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“CHITTAVRITTI NIRODHA” – A REVIEW

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Abstract

Introduction: Citta is the mind, vritti refers to thoughts and Nirodha means removal. Vrittis are of five types as follows: Pramana (right knowledge) – A state in which the mind reflects reality, Viparyaya (misconception) – A state when the mind makes a wrong judgement, Vikalpa (imagination or feeling) – does not refers to understanding the real situation, it refers to verbal imagination without real object. Nidra (deep sleep) – The state of mind that exists when one sleeps and Smriti (memory) – That which is stored in the mind. “Vrittis” refers to the whirlpool of thoughts, emotions, and mental activities that constantly occupy our consciousness. These fluctuations can be compared to the ripples on the surface of a serene lake, disrupting its tranquility.

Material and Methods: A compilation and critical analysis of Yoga and Ayurvedic literature, national and international journals, online search engine, contemporary textbookbooks and other sources that contributes to the compilation of study.

Discussion: "Yoga Chitta Vritti Nirodha" is one of the beginning sutras from Patanjali's Yoga Sutra which means 'yoga is the cessation of the modification of Chitta. The Chitta is the unconscious storehouse of past thoughts and experiences and the bed of memory. In Hindu philosophy, Vritti is often described based on the foundation of Samskara. Samskara represents the result of our past karma,

Conclusion: Vrittis are the ever-changing mental fluctuations, encompassing thoughts, emotions, and patterns of the mind, at the heart of yoga philosophy. By engaging in yogic techniques such as meditation, individuals can gain mastery over these mental fluctuations. The path may be challenging, but with persistence and self-compassion, it leads to the self-realization.

Key words: Chitta, Chittavritti, Vriiti, Yoga, Ayurveda

Introduction:

Chitta vritti is a term that refers to the thoughts that clutter or create chaos the mind.[1] Chitta vritti can be translated as "Mind chatter," or "Monkey mind." When the mind gets connected with any object it assumes the form of that object. This form is called as 'Vritti'. Modifications of the mind are called 'Chitta vrittis'.

Modifications of Chitta or Chitta Vritti

The Vritti is of two types, can be painful (Klishta) or non-painful (Aklishta) classification is given by Patanjali, but they always affect one's ability to find truth.[2] Vritti prevents us from self-realization. Five types of Chittavritti viz. Pramana, Viparyaya, Vikalpa, Nidra and Smriti.[3] In this context, Swami Vivekananda gave an example of a river. Consider a silent river. When we throw a stone into the river, a small wave or series of waves on the surface of water start appearing. Until we stop throwing a stone, it gradually appears at the surface. These waves don't let us see at the bottom of the river. The river is like our Chitta. The stones we throw into the river is the external causes which enter in mind through senses. The bottom of the lake is our own true Self; the lake is the Chitta and the waves the Vrittis.[4]

Pramana: Pramana is right cognition. In the yoga philosophy, three Pramanas are accepted as a valid means of knowledge, Perception, Inference, and Testimony by which Chitta attends the form and knowledge of object.[5] perception is possible when it comes in contact with the sense organs and again in contact with external object and its form.[6] Inference takes place when Chitta organizes the generic feature of things.[7] verbal testimony takes place when there is a word uttered by trustworthy person and the meaning is understood out of it.[8]

Viparyaya:[9] It is wrong cognition or false knowledge. All knowledge of the external world, we get through five senses, sometimes becomes deceptive. For example, illusion such as snake - rope confusion etc.

Vikalpa:[10] It is verbal cognition or imagination. This is knowledge in which the object does not exist. For example, fantasy, daydreaming etc. If it's used in the controlled & practical manner, It is called controlled imagination - 'Kalpana'. On the other hand, Vikalpa is uncontrolled imagination which diverts the mind in fantasy.

Nidra:[11] It is state of sleep or the absence of cognition. In this state due to the preponderance of Tamas guna, there is absolute absence of the waking and dreaming modifications of Chitta.

But according to some scholars this state should not be conceived as the total absence of knowledge because after arising from sleep, the person has the consciousness that he had slept well. Thus, Nidra is also a Vritti of mind because it still experiences a thought unconsciously.

Smriti:[12] Smriti means memory. Memory consists of impressions of past experience which is stored consciously or unconsciously by the person's mind. Memory is the recollection of past experience through which new experience comes with knowledge by the help of the impressions left behind.

Material and Methods:

A compilation and critical analysis of Chitta and Vritti told in Yoga Ayurveda has been done. Yoga and Ayurvedic literature, National and International journal, online search engine, contemporary textbook and other sources were primary source for compilation, review and critical analysis was carried out in the data base with the keywords like Chitta, Yoga, Vritti, Pramana, Nidra etc. The obtained Data were correlated and critically analyzed and conclusion were drawn that the brief presented in the ancient literature are relevant even today.

Discussion:

"Yoga Chitta Vritti Nirodha" is one of the beginning sutras from Patanjali's Yoga Sutra which means 'yoga is the cessation of the modification of Chitta. When the self attains true knowledge then self ends to see itself in these modifications of the Chitta and get rid of attachment and aversion to the worldly pleasure and sufferings. This attachment and aversion are cause of bondage. The only way to get rid of this bondage is to control the modification of Chitta, which is the result of yoga.

The waves of thought in the Chitta are called Vrittis. for example. consider how pearls are formed. A parasite gets inside the shell and causes irritation, and the oyster throws a sort of enameling round it, and this makes the pearl. The universe of experience is our own enamel, so to say, and the real universe is the parasite serving as nucleus

The Chitta is the unconscious storehouse of past thoughts and experiences and the bed of memory. It accumulates impressions and blends them with current mental imagery to give understanding and richness to experience. In meditation this can take the form of a fantasy, a distracting thought, a simple desire, or a powerful emotional urge. However, the process of

meditation deposits impressions of peace and concentration in the Chitta. These provide support during future periods of meditation. Meditation gradually dispels the falseness of self-identity and reveals a deep and true Self. Sat, Chit, Ananda: The realization of the true Self is actually indescribable. Sometimes it is described as: Sat means existence itself. Chit means consciousness. Ananda means bliss. In Ayurveda also Chintya, Vicharya, Unhya, Dhyeya, and Sankalpa mentioned as a Chitta Karma.[13]

Pramana” stands as the pillar of right cognition. This Vritti revolves around our ability to perceive information accurately, making it an indispensable aspect of our cognitive faculties. Pramana essentially represents the mind’s quest for truth and knowledge based on belief, experience, and moral values.

The Six Types of Pramana[14]

Within the realm of Pramana, the mind employs a diverse set of tools to determine the validity of information. These six types of Pramana Vrittis are essential to our understanding of the world.

Table 1: Pramana

SR. No	Pramana
1	Direct Experience (Pratyaksha): This is the most straightforward form of Pramana, relying on sensory perception. What we see, hear, taste, touch, and smell directly inform our understanding of reality.
2	Inference (Anumana): Inference involves drawing conclusions based on observations. For example, if we see smoke, we infer the presence of fire.
3	Comparison (Upamana): Upamana Pramana relies on comparison. When we relate something new to something familiar, we gain insights. For instance, a new fruit is described as “apple-like.”
4	Postulation (Arthapatti): This form of Pramana helps us understand scenarios where direct evidence is lacking. For example, if a person never eats during the day but remains healthy, we postulate that they eat at night.
5	Non-apprehension (Anupalabdhi): Anupalabdhi is the perception of the absence of something. It’s the recognition that something we expected to see or experience is not present.
6	Verbal Testimony (Aptopadesha): This involves gaining knowledge from credible sources, such as teachers, books, or experts. It’s an important Pramana as it enables us to access knowledge beyond our direct experiences.

While Pramana Vritti empowers us to acquire knowledge, it's crucial to recognize that what we perceive as true may not hold the same truth for someone else. Belief systems, past experiences, and individual perspectives influence our understanding of reality. As seekers of self-realization, the recognition of these individual differences becomes vital. In our journey to understand Pramana and its role in Vrittis, we navigate the path of discernment and wisdom. The ability to differentiate between personal belief and objective reality is a stepping stone toward clarity and self-realization.

Viparyaya referred as “misconception,”. This Vritti occurs when the mind incorrectly interprets sensory information, leading to a distortion of reality. In the intricate tapestry of the mind's fluctuations, Viparyaya can be likened to a mirage, where what we perceive may not align with the truth. To illustrate Viparyaya, consider the classic example of a mirage in the desert. From a distance, one might see what appears to be a shimmering pool of water on the arid horizon. The senses signal the presence of water, and the mind interprets it as a real body of water. However, upon closer examination, it becomes evident that there is no water, and the mirage dissipates. This mirage effect encapsulates the essence of Viparyaya vritti. It highlights how our sensory perceptions can deceive us, leading to a false understanding of reality. It serves as a reminder that our senses, while powerful, are not infallible. The mind's tendency to misinterpret sensory input can create illusions that obstruct our path to self-realization. In the pursuit of self-realization through yoga, clarity and accurate perception are paramount. Recognizing the presence of Viparyaya within our mental landscape is the first step toward dispelling the fog of misconception. By acknowledging that our senses can sometimes lead us astray, we open the door to a more profound understanding of the true nature of reality.

Vikalpa, often associated with imagination, is a fascinating Vritti that explores the creative depths of the mind. This mental fluctuation allows us to conjure mental images, fantasies, and daydreams. While imagination can be a wellspring of inspiration and innovation, it also has the potential to lead the mind astray if left unchecked. One facet of Vikalpa worth exploring is controlled imagination, known as “Kalpana.” This form of imagination serves as a valuable tool for setting and achieving goals, problem-solving, and nurturing creativity. Controlled imagination allows us to envision possibilities, plan for the future, and bring our dreams to life. Imagine an artist who envisions a masterpiece before putting a brush on canvas or an architect who mentally constructs a building before it stands in reality. These are examples of controlled imagination at work, harnessing the mind's creative power for constructive

purposes. Conversely, uncontrolled imagination (Vikalpa) can be likened to a wandering mind lost in fantasy. It often leads to daydreaming, doubt, and indecision. While brief moments of wandering imagination can be harmless, unchecked Vikalpa Vritti can become a source of distraction and mental turmoil. Think of a moment when you found yourself lost in an elaborate daydream, detached from the present reality. This is a manifestation of uncontrolled imagination. It diverts the mind from its intended focus and may hinder productivity and self-realization.

Nidra, the Vritti of sleep, introduces us to an altered state of consciousness that is both mysterious and profound. In the landscape of mental fluctuations, Nidra represents a unique state where the mind's thought patterns are significantly reduced. It's a state where we experience rest and restoration, but it's not merely the absence of wakefulness. It's a state where the mind's usual chatter subsides, and we find ourselves in a realm where thoughts are minimal, if not absent. It's a transient state that holds great potential for self-discovery and transformation.

Within the realm of yoga, there exists a powerful practice known as "Yoga Nidra." This ancient meditation practice allows individuals to consciously experience the activity of deep sleep while remaining awake and aware. Yoga Nidra guides practitioners through a state of deep relaxation, where they become observers of their thoughts and sensations. Yoga Nidra provides a unique opportunity to explore the depths of consciousness while retaining a sense of mindfulness. It allows us to access the tranquil state of Nidra intentionally, rather than experiencing it solely as an unconscious part of our daily cycle. In Ayurveda also Nidra is considered as a Vaikariki and Papma Nidra as described by Acharya Sushurta.[15]

Smriti means "memory," is a Vritti that takes us on a journey through the corridors of our past. It involves the recollection of lasting impressions, both conscious and unconscious, that have been imprinted on the canvas of our mind by past sensations and emotions. Smriti as the mental archive that stores our life's experiences, both significant and mundane. It encompasses memories of joy, sorrow, love, and countless other emotions, each with its unique vibrancy and texture. These memories shape our perception of the world and influence our responses to present situations. Smriti plays a crucial role in shaping our present moment. It affects our mood, decisions, and interactions with the world. When we encounter a situation, Smriti acts as a lens through which we view it. The memories we recall can either elevate our spirits or cast a shadow on our experiences. For example, a positive

memory of a past achievement can boost our confidence, while a negative memory may trigger anxiety or self-doubt. Smriti's influence on our current state of mind is profound, and it can either facilitate our journey toward self-realization or hinder it. Acharya Charaka has mentioned 8 factors whose repeated practice will improve Smriti.^[16] They are Nimitta Grahana (Reaction to Caused effects), Roopagrahana (Perception of Similar shape and objects), Sadrushya (Similarity), Saviparyayata (Contrast), Satwanubandha (Attention), Abhyasa (Repetition), Gyanayoga (divine knowledge), Punaha shruta (Repeated hearing).

Vrittis in Hindu Philosophy

In Hindu philosophy, Vritti is often described based on the foundation of Samskara. Samskara represents the result of our past karma, the actions and deeds that accumulate over lifetimes. These accumulated impressions give direction to our emotions, behaviors, and responses to various life situations.

Conclusion: Vrittis are the ever-changing mental fluctuations, encompassing thoughts, emotions, and patterns of the mind, at the heart of yoga philosophy. These Vrittis are primarily of five types and each with its unique influence on our daily lives and spiritual journey. Controlling Vrittis is central to the practice of yoga, and it begins with self-awareness and mindfulness. By engaging in yogic techniques such as meditation, asanas, pranayama, and concentration, individuals can gain mastery over these mental fluctuations. Through a consistent yogic lifestyle and unwavering dedication, one embarks on a transformative journey toward self-realization, unlocking the profound inner peace that lies beyond the realm of Vrittis. The path may be challenging, but with persistence and self-compassion, it leads to the realization that the fluctuations of the mind are not obstacles but stepping stones toward reaching our highest potential.

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