**Question: Discuss the five Bhumis and their nature.**

**Answer:** In the second verse of the Yogasutras, Patanjali defines yoga as ‘chitta-vrtti-nirodha,’ literally translated as ‘the removing of the thought-waves of the mind.’ Our mind is constantly fluctuating. Thus the purpose of yoga is to eliminate this fluctuation and reach a state of absolute calmness and balance. In order to reach this stage, it is important to first develop an understanding of different states of the human mind. We all experience each of these states at different times in our lives, and we tend to oscillate among them. In Yoga terminology, these states are called bhumis. They are five in number:

**Kshipta (restless)** - In this state of mind, a person is highly agitated and unable to think, listen, or keep quiet. Here the mind is like a monkey, totally restless, unable to concentrate or decide, jumping from one thought to another, from one emotion to the next and from object to object. It moves between love and hate, likes and dislikes, expectations and disappointment.

**Moodha (lethargic)** - In this state, the mind is compared to an overworked donkey – it is dull, sleepy, and lacks strength. When we are in such a mental state we feel tired and not willing to engage with life. We easily give up and find numerous reasons not to move on with our intentions. If we are denied anything, or we have to invest more effort into getting the desired object, the mind drives us into a state of dissatisfaction. We easily complain and blame others.

**Vikshipta (distracted)** - In the third state, the mind is able to achieve temporary concentration on some object, but this is soon followed by distraction. The mind oscillates between thoughts of clarity and thoughts of confusion, just like a butterfly alternates between motion and rest in its flight. In this stage, as long as things are going fine, we are happy, feel good about ourselves. But at the first challenge, we fall again into a state of distracted mind. If we experience a painful situation we choose to withdraw and go back into the old habits.

**Ekagra (concentrated)** - This state of mind is compared to a candle, because in this state the mind remains focused on one object, like the stillness of a candle flame. In this state, the mind is relaxed but not sleepy. It is ready to focus and pay attention, which is the first necessary step to meditation. But this is still not the final stage, as the mind continues to think or meditate on some object, and so, the mental processes are not altogether arrested.

**Niruddha (restrained)** - Here the mind is not distracted by random thoughts but is fully absorbed in the object of focus. This state is experienced through meditation or when a person is fully engaged in something. In this state, there is the cessation of all mental functions including even that of concentration which marks the previous stage. Here the succession of mental states and processes is completely checked, and the mind is left in its original, unmodified state of calmness.

Most human beings remain restricted to the first three bhumis for most of their lives, and do not qualify for the higher stages. The Moodha mind is too dull to make the required effort to “wake up”. The Kshipta mind is too restless and therefore lacks concentration and balance. The Vikshipta mind is inconsistent. Only the Ekagra and the Niruddha minds are helpful for the attainment of the ultimate goal of moksha or liberation. Through the practice of Yoga, we can train the mind to reach these higher states and to maintain them.