



## THE THREE GUNAS AND CONSCIOUSNESS

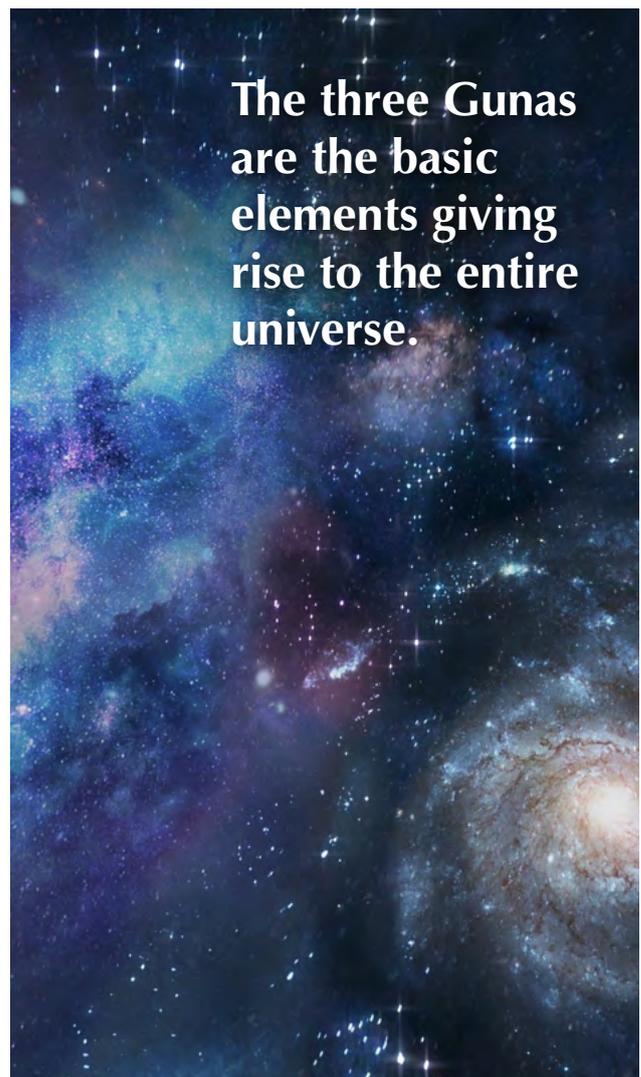
In Ayurveda, life is seen as an interplay of body, mind and soul. You are already familiar with the physical constitution, which is the result of the individual distribution of the three Doshas: Vata, Pitta and Kapha.

On the level of the mind, we see a similar structure: three Gunas – Sattva, Rajas and Tamas – give rise to our mental constitution.

Thus, the physical and the mental levels can be distinguished, each having its own specific characteristics, but at the same time, they are interrelated. The soul, on the other hand, is the realm of pure consciousness, beyond qualities and unclassifiable.

So our physical health is the result of a dynamic balance of the three Doshas, which are always in flow, never static. And our mental health is supported by strengthening Sattva.

The three Gunas can be understood as subtle qualities of nature permeating us, down to our deepest consciousness. Actually, they are not present in our mind alone: they are the basic elements giving rise to the entire universe through their endless combinations and permutations.





## The three Gunas and our mind

### Sattva



Sattva comprises qualities of intelligence, joy, harmony, tranquility, equilibrium, and deep insight – all the qualities that promote life and evolution. Sattva brings about the awakening of the soul and is vast and clear within itself, recognizing the interconnectedness of all things with one another. It is a state of inner clarity that promotes healing and makes spiritual growth possible. Sattva awakens our interest in existential questions and in attaining meaningfulness in life, which is called Dharma in Sanskrit.

### Rajas



The mind characterized by Rajas is always on the move, demands activity and tends to restlessness, greed and worry. At the same time, Rajas is also the

driving force for motivation and realization of personal goals. Rajas is self-motivated in its actions, always looking for a new goal or purpose. In the short term, Rajas can be very stimulating and uplifting, but over a long period of time it can lead to imbalance and inner conflicts.

### Tamas



A mind dominated by Tamas tends to be lethargic, inert, resistive, and ignorant. Tamas inhibits personal growth and covers our clear consciousness like a veil.

It diminishes intelligence as well as the drive for personal growth.

Both Ayurveda and Yoga aim to increase Sattva, control Rajas, and decrease Tamas.

All three Gunas are always present within us, but through our daily actions we are able to influence their balance.

A mind characterized by Sattva facilitates a joyful and effortless life. If the mind is dominated by Rajas, life is characterized by effort, and if dominated by Tamas, by a lack of motivation.

A 'sattvic' state thus produces sound mental health and confers stability, and is described in the Sushruta Samhita 1.35.37 as follows:

**“The one governed by sattva endures everything, for he supports his self by himself.”**



## The three Gunas and our mind

In other words, such a personality is so at rest within himself that even the challenges and rigors of everyday life can be met with a peaceful and joyful mental poise. On the basis of the concept of the three Gunas, we can better understand – and consciously nurture – our mental and spiritual nature.



### Personality and the three Gunas

If Sattva is predominant in a person's personality, they feel healthy, creative, and spiritually connected. Sattvic people have a harmonious disposition and are very accommodating to their external circumstances. They are in inner balance, considerate, and able to take good care of themselves and others. They perceive all circumstances as experiences from which to learn and gain new insights. This disposition has an extremely positive and inspiring effect on the surroundings.

People with a lot of Rajas have large reserves of energy at their disposal, which they draw on readily and naturally. They are overly active and their thoughts tend to be driven and restless. They usually achieve their goals effortlessly, but are often unaware of their Dharma and dominated by ego. At the same time, achieving their goals does not lead

to the happiness they had hoped for and the search for a new goal begins.

Rajasic individuals are prone to burnout and exhaustion, if energy is continuously burned up but not replenished to the same extent. They are also quick to become impatient with themselves and rarely take the time to stay or become healthy. Often these people experience major cutbacks, such as a more serious illness, which forces them to pause and rethink.

If Tamas predominates, the person feels lacking in energy and blocked. Tamasic people tend to suppress their needs and emotions, which can lead to stagnation and depression. Their self-efficacy is diminished and they find it difficult to take sufficient care of their mental and physical well-being. They often accept this condition as fate and remain in a kind of rigidity that increases suffering.

They avoid confronting their problems and do not sufficiently recognize their responsibility for their own lives.

While the three Doshas Vata, Pitta and Kapha can be called bioenergies of the body, the three Gunas can be understood as Doshas of the mind. Sattva, Rajas and Tamas thus directly affect our psyche and personality. If we become aware of our individual distribution of the Gunas, we can take direct control through a suitable way of life and find more inner balance.

### More Sattva through healthy habits

To strengthen Sattva, it helps to have health-promoting routines for quieting and clearing the mind.

#### Suitable are:

- Daily meditation practice, providing space for stillness.
- Spending time in nature and interacting with animals and plants.



## The three Gunas and our mind

- Practicing gratitude for the abundance that permanently surrounds us; going through everyday life mindfully.
- Daily exercise, adapted to personal needs. For example, if Vata is predominant, walking and gentle yoga are suitable; if Pitta is abundant, dynamic sports can balance excess energy. And if Kapha is in excess, it's helpful to rev up the circulation, for example by brisk walking, cycling or swimming.
- Sattva is also influenced by our home. A bright, tidy environment with nice plants lets the mind settle down.
- Relaxing and harmonizing sounds can also be very beneficial. Traditional Ayurveda makes use of Vedic music ('Gandharva-Veda') for this purpose. E.g., you can make use of the Maharishi Veda app, which offers a large number of tracks by many outstanding musicians.
- Loving body care, with good quality products, is an expression of appreciation to your own body. Giving yourself an oil massage (Abhyanga) regularly works wonders.
- Naturally, nutrition also has a special significance. A Sattvic diet is sweet, oily and light. Possible ingredients are fresh fruits, almonds, honey, high-quality raw milk, Ghee, rice and fresh vegetables. Foods that are stale, reheated or frozen are not recommended, as there is little Prana, or life energy, left in them.

Rajas can be accumulated by working too much without regular breaks and by always comparing oneself with others. Reducing the intake of alcohol, coffee, meat, and hot spices helps to reduce Rajas.

Tamas accumulates from sleeping too much, especially sleeping during daytime, and from pleasure-seeking lifestyles, including frequent consumption of stimulants and a lack of structure in one's day.

As you can see, a balanced lifestyle is always the foundation for maintaining physical but also mental balance, and for staying stable and grounded in the face of mounting challenges from our environment.

If you are having trouble shifting into a better mode, a Panchakarma course of treatment can be very helpful at this point. While your body and mind are cleansed of unnecessary baggage, it also provides a clear break in your daily routine.

We'll be happy to welcome you in our Maharishi Ayurveda Health Center in Bad Ems to experience top-level authentic Panchakarma and lay the foundation for a fresh start with more healthy habits.

