



*In the introduction to his compilation of the Transactions of HP Blavatsky, Michael Gomes informs us that 'BLAVATSKY LODGE, had its first gathering in London on May 19, 1889', (lead by Madame Blavatsky herself), 'with the aim of engaging in more active work than ever existed before'. He tells us that the printed Rules stated that: 'the special object of the Lodge is the spread of Theosophical teaching and Brotherhood by the individual and collective work of its members.' He continues: 'Some took a demanding pledge, striving to make Theosophy an active power in their life, to support the Theosophical movement and its leaders, to refrain from speaking ill of others, to struggle against one's lower nature, to be charitable to the weakness of others, to study and to teach others, and to give the movement 'in time, money and work'.*

*Fast forward nearly 135 years to the present day to find today's members of Blavatsky Lodge treading the path in HPB's footsteps, actively working through study and service to its existing members, to all other members of the Theosophical Society, and to the public in general.*

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*The main reference material in today's talk on 'The Three Gunas' is extracted from the translations and commentaries on a book entitled 'The Science of Yoga' by Professor IK Taimni, published in 1961, on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali - which were written prior to 400CE. Born in India in 1898 (d.1978), the Professor became a member of the Theosophical Society in India when he was 21 years of age. He came to London where he earned a Masters degree in Inorganic Chemistry and he later*

went on to become Professor of Chemistry at the Allahabad University in India. After retiring, he studied Sanskrit and began writing many articles, translations and books on Theosophy and Hindu religious texts. As well as being an influential scholar in Yoga and Eastern Philosophy, he was also a former leader of the Theosophical Society at Adyar in India and was awarded the Subba Row Gold Medal for his contribution to Theosophical literature.

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In his introduction to 'The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali', he says: 'it stands in its own right as a Science based on the external laws of the higher life and does not require the support of any science or philosophical system to uphold its claims. Its truths are based on the experiences and experiments of an unbroken line of mystics, occultists, saints and sages who have realised and borne witness to them throughout the ages'

This is put in much the same way as the Mahatmas and HP Blavatsky had described the occult teachings which were passed onto them and written down in our Theosophical texts, and he also stresses that **'its appeal is to the intuition and not to the intellect'**.

The Secret Doctrine tells us that **'our divine sparks of being are radiated from the undifferentiated Source, 'the unknown deity', known as 'Parabrahm', with its veil, 'undifferentiated Nature', known as 'Mulaprakriti'**.

'The Three Gunas', are described as forces or qualities; but to come to an understanding of what they really are, we must first consider the nature of **Purusha & Prakriti**, which are defined in the Secret Doctrine as: 'The two primeval aspects of the one unknown deity' (SD1 P.51 +Theosophical Glossary) **Purusha** - The Spiritual Self (which is subjective) and **Prakriti** - the spiritual Nature (which is objective).

Professor Taimni translates from the Sanskrit Sutra 18 on p.171 of 'The Science of Yoga' which describes the relationship of the Three Gunas to Prakriti and Purusha thus:

**'The Seen (objective side of manifestation) consists of the elements and sense organs, is of the nature of cognition, activity and stability (Sattva, Rajas and Tamas) and has for its purpose (providing the Purusha with) experience and liberation.**

The 'seen' is thus **Prakriti**, whose essential nature consists of the elements: earth, water, air, fire, and ether and the sense organs: (nose) smell, (mouth) taste, (skin) touch, (eyes) sight and (ears) sound, through which the **Purushas** gain experience leading to Self Realisation.

*Prof. Taimni ('The Science of Yoga' p.171/172) states:*

'...In this one brief *Sutra*, Patanjali .....gives the essential nature of all phenomena which are the objects of perception, and which are really made up of the Three *Gunas*.....and that the perception of the phenomenal world is really the result of the interactions of the ***Bhutas and Indriyas, the elements and the sense organs***. And lastly he points out the purpose and function of the phenomenal world which is twofold: 'Firstly to provide experience for the Purushas who seem to be evolving in it, and secondly through this experience to lead them gradually to emancipation and Enlightenment.'

*He continues:*

'It is necessary to note that the word used for the phenomenal world is ***Drisyam***, that which is 'seen' or capable of being 'seen'. The contact of the *Purusha* and *Prakriti* results in the emergence of a duality...the subjective and objective sides of Nature.....The ***Purusha*** is the essence or substratum of the **subjective** and the ***Prakriti*** is that of the **objective** side of duality. As consciousness recedes inwardly the dividing line between the subjective and objective shifts continually but the relation between the two remains the same (**ie., subject and object**).

'So the *Sutra* is saying that '.....the essential nature of all the phenomena which are the objects of perception are....the result of the play of the three *Gunas* which finds expression through cognition, activity and stability..... and that **The whole structure of the manifested Universe, according to this philosophy, is considered to rest on these three qualities or attributes of *Prakriti*.**'

*He goes on to state (The Science of Yoga p.173) that:*

'The ***Gunas*** are referred to over and over again in the ***Bhagavad-Gita***, and there is hardly any important book in Sanskrita .....in which the word Triguna *Gunas* (*the three Gunas*) does not occur.'

*However, he states:*

'It is not difficult to understand why the nature of the *Gunas* is so difficult to comprehend. **They lie at the very basis of the manifested world** and even the working of the mind through which we try to comprehend their nature depends upon their interplay.

*He then gives an analogy:*

'...Trying to comprehend the nature of the *Gunas* with the help of the mind is like trying to catch the hand with a pair of tongs held by the hand' (!)

*However, he then elucidates these concepts by stating that:*

"The advances which have taken place in the field of the physical sciences and the light this has thrown on the structure of matter and the nature of physical phenomena

have now placed us in a position to gain a faint glimpse into the essential nature of the *Gunas*'.

*And that: ('The Science of Yoga' p.174)*

'These three principles which ultimately determine the nature of every phenomena are all connected with **motion** and may be called different aspects of motion.

**1) vibration which involves rhythmic motion of particles**

**2) mobility which involves non-rhythmic motion of particles with transference of energy**

**3) inertia which involves relative position of particles**

*Using a further analogy he says: '.....These may be illustrated.....by a number of soldiers drilling on a parade ground, a number of people walking in a crowd and a number of prisoners confined in separate cells'.*

*He continues: 'Let us take the sensuous phenomena which are observed through the five sense organs. The cognition of visual phenomena depends upon the presence of light vibrations which, by their action on the retina of the eye give the impression of form and colour.'*

*('The Science of Yoga' p. 175)*

*He expands this further by explaining that: 'Auditory phenomena depend upon sound vibrations which acting upon the drum of the ear produce the sensation of sound. The sensation of heat etc. depends upon the impact of moving atoms and molecules on the skin. The sensation of taste and smell depends upon the action of chemical substances on the membranes of the palate and nose, the nature of the chemical substance (which is determined by the relative position and the nature of the atoms in the molecules) determining the sensation which is experienced.'*

**'In every case we find vibration or rhythmic motion (Sattva), mobility or irregular motion (Rajas), and inertia or relative position (Tamas) at work determining the nature of the sensuous phenomena.'**

*Bearing in mind that Professor Taimni wrote this book in the early part of the 20th century he continues: 'Up until this time we have assumed the presence of particles which by their motion determine the phenomena. But what are these particles? Science tells us that these particles are also nothing but combinations of protons, neutrons and electrons, the electrons whirling around the nucleus of protons and neutrons at tremendous speeds and determining the properties of the atoms. In view of the discovery of the equivalence and interconvertibility of mass and energy **it will probably be found ultimately that the nucleus of the atom is also an***

**expression of energy and that the ultimate basis of the manifested universe is nothing but motion or energy.'**

*\*\*\*HPB herself states in The Proem SD1 p.2\*\*\**

*that: '.....there is nothing in fact and reality absolutely motionless within the universal soul'*

*(Prof.Taim. 'The Science of Yoga' p. 175 cont/)*

*'We see, therefore, that all properties can be reduced to their simplest elements - wave motion (**Prakasa**), action (**Kriya**) and position (**Sthiti**) at least as far as the physical universe is concerned, and since these are also the ideas associated with the nature of the three *Gunas*, **Science has to a certain extent corroborated the nature of the three *Gunas*.***

*Prof.Taimni ('The Science of Yoga' p. 176) refers to the Three *Gunas* in relation to each other and states:*

*'....wave motion or vibration (**Sattva**) is a harmonious combination of mobility (**Rajas**) and inertia(**Tamas**) .....and it follows that **Sattva** is....a combination of **Rajas** and **Tamas** .... so the development of **Sattva** is the harmonisation of the existing **Rajas** and **Tamas**.*

*Professor Taimni continues further by saying that: 'When the **Purusha** comes into contact with **Prakriti** at the beginning of the evolutionary cycle, this contact disturbs the equilibrium of the three *Gunas* and gradually brings into play the forces of **Prakriti**. Through this disturbed atmosphere the **Purusha** cannot see his **Svarupa** (*True form*) because this **Svarupa** can be expressed or reflected only through a sufficiently purified **Sattva Guna**'.*

*Put in another way, **Sattva** is said to reflect the light of consciousness, **Rajas** conducts consciousness and **Tamas** absorbs consciousness.*

*A helpful analogy in understanding the nature of the Three *Gunsa* is to visualise **Sattva** as being like pure water reflecting its surroundings in full detail while maintaining its clarity. then visualise **Rajas** as being like water containing some sand which has been agitated so that the surroundings are clouded and not clearly visible; then visualise **Tamas** as being like stagnant water which is thick with mud so that the surroundings have become completely engulfed.*

*{In a footnote on p. 68/69 of the SD1, Madam Blavatsky refers to **Sattva** 'as having been defined by Adi Shankaracharya his translation of the Bhagavad Gita as \*\*\*'antahkarana refined by sacrifices and other sanctifying operations'. She also states that: 'Whatever meaning the various schools may give the term, **Sattva** is the*

name given among occult students of the Aryasanga school to the **dual Monad or Atma-Buddhi**, and **Atma-Buddhi on this plane corresponds to Parabrahm and Mulaprakriti on the higher plane.**' (\*\*\*)in [Theosophy](#) the term 'antahkarana' is used with a special meaning that differs from the Hindu. According to [H. P. Blavatsky](#) the **antahkarana** is 'an aspect or function of the [lower mind](#) that retains its original purity, active whenever there is a spiritual aspiration. It is, figuratively speaking, a "path" or "bridge" that acts as a two-way communication. Through antahkarana the spiritual influence of the higher manas is conveyed to the [personality](#), and all good and noble activity of the lower manas can reach the higher, to be assimilated in [Devachan](#))'.

*Professor Taimni gives a clear indication of what this might mean when he continues:*

**'After evolution has reached a sufficiently advanced stage and the desire for Self-realisation is born within the soul, *Rajas* and *Tamas* have gradually to be replaced by *Sattva*. So the object in Yoga is to harmonise *Rajas* and *Tamas* into *Sattva*.....and the attainment of a condition which is free from opposites.'**

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*Ultimately, man's 'self devised' efforts will lead him to the stage where he will transcend all Three Gunas - even Sattva! Falling still, let us hear some extracts taken from the 14th Discourse of the Bhagavad Gita p.378-p.395 of the translation by Alladi Mahadeva Shastri ( see this translation for the commentary of Adi Sankaracharya that HPB describes in her footnote in SD1 on p.68 - 69) which poetically explain this process:*

P.381 No5

**Sattva, Rajas, Tamas - these gunas, O Mighty Armed, born of Prakriti, bind fast in the body, the embodied, the indestructible.**

P.382 No6

**Of these, Sattva which, from its stainlessness, is lucid and healthy, binds by attachment to happiness and by attachment to knowledge, O sinless One.**

P.383 No7

**Know thou Rajas (to be) of the nature of passion, the source of thirst and attachment; it binds fast, O son of Kunti, the embodied one, by attachment to action.**

P.384 No8

**But, know thou Tamas to be born of unwisdom, deluding all embodied beings; by heedlessness, indolence and sloth, it binds fast, O Bharata.**

P.384 No9

**Sattva attaches to happiness, Rajas to action, O Bharata, while Tamas, enshrouding wisdom, attaches on the contrary, to heedlessness.**

P.385 No10

**Sattva arises, O Bharata, predominating over Rajas and Tamas, and Rajas over Sattva and Tamas, and Tamas over Sattva and Rajas.**

P.385 No11

**When at every gate in this body there shoots up wisdom light, then it may be known that Sattva is predominant.**

P.386 No12

**Greed, activity, the undertaking of works, unrest, desire - these arise when Rajas is predominant, O lord of the Bharatas.**

P.386 No13

**Darkness, heedlessness, inertness - and error - these arise when Tamas is predominant, O descendant of Kuru.**

P.386/7 No14

**If the embodied one meets death when Sattva is predominant, then he attains to the spotless regions of the knowers of the Highest.**

P.387 No15

**Meeting Death in Rajas, he is born among those attached to action; and dying in Tamas, he is born in the wombs of the irrational.**

P.387 No 16

**The fruit of good action, they say, is Sattvic and pure; while the fruit of Rajas is pain and ignorance is the fruit of Tamas.**

P.388. No17

**From Sattva arises wisdom, and greed from Rajas; heedlessness and error arises from Tamas, and also ignorance.**

P.388 No18

**Those who follow Sattva go upwards; the Rajasic remain in the middle; and the Tamasic, who follow in the course of the lowest guna, go downwards.**

P.389 No19

**When the seer beholds not an agent other than the gunas and knows him who is higher than the gunas, he attains to my Being.**

P.389/390 No20

**Having crossed beyond these three gunas, which are the source of the body, the embodied one is free from birth, death, decay and pain and attains the immortal.**

***(See Nos 21 - 27 to discover the condition one attains beyond the Three Gunas)***

*It is clear from what we have heard that way before we can reach a state of going beyond all three Gunas, we need to concentrate on improving the quality of our lives by taking steps to increase the level of Sattva. So how might this knowledge have a practical bearing on our bodies, minds and daily living?*

*The following are extracts from a book entitled: 'PRACTICAL AYURVEDA' (Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre Pages 166 - 167) which may serve to verify what we have heard so far already:*

'The Three Gunas provide insight into the functioning of our minds. According to the Ayurvedic and yogic scriptures, the mind is a subtle energy field and is continuously reacting to the information we receive from the physical senses.

The nature of the mind is inherently **Sattvic** - clear and harmonious. However, by experiencing negative thoughts and emotions, such as greed and fear. The mind loses its pure quality, and becomes **Rajasic** (restless and agitated) or **Tamasic** (lethargic and resistant).

A person's mental health depends on how much **Sattva** has been developed in his or her mind. The predominance of **Rajas** or **Tamas** often leads to psychological problems. The goal of both Yoga and Ayurveda is to make **Sattva** predominant Guna in the mind. Positive thinking, a healthy diet and meditation, remove **Rajas** and **Tamas**, and increase **Sattva**, calming and uplifting the mind.

### **SATTVA (Key Words: Harmony and Clarity)**

This is the energy of harmony and clarity. It brings contentment, and peace as well as revealing truth, making us feel centred and strong. Sattva is dominant in a healthy mind. Under the influence of Sattva a person might be:

**Adaptable; Eloquent; Enthusiastic; Positive; Courageous; Independent; Intelligent; Sympathetic; Calm; Contented; Devoted; Humble**

### **RAJAS (Key Words: Movement and Agitation)**

This is the energy of movement, agitation, expansion and passion. It is needed to bring change, but can delude us into thinking happiness is provided by external pleasures. Excess Rajas causes hyperactivity, causing tension and fatigue.

Under the influence of **Rajas** a person might be:

**Anxious; Indecisive; Restless; Unreliable; Aggressive; Judgemental; Manipulative; Vain; Compulsive; Dependent; Jealous; Materialistic**

**TAMAS (Key Words: Inertia and Contradiction)**

**This is the energy of inertia, contradiction, and darkness. It is the power of ignorance that makes us resist positive change and creates indifference to our own and other people's well being. In excess, it causes lethargy.**

Under the influence of **Tamas** a person might be:

**Depressed; Dishonest; Prone to Addiction; Submissive; Destructive; Dull; Hateful; Judgemental; Apathetic; Lethargic**

*So how do we set about increasing **Sattva** in our actions?*

(‘Practical Ayurveda’ P. 174 & 175)

**‘REFINING OUR VALUES - Gaining Sattva with our actions**

To develop Sattva .....we need to realise that we are not separate from others, but of a whole, and realise that whatever we do to others, we do to ourselves.

**We can begin by following ten ethical practices:**

### **1 DO NOT HARM**

Seeking to do good for others, wishing them well, and avoiding causing harm through thoughts, words and actions.

### **2 BE TRUTHFUL**

Being truthful to ourselves is essential, as without this we are incapable of introspection. Being truthful to others is also essential, since respecting our values is the foundation of a healthy mind.

### **3 DON'T STEAL**

Taking what belongs to others makes the mind tamasic (resistant) This includes intellectual property and material possessions, as well as being careful not to take too much from the world without giving back.

### **4 BE SEXUALLY MODERATE**

Be sexually moderate so that sexual energy can build up and be transformed into mental strength.

### **5 LIVE MODESTLY**

Greed for material wealth prevents us from connecting to the Self, while the clutter from having many possessions makes it hard to calm the mind. Gratefully accept what you have and don't take more than you need.

### **6 MAINTAIN CLEANLINESS**

A clean body is achieved through asanas, diet and daily hygiene. Keeping the mind clean involves avoiding tamasic impressions, and not indulging in gossip, criticism, or negative thinking.

**7 BE CONTENTED** Contentment is being grateful for what life has given us, and showing a willingness to work with it. It requires an attitude of patience, knowing that change is slow, and the fruits of practice take a long time to show.

### **8 BE DISCIPLINED**

To reach full mental health in the form of lasting peace and joy is a worthy goal, and so requires many sacrifices. This can only be done with the self-discipline to stay focused on the goal and face the challenges of life.

### **9 STRIVE FOR SELF-IMPROVEMENT**

The mind can be nurtured by reading spiritual books, listening to uplifting discourse, and repeating mantras. **I would also like to add listening to uplifting music.** It is not about accumulating knowledge but gaining a greater understanding of oneself.

### **10 SURRENDER TO A HIGHER POWER**

We must accept help by opening ourselves up to a higher influence that we can trust. This may be the form of a divine or a spiritual teacher (or teaching)'.

*Further increase in Sattva clearly can be gained through meditation of which much more may be said, but here is a brief quote regarding the practice of Meditation in our daily lives from Practical Ayurveda P. 176:*

**'Meditation goes beyond positive thinking. It teaches us that we already have all we need, and that, by creating space and silence within, we can experience the peace and bliss of our true Self'.**

*'Practical Ayurveda' (p.182 & p.183) further advises us that:*

*'Focusing the mind during meditation can be a real challenge. A good way to increase concentration (**harmony**) in these circumstances is through **Karma Yoga** - the practice of selfless service'.*

### **BALANCE THE MIND THROUGH SELFLESS SERVICE**

**Karma Yoga** requires a person to act in the service of others without expectation of material gain. The action must be performed for its own sake. The change of focus from oneself to others diverts the mind from self-centred thought patterns. When we open ourselves up to the pain of other beings (humans, animals or even the planet as a whole) we can relate to them with compassion and empathy. This uplifts our minds and opens our hearts ... the purpose of human life goes beyond individual well being - it aims at the expression of a higher consciousness through the individual. Our Dharma is thus to work for the good of all beings'.

**How to practice Karma Yoga**

Think how you can best use your energy, time, material resources or knowledge for the good of society. Here are some pointers to help on the way:

**Look for opportunities to serve colleagues, friends and family**

**Give what you are doing your full attention**

**Be self-confident**

**Expect nothing in return for your actions**

**Be detached from the results of your service**

**Be enthusiastic**

**Finish what you start**

**Serve with a cheerful mood**

*It can be very helpful to run a check on your thoughts and actions throughout the day just lived, at night before you go to bed; then to see where they tally with these intentions, remembering to make a mental note of your actions without judging yourself if you see where you may have failed, but rather to see where you may make improvements. If you begin to feel lighter and even slightly less burdened sometimes, you are making great headway and are sure to be about the business of increasing **Sattva**, with all its beneficial effects reverberating in your life and extending to others.*

*Finally, we can use positive affirmations to remind us of our true Divine Stature (Practical Ayurveda P.185)*

## **POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS FOR SPIRITUAL HEALTH**

**I am the Self**

**I am the pure light**

**I am free**

**I was never born, I will never die**

**I am bliss absolute**

*Notes on the Blavatsky Lodge talk on 'The Three Gunas' given at the Theosophical Society by Teresa King on Saturday November 23rd 2019.*