There is an interesting schematic in Indian thought which views human nature and the culture or society by which it is conditioned as three-fold. Three words are essential: Prakrithi is a large word, like most Sanskrit words, and has many meanings, but in this context Prakrithi means “the basic urges of man and animal life:” sex, food, power urges, desire for dominance, aggression as a survival mechanism, herd instincts, hierarchical status (pecking order), need for ritualized behaviour in relationship, the play instinct, emotional drives etc. In other words, the term “Prakrithi” encompasses all the primal urges which man shares with his mammalian and reptilian brethren, powerful sub-conscious drives which are part and parcel of the DNA baggage stored in the ancient parts of his brain. These drives or needs are seen as part of nature’s grand design in the evolution of consciousness from lower to higher life forms. In the proper place and at the proper time, they have their own legitimacy, and their own right to fulfillment.

“Vikrithi” is the term used to describe a situation where these normal and natural drives (Prakrithi) have become perverted and distorted. One rarely encounters “Vikrithi” in the animal world. Occasionally, a rogue elephant will emerge from the herd, or a “mad dog”, but usually these creatures destroy themselves or are destroyed by the herd or the pack. It is a peculiarity of the human race that “Vikrithi” or perversion of these natural instincts is much more common than in the animal world. In fact, one could go so far as to say, at the risk of alienating almost everyone, that “Vikrithi,” or “perversion of natural urges,” is now the standard behaviour in modern society! The sexual act, which is designed for procreation at its lowest level and as a sublime spiritual union at its highest, is the most visible case in point. Vulgarity in sex, multiple sex partners, pornography, one night stands only to satisfy bestial lust, devices to enhance sexual pleasure, prostitution, pedophilia, homosexuality, sadomasochism, entertainment based mostly on sexual stimulation etc are just a few of the signs of this Vikrithi. Sex has been taken out of its context and sexual satisfaction glorified as the highest goal of human life. In our Indian tradition, this is “Vikrithi,” or “perversion.” Another easily visible example of Vikrithi is
the obscene modern attitude towards food, characterized by the so-called "fast-food industry" which has reduced food to a "pleasurable-sensation" without any concern for preparation, for propriety, nutrition, spiritual aspects, or the morality and ethics surroundings ingestion and procurement. A gross vulgar and perverted attitude towards food has emerged along with deplorable eating habits. At its extreme, this perversion takes the form of bulimia and anorexia. But most people, especially those living modern, westernized lifestyles, have a perverse relationship with food. Food is a necessity. The body must be nourished and in the process, enjoyment may be felt. But the rising popularity of fast food and hotel culture has produced a perversion towards food resulting in a very selfish, wasteful, self-indulgent attitude. Eating anything, moving or still, alive or dead, in any manner, at any time, prepared by anyone, has become the norm. Food totally devoid of any nutritional value, abounding in artificially created taste stimulators, is the food of choice. The concepts of eating simply, at regular hours, enough to sustain and nourish the body, food in season, freshly prepared, food shared with other men and beasts, food taken in a reverential manner, are no longer important values. Frozen food, stored food, canned food, chemically preserved food, all literally "dead food", allow the taste buds to enjoy bananas in Alaska in the heights of winter! Eating in hotels allows one to selfishly choose whatever one wishes to eat whenever one wants and demands no self-effort or self-involvement at all! Only the capacity to produce the paper money necessary to provide the service is required. Eating alone is common, or eating while reading or watching television. These activities, of the human being are all gross perversions of the natural hunger instinct and need for food, and are classified as "Vikrithi" in Hindu thought. One could go into detail with all the natural urges and see how they all have become perverted in the modern materialistic life style. As a contrast, the Hindu traditional view towards satisfying hunger is amazingly refined. In fact, it is said to be "a sin to eat alone." Traditionally, when women cooked, they would prepare five chapattis: one for crows (to appease the hunger of ancestors), one for the cow, one for any guest or passing stranger, one as Prasad to the Divine, and one for themselves. One ate what was given, quietly first offering the food to God. Timings were regulated as well as quantity. Giving food to others, especially the hungry, was considered the highest charity. These are only a few of the sublime attitudes towards basic human needs in the Hindu Culture.

This brings us to the third Sanskrit term "Samskrithi". Samskrithi, in its most basic sense, means "culture". In the Hindu tradition culture or "Samskrithi" is that "collective ethos of a group of people which evolves a pattern of behaviour which regulates, refines and sublimates the basic Prakrithi or the bestial urges which man shares with the creatures who are lower than he in the Great Chain of Being. The greatness of a culture or Samskrithi is its
capacity to restrain, refine, transcend and make sublime (sublimate) the primordial urges of man.

By this definition, one can see that the modern materialistic life style cannot be called a “culture” at all! The modern way of life does not in any way quality as “Samskrithi”. Instead of refining, controlling, and sublimating the animal instincts, it glorifies, indulges, magnifies and worst of all, perverts them. The modern life style is a collective “Vikrithi,” or perversion of primordial instincts.

In discussing “Yoga Psychology” it is necessary to clearly understand this concept for “individual mind” is conditioned by the “culture” into which it is born. A mind, which is born into “Vikrithi”, will almost certainly become perverted. Perversion of natural urges can never lead to permanent happiness, stability, peace of mind, health or spiritual unfoldment. Instead, perversion will only lead to devolution of the psyche, a return to the bestial state. That this is a fact is easily witnessed by the animal-like behaviour of huge numbers of human beings in today’s society and the horrendous social, personal, mental and physical health problems, which now abound. One can hardly meet a same, happy, healthy, controlled, balanced or stable personality in today’s society. According to World Health Statistics depression will reach endemic proportions and be the world’s number one “Killer Disease” by 2040! Mental and physical wrecks, wracked by the most complicated problems, are the order of the day. Yoga Psychology considers much of this is caused by lack of Samskrithi and the prevalence of Vikrithi in modern society. Psychological disorders are caused by “Vikrithi”, perversion of Prakrithi, natural urges, and due to lack of Samskrithi, or strong cultural values and controls.

Thus, Yoga Psychology also takes cognizance of the culture into which the mind has been born, and whether the mind has been established in a stable controlled framework by Samskrithi, or destabilized by Vikrithi.