An important concept in Yoga, as well as, other systems of Indian philosophy (Yoga is one of the six revealed philosophical views of life or the Shat Darshana of Sanathana Dharma) is the knowledge that our mental make up, our actions and the material world we live in, can be understood better by developing a deeper understanding and a greater awareness of the Trigunas, the three-fold natural divisions of our inner and outer nature.

Yogeshwar Sri Krishna in Chapter 17 of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita, the song celestial explains in great detail this three-fold natural division into the Gunas of Tamas (inertial ignorance), Rajas (dynamic and passionate ego centric activity) and Sattwas (pure goodness).

Lord Krishna says that the food we eat, the way we worship, the sacrificial offerings we do, the austerities we undertake and the charity we perform may all be sub-classified under the Trigunas according to the spirit and inner nature of the act itself.

TRIGUNAS AND WORSHIP
Each of us will have a tendency to worship ‘THAT’ which is closest to our inner nature and inner calling. In Verse 4 of Chapter 17 Krishna explains how those who are of the higher Sattvica nature or pure goodness will have a tendency to worship the Divine in different manifest and un-manifest forms. This is a reflection of their inner nature that deeply aspires to ascend to the higher states through the accelerated process of conscious evolution from animal-to-human-to-humane-to-ultimately becoming one with the Divine.

On the other hand, those who are of the Rajasica nature will be enamored by the passion aroused in the worship of the demons. Demons have tremendous powers and Rajasica passion and non stop activity is at its height in such beings. Both will power (Iccha Shakti) and the power of action (Kriya Shakti) is there in abundance, but the power of discriminatory wisdom (Jnana Shakti) is sadly lacking in such demonic beings. A good example of this is seen in modern times where rock stars and movie stars who live and behave like demons are worshipped by demonic fans in this mode of unbridled passion with no regard to consequences at all. Just go to any rock show or night club and you will for sure have a “Passionate trip to hell”!

Those in the mode of Tamasica ignorance tend to worship ghosts and spirits and this is prevalent in the primitive societies of the world where Witch doctors and Voodoo men have a great time taking control over the weak Tamasica minds. The lower minds are highly influenced by the neither world and this is often seen in the way ‘spirits’ take over villagers and then the local exorcist has a gala time exerting his control over everyone near and dear. The use of these lower entities for revenge and getting back at enemies is a classic example of how the Tamasica minds worship these lower entities.

TRIGUNAS AND FOOD
In the Verses 8, 9 and 10 of Chapter 17, Lord Krishna describes the Gunas and their relationship with the different types of food in detail. It is not only just the type of food but also the time, place and how it is partaken that matters. It is also important to understand the resultant effects of imbibing the different classes of food.

Sattvica foods that are dear to those in the mode of pure goodness are those that increase the duration of life, purify one’s existence and give strength, health, happiness and satisfaction to the person. The Bhagavad Gita describes such foods as those that are juicy, fatty, wholesome and pleasing to
The heart. These foods are the nutrients for the Yogic minded ones and help the mind to be calm, composed and ready for the higher states of consciousness and evolution. There is a deep relationship between food and mind and this is only now being slowly understood by western science. We are what we eat and so it makes sense to eat that which will make us a better person.

Rajasica foods are those that are very bitter, extremely sour, salty, too hot, pungent, dry and tasteless or burning. These foods are craved by those who are always on the move. It is therefore no wonder that such foods are popular amongst modern men and women who are forever on the move in their attempt to be the rat that wins the rat race! Lord Krishna warns us that such foods ultimately lead to distress, misery and disease. Truer words were never spoken considering the modern pandemic of food related diseases that are sweeping across the globe in gigantic proportions.

Food that has been prepared more than three hours before being eaten is considered the first of the Tamasica foods even if it is Sattvica or Rajasica in its constitution. As food ages, it starts to decompose and such foods are unsuitable for those seeking the higher states of consciousness. What to do in this modern time where most food is preserved, pickled or kept refrigerated for ages before being eaten? Tamasica foods also include those that are tasteless, decomposed and putrid. Food consisting of remnants and untouchable things is dear (bhoganam tamasa priyam) to those in the mode of darkness (Tamasica Guna) as it feeds their lower animal nature that loves to be inert and heavy. This lower nature avoids anything that may wake it out of its sound and deep sleep of animal hibernation where it resides for ages.

**TRIGUNAS AND SACRIFICES**

Verses 11, 12 and 13 of Chapter 17 detail the relationship between the performance of sacrificial offerings (Yagna or Homa), and the Gunas. Any offering or sacrifice that is done, can also be classified according to the Gunas based on how it is done, as well as by the reason for which it is done.

Those sacrificial actions and obligations that are performed without desire for reward and in accordance with the scriptural directions and with a sense of Dharma (righteousness) become those of the Sattvica nature of goodness. They are done for the sake of doing and not for the sake of anything else. As Pujya Swamiji, Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj used to say, “The reward for a job well done is to have done it well!” The Sivapuraanam one of the ancient Tamil scriptures tells us that, to even to bow to the Lord we need his blessings in the first place (avan arulale avan thal vanagi).

When such sacrifices are performed for some variety of material benefits or for the sake of pride they become those of the nature of Rajas or passion. The ego becomes involved in the action thus coloring the action with other elements of the individual nature rather than being of the Divine nature. These are the majority of sacrificial offerings seen today in most the religious places all over the world where even God is worshipped only for the sake of some benefit or the other! People bargain with God by saying, “I will do this for you if you do that for me!”

When such offerings are done with a total lack of faith and without regard for scriptural directions they become meaningless and when coupled with the lack of distribution of the offerings and without the chanting of Vedic Mantras and offering of Guru Dakshina they become of the nature of Tamas or ignorant darkness that has no intelligence, consciousness nor awareness. At many events such as modern weddings we find people instructing the Pundits to cut short the Pujas even if it descends to Tamasica proportions, so that other more important things such as flattering the egos of politicians can be done!

**TRIGUNAS AND AUSTERITIES**

There are three types of austerities (Tapah) mentioned in the Srimad
Bhagavad Gita. The first is the austerity of the body (shaariram tapah) that includes worship of the higher Self and its manifestations with cleanliness, celibacy and nonviolence. The second is austerity of speech (vaangayam tapah) that implies the speaking of words that are truthful, pleasing, beneficial and non-agitating to others along with the regular recitation of the Vedas. The third is austerity is that of the mind (tapo maanasam) that includes the inner qualities of satisfaction, simplicity, gravity, self-control, and purification of ones existence.

When this three-fold austerity is done with transcendental faith, without expectation of material benefits and for the sake of the Supreme alone, then it becomes the austerity of the goodness or that of the Sattvica nature. This was also seen in the types of Tapah done by the Asuras in ancient times and in more recent times in the barbaric sacrifices and sadomasochistic tendencies of modern people.

**TRIGUNAS AND CHARITY**

We normally think that all forms of charity are good but the Srimad Bhagavad Gita in Verses 20, 21 and 22 of Chapter 17, enlightens us on the three fold nature of charity that helps us become more aware and conscious of our actions.

In Verse 20, it is said that the charity (daanam) given out of duty and without expectation of return at the proper time and place, to a worthy person is that of the nature of Sattwas. It is important to realize that the time (kale), place (desha) and person (paatre) are important components to determine the nature of charity. Giving charity to an unworthy person, at the wrong time, or in the wrong way make the charity fall from its higher Sattvica nature to become one of a much lower nature.

Verse 21 tells us that when the charity is performed with expectation of some return or with a desire of the furtive results or in a grudging mood it is of the Rajasica nature. In modern times this type of charity is rampant as we often don’t consider these aspects of time, place and person and just give charity for the sake of name, fame and other such egocentric considerations.

Charity performed at the wrong time (akala), in the wrong place (adesha), for the benefit of unworthy persons (apaatre), without proper attention and respect becomes that of the nature of Tamasica darkness. No good comes of such charity despite any claims to the contrary. This is made very clear in verse 22.

An understanding of this relationship between the Gunas and charity gives us a clue to a possible answer why so many of the social welfare projects and socialistic ideas have never been able to succeed despite the best of intensions. Until and unless we consider the multiple aspects of time, place and worthiness of persons involved in the act of charity, our best intensions are doomed but to fail.

**CONCLUSION**

When we deeply consider the Srimad Bhagavad Gita’s classification...
of worship, food, sacrifices, austerities and charity we can conclude that there are some key elements that determine the Trigunic nature of not only these five but also the entire spectrum of actions and the materialistic world.

To be classified as being Sattvica in nature, our actions must be:

- done for the sake of common good,
- done without desire for the rewards or benefits arising from the action,
- done in accordance with scriptural rules,
- done with piety and devotion to the Divine,
- done with consideration for the right time and right place for the action, and
- done with due consideration of worthiness of the persons benefiting from such an action.

Our actions will be of the Rajasica nature if they are:

- done for the sake of the ego centric considerations,
- done for the mere self serving attainment of name and fame,
- done for material gains,
- done for self preservation,
- done grudgingly because we have no choice, and
- done without discriminatory intellect though they are done with great willpower and passionate action.

Such actions will be Tamasica in nature if they are:

- done in ignorance,
- done without consciousness,
- done without awareness,
- done without devotion or piety,
- done without considering the time and place,
- done without considering the worthiness of the persons being benefited, and
- done with the evil intent of destruction.

**AVOIDANCE OF RIGHT ACTION: SINS OF OMISSION**

An additional element to all of this can also be the avoidance of action, called in Christian parlance as the “sin of omission.” Yoganaharishi Dr Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj used to teach us that the failure to do what should be done also has disastrous consequences. A Sattvica failure to act may be the avoidance of a necessary action because one does not wish to offend the other (such as scolding an errant child). The Rajasica avoidance of action would be to not do something because one feels the reward is not great enough, or out of fear. Tamasica avoidance of action would be that due to sheer laziness, dullness or stubborn ignorant refusal to do what should be done.

**Swadhyaya,** the fourth Niyama of Adhikara Yoga (the tenfold moral and ethical path of the Yoga-Niyama), is the key that opens up our understanding of the Trigunic nature of our day-to-day actions. It is only when we start to look inward that we can begin to understand the nature of our external actions. With clear-cut intellectual discrimination (*viveka*) between the false (*asat*) and the true (*sat*) we start to understand our actions and their repercussion better. As we begin to cultivate dispassionate detachment (*vairagya*) in the performance of our day-to-day actions, the larger picture begins to appear in our mind’s eye and our actions start to take on a more Sattvica nature. This signifies yet another major step on the accelerated path of evolution facilitated by the art and science of Yoga.

---

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF NATUROPATHY**

(Dept. of AYUSH, Ministry of Health & F.W., Govt. of India)

6, “Bapu Bhavan”, Tadiwala Road, PUNE – 411 001.

**RESUME INVITED**

We receive many enquiries from private entrepreneurs from all over India for BNYS graduates for posting in their hospitals. Therefore, the National Institute of Naturopathy, Pune, is creating a database of BNYS & ND (Hyd) doctors.

All BNYS & ND (Hyd) employed & unemployed doctors are therefore requested to send in their detailed resume with correct contact numbers along with other contact details to this office either by post on the above mentioned address or by email (ninpune@vsnl.com).

Unemployed candidates may keep in contact with NIN. The appropriate candidature will be recommended for suitable vacancies anywhere in India.

**DIRECTOR**