Retrospect

The questions relating to mind occupy a central place in the later Indian philosophy, although the notion of mind as having a separate identity is not found in the Vedas. In the Upanishads the words used for mind are manas, prajna, sankalpa and citta. The essence of mind is not consciousness but it is a subtle form of matter and like the body it is made of matter. The difference is that whereas the body is gross, the mind is subtle.

In the first chapter, the different views regarding mind as found in both the Indian philosophy and Western philosophy have been examined. The orthodox schools of Indian Philosophy have defined mind in agreement with their philosophic ideas. According to Nyaya School, mind is an appendage for attaining knowledge. It gets the details from the sense organs and carries it to the atman (soul). It also apprehends the internal states of pleasure, pain etc. It is atomic in size and is one in each body. If the mind were possessed of enormity it could come in contact with many senses at a time. Since this is not achievable the mind is an atom. The Vaesisika School describes the component parts of human being as body, sense organs of knowledge and of action, manas (mind) and atman (soul). The minds and souls are unlimited in number and eternal in existence. Each soul in the worldly existence has involvement with a mind, which acts as the apparatus of knowledge, feeling and action. The mind connects the soul with the sense organs of knowledge and through them with the objects of knowledge.

According to Samkhya School, the instruments of knowledge are antahkarna consisting of intellect (buddhi), ego (ahamkara), the inner sense (manas) and the five external senses of ear, skin, eye, tongue and nose. The first three are inner instruments of knowledge because they are situated inside the body and five are outer senses as they are on the surface of the body and are turned outward. The distinctive function of buddhi is ascertainment of the true nature of everything; ahamkara refers to the self; and the function of manas is said to be samkalpa.

In Yoga philosophy mind has been called citta. The word citta is derived from the root cit, which means 'to know'. Citta is used in the Yoga system to mean the
entire knowing mechanism. *Citta* has three chief aspects with distinct functions to perform namely *manas, ahamkara* and *buddhi*. In relation to the external world the *manas* perceives, the *ahamkara* arrogates and the *buddhi* discriminates, decides and resolves after which action arises. These there aspects constitute the mind (*citta*) as a whole.

According to *Mimansa* school mind is an internal organ through which the apprehensions of the sense organs (about external objects) and also about pleasure, pain, cognition and other qualities of the self (internal) are perceived. The mind is neither atomic (*anu*) in dimension nor quick in motion but it is all pervasive (*vibhu*) and motionless (*aspandam*). It is an intangible substance, which is neither an effect nor cause of anything else. Although all-pervading, it is limited by the body and serves as an organ of internal perception. It functions in conjunction with the self, which is also all-pervading.

According to *Vedanta* school, man is a composite structure consisting of body, mind and soul (*atman*), which is the same in all individuals and in the cosmos. It is called *atman* in the individual and *Paramatman* or *Brahman* in the cosmos. This Universal *Atman* is reflected in or limited by the bodily mechanism of each individual and is called *jiva*, which for the time being assumes an identity and separateness for itself. The bodily mechanism of the individual as well as that of the cosmos consists of the following principles: individual ignorance (*avidya*), which is a part of the cosmic ignorance (*mula avidya* or *maya*); *antahkarana*, the internal organ (mind) consists of the four aspects or parts of the mind namely, *buddhi* (intellect), *ahankara* (ego), *citta* (storehouse of past impressions) and *manas* (organ of attention).

Among the three hetrodox schools of Indian Philosophy *Carvaka* states that mind is a by-product of body and consciousness is the end result of mind. At death the body disintegrates and so does the mind and consciousness. Buddhism believes in the doctrine of *anatma-vada* (no-self), according to which there is nothing permanent in the physical or mental realms. There is no permanent, enduring or unitary substance either in the physical or mental world. According to Jainism mental activities such as cognition, affection and conation belong to the self or *jiva* (soul) and *manas* (mind) has only a limited function to perform. The *soul* is a permanent
principle of consciousness. It is not a material entity but an immaterial or spiritual substance different from and independent of the body and brain. It is an agent of all mental activities and is directly experienced as the 'I' in all such activities as 'I know', 'I do' and 'I feel'. It is the source of all mental activities and consciousness is its essential quality.

In the Western philosophy, mind is defined in different ways by different schools of thought. According to Materialism only physical matter exists and mind is the by-product of matter. This outlook is known as Epiphenomenalism; it considers matter as the real substance and considers mind as only a 'glow' or shadow of matter that appears under some conditions. Mental events are always the result of physical events but are never the cause of other mental events or of any physical events. This school of materialism thus denies mind as a fundamental reality. As opposed to this view the school of Idealism states that mind exists as an independent and immaterial reality and this view is known as Psychical Monism. It denies the reality of matter and reduces it to secondary importance. It holds that the causal series is confined to the mental and what is called matter is only a 'shadow' cast by mind or is only an appearance. The school of Neutral Monism states that what exists in nature is neither material nor mental but some neutral substance out of which both material and mental substances are formed. Every human being consists of two different substances namely mind and body. Mind is defined as a substance having no spatial location and it is referred to as the locus or centre or owner of thoughts, feelings and sense-experiences. On the other hand, body is the locus of all the physiological changes.

In the second chapter, the relationship of mind with body, intellect, senses and self has been examined to study its physiological basis. According to Guru Nanak *Bani*, human body is composed of five elements of earth, water, fire, air and ether. These five elements are the manifestations of God. The body is a living organism but it has life only due to soul. The soul enters the body and after death of the body the soul passes to another body. Along with body and soul, human being has another entity called mind. It is also composed of five elements and resides within the body. It is unlike body and self but it is interrelated and affected by these co-relates. It is the seat of all mental behaviour like thinking, feeling and willing. The mind is subtle in
contrast to the gross body. Mind is ever active but not conscious in itself; it seems to be conscious because of the reflection of the divine light of the soul. To receive knowledge, it must be in contact with the objects seen through the sense organs and at the same time it must be in contact with the soul. It is the connecting link between soul and body.

In the *Yoga Sutras*, mind is called *citta*, which is unconscious but becomes seems to be conscious on account of the manifestation of *purusa* (spirit). Mind is finer in structure but like everything else, is born of *prakrti*. Therefore, the activities of the body and the processes of mind are unconscious (*jada*). The only conscious element is the *purusa*. All the mental activities apart from consciousness are performed by mind. The mind, however, has the power of manifesting or revealing the consciousness of the *purusa*. The more *sattvic* the mind, the more capable it is of revealing the light of consciousness of *purusa*.

The system of *Yoga* is based on the philosophy of *Samkhya* and according to this system human evolution takes place gradually. The *purusa* enters the body in a non-material capsule, which it carries along from its earlier birth. This shell is called *karana sarira* or causal body. The *samskaras* are carried in this non-material causal capsule, shell or casing. This causal body interacts with matter or *prakrti*, which is equipoise of three *gunas* of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Now starts the formation of body-complex, which is known as *linga-sarira* (the astral or subtle body). All the psychological tendencies are inherent in this *linga-sarira*. The subtle body consists of *ahamkara* (ego), five sense organs, five motor organs and mind, considered to be the eleventh organ. The subtle body interacts with matter and the gross body is formed. The gross body that is fashioned is called *sthula sarira* and it is constituted by *pancha bhuta* or *sthula bhuta* of earth, water, fire air and ether.

In the third chapter, the nature of mind is discussed. According to Guru Nanak mind is never constant and it keeps on drifting from one condition to another. Sometimes it behaves as unwise and ignorant but it can be intelligent also. Mind is subtle like air and get in touch with with external objects through sense organs. That is, to receive knowledge mind must be in contact with the objects seen through the sense organs and at the same time it must be in contact with the self. Therefore mind
is related both to physical as well as to the spiritual. It moves to enjoy the material objects, which bind him and push him in the series of causal determination but it can also turn around by comprehending sabda and thereby realizing its Divine Essence.

According to Yoga philosophy, mind is at all times transforming itself into different states of being and willing. In perception, the external objects are not known as they actually are. To know an object the mind travels to an external object in the form of a vritti (modification) through a sense organ and is modified and coloured by the form of the object. The mind itself is also an object undergoing change at every moment; it is like a flowing stream.

The Yoga philosophy defines five kinds of states of mental states i.e. ksipta, mudha, viksipta, ekagra and nirudha. The first three stages are negative while the last two are the preferred states of mind. When the mind is in an earlier stage of disturbance (ksipta), it lacks judgement and is generally hyperactive. The next stage of the mudha is marked by inertia, lethargy, sluggishness, vice and ignorance. The state of viksipta is an advanced stage of the ksipta, where the mind is unable to slow down. Ekagra and nirudha are the mental levels at which the mind almost ceases to be affected by the pains and miseries of mortal existence. Ekagra state is highly beneficial in achieving concentration. Nirudha stage is that state where the mind is totally undisturbed and it is purified by the flow of positive energy. Nirudha is the ultimate desired mental state. In this state the true nature of purusa comes to be known.

In the fourth chapter the functions of mind are discussed. According to Guru Nanak, mind is the means to get knowledge. It perceives, assimilates and discriminates one thing from another. God has created the world and He pervades within and without. The atman, residing within man sees all things through the mind only. The chief characteristics of mind are awareness and reflection. To obtain knowledge of the outside world of objects the self has to take help from the mind, which through its characteristics of awareness and reflection finds out the objects and thus knowledge arises. The function of mind, intellect and ego is integrated as mind sees the external objects through the senses and reflects upon the objects and presents it to ‘ego’. Bliss is the characteristic of self if the mind is not influenced by maya,
greed or ego. The terms surat, mat, buddhi, sudh etc. point to the process of knowing and functioning of mind. However, sahaj is the advanced category of knowledge, which is obtainable by mind through sabda-surat yoga.

In the Yoga philosophy five-fold mental activities are described i.e. pramana (true cognition), vipraya (false cognition), vikalpa (inference), nidra (sleep) and smriti (memory). Pramana apprehends an object as it is in reality. Viprayaya does not correspond to the object which one wants to apprehends. Vikalpa is only a mere name and has no real object corresponding to it. Nidra is the mental modification based on the cognition of absence or void. Smriti reproduces a past apprehension of an object. When the citta is modified into any kind of vritti, the self is reflected in it and it identifies itself with these vrittis and suffers five kinds of sufferings i.e. avidya (ignorance), asmita (wrong identification), raga (desire for pleasure), dvesa (aversion to pain) and abhinivesa (fear of death). Avidya consists in a false view of things and situations. Avidya is primarily responsible for the other four klesas also. These afflictions exist in the form of various intensities and degrees. They are burnt or destroyed only by discriminative knowledge, which leads to a state of kaivalya (perfect isolation of purusa from prakrti).

The fifth chapter explicates the methods to control mind. According to Guru Nanak naam-simran is the easiest and natural way to control the mind. Naam is the description of the attributes of God through speech. According to Guru Nanak naam (name of God) is the purifier of mind. The naam leads to the feelings of marvel and an aesthetic enjoyment of the creation of God. Through the recitation of naam, one feels the presence of God within as well as outside. Though naam-simran is crucial for man’s spiritual progress, but an essential correlate of naam-simran is uprightness in thought and action. Even loving recitation of naam will fail in the attainment of its objective, if it is not fortified with the cultivation of good moral qualities. For this reason the concepts of sangat and sewa has great importance in the teachings of Guru Nanak. Another important feature is the importance given to the grace of God, Guru and realizing His Hukam on the way to control the mind and attain spiritual progress.

According to Yoga, the vrittis of mind can be controlled by the adoption of two means (a) constant repetition and practice (abhyasa) and (b) detachment and
indifference (vairagya). While one proceeds to practice abhyasa and vairagya, many obstacles can crop up on the way to achieve the control of mind. These obstacles cause distractions in the way of achieving the purpose i.e. control of mind. Besides abhyasa and vairagya there are some other methods given by Patanjali to achieve the calmness of mind. One method is to fix attention ‘upon some one truth’. Another method is to concentrate mind on some person whose life is holy and devoid of passion and attachments. The stillness of mind and its modifications is also possible through the practice of eight limbs of yoga that is, yama (restraint), niyama (observance), asana (posture), pranayama (breath-control), pratyahara (withdrawal), dharana (concentration), dhyana (meditation) and samadhi (absorption).

In the sixth chapter the role and condition of mind is discussed once the goal of life has been achieved, that is, enlightenment or the experience of Ultimate Reality. Guru Nanak has stressed naam-simran and truthful living by the cultivation of virtues; through these practices ignorance is removed which is the root cause of sufferings and bondage. When the mind becomes pure, the self returns to its pure state; this pure state is what is called self-realization and this is a state of pure consciousness. The self-realized person becomes one with God in spirit, though he still retains his body (jivan-mukta). He conquers the world as well as his own mind by keeping the name of God enshrined within his mind. Although, he is alive in the body and mind but these have got no hold on him now. The allurements of body and mind have evaporated for him. There remains no fear either of life or death.

In the Yoga Sutras there are various types of samadhis mentioned of which there are two main classes: (i) Samprajnata Samadhi (ii) Asamprajnata Samadhi. Samprajnata samadhi is of subordinate status, since in this samadhi the samskaras are not altogether eliminated. Since it has seedlings of samskaras it is also called sabija samadhi. Asamprajnata samadhi is called seedless samadhi or nirbhija samadhi in which all the samskaras are destroyed. There is nothing higher than this samadhi. The attributes of sattva, rajas and tamas disintegrate and the purusa stands forth shining in its own unspoiled form. One is no more affected by the sense organs or by the psychological conditions. Prakriti along with her entire complex disappears. One
sees all round oneself the divine existence just as the unenlightened one sees all around him the existence of prakrti and her modifications.

As against Yoga’s duality of soul (purusa) and matter (prakrti), Guru Nanak stands for monotheism. Prakrti has no independent existence; it comes into being by His Will and it subsists as long as He Wills. God is the sole Creator; everything lies in God lies in everything. Before manifesting Himself in the form of this phenomenal world God lay in the form of sunn samadhi or in a state of attributelessness. As and when God thought of manifesting Himself, He created this Universe. As nirguna He is Absolute, Immutable, Infinite and Ineffable; and as saguna He is all that is temporal. This vast universe of matter and life is His own creation. God is both Transcendent as well as Immanent. He is Immanent because having created the Universe He permeates it and can be comprehended. He is Transcendent because He is Infinite and cannot be confined to the visible world only. Just as all things are in space and space is in everything and yet space is more than the objects that occupy it. In much the same way God transcends the phenomenal world.

Unlike Patanjali, who believes in the array of souls, Guru Nanak believes in One Universal Soul or Spirit; all other souls are but individual manifestations of that. They got segregated from their original source by the will of God Himself. This separation gives man his uniqueness, I-am-ness, or haumai and from this springs the miseries, sorrows and kleshas of life. Actually, Haumai is nothing but a facade of mind that distracts atman from merging in Parmatman.

Like the other systems of Indian philosophy, Guru Nanak also believes in the law of karma and doctrine of transmigration of atman. In order to get rid of these two irreversible laws, one has to go through some sort of discipline, of which control over mind is the primary requisite; and most importantly efforts made by one can yied results only if Guru’s or God’s grace wills and blesses him. Man is intrigued by the sufferings and pain in life. If God is all merciful then why does there is suffering. According to Guru Nanak when man ceases to follow the path of love and acts selfishly then this in turn sets in motion the chain of cause and effect. This karma is the cause of birth and death. In selfishness is bondage, and in selflessness is freedom. Pain occurs when man indulges in pleasure. The desire to repeat the previous
pleasures allows no peace to the mind. If the pleasure is not attained again then there is mental pain and anguish. Happiness and peace are not attained by indulging in momentary worldly allurements. The root cause of suffering is the assertion of the self. But this very self can be brought under the Will of God and then it ceases to trouble man. As soon as man realizes that all phenomenon including him are subject to God’s will, he ceases to assert himself. He surrenders himself to God’s Will and thereby overcomes his ego.

Guru Nanak’s path of *naam-simran yoga* falls within the orbit of *bhakti-yoga* practice of Indian philosophy; but it relates to the *nirguna* tradition of *bhakti-yoga* and not to the *saguna* one. In the latter, one concentrates on some image or deity such as *Kali, Durga, Rama, Krishna* and so on. But this is not the case with *naam-simran yoga*; in it one has to tread a far more challenging path, which needs application of a higher order. Guru Nanak’s path seeks this concentration by reconditioning life in such a way that the whole progression of having the feel of the Formless God becomes an everyday experience. That is the explanation that Guru Nanak’s path is also called *sahaj-marga* or *sahaj-yoga*.

The paths that are by tradition accepted for the deliverance of the soul are called *jnana-marga, karma-marga* and *bhakti-marga*. These are also called the *yogas*. The *karma-marga* touched its zenith in the development of the concept of *nishkam-karma* (action done without any expectation of fruits or rewards) in the *Bhagwadgita*. According to the path of *jnana-marga*, one has to know the nature of the phenomenal world, which is illusory (*maya*); and to realize the Ultimate Reality i.e., the *Brahman* as eternal and immutable. The *Bhakti-marga* is based on loving adoration of the Supreme Power i.e. God. Man’s devotional faith is directed, in the case of *saguna bhakti*, towards a personal God and, in the case of *nirguna bhakti* towards God’s essence (*naam*). It demands a total surrender of oneself to the Will of the Almighty and an intense loving adulation of Him. The most distinct point in Guru Nanak’s *bhakti* is the importance given to God Himself and not to any manifestation of God. That is why the stress is not on repetition of the name Ram or *Hari*, but meditation on the nature of God and His attributes.
The human being has to come across physical and mental hardships and sufferings. These are born of his own actions in the present or past lives. These actions lead to either pleasure or pain but ultimately even the pleasures turn into pain, considering the nature of this phenomenal world. Patanjali identifies citta as the seat of both pleasure and pain and prescribes control of the psychomental states as the therapy for the sufferings encountered by man. Guru Nanak too stands for the control of the mercurial mind. In this respect, both Patanjali and Guru Nanak have the same opinion. They, however, vary in their techniques required to encounter the quandary of the human situation. Patanjali stands for the yogic techniques of the eight fold programme and Guru Nanak for the naam-simran yoga. Guru Nanak does not support the yogic techniques of asana, pranayama, dharana, etc. undertaken to bring ekagrata (high degree of concentration) and thereby to attain a state of kaivalya. This is achieved through the agency of naam-simran only.

All the philosophies and religions bring forward ways and means to declutch man from his accustomed life. The various terms used for this declutched and liberated state are mukti, moksha, nirvana, kaivalya etc. Patanjali uses the term kaivalya, which signifies complete segregation of the soul from everything else. It is not merger but isolation or aloofness, a release from the fetters of prakrti. For Guru Nanak the term most favoured is jivan-mukta. It is a state of peace and serenity attained through the sahaja-marga. It is a state of life, which is perfectly attuned to God; one remains riveted in Him and enjoys bliss by continuously feeling His Divine presence.

Repudiation of the world need not take place for the follower of the sahaj-marga. It is basically an inner state of joy and peace amidst worldly pre-occupations. One becomes like a fowl, which keeps hovering on the surface of the water, and yet, when it needs to take off, it does so with ease and altogether unperturbed. Or one becomes like a lotus flower, which grows in grimy waters, and yet stays free of the grime. One is able to travel the perilous and difficult terrain of life by attuning one’s mind to the Name of The Divine.

The procedure of naam-simran is ultimately related to the bhakti-yoga of the Indian tradition. But the Yoga philosophy of Patanjali has no place for bhakti,
although the idea of the *Isvara* and the Universal *Purusa* or Soul is included in the *Yoga Sutras*. But it is not credited with any work beyond being the initiator by providing the first impulse in *prakrti*’s evolution of manifesting itself. *Purusa Visesa* is not a dynamic entity. It is neither the creator, nor the sustainer, nor the destroyer of the universe. It cannot be, therefore, an object of prayer and loving devotion. At the most, the idea of it is an aid in facilitating concentration and thereby attaining the state of *samadhi*.

For this reason the concept of *Guru* or God’s grace (*nadar*) as retort to a loving and longing heart is alien to Patanjali’s *Yoga* system. For Guru Nanak, it is the grace of God, which is the final authority in all things. The invoked Divine Grace may settle upon one direct from God or through His chosen one in human form, gifted with the power to deliver the message of God, revealed to him earlier. Although prayer and devotion are necessary requisites, *mukti* is not possible without God’s grace.

Patanjali’s endeavour is to create such a man who would remain composed amidst the humdrum of life. As there would be no disturbances (*vrittis*) in the calm sea of his mind (*citta*), the world can remain what it is but he himself would remain alone, aloof and undisturbed in the state of *kaivalya*. Nothing can disturb his peace now. Guru Nanak’s intent is to generate such a man who would not only lead a focused life himself but also guide others to that end. Such a person has the Name of God enshrined in his mind, pursues the path of *sahaja yoga* (*naam-simran*) in a state of perfect equipoise. The life of such a person is full of upright activity based on a quest of truth, is not ego-oriented (*manmukh*) and led under the control and direction of a *Guru* (*gurmukh*).

The word *manmukh* indicates the customary state of man in which his self-will and natural instincts dominate and *gurmukh* indicates the idyllic man or the man with the highest stage of mystic attainment. The discipline of Guru Nanak constitutes the progress from *manmukh* to *gurmukh*, or from a self-centered person to a God-centered person. The root cause of mental tension is man’s estrangement from God and his consciousness of separate individuality. The world of sense perceptions is real and mind’s action and reaction to the external surroundings increase the mental
anxiety, but it is also a fact that mental peace, happiness and bliss can be achieved by plunging inside oneself. These are inner states of mind and can be realized by transcendence of ego-consciousness to cosmic consciousness.

Guru Nanak denounces the path of outer renunciation. *Mukti* is to be found in this life while laughing, playing, wearing, eating and enjoying diverse joys of the world. The way of devotion or *bhakti* is compatible with action in Guru Nanak philosophy but it is not so with the *samadhi* of *yoga*, which is induced intentionally with effort by the yogi. The way of devotion is induced by meditation on the Name of God. It is therefore relatively easy, effortless and natural and for that reason known as *sahaj samadhi*. 