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MIND AND BODY: AN ASPECT OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

In this paper I shall try to explain how Indian Philosophy views the relationship between mind and body. Every school of Indian philosophical thought sought to discover truth and unlock life's mysteries by looking inward at human nature. Vedic texts tell us that our physical bodies are made up of five basic elements - earth, water, fire, air, and space. The Upanishads describe the human body as having three parts: an energy or etheric body, the physical body we can see, and the soul that connects us to universal life. They also break down the human body into three levels - the gross body, subtle body, and causal body. When it comes to the mind, pretty much every Indian philosophical school agrees that it works like an internal sense organ that controls all our other senses. In this tradition, the mind serves as a tool for the soul. It's what they call an inner sense organ or antahkarana. The mind connects to our physical body through our five senses and five action organs, which are like external tools. It also helps us gain knowledge and understand consciousness.

Keywords: Mind, Body, Upanishad, ahamkara and Suksma.

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The relationship between mind and body stands as a crucial topic in both Western and Indian philosophical traditions. This paper explores how Indian philosophy understands the mind and body, examining their nature and roles. In ancient Indian texts like the Vedas and Brahmanas, the term 'manas' originally meant 'measuring,' and this word became the standard way to refer to the mind in Indian thought. Early philosophers saw manas as connected to what they called 'nama' or naming. Essentially, it's how people gauge their understanding, happiness, suffering, and other experiences. The Chandogya Upanishad describes this manas as Annamaya, meaning it's made of matter. According to this text, when we eat food, its most refined essence transforms into manas. While it's still considered matter, it's much more refined than the physical substances we can touch and see. The Satpatha Brahmana also talks about the mind frequently, presenting knowledge as having two aspects: Name and Form. Sometimes the word 'mind' gets used interchangeably with 'soul,' while other times it's described more like a physical tool we use. In the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad, manas gets treated like another sense organ - basically a knowledge-gathering instrument that has some physical foundation. Most Indian philosophical schools agree that the mind serves as a bridge between the physical world we can touch and the pure consciousness of our true self. They see the mind as subtle matter that connects these two very different realms. Indian philosophy also has a clear understanding of what the human body is. What we can know depends on how many senses we have and how they work. The Nyaya school teaches that our body is where we experience pleasure and pain. Without our senses, the body couldn't function, and without a body, our senses would have nowhere to operate. Indian thinkers don't just recognize the physical body we're familiar with. They believe each soul actually has three bodies: the obvious physical one, plus a subtle body and a causal body that most people don't realize exist.ⁱ

In Indian philosophical traditions, when philosophers talk about the mind, they're referring to what's called *manas* or *antakarana* - basically the internal organ of thinking - rather than the *Atman*, which is the true Self. You'll find the term '*manas*' showing up throughout the ancient Vedic writings. The *Rigveda* actually describes the mind as a universal principle that operates on a cosmic level. But when we get to the *Upanishads*, they make it clear that *manas* isn't the same thing as the soul or *Atma*. Most Indian philosophical schools treat the mind like it's just another sense organ, though the *Jains* have a different take - they see the mind as made of subtle matter rather than being a sense organ. Either way, everyone agrees that the mind plays a crucial role in how we perceive things. "Without it, we simply can't understand or know anything. It's also what either keeps us trapped in worldly existence or helps us achieve spiritual freedom. When it comes to the *Nyaya-Vaisesika* schools, they accept that *manas* are indeed an internal organ, and each person has just one. They describe the mind as something that's non-material yet still physical in a sense, without parts, tiny like an atom, unconscious, everlasting, and able to move and act. They say it's atomic-sized because we can't actually see it directly. The *Vaisesika* thinkers put *manas* in their category of fundamental substances, viewing it as the tool the soul uses to gain knowledge. Both *Nyaya* and *Vaisesika* philosophers insist that *manas* are completely separate from the *Atman*. They believe there are many minds - one for each person - and each one lasts forever even though we can't perceive it directly. We know the mind exists because we can observe internal experiences like thoughts, emotions, pleasure, and pain. *Sankhya* philosophy breaks the mind down into three working parts: the basic mind (*manas*), the ego (*ahamkara*), and the intellect (*buddhi*). The basic mind gathers information from our senses, while *ahamkara* creates our sense of being an individual "I." *Vedanta* philosophy goes a step further and divides the mind into four parts by adding *citta*, or "mind-stuff." They also talk about something called the subtle body, which combines intellect,

ego, the eleven sense organs, and the basic elements of perception. Sankhya also treats the mind as a sense organ. According to their worldview, everything in existence comes from the interaction between Prakriti (primordial nature) and Purusha (pure consciousness). This isn't like two physical things bumping into each other - it's more like how your body might react just from having a certain thought. Prakriti gets influenced simply by Purusha being present, kind of like how iron filings move when you bring a magnet near them. For Sankhya philosophers, the whole point of the universe manifesting is so that individual souls can eventually achieve liberation. When Purusha and Prakriti interact, it disturbs the perfect balance that the three fundamental qualities of nature were in before anything came into existence.ⁱⁱⁱ

In Sankhya philosophy, the first thing that emerges from Prakriti is called mahat or buddhi, which is basically the intellect. They call it mahat because it means "the great one" - it's like the cosmic seed from which everything else springs. This happens when Prakriti gets illuminated by Purusha's light and becomes self-aware, which kicks off the whole process of creating the universe. On a personal level, this cosmic mahat shows up as buddhi, our individual intellect. It's the purest part of who we are and has the amazing ability to understand our complete personality in all its clarity. Sankhya teaches that buddhi comes from the sattvic or pure aspect of Prakriti and has eight different qualities. The good ones are virtue, knowledge, detachment, and power, while the not-so-great ones are vice, ignorance, attachment, and weakness. The first group comes from sattva (purity), while the second group gets weighed down by tamas (inertia). From mahat comes ahankara, which is basically our ego or sense of individuality. Its job is to create that feeling of "I am me" and "this belongs to me" - it's what makes us feel separate from everyone else. Ahankara comes in three flavors: vaikarika (pure), bhutadi (dull), and tajasa (active). Next comes manas, our

mind, which develops from the pure type of ahankara. It acts like the central command for all our senses.^{iv} Unlike some other philosophical systems, Sankhya says the mind isn't eternal or tiny like an atom - it's actually made by Prakrti, so it has a beginning and an end. Since it's made up of parts, it can handle multiple senses at the same time. The pure ahankara also creates our ten sense organs - five for taking in information (seeing, smelling, tasting, touching, hearing) and five for acting in the world (speaking, grasping, moving, eliminating waste, reproducing). Together, buddhi, ahankara, and manas represent how we know things, make decisions, and feel emotions. Sankhya considers all of these as material things that come from Prakrti. The three psychological aspects are called internal organs, and our life energy flows through them. The ten sense organs are called external organs. So in total, there are thirteen organs in the Sankhya system, with the mind acting as the boss that tells all the other senses what to do.^v

From the Tamasik Ahankara comes what we call the subtle essence - these are the Tanmatras or things-in-themselves. We're talking about the basic essences behind what we see, smell, taste, touch, and hear. These aren't just qualities or differences in physical elements, and they're not the same as our sense organs either. Instead, they're the subtle building blocks that create both the physical elements and their characteristics. When it comes to Yoga philosophy, they use the term "citta" for mind. Citta actually includes three inner parts from Sankhya thinking - buddhi (intellect), ahankara (ego), and manas (mind). Patanjali taught that yoga is really about controlling how your mind changes and shifts. In yoga thinking, the mind has five different ways it can work or change, and these are behind everything we do. Your mind can have right understanding, wrong understanding, imagination based on words, the blank state of sleep, and memory. There are also five different levels your mind can be at, and which level you're on depends on which of the three

gunas is strongest. The lowest level is called Ksipta - your mind is all over the place because there's too much rajas energy. The second level, Mudha, is when your mind gets sluggish because tamas dominates, leading to ignorance and laziness. Your thinking gets so slow and dull that it becomes negative. The third level, Viksipta, happens when sattva is mainly in charge but rajas still pops up sometimes. Your mind jumps from thing to thing but never really settles anywhere - it's like an advanced version of a scattered mind. The fourth level, Ekagra, is when sattva completely takes over and keeps rajas and tamas in check. Now your mind can actually focus on what you're meditating on. The highest level, Nruddha, is when your mental changes stop completely, though the underlying patterns are still there. Only these last two levels actually help with meditation, which is why so many yoga practices are designed to get you there. Vedanta has a pretty different take on the mind compared to other Indian philosophical systems. ^{vi}In Vedanta, your mind works like an inner tool that takes in experiences from the outside world and passes them along to your true self. They break the mind down into four parts: the lower mind, ego, intellect, and something called mind-stuff or citta. The lower mind handles bringing feelings and sensations in from the outside world and sending them through the intellect to your self. The ego is what gives you that sense of "I am me." The mind-stuff is like your storage system - it holds onto all the memories and experiences that flow through your lower mind, ego, and intellect, and sometimes brings them back up to the surface. The intellect is your decision-maker - it's the part of your mind that's closest to your true self and is filled with sattva, which brings brightness and lightness. According to Vedanta thinking, the mind is this inner instrument for taking in outside experiences. Acharya Sankara believed the mind is tiny, but not in the same way that Nyaya Vaisesikas talk about smallness. It's subtle and has limits to its size because when someone dies and the mind leaves the physical body, you can't see it anymore. It's what they call Suksma - meaning subtle. ^{vii}

In Indian philosophy, the human body isn't just what we can see and touch. It's actually broken down into three different types: the physical body, the subtle body, and the causal body. The ancient Atharva Veda talks about how Caraka saw the human body as being made up of five basic elements - space, air, fire, water, and earth - and he believed it was also where consciousness lives. The Samkhya school of thought agrees that our physical bodies are made of these five elements, but they say the subtle body is made up of different things like intelligence, ego, mind, our five senses, and our five ways of acting in the world. There's a text called the Sariraka-Upanishad that goes into great detail about how the body is formed, especially the human body. According to this Upanishad, our bodies are basically collections of these five elements - Earth, Water, Fire, Air, and Space. It explains that the hard parts of our body are earth-like, the hot parts are fire-like, anything that moves around is air-like, and the hollow spaces are space-like. Our sense organs each connect to these elements too - our ears relate to space, skin to air, eyes to fire, tongue to water, and nose to earth. These organs help us hear, feel, see, taste, and smell. Then there are our action organs - mouth, hands, feet, and our excretory and reproductive organs - which let us talk, grab things, walk around, get rid of waste, and experience pleasure. There's also something called the internal organ that has four parts: mind, intelligence, ego, and memory. Western philosophers have come up with all sorts of different theories about how the mind and body work together, and this has been a big question for a long time. Indian philosophy has been wrestling with these same questions for thousands of years. They divide the physical body into three parts: the gross body, the subtle body, and the causal body. ^{viii}The Nyaya-Vaisesika school believes our bodies are mostly made of earth element. Sankhya philosophy sticks with the idea that the physical body has five elements, while the subtle body contains intelligence, the five senses, and five action abilities. A philosopher named Vatsyayana said that consciousness is like a quality of the body - it's there when the body is there,

and gone when the body isn't there, kind of like how the color of a pot only exists when the pot exists. In Nyaya philosophy, the body isn't the one that experiences things - that's the job of the conscious self. The gross body, according to Sankhya-Yoga thinkers, doesn't exist just for its own sake. It's made up of six substances or layers. Sankhya philosophy sees the gross body as a changed form of those five basic elements. The Upanishads do a great job of explaining the gross body. The Taittiriya Upanishad talks about five different sheaths or layers that make up who we are. These are the Physical Sheath, the Vital Sheath, the Mental Sheath, the Wisdom Sheath, and the Blissful Sheath. The Physical Sheath is what makes up our gross physical body - it's created when the gross elements combine together and includes our flesh, bones, blood, and other body parts. People call it the Food Sheath because it depends on food to survive and is literally made from the food we eat. It needs food to keep going and only lasts as long as it can process food. This sheath is temporary and always changing - nothing about it stays the same forever.^{ix}

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ⁱ Cf. T. Prabir, The Concept Of Mind And Body In Indian Philosophy, IJCRT, Volume 13, P. 299

ⁱⁱ Cf. T. Prabir, The Concept Of Mind And Body In Indian Philosophy, IJCRT, Volume 13, P. 300

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. T. Prabir, The Concept Of Mind And Body In Indian Philosophy, IJCRT, Volume 13, P. 300

^{iv} Cf. T. Prabir, The Concept Of Mind And Body In Indian Philosophy, IJCRT, Volume 13, P. 301

^v Cf. T. Prabir, The Concept Of Mind And Body In Indian Philosophy, IJCRT, Volume 13, P. 301

^{vi} Cf. T. Prabir, The Concept Of Mind And Body In Indian Philosophy, IJCRT, Volume 13, P. 302

^{vii} Cf. T. Prabir, The Concept Of Mind And Body In Indian Philosophy, IJCRT, Volume 13, P. 302

^{viii} Cf. T. Prabir, The Concept Of Mind And Body In Indian Philosophy, IJCRT, Volume 13, P. 303

^{ix} Cf. T. Prabir, The Concept Of Mind And Body In Indian Philosophy, IJCRT, Volume 13, P. 303