

# A three part mind - Horses and Chariots

**"Yoga is the cessation of the modifications, or fluctuations, of the mind"\***

**"So the restless mind is calmed and energy directed into constructive channels"\*\*\***

Yoga philosophy says that our mind has 3 parts:

1. Lower Mind (Animal Mind) used to think and feel.
2. Ego mind (the I making mind) creates our identity.
3. Higher mind (Intellectual Mind ) used to decide and discriminate.

In Sanskrit the lower mind is called the *Manos*. It is our animal brain, it thinks on a basic level reacting to needs, instincts and emotions. It keeps us alive by responding to our senses. Too much stress and mental activity confuses the mind, and it starts operating only in this part of the brain.

In Sanskrit the ego mind is called the *Ahankara*. It is the "I" maker, it creates and binds us to a false identity: I am this body, I am this mind, I am my emotions, I am my personality, I am the life I was born into.

In Sanskrit the higher mind is called the *Buddhi*. It is the part of the mind needed for intelligence and discernment. It knows the truth of what we are. We are more than a sum of our parts.

In this blog I'd like to introduce you to an analogy to help better understand one of the main concepts in Yoga philosophy.

It is taken from an Upanishad (ancient Indian literary texts) and one that BKS Iyengar touches on in his book, *The Iyengar Way*,

**Imagine, a chariot with 5 horses, 10 reins, a driver, a traveller in the chariot, all following a path.**

**The path** is the journey of life that we must fulfil. The path is full of ups and downs that the traveller has to experience and learn from.

**The traveller**, we can consider the traveller our true self.\*\*\*

**The chariot** is the body. The stronger and more stable we can make our body the better it will hold up to the journey, and the more comfortable, stable, and enjoyable the journey will be. This is why the yogasanas are so important.

**The driver** is the Buddhi Mind, who understands all of this and is guiding the process.

**The 5 horses** are our senses (sight, sound, taste, touch, smell) - they are easily excited and distracted. Without the guidance & discernment of the driver (the Buddhi mind), the horses wouldn't have any idea where they were going, or what they were meant to be doing. The external world after all is amazing, exciting and distracting.

**The reins** attached to the horses are our emotions and thoughts. When the horses go wild they make the reins wild. When the reins (emotions and thoughts) go wild the chariot gets pulled around and battered, the driver (mind) forgets his true purpose and goes into survival mode. The driver (mind) becomes so distracted controlling the reins (thoughts, emotions) and engaging with the horses (5 senses) and thinking about the chariot (body), the passenger (our true self) is forgotten.

Essentially the driver has stopped operating in the Buddhi mind, and has started operating solely in the ego and manas mind. This means the driver is being pulled around by the reins (thoughts and feelings) and led by the senses (5 horses) and starts to base all decisions and behaviours on these things.

So the Buddhi mind needs to take over again, take control of the fluctuating thoughts and feelings, and take control of the 5 horses (senses) How?

Through the consistent practise of Yoga.

The journey doesn't have to be a frugal, austere one; life should be a joyful journey of learning, connecting, evolving and experiencing, but it can all so easily result in every part of you getting, confused, battered, lost and suffering.

Yoga is designed to keep you on the right path keeping the mind (reins) and the senses (horses) settled and the Buddhi mind in the drivers seat.

\* *'Yoga is the cessation of the modifications, or fluctuations, of the mind'* The Sanskrit translation is *Yogas citta vrtti nirodhah'*. This aphorism is the 2nd sutra from the seminal Yoga textbook **The Yoga sutras of Patanjali**.

\*\* *This quote is taken from BKS Iyengar in his seminal book Light on Yoga*

\*\*\**Yoga teaches us that our true Self is an eternal blissful consciousness, not separate from but interconnected with everything around it, and a higher universal consciousness*