



Balancing Trigunas with yogic practices

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Abstract

According to Ayurveda, the human body (the physical entity) is composed of three fundamental categories called Doshas, Dhatus and Malas. The Doshas are three in number, the Dhatus are seven and the Malas are three. The three doshas (Tridoshas) are Vata, Pitta and Kapha. Their psychological correlation has important role in functioning and behavioural patterns of humans in the Trigunas-Sattva, Raja and Tama. The three gunas promote a different kind of temperaments based on the dominance of one or the other guna. The awareness and conscious manipulation of the three gunas is a powerful way to reduce stress, increase inner peace and lead towards enlightenment.

Trigunas in itself is not a physical quantity but its presence can be seen by three means

The action, we perform

The interaction behind the action

And the reaction.

We can work on balancing the Trigunas with careful and minute observations of these Trigunas, lies within us. Transform Tamasa into Rajas and when Rajas is attained, balance it to bring focus on the Sattvaguna. Sattvikguna brings us closer to the universal truth of oneness.

Keywords: Tridoshas, Trigunas, balancing, Satva, Raja, Tama, oneness

Introduction

In the philosophy of yoga, all the matter in the universe arises from the fundamental substrate- Prakriti. From this ethereal Prakriti, the three primary Gunas (energies) emerges, creating the essential aspect of all nature- energy, matter and consciousness.

The word Prakriti also consists of three root words

Pra means Sattva (lightness)

Kr means Rajas (activity)

Ti means Tamas (stability)

Prakriti is thus composed of these three gunas: SATTVA, RAJA and TAMA.

The concept of trigunas states back to Atharvaveda.

It was discussed in Bhagavad-Gita and Sankhya Darshan too.

In Ayurveda and Yoga, Guna is an element of reality that can affect our psychological, emotional and de-energetic states.

In Sanskrit, guna stands for quantity, tendency, peculiarity and attributes.

In Sankhya Philosophy, the three gunas create an essential component in which prakriti can manifest.

These trigunas combine in different composition to develop the five basic elements of the body, which are also known as Panch Maha Bhutas. These are

Akash - (space) is predominant with Sattvaguna.

Vayu - (air) is predominant with Rajas guna.

Agni - (fire) is predominant with Sattva and Rajas guna.

Jala - (Water) is predominant with Sattva and Tamas guna.

Prithvi - (earth) is predominant with Tamas guna.

These Panch Maha Bhutas further fused together to form Tri doshas.

Both Charak and Sushruta state that the Tridoshas are a combination of Panch Maha Bhutas.

Vata dosha is a combination of Akash and Vayu.

Pitta dosha is a combination of Agni and Jala.

Kapha dosha is a combination of Prithvi and Jala.

Hence, the Vata dosha is a combination of Sattva and Rajas guna, but referred to as predominance of Rajas guna.

Pitta Dosha is a combination of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas Guna but has a predominance of Sattva Guna.

Kapha dosha is a combination of Sattva and Tamas guna but has a predominance of Tamas guna.

Thus, we may conclude that the doshas in respect of gunas exhibited by them due to the relative dominance of one or other panchmahabhutas.

This trigunatmaka description of the constitution of Panch Maha Bhuta is the most important aspect of philosophical concept of gunas in science and medicine, having importance in concluding the behaviour exhibited by individuals on the dominance of one or the other Dosha or Guna, that is constitutionally present in the person from conception- referred to as the particular prakriti-Guna combination. This combination is unique to every person and it is not changeable throughout his life.

Yoga practitioner should have the awareness of all the three gunas to identify the personality of a person, which provides him a better way to make choices to be more balanced, peaceful and harmonious, both on and off the yoga mat. Cultivating the ability to identify and understand the nature of the trigunas bring us closer to seeing the universal truth

of oneness.

Triguna and Personality

The entire world is under the influence of Trigunas. The people we observe are a combination of Trigunas, in different combinations and proportions. Trigunas never exist in isolation in a person and always act in conjunction with each other. Also they compete each other and the dominant guna decides the personality of that person.

Any changes in the physical, mental or psychological states of a person, has the roots in the Panch Maha Bhutas, which compose the body as the base elements.

Thus, Trigunas influences the personality of a person.

Each guna exhibits certain characteristic qualities to the person, on that basis a person can be classified as belonging to that particular guna type.

Charak and Sushruta, both recognizes seven types of categories(gunas) for all the people, depending on the dominance of gunas in their bodies. Also, they are said to belong to a particular guna combination as follows:

1. People with dominant sattva guna.
2. People with dominant rajas guna.
3. People with dominant tamasguna.
4. People with dominant sattva and rajas guna combination.
5. People with dominant sattva and tamas guna combination.
6. People with dominant rajas and tamas guna combination.
7. People with balanced gunas.

According to Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, the actual intention of Yoga was to enhance Sattva guna(a calm yet alert state of mind).

According to the Bhagavat Geeta (14-20), “when one rises above the trigunas that originate in the body, one is freed from birth, old age, diseases and death and attain enlightenment”.

Thus Yogi’s goal is to cultivate Sattva by practicing Yoga, but his ultimate goal is to transcend their misunderstanding of the self with the trigunas and to be unattached to the good and the bad, the positive and the negative qualities of all life.

Characteristics of Trigunas

All living and non-living things have the characteristics of Trigunas. The Trigunas are present in each and everything, but vary in their relative amounts. Humans have the unique ability to continuously alter the levels and Trigunas in body and mind. The gunas cannot be separated or removed but can be consciously acted upon to encourage their increase or decrease, through the interaction and under the influence of external environment, lifestyle practices, food and thoughts.

Sattva guna:

Sattva is the topmost of the Trigunas, that is achieved by the Yogis, as it reduces Rajas and Tamas gunas and makes liberation possible. Sattva guna is a state of harmony, balance, happiness and intelligence. Other Sattva qualities are: delight, peace, lightness, wellness, freedom, love, compassion, equanimity, empathy, friendliness, calmness, cheerfulness, focus, self control, satisfaction, trust, bliss, fulfilment, gratitude, fearlessness, selflessness, feeling

expansiveness and full of joy all at the same time for no practical reason.

Sattva guna is symbolized with White Color.

Rajas Guna

Rajas guna is a state of activity, energy, action, motion, change and movement.

The nature of Rajas Guna is of attraction and attachment and to bind to the results of the work.

Rajas Guna has the nature of being overactive in all. Other Rajasic qualities are: Anger, Euphoria, Anxiety, Fear, Irritation, Worry, Restlessness, Stress, Courage, Rumination, Full of activity and mental agitation.

Rajas Guna symbolizes with Red color.

Tamas Guna

Tamas Guna is a state of inertia, darkness, inactivity and materiality.

Tamas manifests from ignorance and mislead all beings from their spiritual truths.

Other Tamas Gunas are: Laziness, Disgust, Attachment, Depression, Helplessness, Doubt, Guilt, Shame, Hurt, Boredom, Addiction, Sadness, Apathy, Confusion, Grief, Dependency and Heaviness.

Tamas Guna symbolizes with Dark Colors.

Balancing Trigunas

Human mind’s psychological qualities are highly unstable and can fluctuate frequently between the Trigunas. The predominant guna of the mind acts as a lens that affect the perceptions and perspectives of the world around us.

Thus, if mind is in Rajas Guna, it will experience world events as chaotic, confusing and demanding and it will then have a strong tendency to continue to react to events in a Rajasic way.

Therefore yogis, who have to make process along the path, must have to practice self-observation and discernment to witness and not react to the activities of the gunas.

Also, we must have the inner-strength and will-power to continuously shift our thoughts and actions away from the Tamas and Rajas towards Sattva that balance the purpose.

Everything we eat, we think, we do, we observe, we see, read and experience either pulls us close to the balance or pushes us away from the balance.

Through deliberate choices, we can keep ourselves out of attachment, fear and restlessness, towards the balance and generosity.

To Balance (Reduce) Tamas Guna

Tamas guna can be reduced or balanced through simple changes to yoga practices (asanas/poses), meditation, diet changes and lifestyle changes.

Avoid tamasic foods, over-sleeping- over eating, inactivity, passivity and fearful situations.

Asana/poses adjustments to balance Tamas:

Regular asana practice will be very effective in reducing tamas guna, but need to hold poses for less time and practice more vinyasa and sun- salutation type sequences.

Practicing back bends and balancing poses will be energizing invigorating.

Minimize forward bending and shorten shavasana to reduce tamas guna.

Pranayama for balance

To balance high amounts of tamas guna, practice Bhastrika pranayama.

To balance moderate amounts of tamas guna practice Kapalbhathi.

To balance mild amounts of tamas guna practice Nadi shodhana.

Meditation with movement

The stillness or seated meditation can increase tamas guna. That is why minimize meditation time or practice more active or movement based meditations, such as walking meditation, dynamic meditation. Kirtan/chanting prayers help us to balance tamas guna.

Dietary adjustments

Adjusting/changing diets, have the most powerful effect on balancing Tamas guna.

Refrain from over eating and try to consume a light diet with a lot of vegetables and fruits.

Avoid all types of foods that make feel heavy.

Avoid foods that are difficult to digest, fermented, preserved, spoiled, chemically treated, over-processed or refined.

Minimize drugs, alcohols, caffeine and other stimulants. Consume a lot of pure water.

Life style adjustments

1. Increase overall physical and mental activities.
2. Avoid over sleeping.
3. Try to wake up early in the morning (brahma muhurat), get out of the house in open stimulating environment.
4. Make distance from screens (TV, mobile etc), inactivity, passivity and fearful situations.
5. Always try to be a part of good company/community.
6. Avoid wearing dark coloured clothes.

Balance rajas guna

Rajas guna can be balanced through simple changes/modifications to yoga practices, meditations, diet changes and life style changes.

Avoid Rajasic foods, over-exercising, over-work, over-consuming, loud music, over-thinking etc., expose more to sattva activities.

Asana adjustments to balance rajas guna

Daily/ Regular asana practices will be very effective in balancing Rajas guna, but need to hold poses for more time.

Pranayama to Cool and Calm Rajas Guna

Sitkari and Shitali Pranayama are the most effective practice in calming down the practitioner. It will clear out the agitating energy of rajas guna. Also try Ocean Sounding Breath, in case attention is distracted by outside noise or stimulation.

Seated meditation will be very effective to disperse the over-stimulating effect of rajas-guna, on the heart and mind. Practice calming meditation, like Inner Peace Meditation, Third Eye Meditation and Heart-Chakra Meditation.

Practice Mantra meditation, in case of over active mind and lot of thinking.

Practice Meta meditation, in case of excessive anger and bitterness in heart.

Dietary adjustments

Dietary adjustments have a powerful impact on balancing Rajas guna.

Avoid eating on go and resist gobbling.

Properly sit down for the meal and eat slowly and feel gratitude for the meal.

Avoid bitter, sour, salty and spicy foods and emphasise on sweet, pungent and stringent foods.

Avoid fried, oily or greasy foods, warming foods.

Consume watermelon, mint and cucumber.

Avoid sugar, caffeine and chocolates.

Life style adjustments

The biggest lifestyle modification to consider for balancing Rajas guna, is to slow down, do less and sleep and rest more.

Avoid busy and stimulating environments.

Talk less, listen more and engage in mindful communication.

Listen slow, calming music or enjoy silence.

Try to spend more time near to nature or natural places.

Avoid exposure to wind.

Seek cool and dimly lit environments.

Practice karma yoga.

Balance sattva Guna

Sattva Guna can be balanced through simple modifications to Yoga practices, meditations, dietary changes & life style modifications.

All the yogic practices were developed to create Sattva Guna in the mind & body.

Practicing yoga & leading Yogic lifestyle strongly cultivate Sattva Guna, gradually.

A Sattva guna person can take better decisions & can lead a regulated & happy life.

Asana practice

A restorative Yoga practice provides the physical & mental balance that prevents stress & anxiety.

Hold poses longer & relax even deeper with access to deep passive stretching.

Sukhasana, Marjaryasana, Bitikasana, Balasana, Paschimottanasana, SuptaMatsyendraasana, etc intended to be comfortable & calming and provides a great help to restore balance.

Pranayamas

Pranayama will purify Nadis, increase blood in eye & sinus area & bring balance between the right & left sides of the brain.

Anulom – Vilom will immediately bring calmness & balance emotions.

Kapal Bhati will purify our nadis. It calms the mind down, provides fresh energy, bring balance to emotions & gives more inner – strength.

As we go deeper in Pranayama – it leads to Dharana (concentration) & Dhyana (Meditation).

Meditation

No yoga practice would enable to undergo complete transformation without practicing Meditation & Pratyahara. Meditation will help in cleansing the consciousness by detaching it from matter & activate the inner Buddha.

Dietary Adjustments

Food we consume has a strong effect on the mind & body.

Sattvic diet is vegetarian, based on real, whole food.

Fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, grains, legumes, natural sweeteners make us feel happy & peaceful.

Lifestyle Modifications

There are many ways to modify our lifestyle.

Cleanliness of body, clothes, places where we live, where we work, altering with aromapathy, gentle music, sunlight, soft lighting changes the vibes.

Swimming & walking in forest (Being in nature) brings us near to Sattva guna.

Avoid night working. Awake in early morning (Brahma muhurat), surround with Sattvic people, etc.

Develop a sense of gratitude, will drop small stresses & desires & induce more lightness.

Enjoy activities & environment that produce happiness & positive thoughts.

Conclusion

Sankhya Darshan states that everything in this life is composed of the three gunas, within or without us. We all have all the three gunas within us, in different proportions, according to our lifestyles and bodytypes. The predominant guna will decide the personality of the person, which will depend on the diet, lifestyle and natural tendencies according to the physical body.

The gunas make up our Prakriti, which is everything in our ethereal Universe, consciousness, matter and energy. They cannot be removed and they exist always.

In Yoga and Ayurveda, a guna is an element of reality that can affect our psychological, emotional and energetic states.

Any imbalance or disease is a manifestation of too much Rajas or too much Tamas. Therefore for a vibrant health cultivate Sattva guna.

Yoga practices were formed with gunas in mind, and to create Sattva in the mind and body. It is the physical and mental practice we can use to consciously alter the levels of the gunas in our mind and body.

Moderation is the key with the gunas. It always comes back to balance.

Traditional text (Vedas, etc) suggests that we have to develop Sattvic guna at the most.

But my opinion is that, it will be better to develop a balance of the three gunas, so that, we Tamasicly grounded to the earth, Rajasically passionate to work and Sattvicly reaching for our ultimate goal of Self- Realization.

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