

Yoga Philosophy-7:

What is the mind? What is its operational set-up?

Prof. K.S. Arjunwadkar

States of mind

The mind is the instrument of the import and interpretation of information, and the export of reactions. It operates in five states or modes: [i] valid cognition, [ii] erroneous cognition, [iii] verbal cognition, [iv] sleep and [v] memory (I.5). The control of the mind, Yoga, implies the suspension of all these aspects. In other words, the mind as an instrument of worldly cognition is suspended during meditation; what is valid cognition for worldly dealings is also not relevant to the cognition of the highest realities through Yoga. When the mind is thus suspended, the soul is left in its real nature which is pure consciousness (I.3). During the active states of the mind (*vyutthāna-citta*), the soul gets erroneously identified with it and ascribes experiences of the mind to itself (I.4).

States of mind defined

[i-ii, iv, v] According to Yoga, there are three means of valid cognition: perception, inference and authority. (Other systems have a greater or lesser number of means, depending on the emphasis of their similarities and differences.) Perception is the means by which cognition is obtained, broadly, of the *specific* characteristics of external objects which possess both general and specific characteristics. Inference is the means by which cognition is obtained, broadly, of the *general* characteristics of objects (Vyāsa I.7); this is on the basis of such characteristics which are present in similar objects and absent in dissimilar ones. Authority is the knowledge obtained through the words of a trustworthy person who obtains it by perception or inference. Erroneous cognition, deep sleep and memory are self-evident. The memory of experience in sleep proves that sleep is not the absence of experience. The waking state is implied in valid/invalid knowledge and dream in invalid knowledge/memory.

[iii] Cognition through language defies all norms and is in a class by itself. ‘Consciousness is the nature of the soul,’ is an instance on the point. The fact is, the soul itself is consciousness; and yet the statement implies a distinction between them.

Ways to suspend states of mind

These states can be suspended by means of persistence (*abhyāsa*) and detachment (*vairāgya*). Detachment starts from indifference to worldly pleasures and matures in total indifference to the entire domain of the primaevial constituents of Nature (*guṇa-s*) which includes even discriminative knowledge (I.16). Though stated here in the context of Yoga, persistence is a universal factor necessary even for worldly achievements.