

## A REVIEW ARTICLE ON TRIGUNA

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### ABSTRACT

The term *Guna* refers to the inherent energy or tendency with which *Prakruti* is created and with which human mind functions. The individual's vital collection of powerful energies which drives people to work. *Guna* is *Sadviteeya*. Until when *Guna* will be there, till then the universe will be there. One who is devoid of *Guna* is devoid of universe. *Guna* is *Sahaja Prakruti* which stays inside a person and is called as quality, impulse and propensity<sup>1</sup>. The *Prakruti* is composed of three *Guna*; *Satva*, *Raja* and *Tama*. On an individual level *Satva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* also corresponds to various psychophysiological state and personality types. *Satvika* response to clarity of thoughts and purity of Mind. *Rajas* denote passionate, excitable, aggressive states of Mind and *Tamas* denotes indifference, confusion and depression. In *Srimad Bhagavd Geeta* there is description about *Triguna* and its *Swabhava*, *Lakshana*, *Karya*, *Phala* and *Parinama*<sup>2</sup>. The *Trigunas* reciprocally involve one another and form a Unity in Trinity. They are so interdependent that they can never be separated from one another. These three not only coexist but also stick together. They are in inseparable complex. In some, at one time, one may be dominant and the other two recessives. Human nature which is a complex of these *Triguna*<sup>3</sup>.

**Keywords:** *Satva*, *Raja*, *Tama*, *Triguna*, *Prakruti*.

### INTRODUCTION

One can find the *Lakshana* and *Gunas* of *Manas* described in *Bhagavad Geeta*. One of the great epics of India and in *Srimad Bhagavad Geeta*, Lord Krishna has beautifully explained the concept of *Manas*, the *Triguna* of *Manas*, characters of each *Guna*, the relationship between food and habits in *Triguna* and methods of controlling the *Manas*.

*Triguna* as "Sarvada Sahasanchari". *Triguna* are present in all human beings, none is free from the operation of any one of the three qualities. They are not constant. Sometimes *Satva* predominates and at the

other time *Rajas* and *Tamas* predominates. One should analyze and stand as a witness of these three qualities.

For the performance of all the functions of the world, *Triguna* must be there. And all the *Guna* must not be in *Sama Avasta*. They should be in *Vishama*. This *Asama Sammishrana* of *Triguna* is *Jagat niyama*<sup>4</sup>. So, one who know that the *Satva* is *Shreshta* and one cannot get rid of *Rajas* and *Tamas*, should do *Sadhana* in enlightening the *Satva*. One should work to increase

the *Satvamsha* and to increase *Rajas* when compared to *Tamo Guna*.

These three *Guna* in different proportions influence the mental and intellectual caliber of every individual. *Guna* indicates the attitude with which human mind functions. Dominance of *Guna* determines the individual's personality. *Prakruti* is the ultimate cause of the world of objects. All objects of the world including body and mind, the senses and the intellect are limited and dependent; things are produced by the combination of certain elements. So, it is assumed that the world is a series of effects and that it must have a cause and *Prakruti* is cause of creation.

*Prakruti* is made up of *Triguna- Satva, Rajas* and *Tamas*. These three qualities deluded the soul and make it forget its true nature, which is one with god. This delusion is termed as *Maya*, can only be removed by the grace of the lord himself<sup>5</sup>.

Apart from *Bhagavad Geeta* the other *Acharyas* also mentioned about the *Triguna*. In *Sushruta Samhita* personality of a man is explained based on *Triguna; Satvika, Rajasika, Tamasika Purusha Lakshana* are explained<sup>6</sup>.

*Acharya Charaka* mentioned mental faculty is of three types; *Satvika, Rajasa* and *Tamasa*. The *Satvika* is one which is free from defects as it is endowed with auspiciousness. The *Rajasa* is defective because it promotes wrathful disposition. The *Tamasa* is the one which is similarly defective because it suffers from ignorance<sup>7</sup>.

In *Astanga Hrudaya* the characteristics of *Triguna* are mentioned as, *Satvika* persons having *Guna* like cleanliness, have faith in god, righteous, honest and intellect. *Rajasika* persons are talkative, having anger, jealousy and are proud. *Tamasika* persons are coward, illiterate, sleepy, lazy and non enthusiastic<sup>8</sup>.

According to *Sankhya* philosophy, *Prakruti* is constituted by three qualities- *Satva, Rajas* and *Tamas*. At the level of *Mula Prakruti* the *Triguna* are in equilibrium. The moment this equilibrium is troubled, the *Guna* are thrown out of the balance leading to a continuous cycle of changes. *Satva Guna* is the indicator of purity, creativity and bliss. *Rajas* is distinguished by movement, dynamism and reactivity or *Raga*.

*Tamas* is characterized by ignorance, delusion and power of resistance<sup>9</sup>.

*Srimad Bhagavata Purana* explained about the nature of man, things and actions according to the dominance of *Guna* of *Prakruti* in their unspoiled or perfect and uncombined nature as also in combination. Also says, material substance, the place, the fruit of action, time, knowledge, activity, the performer, faith, the state of consciousness and the species and destinations of life thus all belong to the *Triguna*<sup>10</sup>.

### SRIMAD BHAGAVAD GEETA

#### 14<sup>TH</sup> CHAPTER OF BHAGAVAD GEETA:<sup>11</sup>

The knowledge of these *Triguna* which hold the entire Universe and all creators under their way, is of vital importance to each one for their progress and happiness in life. Without this knowledge one will be forever bound by sorrow. This knowledge has the secret of success in worldly life as well as in spiritual life. Therefore, one should acquire this precious knowledge of knowing *Triguna*.

Lord *Krishna* reveals that these three qualities composed the *Prakruti*. This *Prakruti* is the primary source and origin of the entire creation and all things in it. Hence all things created are subjected to their influence and irresistible power. The individual soul also is bound to the body by these three qualities present in cosmic nature. The Supreme Being brings about creation through the help of his *Prakruti* endowed with these *Triguna*.

The highest of three qualities is *Satva*. It is pure. It brings about happiness, wisdom and illumination. The second quality is of *Rajas* gives rise to passion manifested by intense attachment and greed. It causes sorrow and suffering. The third, termed *Tamas*, is the worst of all. It arises due to ignorance and results in darkness, lethargy and delusion.

One should control and master *Rajas*, and by holding it in check, wisely divert its power towards good kind of activities. *Satva* should be carefully cultivated, developed and conserved in order to enable us to attain immortality. Lord *Krishna* in *Bhagavad Geeta* declares that, one who rises beyond all the *Triguna* through spiritual practices becomes free from birth, death, old age and sorrow and enjoys immortality.

*Triguna*; *Satva*, *Raja*, *Tama* are born of *Prakruti*, which binds immortal soul to body in its embodied state. *Satva* which from its Stainlessness is luminous and healthy, binds by attachment to knowledge and to happiness and is sinless one. *Rajas* to be of the nature

of passion, the source of thirst (for sensual enjoyment) and attachment, it binds fast the embodied one by attachment to action. *Tamas* is born of ignorance, deluding all embodied beings, it binds fast, is full of thoughtlessness, sleep and ignorance.

**TABLE 1:** *Swaroopa of Triguna*

<b>GUNA</b>	<b>Swabhava</b>	<b>Lakshana</b>	<b>Kaarya</b>	<b>Phala</b>	<b>Parinama</b>
<b>SATVA</b>	<i>Nirmala</i>	<i>Prakasha</i>	<i>Jnana</i>	<i>Sukha</i>	<i>Shanti</i>
<b>RAJAS</b>	<i>Kama, Krodha</i>	<i>Atirekha</i> <i>Avesha</i>	<i>Karma pravrutti</i>	<i>Trushne</i> <i>Udvega</i>	<i>Paribramane</i>
<b>TAMAS</b>	<i>Moha</i>	<i>Apravrutti</i>	<i>Ajnana</i>	<i>Pramada</i> <i>Alasya, Nidra</i>	<i>Dukha</i>

All the *Guna* are always combined in an unequal proportion not in equal proportion. *Satva* attaches to mood of joy and action, while *Rajas* to action. *Tamas* to ignorance and heedlessness. *Satva* prevails by overpowering *Rajas* and *Tamas*. *Rajas* dominate other two by suppressing *Satva* and *Tamas*. *Tamas* overpower itself by suppressing *Satva* and *Rajas*.

When through all the senses which are the portals of the body, knowledge, happiness and similar characteristics manifest then indeed it should be understood that *Satva* is dominant. Greed, extroversion, ceaseless planning and execution of work, restlessness, desire for enjoyment, these arises when *Rajas* is predominant. When *Tamas* dominates, there is lack of Intelligence, lack of effort, negligence and delusion arises.

When a person dies, if *Satva* was predominant, then he attains pure, Spotless regions of the knowers of the highest (*Atmajnani*). Those who die when *Rajas* dominates are born among those attached to action (*Manushya/man*) likewise those dying in *Tamas*, are born in the wombs of creatures without reason (animals).

The fruit of good action is spirituality and purity (*Satva*). The fruit of *Rajas* is pain, and ignorance is the fruit of *Tamas*. From the *Satva* arises knowledge and greed. From *Rajas*, Negligence. Delusion and ignorance are the product of *Tamas*. Those established in *Satva* evolve to higher goals, while those abiding in *Rajas* remain in middle and *Tamasika* abiding in the function of lowest *Guna*, which degenerates, go downwards.

The embodied one, having crossed beyond these *Triguna* out of which the body is evolved, is free from birth, death, *Jara*, *Dukha* and attains to immortality. When *Prakasha* (light), *Pravrutti* (action) and *Moha* (delusion) are present, a person doesn't hate anything, nor does he desire for them when they are absent.

One who is alike in honor and in humiliation; who views a friend and foe alike; who has abandoned all sense of agency, such a person is said to have transcended the *Guna*.

One who serves God through the communion of unwavering and exclusive devotion transcends the *Guna* and attends fitness to become *Bramhan*.

## 17<sup>TH</sup> CHAPTER OF SRIMAD BHAGAVAD GEETA:<sup>12</sup>

The *Shraddha* (faith) of the embodied manifest in three ways; *Satvika*, *Rajasika*, *Tamasika*. Those endowed with *Satva*, worship *Devatas*. Those with *Rajas* worship *Yakshas* and *Rakshasas*. Those with *Tamas* worship the Spirits of dead ancestors and elementals (Supernatural entity).

*Ahara* is of three kinds; The person who are *Satvika* by nature, like food that promotes longevity, vitality, energy, health, happiness, cheerfulness and that are juicy, soft, nourishing and agreeable. Persons who are *Rajasika* by nature like food that are *Katu*, *Amla*, *Lavana*, excessively *ushna*, *Teekshna*, *Ruksha*, *Vidahi* and thirst producing, as also which brings on uneasiness, depression and diseases. Persons who are *Tamasika* by nature like food that is stale, tasteless,

putrid, decayed, unclean and constitutes the leavings of others (leftovers).

The *Yajna* (worship) which is performed as mentioned in *Shastra* without any desire of reward from it and by considering only as responsibility, with calm mind is considered as *Satvika*. The *Yajna* done seeking a reward or fruit from it and for vain display (excessively proud of one's own appearance, qualities, achievement) is considered as *Rajasika*. The *Yajna* done without following the *Shastra Niyama*, which is without any distribution of food, which is devoid of *Mantra*, without any sacramental presents and without sincere faith is considered as *Tamasika*.

The *Tapa* performed with the highest faith, by men who are not motivated by expectations of reward and who are established in mental equipoise is declared to be of the nature of *Satva*. The *Tapa* that is performed with much show and ostentation (too obviously showing your money, possessions or power) having in view recognition, praise and adoration as a pious man by others, is said to be of the nature of *Rajas*. The *Tapa* performed through the practice out of a foolish notion, with self-tortures or for the purpose of destroying another is considered as *Tamasika*.

The *Daana* (Gift/Charity) given to others with the absolute sense of duty, without expectation of any kind of return, given at the proper time and place to a fit recipient is said to be of the nature of *Satva*. The *Daana* which is given in consideration of some gift in return or with some fruit to be reaped in future or in a grudging mood, that is of the nature of *Rajas*. The *Daana* is made at an improper time and place to an unworthy recipient, who is with lack of courtesy and in a disregarded manner that is said to be of nature of *Tamas*.

The constantness in *Yajna* (worship) and in the *Daana* (charity) is called *Sat* (good). Any action in connection with these is also called *Sat*. Whatever is performed as *Yajna*, *Tapa* and *Daana*, without faith, in fact anything done without faith is declared to be *Asat* (not good). It is of no significance here (earthly life) or in the hereafter (death).

#### **SUSHRUTHA SAMHITA:**

Kind, Merciful, *Samvibhaga ruchita*, patient, truthful, follows righteous way, belief in god, *Jnana*, *Buddi*, intelligent, *Smruthi*, courageous, who is not blamed by anyone, these are the characteristic features of *Satva Guna*. *Rajo Guna* predominant persons are always in grief, wandering, unhappy, *Ahankara*, telling lies, *Akarunya*, deceiving, respectful, joyous, *Kama* and *Krodha*. *Tamo Guna* predominant persons are in sadness, lack of belief in existence of God, doing unrighteous things, *Buddhirnirodha*, *Ajani*, foolish, does not like to work and *Nidralu*<sup>6</sup>.

#### **CHARAKA SAMHITA:**

*Acharya Charaka* mentioned Mental faculty is of three types; *Satvika*, *Rajasika* and *Tamasika*. *Satvika* is one which is free from defects as it is endowed with auspiciousness. *Rajasika* is defective because it promotes wrathful disposition. *Tamasika* is the one which is similarly defective because it suffers from ignorance<sup>7</sup>.

#### **ASTANGA HRUDAYA:**

*Satvika* persons having *Guna* like cleanliness, have faith in god, righteous, honest and intellect. *Rajasika* persons are talkative, having anger, jealousy and proud. *Tamasika* persons are coward, illiterate, sleepy, lazy and no enthusiastic<sup>8</sup>.

#### **TRIGUNA IN SANKHYA KARIKA**

According to *Sankhya* philosophy, *Prakruti* is constituted by three qualities- *Satva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. At the level of *Mulaprakruti* the *Triguna* are in equilibrium. The moment this equilibrium is troubled, *Guna* are thrown out of the balance leading to a continuous cycle of changes. *Rajas* is distinguished by movement, dynamism and reactivity or *Raga*. *Tamas* is characterized by ignorance, delusion and power of resistance<sup>9</sup>. *Satva* is said to be light in weight and illuminating. Its lightness helps in making the object nonphysical. Its illuminating power can give extension to the consciousness. *Satva Guna* is the indicator of purity, creativity and bliss. It can be compared with flame and is represented by white colour. *Rajas* by nature is; stimulant, hyperactive and fickle, Therefore, said to be the indicator of stimulation, impatience and pain. It can be compared with wick and is represented by red colour.

*Tamas* is said to be heavy and work as covering for the consciousness. It is indicated by ignorance, darkness and nobility. It can be compared with oil of a lamp and is represented by blue colour<sup>9</sup>.

### SRIMAD BHAGAVATA PURANA

Control of the mind and senses, forbearance, discrimination, austerity, truthfulness, compassion, memory, contentment, self-sacrifice, lack of desire, faith, revulsion from evil, charity, absorption in the Self-these are the signs of *Satva*. Desire, activity, pride, greed, self-boasting, longing for one's selfish ends, sense of difference between man and things, sensuality, enthusiasm arising from excitement, craving for name and fame, indulgence in ridicule of others, demonstrativeness, and aggressiveness-these are the signs of *Rajas*. Anger, greed, untrustworthy, cruelty, beggarliness, hypocrisy, inactivity, quarrelsomeness, depression, delusion, despondency, wretchedness, lassitude, vain expectations, fear, lack of initiative and vigour in work-these are the characteristics of *Tamas*.

When *Satva* is illuminating, brilliant, pure and peaceful, dominates over the other two *Gunas*, then person will be happy and established in morality and knowledge. When *Rajas*, characterized by attachment, sense of difference, and consciousness of one's power, dominates over *Satva* and *Tamas*, then man becomes subject to suffering, sorrow, following as he does the path of desire-prompted actions seeking wealth and fame. When *Tamas*, characterized by lack of discriminative power by lethargy and by inertia dominates over *Rajas* and *Satva*, then man becomes subject to pessimism, delusion, sloth, cruelty and indulgence in vain expectations.

When one's consciousness clears up and the senses are no longer distracted, one achieves physical self-confidence and a detached mind; then *Satva Guna* dominates. When the intelligence is disturbed by too much activity, when one fails to disengage from one's senses, when one is not at ease with one's body and when the mind is unsteady, it shows that *Rajas* has become dominant. When the drooping mind, unable to sustain consciousness, dissolves into sleep, when thought ceases to function due to dominance of inertia

and pessimism, then we know that *Tamas* is prevailing.

One who die when *Satva Guna* is dominating, will go to *Swarga* (heaven), one who die when *Rajo Guna* is dominating, will acquainted with *Manushyaloka* (human world), One who die when *Tamo Guna* is dominating, will go to *Naraka* (hell).

When a person does any work in the feeling of dedication to god or with good thoughts without desiring the fruits is in the mode of goodness, then he will become *Satvika*. When a person expects the benefit out of that work then he will become *Rajasika*. If he is self-praising himself and egoistic towards the work and performed with violence and pressure, then he will become *Tamasika*.

Spiritual knowledge of detachment is of the *Satva*, fostering opinions is of the *Rajas* and a materialistic conviction belongs to the *Tamas*. A worker free from attachment is of *Satvika*, blinded by personal desire is of *Rajasika*, having lost one's memory and doesn't think about pros and cons before doing any work is of *Tamasika*.

*Satva* is the one who believes in spiritual matters, *Rajas* is the one who believes in outcome of fruit from activities, *Tamas* is the one who believes in *Adharma*<sup>10</sup>.

Food that is wholesome, pure and attained effortlessly is of *Satvika*, food which is delicious and tasteful to oneself is of *Rajasika* and impure food that makes one suffer is of *Tamasika*.

Happiness derived from the soul is of *Satvika*, generated by sense objects it is of *Rajasika*, happiness derived from delusion and depravity is of *Tamasika*.

Those who have control over sense organs are called *Satvika*. Those who indulged in the enjoyment of the world are *Rajasika*.

## DISCUSSION

A person having *Satva Guna* predominance is having qualities by which he can abstain from having diseases caused due to *Prajnaparadha* and *Asatmyindriyārtha Samyoga* as the person is aware of the consequences and its outcomes. *Acharya Sushruta* not separately mentioned the types of *Guna* and *Satva*

*Pareeksha*, but he explained according to the *Pradhana Guna* of the *Manas*.

*Satva Guna* of the person at the time of *Vyasana*, *Abhyudaya* and *Chedy Bhedyadhi Shastra Karma* does not cause *Dukkha*. *Satva* is the capacity of mind which does not cause the frustration (agony, misery) at times of sorrow, joy (happiness, prosperity) etc. (other emotions like anger, fear). *Satva Guna Yukta Purusha* from his *Atmabala* or *Manobala* he overcomes from the pain or harm caused by the *Shareerika* and *Manasika Vyadhi*. *Rajo Guna Pradhana Purusha* with help of others he can bear and overcomes from his problems. But *Tamo Guna Yukta purusha* does not bear and overcomes from such problems<sup>13</sup>.

*Manasika Prakruti* can be identified on how a person behaves or reacts to a given situation considering the place and time. *Acharya Sushruta* describes the same in the aspect of *Guna* where each *Guna* is explained with each of the exclusive character of the person and each of the character defines how the person will react to a situation.

## CONCLUSION

*Bhagavad Geeta*, *Bhagavata Purana*, *Sankya karika* and our *Ayurvedic* literature gives detailed information about *Triguna*, their function, characteristics and their role in maintenance of health of an individual. *Triguna* plays major role in treatment aspect to know about the mental faculty of each person and their mindset towards every situation. This article provides all that information compiled at one place.

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