaning 'action or flow' so a translation for samskara is 'that which flows together'.

In The Light of Yoga Iyengar says **"The practice of yoga is about reducing the size of the subliminal mounds and setting us free from these and other fluctuations or waves in our consciousness. Everybody aspires to be free. No one wants to be manipulated by unseen forces, but effectively, the banks of samskara in the dark depths of the unconscious do just that. As stimuli from the conscious surface travel rapidly down through the levels of the lake, they encounter uncharted banks of sediment that cause secondary waves of thought. These in turn stimulate, in a way that is beyond our comprehension or control, behaviour that is both reactive and inappropriate. Our reactions are preconditioned and therefore unfree"** (page 133).

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Sometimes rather than samskara the word 'vasana' is used and Feuerstein in his book 'The Deeper Dimensions of Yoga' discusses the relationship between samskara and vasana in this way. **"The dynamic aspect of the depth-mind is captured in the Sanskrit term samskara which means literally 'activator.' Each unit of experience, or self-expression, creates a samskara in the depth-mind. Patanjali does not tell us exactly how the subliminal activators determine our mental activity. He simply asserts that they do...The mind is a billowy sea with numerous whirlpools in which we continually lose our true identity as the Self (Purusha). It is by force of habit that we cannot remain observers for very long. And 'habit' is merely another word for the samskara chains that form the lattice of the depth-mind. Patanjali employs the term vasana (trait) for these subliminal configurations composed of a series of similar samskaras. He also refers to them collectively as 'karmic deposit' (karma-ashaya) (p. 281-2).**

This highlights another aspect of the mind, which is that our conditioning ultimately creates new births, as the vasanas, the different collections of samskaras held in the body/mind and subtle bodies continue to need to be expressed. See Book 4 v7 to 9.

The Gunas

Beyond the mechanism of the kleshas, samskaras/vasanas the **gunas** also affect the functioning of the mind **"and the constant conflict among the three gunas, which control the mind"** Bk2 v15. The mind is comprised of the **gunas**, as is true for all of Prakriti or Nature. This means the mind will always be changing and the predominant guna will be shifting and of course this will colour our perception. Also the world around us will also be shifting and in continuous change affecting our own gunas, again colouring the mind. For instance in the morning, in winter time, or after a heavy meal tamas is heightened so our mind and our perception is dulled. Or drinking lots of coffee, running around against the clock or watching a great deal of TV will increase rajas creating more rajas in our minds, colouring our perceptions. This is the reason why Yoga encourages us to choose more sattvic foods, drinks, activities and environments!

We can explore this in more detail with the chitta bhumis or five states of mind, that differ according to the gunas.

Take a look though the chitta bhumis, or five states of mind, as given below and see if you can see what looks familiar to you:

The agitated mind	The mind is uncontrolled & hyperactive, flipping unconsciously from one TV station to another – Extremely rajasic
The dull mind	The mind is slow and inert, the body cannot act, the TV picture cannot be tuned in, it is hazy, unfocused - Tamasic
The distracted mind	The mind alternates between being attentive and distracted. Sometimes channel hopping. Somewhat rajasic – beginning of sattva
The focused state	The mind can be focused upon a single object. We stay and watch one programme only. Sattvic
The state of absorption	The mind knows the object of its focus as it really is without mental projection. Now a TV becomes unnecessary!

The mind is not self-luminous

See Book 4 v17 to 20 where we are told that the mind is the instrument of the Self, and that we are not the mind, rather we are the Purusha but have become identified with the mind. We are the Sun, the Light of Consciousness itself, but think we are the Moon which in reality is only seen in the reflected light of the Sun. Through recognising this we are told in the Sutras we can

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become free Book 4 v25. **Indeed the whole process of the Sutras helps us to experientially realise the fact that in truth we are the Purusha, losing our identity as the mind.**

The four faculties of the mind

Finally looking at the 'functions' of the mind, all of which are subject to conditioning, through the play of the gunas, kleshas and samskaras:

Ahamkara	Ego or sense of 'I' as separate from 'other'. The feeling of me, mine. The sense of relating everything to our own personal story.
Manas	The sensory or lower mind – our capacity to analyse information, particularly that received through the senses, sometime called the desire mind
Buddhi	The intellect or higher mind – faculty of judgment, discrimination & intuition, which is often undeveloped, needing more sattva (calmness) to see clearly
	That part of the Buddhi which is the unconscious or memory – the storehouse of all impressions received; where our samskaras are located within the body/mind and subtle energies

The Kleshas....

See PYS 2.3 to 2.15

In Book 1 we were told that the chitta vrittis could be divided into painful (klishta) and painless (aklishta) types and here we are taken deeper into the source of our potential suffering. The collective name for the **deeper causes of suffering** is the kleshas, translating as '**afflictions**'. There are **five fundamental afflictions** underlying motivations behind our resultant thoughts and emotions (samskaras). They are not the thoughts or emotions themselves but rather the background beliefs and desires from which all else springs forth.

They are listed in the sutras as:

1. **Avidya (Ignorance):** there is a fundamental ignorance of what we really are so we identify with the mind, body and senses
2. **Asmita (Egoism):** where we relate everything to 'I'
3. **Raga (Attraction):** where we naturally seek things we find pleasant
4. **Dvesha (Aversion):** where we naturally try to avoid things we think cause us pain
5. **Abhinivesah (Fear):** where we become fearful, especially of death

We are told in sutra 2.4 that the kleshas have four states of expression where they may be completely **latent**, and not yet expressed in thoughts and behaviour; they may be **mildly** experienced, i.e. there are subtle traces of the kleshas which may be expressed in the future which are experienced in an **oscillating** way where they are sometimes fully expressed and at other times remain unexpressed; they may be **fully active** and constantly expressed in our thoughts and behaviour. We are also told that all of the kleshas sit within the field of avidya, that it is **avidya is the seed from which all other kleshas grow**.

1) Sutra 2.5 gives the classical definition of **avidya** where ignorance is essentially a fundamental incorrect perception of mistaking one thing for another, it being the ultimate root misconception of being completely identified with the world of name and form. It is a **mistake of knowing** or understanding, requiring the development of viveka meaning discrimination, where just as we might separate the grain from the husk we can distinguish between the Purusha and the body, Purusha and the mind etc. Vidya is the highest knowledge being the direct experience of the Truth; **Avidya is existential ignorance** where due to a lack of

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knowledge (vidya) **we confuse the transient with the eternal, impure with the pure and so forth.** Essentially we do not know what we are in truth.

One can say that from avidya asmita grows, from asmita raga grows, from raga dvesa grows and from dvesa abinvesah grows.

2) **Asmita**, sometimes defined as individuality, **ego or 'I am-ness'**, is our natural state of consciousness stemming from Avidya whereby we identify with the mind, senses, body and our actions, often being compared to being like a king who is disguised as a beggar and identifies completely with being a beggar. We possess a list of what we think we are I am a parent, I am a teacher, I am a sister etc. We identify things as mine. We are fully identified with our personal story. Some people may identify more with the body and others who are more intellectual may identify primarily with the mind.

We do not know that it is possible to function whereby the purusha sees, moves, feels etc. although this can be experienced in meditation when we lose the sense of I but remain conscious!

We can work with the klesha of asmita by noting our terminology, noting if we are fully identifying with something thinking 'I am sad', 'My leg hurts', 'I hate snakes' better perhaps to think there is sadness, this leg hurts, there is a fear of snakes....We are conscious of the experience of a thought or emotion but have removed complete identification allowing us to more dispassionately choose a course of action.

3) Raga then follows as we seek pleasure and happiness in the outer world, getting attracted to pleasurable experiences that **we seek to repeat.**

4) Inevitably we are also attempting to avoid pain, **Dvesha**, and **actively avoid any discomfort.**

In our own daily practice we can stay awake to the kleshas, watching for their presence, so we better understand our ego.

Do you hold on to that which you consider pleasurable, being fearful of losing it? Do you look to the outer world, both in the form of things and people to give you happiness and to validate your own worth? Do you recognise the strain created by these needs?

Can you practice being in the world where you do not mind what happens and can be fully with what happens in each moment? Can you notice when you feel the need to protect or promote yourself?

5) Finally as a result of this innate inner tension and need to serve the ego we are subject to **Abhinivesha**, where we are caught up in anxiety or fear, especially the fear of annihilation or death and this will **necessarily affect our actions.**

In sutra 2.10 we are told when the kleshas are subtle, where the associated thought forms or impressions (samskaras) exist in a subtle latent, potential form they can be returned to asmita. Bernard Bouanchaud in his commentary tells us this when the impressions are subtle and we have a calm mind state then we can see these thought forms arising and we can cut them off so they do not escalate into a series of thoughts and a resulting action. We have a choice although this relies upon having a sattvic state.

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In sutra 2.11 we are told that when the kleshas are in an active state their gross effects can be destroyed by meditation, through which we can detach ourselves from the mental impressions, as the mind is calmed and the energy is dissipated.

Patanjali tells us the kleshas and their resultant samskaras can ultimately only be destroyed through the highest Samadhi, Nirbija (without seed) Samadhi where all conditioning is burned away. In his translation of PYS Sri Swami Satchidananda gives us an interesting metaphor:

“It is something like using the herb asafoetida. Asafoetida is a product that aids digestion and helps control gas. In India it is used in curries and kept in a mud pot. But it smells so much that even if you clean the pot hundreds of times, the smell will stay. How can you get rid of the smell? The only way is to break the pot. The ego has the ‘smell’ of your thoughts in a very subtle form. But you can only understand the smell and see that the thoughts are there when they manifest. To get rid of the impressions completely, you have to break the ego. So, first you clean the superficial things, and ultimately you break the pot. By meditation you can understand the thought forms and clean them up. Then when you have gotten a glimpse of where and how they are, you can slowly trace them to their root and finally cut it out. When you want to uproot a tree, you cut the branches first and then dig to the very root.” 2.11 commentary

Please note however that this metaphor, especially the reference to ‘break the ego’, can seem a little too violent and we must be aware that the ‘ego’, mind and senses have their special role, and allow us to uniquely express ourselves in this world. Nor should we deny any ‘negative thoughts’. **Rather it is a question of where our deepest identification lies.** And through our practice of yoga meditation it is intended that we may see beyond these aspects of ourselves, and so can practice non-attachment. It must however be a kindly compassionate method of calming the mind and becoming more aware of what is arising so we can understand the mind and release the mind’s power to influence us.

The sutras go on to describe how the kleshas and the resultant samskaras, i.e. our base drives and the resultant thought forms or beliefs, drive the mechanism of re-incarnation as we are told when they remain they must be expressed. This is the Law of Karma, ‘karma’ translating as ‘action’ where every cause must have an effect. We certainly see this in our own lives where our actions will always have a consequence and here we are told this carries across through death motivating new lives. So the kleshas and samskaras keep us on the Wheel of Samsara (the cycle of death, life and re-birth) through the Law of Karma.

Sutras 2.15 to 2.17 are very important sutras because they tell us that we must engage the **Buddhi**, our capacity for discrimination (viveka) to see that all of prakriti, the manifestations of the world, are transient ultimately causing us suffering, that our latent desires will always cause us pain, but that with viveka we see this will always be the case and so we **choose not to hang our happiness upon the transient world**. This is worthy of deep contemplation and when it is fully comprehended then it is inevitable we will look for happiness deeper within rather than outside, you could say in the spiritual rather than the worldly!

The mechanism of removing the Kleshas can be seen as a process where we are returning the kleshas back to the ignorance from which they spring and through meditation eventually removing ignorance itself as we experience the Purusha as what we really are.

Meditation is a process that shows this mechanism very well. As you meditate you allow thoughts to arise, at first they may be very familiar but eventually deeper thoughts arise from the unconscious and we become aware of our inner drives and ‘seeds’. As the seeds rise into consciousness and we become aware of them they lose their power to affect us. We become

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less likely to act in a habitual way, i.e. responding without awareness to triggers, and in this way the quality of the mind changes as we become more aware of ourself – indeed self-awareness is the key. Indeed as the mind gradually calms it generally becomes easier to see what arises within our consciousness.

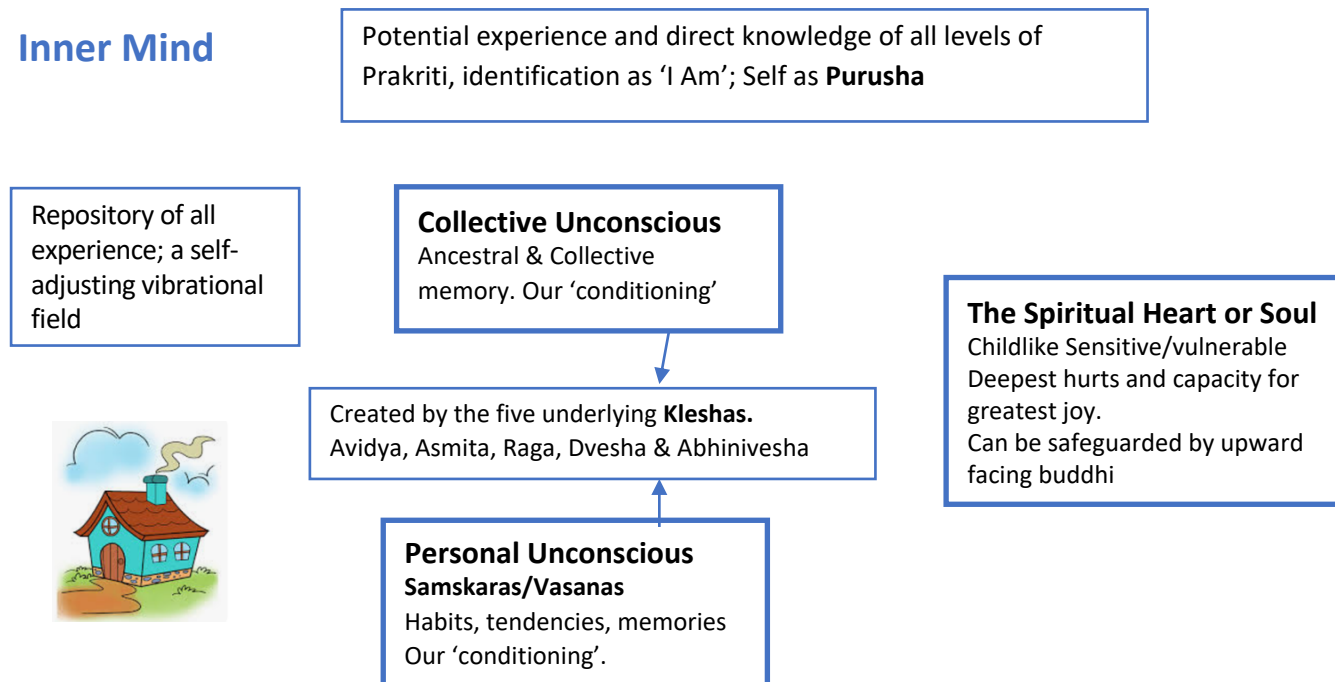
Kleshas can be transformed gradually through practice (abhyasa) and non attachment (vairagya), and the cultivation of discrimination (viveka) but as the Sutras say it is only through Nirbija Samadhi, the seedless samadhi, that the seeds or kleshas are ultimately destroyed.

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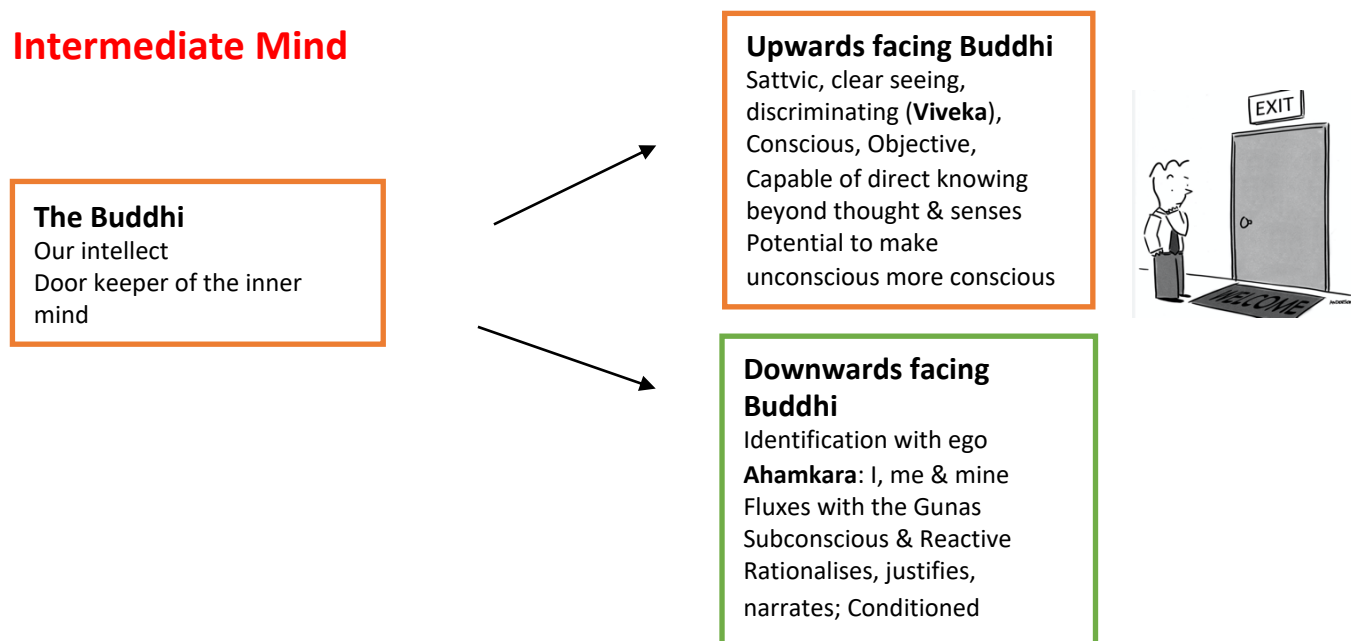
A useful way of conceptualising the mind is via the concept of the Outer mind, Intermediate mind, and the Inner mind.

Worthwhile bearing in mind that Consciousness is really our capacity to relate to something and different states of Consciousness naturally relate to different things.

Inner Mind



Intermediate Mind



Outer Mind

