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**Balancing Triguna for the Betterment of Human Life**

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**Abstract**

Balancing triguna one of the basic conditions to live a healthier life physically, a better life socially, and psychologically as well this balance develops spiritual growth as the ultimate result. In this proposed article, the importance of the balance of triguna will be described through its physical as well as spiritual aspects. To understand and elaborate on this concept, *Śrimadbhagavadgita* will be the main text and with this, statements from other relevant texts will be addressed.

**Keywords:** Gita, triguna, spiritual growth, human life, balance

**The concept of Triguna**

Triguna is the core concept of Hindu philosophy that describes the creation of the universe widely to the behavior of every single component in short. That means triguna is a basic thing that is the cause of greater to the shorter concept of every sentient to insentient matter of the universe. According to Sāmkhya, a very ancient philosophy of Indian tradition whose concepts are recognized by most of the schools of this philosophical tradition– the creation is just the lack of equilibrium of triguna what is called Prakriti. (Chandradhar, 2022:141)

While Guṇa constitutes several meanings in Indian tradition, for triguna, refers to the three fundamental qualities or guṇas that influence human behavior and life on both physical and

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spiritual levels. These guṇas are Sattva (purity, harmony), Rājas (activity, passion), and Tāmas (inertia, darkness). (Ādidevānanda, 2014:468) According to Grimes, Guṇa is described as quality; attribution; characteristic; excellence; rope, constituent, subsidiary. It is either composed of, or constituted of (depending on individual school's interpretations) the three aspects: sattva, which is buoyant, light, illuminating, knowledge, and happiness; Rājas, which is stimulating, mobile, pain, and action; and Tāmas, which is heavy, enveloping, indifferent, and laziness. (Grimes, 1989:135 )

These triguṇas are described in various texts viz. *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, *Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad*, etc. while Sāṃkhya school of philosophy explains these very clearly. According to Sāṃkhya, these triguṇas it the cause of the universe, and the proper balance of these is the state of dissolution. (Chandradhar, 2022:140) So, these are very fundamental and natural phenomena. Quoting the Kārikā 13 of *Sāṃkhya Kārikā*, we can discuss and understand the triguṇas and their importance:

सत्त्वं लघु प्रकाशम-इष्टम-उपष्टमभकं चालं च राजाः।  
गुरु वरणकं -एव तमाः प्रदीपवत्-च-अर्थाः वृत्ताः ॥

(Virupakshananda, 1995: 45)

That Means, the Sattva attribute is buoyant and illuminating; the rājas attribute is exciting and mobile; and the tāmas attribute is sluggish and obscuring. Their function serves a simple purpose, like that of a lamp.

It is believed that each person possesses all three guṇas in varying degrees. Though they differ by their nature, they stay with each other all the time - like fire, a lamp holder, and oil to light a lamp. The balance of these guṇas shapes one's personality, behavior, and life experiences. Sometimes, sattva becomes the dominant quality in a person, and rājas and tāmas are suppressed. The same can occur happen with the other two qualities: when Rājas dominates, then sattva and tāmas are subdued; when Tāmas dominates, then sattva and rājas are subdued. The dominance of any guṇa is related to the physical, social, psychological and spiritual aspects of personality.

These triguṇas are described differently according to the context like in Ayurveda, Vastu, etc.

But they carry the main concepts and characteristics of these. Though there are several texts, we will consider Gita as our main text to describe triguṇas and its nature with its impact on human life and the balance of these for the betterment of human life.

**Sattva (purity, harmony and knowledge):** This guṇa is treated as the best among all three guṇas. It has its own beauty and characteristics:

तत्र सत्त्वं निर्मलत्वात् प्रकाशकमनामयम्।  
सुखसङ्गेन बध्नाति ज्ञानसङ्गेन चानघ॥ 14/6

(Ādidevānanda, 2014:465)

That means, Of these, Sattva, being pure, is luminous and free from morbidity. It binds, O Arjuna, through attachment to pleasure and knowledge.

**Characteristics:** Sattva is associated with qualities like clarity, wisdom, compassion, and peacefulness. It promotes mental and emotional stability, ethical behavior, and spiritual growth.

**Influence in life:** people with a predominance of sattva guṇa are generally calm, rational, and altruistic. They tend to have a balanced lifestyle, make thoughtful decisions and are inclined towards activities that promote well-being, such as meditation and studying.

**Rājas (Activity, passion and Movement):** Rājas is considered as the main force of everything. It motivates, gives motion to everything. Lets it described from Gita:

रजो रागात्मकं विद्धि तृष्णासङ्गसमुद्भवम्।  
तन्निबध्नाति कौन्तेय कर्मसङ्गेन देहिनम्॥ 14/7

(Ādidevānanda, 2014: 466)

That means, Know, O Arjuna, that Rājas is of the nature of passions arising from thirst and attachment. It binds the embodied self through attachment to action.

**Characteristics:** Rājas are linked to action, change, and energy. It drives ambition, desire, and a restless mind, often leading to intense emotions and a dynamic lifestyle.

**Influence in life:** Individuals dominated by Rājas are energetic, ambitious, and driven. They are often focused on having goals, experiencing pleasure, and accumulating wealth. However, they may also experience stress, anxiety, and dissatisfaction due to their constant pursuit of desires.

**Tāmas (Inertia, Darkness and Ignorance):** Though it is usually treated as the worst attribution among the three, but it is also very important for a better life. It is:

तमस्त्वज्ञानजं विद्धि मोहनं सर्वदेहिनाम् ।

प्रमादालस्यनिद्राभिस्तन्निबध्नाति भारत॥ 14/8

(Ādidevānanda, 2014: 467 )

That means, Know that Tāmas arises from false knowledge and deludes all embodied selves. It binds, O Arjuna, with negligence, indolence, and sleep.

**Characteristics:** Tāmas represents stagnation, confusion, and resistance to change. It is associated with ignorance, laziness, and a lack of motivation.

**Influence in Life:** those with a Tāmasika dominance might be prone to procrastination, lethargy, and negative thinking. They may struggle with mental clarity, have unhealthy lifestyles, and find it difficult to break free from unproductive habits.

### **Balancing guṇas:**

In life, achieving a balance among the three guṇas- sattva, Rājas, and Tāmas is considered crucial and essential for physical health and well-being as well as spiritual growth according to Indian knowledge tradition viz. philosophy, or ayurveda, etc. As we mentioned before, the equilibrium of these guṇas is named Prakṛti and that is the state of dissolution, the rest situation is the cause of the creation and living, etc. Krishna described to Arjuna this very concept like this:

सत्त्वं रजस्तम इति गुणाः प्रकृतिसम्भवा ।  
निवध्नन्ति महाबाहो देहे देहिनमव्ययम् ॥ 14/5

(Ādidevānanda, 2014: 464)

That Means, sattva, Rājas, and Tāmas are the guṇas (qualities or attributes) that emerge from Prakṛiti (nature or material reality). These guṇas bind the eternal, unchanging soul (the Atman) to the body, O Arjuna.

Each of the guṇas has its role, and finding a harmonious balance between them can lead to a more fulfilling and well-rounded life. That is the importance of understanding the nature and dominance of guṇas in a particular body.

### **Importance to specify the predominance of particular guṇa:**

Understanding one's body type under triguṇa is very important to live a healthy life on the physical and mental grounds. As we know, every single body has its different nature by the predominance of one or more than one guṇas, a person reacts or acts differently by the influence. Deciding on different aspects like choosing education or profession, lifestyle choices, decision-making for life and livelihood, or creating or bonding a new relationship like friendship, marriage etc has a significant influence on triguṇa. So, it is important to know the predominance and the way to understand is described in Gita:

सर्वद्वारेषु देहे अस्मिन् प्रकाश उपजायते ।  
ज्ञानं यदा तदा विद्याद् विवृद्धं सत्त्वमित्युत ॥ 14/11  
(Ādidevānanda, 2014: 469)

That Means, when knowledge, like light, illumines all the gateways (the senses), one should know that Sattva prevails.

लोभः प्रवृत्तिरारम्भः कर्मणामशमः स्पृहा ।  
रजस्येतानि जायन्ते विवृद्धे भरतऋषभ ॥ 14/12  
(Ādidevānanda, 2014: 469-470)

That Means, greed, activity, the undertaking of work, unrest, and longing arise, O Arjuna, when Rājas prevails.

अप्रकाशोऽप्रवृत्तिश्च प्रमादो मोह एव च ।  
तमस्येतानि जायन्ते विवृद्धे कुरुनन्दन॥, 14/13

(Ādidevānanda, 2014: 470)

That Means, when Tāmas dominates, O Arjuna, it gives rise to non-illumination, inactivity, negligence, and even delusion.

When one understands the predominance of guṇa, it becomes easy to control life both physically, mentally, and spiritually.

### **Balancing triguṇa physically and spiritually**

Balancing triguṇa can be caused by several means like interaction, environment, lifestyle, thought, and its process, and practicing balance and different eternal and external objects. Here, the discussion will be held on two basic points- physical and spiritual level.

### **Physical and intellectual pursuits**

**Diet:** Consuming sāttvika foods like fresh fruits, vegetables, nuts, and grains can promote sattva. rājasika foods, such as spicy and fried foods, can increase Rājas while tāmasika foods like processed and stale foods can enhance tāmas.

**Sāttvika foods:** Fresh, natural, and nutritious foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, dairy like milk and ghee, and legumes promote physical vitality and mental clarity.

**Moderation in Rājasika foods:** Foods that are stimulating, such as spicy foods, coffee, and tea, should be consumed in moderation. They provide energy and drive but can lead to restlessness if over consumed.

**Limiting Tāmasika foods:** Processed, stale, overly fatty, and sugary foods should be minimized as they can lead to lethargy and health issues.

**Study and Learning:** Engaging in the study of spiritual texts, philosophy, and other intellectually stimulating activities nurtures sattva, fostering wisdom and a deeper understanding of life.

**Service to Others:** Volunteering, helping others, and engaging in selfless service (karma yoga) balance rājas by directing energy

towards constructive and meaningful activities, while also diminishing the effects of tāmas.

**Lifestyle:** Engaging in regular physical activity, maintaining a routine, and adequate sleeping.

**Morning routine:** Start the day with practices that enhance sattva, such as meditation, Yoga, and sāttvika breakfast.

**Mindful activity:** Throughout the day, engage oneself in activities with awareness and purposes, maintaining a balance between work (rājas) and rest (tāmas).

**Evening routine:** Wind down with calming activities like reading, gentle stretching, or reflective practices to promote relaxation and prepare for restful sleep.

**Balanced Physical Exercise and Activity:** Regular exercise such as yoga, walking, swimming, or any form of movement that promotes energy flow without excessive strain helps balance rājas and tāmas, fostering overall physical health.

**Rest and Recovery:** Adequate sleep and relaxation are necessary to prevent burnout from rājasika activities and to counter tāmas. This helps in rejuvenation and maintaining energy levels.

**Spiritual level:** Mindfulness and Meditation

**Meditation Practices:** Techniques such as mindfulness meditation, breathing exercises (prāṇayama), and mantra chanting help cultivate sattva by calming the mind and fostering inner peace and clarity.

**Mindful Living:** Engaging in activities with full awareness and presence helps balance Rājas by channeling energy constructively and reducing the influence of tāmas.

## Ethical and Compassionate Living

**Sāttvika Actions:** Practicing kindness, compassion, honesty, and non-violence in daily life encourages sattva, leading to a peaceful and harmonious existence.

**Balanced Ambition:** Setting and pursuing goals with a sense of purpose and without excessive attachment helps balance Rājas, promoting healthy ambition without causing undue stress.

By these practices, one can achieve and balance the guṇas they need to. There are different results of the guṇas on a spiritual level. Let's have a look on the results according to the Gita:

यदा सत्त्वे प्रवृद्धे तु प्रलयं याति देहभृत् ।

तदोत्तमविदां लोकानमलान् प्रतिपद्यते ॥ 14/14

(Ādidevānanda, 2014: 470-471)

That is when the embodied soul leaves the body in the state of Sattva, it reaches the pure worlds of those who know the highest.

रजसि प्रलयं गत्वा कर्मसङ्गिषु जायते ।

तथा प्रलीनस्तमसि मूढयोनिषु जायते ॥ 14/15

(Ādidevānanda, 2014: 471-472)

That is, when the embodied soul meets dissolution while rājas prevails, it is reborn among those attached to work. Similarly, when dissolution occurs while tāmas prevails, it is reborn in the wombs of beings lacking intelligence.

By integrating these practices into daily life, one can achieve a balanced state of mind and body, fostering physical well-being and spiritual growth.

The doer will be free from attachment, non-egoistic, endowed with firmness and zeal, unaffected by success and failure. Action that is in harmony with the scriptures, performed without attachment or a sense of doership, and without seeking rewards, is defined by Sattva. When one attains this Sattvic knowledge, they are able to realize and perceive the imperishable Supreme Lord who pervades everything. All beings are included in the concepts of 'I', 'You', 'This', and 'That'. They appear diverse, but the one who illumines



them is indivisible. The Sattvic intellect understands the balance between action and renunciation, between what ought to be done and what should be avoided, between fear and fearlessness, and between bondage and liberation. Through Sattvic happiness, one attains love, experiences pleasures as nectar (amrita), and achieves self-sacrifice, wisdom, and serenity.

The doer driven by rājas (passion) is passionate and eagerly seeks the fruit of their actions, driven by greed, and subject to fluctuating joy and sorrow. rājasika action is performed with great effort to gratify desires and an egoistic sense of self. rājasika knowledge perceives diversity in the world, distinguishing between beings and things. The rājasika intellect sees a division between dharma (righteousness) and adharma (unrighteousness), determining what should be done and what should be avoided. Rājasika happiness is initially sweet, like nectar, but ultimately becomes bitter, like poison. The rājasika doer is indiscriminate, arrogant, obstinate, malicious, indolent, despondent, and prone to procrastination. Tāmasika action arises from delusion, performed without regard for consequences or the loss that might result, and is inherently inclined toward downfall. Tāmasika knowledge sees all beings as one, perceiving the world in a limited, distorted way. The tāmasika intellect distorts reality, perceiving what is wrong as right and seeing things as perverted.

Human society is a hierarchical organization. It is more strongly known by the three guṇas. Due to these three guṇas, the difference between good and bad, happiness and sorrow, righteousness and unrighteousness as well as justice can be realized.

If there is no light, nothing can be seen in darkness. So darkness can convey the essence of light. Similarly, when the violence of one guṇa is excessive the other guṇa inhibits it.

Food is absolutely necessary for human survival. A person who eats Sattvic food is always healthy in body and soul and thus attains longevity. So one should avoid Rājasika and Tāmasika food as well as adopt sātṭvika food. People should make sacrifices

to maintain the Samsara cycle. Yajna without expecting results, without following the scriptural rules, doesn't attain the true greatness of the Yajña. So it is necessary to perform Sāttvic Yajña without greed.

According to the third chapter of *Śrīmadbhagavadgita* deals with Yajña....

अन्नाद्भवन्ति भूतानि पर्जन्यादन्नसम्भवः।  
 यज्ञाद्भावति पर्जन्यो यज्ञः कर्मसमुद्भवः ॥  
 कर्म ब्रह्मोद्भवं विद्धि ब्रह्माक्षरसमुद्भवम्।  
 तस्मात् सर्व्यति ब्रह्म नित्यं यज्ञे प्रतिष्ठितम्॥ 3/14-15  
 (Ādidevānanda, 2014: 130)

That Means, creatures come into being from food; food is produced from rain; rain is produced by sacrifice (yajña), and sacrifice is born from action. Know that action originates in Brahman (the Vedas), and Brahman comes from the Imperishable. Therefore, the all-pervading Infinite (God) ever vests in sacrifice (yajña).

If we do penance with peace of mind, purity of mind, and non-violence, we will get the results of that penance. Rājasika and tāmasika austerities leave people in limbo. So ideally one should practice Sattvic austerities for livelihood. It is the duty to donate, in such wise one should donate in an appropriate place, time, and container. Such a donation is called a Sattvic donation. Through this one can get ultimate satisfaction in life.

Nothing is as sacred as knowledge in this world. In the mind of one who has achieved success in Karma Yoga, that knowledge emerges by itself over time. Human life is enlightened by realizing and practicing sāttvika knowledge. One can live without action. By nature, everyone is forced to work. In that case, the *Śrīmadbhagavadgita* talks about sāttvika karma. In sāttvika karma, God's creation remains intact. The Creator is constant, eternal, and orderly, so he must be perceived with sāttvika being. The mind should be buried in the Supreme Brahman. The concept of trigun has a profound impact on human life and influences behavior, mental state, and overall well-being. That's why balancing these three guṇas is crucial for a harmonious and

fulfilling life. In summary, the triguna profoundly affects every aspect of human life. Understanding and balancing these gunas can lead to a healthier, more fulfilling existence physically, and by transcending gunas, one can attain the Brahman or ultimate truth in spiritual life as advocated in the texts of Indian tradition those mention Trigunas.

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