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LEVEL OF TRIGUNAS: SPIRITUAL AND NON-SPIRITUAL AMBIENCE

Sanjeev Kumar Yadav

Member,
Human Excellence Nepal,
Kathmandu,
Nepal.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to study the level of sattva, rajas and tamas between subjects living in a spiritual ambience and those living in non-spiritual ambience. In the study the total sample consisted of 70 graduation pursuing students including both males and females. 35 students were chosen from the university with spiritual lifestyle and 35 of them from outside of the university, living in a normal lifestyle. Age of the subjects being 18-25 years. Method: In this study purposive sampling method was used to collect the sample. The subjects were instructed to fill in the Vedic Personality Inventory (Wolf, 1999) as part of the study. Result: Significant difference among the level of sattva, rajas and tamas were found between the two groups. The sattva-rajas and sattva tamas correlated negatively with each other, but a weak positive correlation was found between rajas and tamas in both the groups. Conclusion: The spiritual ambience plays crucial role in enhancing the level of sattva in an individual's psyche and harmonizing and sublimating the rajas and tamas for productive utilization under the dominance of sattva for an optimum functioning of an individual.

KEY WORDS: *triguna, psyche, spiritual ambience, Vedic personality*

INTRODUCTION

In order to understand the yoga philosophy, it is essential to understand the ancient *Vedic* view of the world and the mechanism of its operation. The mention of *trigunas* is found in the *Atharva Veda*. But it has gained its popularity from the *Sankhya* system of philosophy. Although *Samkhya* system elaborates *trigunas* as the manifestation of the prakriti in context to universal consciousness and phenomenon, it is *Bhagvad Gita* which explains them in context of human consciousness and manifestation of human behavior with an elaboration of human feelings, emotions, and experiences.

In modern time study of *trigunas* has been a benchmark in studying how the psyche of an individual actually operates and different yoga techniques have been found to be helpful in improving the health factors for optimum well-being. Integral yoga practices has significant improvements in variables such as sustained attention, emotional intelligence, general health and *rajas* but not much in *sattva* where *Sattva* has positive correlation with EQ as *sattvic* personality indicates better control over the self. (Khemka, Sushil; Hongasandra, Nagendra;

Hankey, Alex, 2011) (Deshpande S, Nagendra HR, Raghuram N, 2008) (Deshpande S, Nagendra HR, Raghuram N, 2009). There is a considerable difference in the level of *trigunas* between the students with yogic education system and the modern education system (Satsangi, Dr. A & Kumar, Sanjesh, 2018) because of the lifestyle variables. Workplace ethics, organization citizenship behaviour, job satisfaction and performance affects and gets affected because of the *trigunas* proportion within an individual (Anuradha, MV & Kumar, YLN, 2015) (Bhal, K, T, & Debnath, N., 2006). Engaging in spiritual practice such as chanting Hare Krishna Maha Mantra increases *sattva* and decrease *rajas* and *tamas* (Wolf, D. & Abell, N., 2003).

The concept of *triguna* has been examined both theoretically (Mishra et al, 2000; Rao, 1997; Parameshwaran, 1969; Boss, 1966) and empirically (Marutham, Balodhi and Mishra, 1998; Mathew, 1995; Pathak Bhatt & Sharma, 1992; Uma, Lakshmi and Parameshwaran, 1971; Das, 1987) but the present study focuses on impact of spiritual and non-spiritual lifestyle on the level of *trigunas* of the graduate level students. Normal life style induces

tamasic modification of the *rajas* whereas the spiritual setting manifests *sattvic* modification of the *rajas*. In this study the level of *trigunas* between the subjects is compared with an indigenous interpretation on the psyche and its tendencies when exposed to certain lifestyle.

The Trigunas

Different researches have conceptualized the term *trigunas* in their studies. *Sattva* is conceptualized as purity, intelligence and humility (Uma, 1969); pleasant (Larson and Bhattacharya, 1987); peace and knowledge (Pathak et al., 1992); self-awareness, freedom and control, sensitivity, awareness and stability (Mathew, 1995); harmony and purity, essence (Marutham et al., 1998) and truth, mental equilibrium, cleanliness, detachment and determination (Wolf, 1998). *Rajas* is conceptualized as lack of control over emotions, anxiety, greed and desires, bad, active and impure (Uma, 1969); deception, rigidity, hate, animosity (Larson and Bhattacharya, 1987); pain and activity (Pathak et al., 1992); uncontrolled energy, restlessness, high drive, activation, extroversion, instability (Mathew, 1995); activity, passion and motion (Marutham et al., 1998) and dissatisfaction, materialism, envy and desire for sense gratification (Wolf, 1998). *Tamas* is conceptualized as indifferent, doubt, dullness, cynicism, inaction, undisciplined, neutral, delusions, uncertainty, negligence (Uma, 1969); sloth, fear, misery, inactivity (Larson and Bhattacharya, 1987); illusion and darkness, inertia (Pathak et al., 1992); lethargy, inhibition and fear, shallowness of emotions, low self-respect, low self-confidence, anxiety (Mathew, 1995); inactivity, foolishness and sloth, inertia (Marutham et al., 1998) and anger, depression, feelings of helplessness, mental imbalance, arrogance and procrastination (Wolf, 1998).

RESEARCH PROBLEM

“Is there a significant difference in the level of sattva, rajas and tamas of the individuals living in spiritual and non-spiritual ambience?”

HYPOTHESIS

Assuming subjects living in spiritual ambience to be Group A and those living in non-spiritual ambience to be Group B following hypothesis have been formulated:

- There should be significant difference in the level of *sattva* in both groups
- There should be significant difference in the level of *rajas* in both groups
- There should be significant difference in the level of *tamas* in both groups
- Sattva* correlates negatively with *rajas* in both groups

(e) *Sattva* correlates negatively with *tamas* in both groups

(f) *Rajas* correlates negatively with *tamas* in both groups

DISCUSSION OF THE VARIABLES

Spiritual lifestyle as independent variable

Spiritual lifestyle in the university consists of disciplines such as waking up in the *brahmamuhurta*, performing daily *yagya*, yoga practice, mantra japa, consumption of vegetarian food without onion and garlic and attending weekly Gita and life management classes.

Triguna as dependent variable

Sattva, rajas and *tamas gunas* within an individual was viable of being affected by the ambience in which the subjects resided.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample and Sampling

- ✓ Sample size- 70 sample was taken
- ✓ Sample selection- 35 sample was collected from within the university with spiritual ambience and 35 from outside of the University of age group 18-25
- ✓ Sampling technique- Purposive sampling was used

RESEARCH DESIGN

It is a comparative research with an exploratory research design

TOOLS & ASSESSMENT

Vedic Personality Inventory was used for the study. The VPI inventory is based on the concept of the *guna* personality from the Bhagavadgita, a traditional text of yoga, which was developed by David B. Wolf. This measure of the three *gunas* contain 56 questions and have 7 response choices. There are 15 items for *sattva*, 19 for *rajas* and 22 for *tamas*.

Sattva- 1,3,4,5,10,12,13,17,25,28,34,37,38,42,56

Rajas-

8,9,16,18,20,21,22,23,26,27,30,31,39,44,46,48,49,50,51

Tamas-

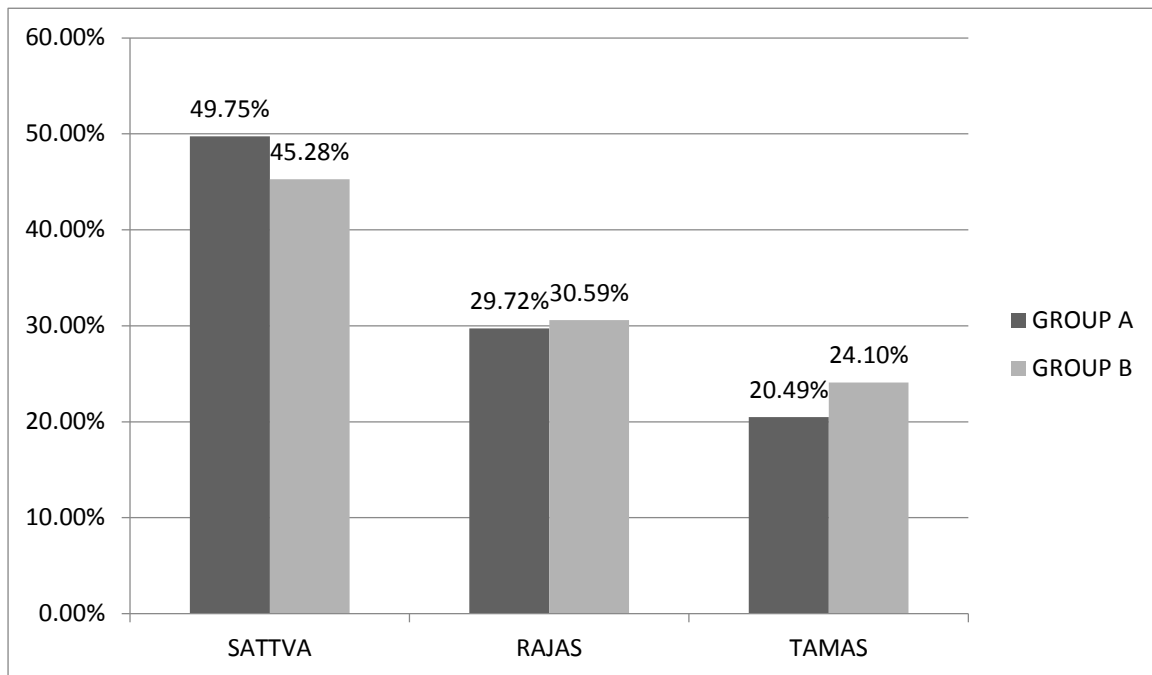
2,6,7,11,14,15,19,24,29,33,32,35,36,40,41,43,45,47,52,53,54,55

Procedure

After taking appointment from the subjects, the questionnaire were filled by both the groups. The participants were given instructions clearly.

ANALYSIS OF THE RESULT

Table 1: Histogram showing comparison in the standardized mean of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* of Group-A (Spiritual ambience) and Group-B (Non-spiritual ambience)



Group differences on the levels of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*:

Table 2: Group difference on level of *sattva*

Subjects	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	P=.0295
Group A	49.75	8.37	2.22	Significant at 0.05
Group B	45.28	8.43		Not significant at 0.01

The t test was significant. There was significant difference on the level of *sattva* in both the groups when checked at 0.05 level of significance which is in much alliance with our assumption. But the P value is not significant at 0.01 level of significance. The lifestyle components does

enhance the *sattva* level into the psyche of individuals residing in such ambience. Following lifestyle disciplines at regular basis has certain impact on group A's *sattva* level. But the increase was not sufficient enough to make a considerable difference when analyzed at 0.01 level.

Table 3: Group differences on level of *rajas*

Subjects	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	P=.528
Group A	29.72	5.88	-0.63	Not significant at 0.05
Group B	30.58	5.72		

The t test was not significant. There wasn't significant difference on the level of *rajas* between the two groups which is not in conformity with our assumption. Here question arises as to how the *rajas* of both the groups came to be almost similar? In a study conducted by Wolf & Abell (2003), negligible decrement in the level of rajas was observed. *Sattva* for its execution requires the force of *rajas*. And since the university students had to undergo

academic performance pressure during their program, the *sattva* level enhanced has to be maneuvered by the *rajas*. Other reasons might be that the students even after been for two and half years in the spiritual ambience might not have been able to lower their *rajasic* tendencies because of sudden adaptation challenges into a completely new environment. Despite of several independent variable in the lifestyle, the difference was not as expected.

Table 4: Group differences on level of *tamas*

Subjects	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	P=.0023
Group A	20.49	4.8	-3.17	Significant at 0.05 level
Group B	24.11	4.7		Significant at 0.01 level

The t test was significant. There was significant difference in the level of *tamas* between both the groups in 0.05 as well as 0.01 level of significance which is in conformity with our

assumption. Observing the lifestyle of the students, we found they do not have an opportunity to give place to the *tamas* in their lifestyle. There is strict routine to get engaged in *sattvic* activities.

Sublimation of *tamas* is an unconscious process for group A because of the vegetarian food provided in the university mess even with an absence of onion

and garlic. But for the group B subjects there are no such opportunity.

Correlation of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* within the same group

Table 5: Pearson Correlation coefficient of *sattva* and *rajas* in Group A

Group A	r-value	Result	P<.00001
<i>Sattva</i>	-0.8321	Strong Negative	Significant at 0.05 level
<i>Rajas</i>			Significant at 0.01 level

Here we found that there is strong negative correlation between the *sattva* and *rajas* of group A.

It means increase in *sattva* would cause decline in the level of *rajas* and vice versa of group A.

Table 6: Correlation of *sattva* and *tamas* in Group A

Group A	r-value	Result	P<.00001
<i>Sattva</i>	-0.7297	Moderate Negative	Significant at 0.05 level
<i>Tamas</i>			Significant at 0.01 level

Here there was moderate negative correlation between *sattva* and *tamas* in group A. It means increase in *sattva* would cause decline in the level of *tamas* but in the above table the moderate relation indicates the affinity of *tamas* to sustain with the *sattva*. It may be due to the fact that *sattva*, being

immaculate, illuminating and flawless: it binds through attachment to happiness and knowledge (BG 14/6). Another reason may be lethargy and inaction of *tamas* that would aid detachment from material stuffs with an increment in *sattva*.

Table 7: Correlation of *rajas* and *tamas* in Group A

Group A	r-value	Result	P=.1875
<i>Rajas</i>	0.2281	Weak Positive	Not significant at 0.05 level
<i>Tamas</i>			

From the above table we find a positive yet weak correlation between the *rajas* and *tamas* of group A. It suggests how *tamas guna*'s further manifestation is depended on *rajas*. On the other hand *rajas* has an innate tendency to bind with it the

tamas while being attached to the worldly objects. But the correlation doesn't seem to be significant either. It may be because of the spiritual ambience that tend to separate the binding nature of *rajas* and *tamas* with each other.

Table 8: Correlation of *sattva* and *rajas* in Group B

Group A	r-value	Result	P<.00001
<i>Sattva</i>	-0.8321	Strong Negative	Significant at 0.05 level
<i>Rajas</i>			Significant at 0.01 level

From the above table we see *sattva* and *rajas* in group B have strong negative correlation like we did in group A.

Table 9: Correlation of *sattva* and *tamas* in Group B

Group A	r-value	Result	P<.00001
<i>Sattva</i>	-0.7736	Strong Negative	Significant at 0.05 level
<i>Tamas</i>			Significant at 0.01 level

Also the *sattva* and *tamas* in group B have strong negative correlation as opposed to the moderate negative relationship in that of group A.

Table 10: Correlation of *rajas* and *tamas* in Group B

Group A	r-value	Result	P=0.0644
<i>Rajas</i>	0.3168	Weak Positive	Not significant at 0.05 level
<i>Tamas</i>			

Like in the case of group A, we found positive yet weak correlation in *rajas* and *tamas* of group B. This indicates the binding affinity of *rajas* and *tamas gunas* with each other. But the P value at

0.05 level isn't significant which indicates the willingness of the *rajas* and *tamas* to exist independently.

Calculation of Pearson Product Moment Partial Correlation

Table 11: Pearson Product Moment Partial Correlation Group A

Statistic	Value
Correlation r(SR)	-0.83
Partial Correlation r(SR.T)	-0.99
Correlation r(ST)	-0.73
Partial Correlation r(ST.R)	-0.99
Correlation r(RT)	0.22
Partial Correlation r(RT.S)	-0.99

Here from the above table we find the partial correlation among the *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* within group A to be strongly negative in all the cases

despite the *rajas* and *tamas* relation which was found to be weakly positively correlated.

Table 12: Pearson Product Moment Partial Correlation Group B

Statistic	Value
Correlation r(SR)	-0.84
Partial Correlation r(SR.T)	-0.99
Correlation r(ST)	-0.77
Partial Correlation r(ST.R)	-0.99
Correlation r(RT)	0.31
Partial Correlation r(RT.S)	-0.99

Like in group A, group B also had strong negative correlation among *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* unlike the relation of *rajas* and *tamas* which had weak positive correlation.

DISCUSSION

Spiritual lifestyle does have a significant impact over the level of *trigunas* and so was found from the above study. Group A had significantly higher level of *sattva* than group B students. There was very little difference in the *rajas* level whereas the mean *tamas* level of group A students were observed to be much less than that of group B. The *sattva* and *tamas* comparison satisfies our assumptions but the *rajas* level of group A raised question as to how its level was almost similar group B. Similar result has been observed in the study where a group exposed to a pre-post design experienced a significant increment in the level of *sattva* (Mean from 70.4 to 77.3) and decrement in the level of *tamas* (Mean from 49.8 to 43.5) but very little decrement in the *rajas* level (mean from 51.9 to 50.7) only (Wolf & Abell, 2003).

The lifestyle of the university resembles that of an ancient gurukul tradition type. Waking up in Brahmuhurta, bathing before sunrise, gayatri mantra japa and meditation, daily yagya and yoga practice, white kurta pajama as dress code, consumption of *sattvic* food (vegetarian food devoid of onion and garlic), life management and scientific spirituality as a compulsory subject and weekly discourse of Gita and meditation were the prime components of the spiritual lifestyle of the university from which the students were sampled for comparative study. The impact of all these in the psyche of an individual is unavoidable. Involvement of the subjects in practicing their lifestyle disciplines beginning from early morning to evening promises change in their proportion of *trigunas*.

Since the subjects were students who had been engaged in pursuing certain academic programs

and involved in their overall personality development. There were various situations that triggered the eustress among the subjects like weekly power point presentations on various topics, compulsory engagement in sports activities, and participation in university cultural programs, weekly selfless volunteering, appearing four unit tests and a semester exam in every six months and providing regular orientation to the junior students. All these are supposed to be handled by the *rajas* guna guided by the *sattva* guna because of the necessity of proper planning and execution, motivation, confidence, finishing up tasks within the deadline, overcoming performance anxiety, fear of public speaking and interaction, pressure to balance between academics and extracurricular in a *sattvic* environment along with other compulsory activities. *Sattva* guna if developed and sustained can make use of the *rajas*, the desire (force) element for a lot of productive activities. *Sattva* alone cannot function in absence of *rajas*. On the other hand too much *sattva* can reduce one's instinct for material satisfaction and incline one to become a sanyasi. The teachings of scientific spirituality in the university claimed to establish a harmony between the spiritual and materialistic world as there were other professional programs like animation, mass communication and journalism, business administration, computer application, clinical psychology, yogic science, music and tourism which promises to develop the essentials in the students for their survival in career perspective.

There was negative correlation between the *sattva-rajas* and *sattva-tamas* within group A and group B respectively whereas a weak but positive correlation between the *rajas* and *tamas* within both the groups was observed. Parameshwaran (1969) and Uma, Lakshmi & Parmeshwaran (1971) in their study also found a significant correlation between the *rajas* and *tamas*. But Das (1987, 1991) found that *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* correlate negatively with each

other at significant levels where affinity of *rajas* towards *sattva* was greater than towards *tamas*. Murthy PK, Kumar SK. (2007) considers *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* to be attached and dependent upon one another (Singh, Kamlesh et al., 2016) practically despite the opposition with each other in their essential characteristics. The correlation seem to depend on the psyche of the subjects rather than a definite principle to understand the issue. Or it may vary depending upon the scale used for the intervention. The *tamas* when drags *rajas* with it to perform the *tamasic* activities and brings forth the inherent negative impulses of *rajas*, we can find a positive correlation between *tamas* and *rajas* of the subjects. On the other hand subjects with strong *sattva* level are capable of eliminating the negative impulses of *rajas* by bringing forth the inherent positive impulses of *rajas* into action along with the *sattva*, hence developing a positive correlation between *sattva* and *rajas* of the subjects. Since *sattva* still strives and binds through attachment to light, illumination, happiness and knowledge (BG 14/6) (Srivastava, 2012), joy, wisdom, calmness, it requires a driving force for operation and hence depends on positive impulse of *rajas* for execution. Further holding pride while engaging in *sattvic* actions is possible as the *sattva* cannot function without the positive ego component. Since there is the feeling of a doer even for the *sattvic* person, the sense of I-ness prevails (BG 14/19). Whenever *sattva* dominates in an individual's psyche but is engaged in an action, it's the positive part of *rajas* active as an execution fuel for desired action while giving credit to the *sattva* overall.

CONCLUSION

Hence the spiritual practices impact the subjects involved in two ways. First the subject themselves being engaged into such disciplines where there is conscious aspect of the psyche involved for desired practice. Secondly the ambience created by various practitioners which act as the collective consciousness (Michael C. Dillbeck and Kenneth L. Cavanaugh, 2016) that support the individual perseverance for transformation with much ease and speed. It is more about created consciousness that simply assists in the process. Hence the lifestyle would benefit one by refining individual consciousness and at the same time contributing to the mass consciousness that in return guides the individual's regularity and continuity required for the discipline.

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