

# Cosmic Motivational Psychology\_Gunas Affect Cognition

## Abstract

Considerable attention by scholars and scientists has been given to the differences between science and spirituality. Yet could there be a cause or a substratum between these two subjects that is shared? Little attention has been directed to the possibility of cosmic energetics being responsible for the creation of the universe. This includes our world of time, space, forms, creatures, processes, cycles, science, humankind, ideas, and thought processes. This paper aims to delve behind the created universe, to a cosmological dimension that existed prior. During the earliest period of creation, there may have been cosmic forces responsible for first micro-organisms, processes, stages, elements, and all creation. Some peoples claim that creation was performed by a divine being or God; others claim that creation of the universe was a natural process of cosmic intelligence. Either due to a divine cosmic being orchestrating a substratum of cosmic forces, or due to a phenomenon of cosmic intelligence, the entire creation occurred. Science, philosophy, spirituality, and psychology all have interest in what exists beyond materiality. Perhaps the concept of consciousness used by scientists, the concept of transcendence used by religions, and transformation used by psychology have a common denominator for transpersonal change.

**Keywords:** light, action, dullness, cosmic energetics, nature/materiality, human mind, qualities

## Introduction

This paper refers to all aspects and dimensions of creation as Nature /Materiality or *prakriti*. Nature includes all that is microscopic, unknowable, as well as that which is easily discernable. A thought is a subtle dimension, but a verbal expression is discernible. The term cosmic energetics is intended to mean three dynamic forces identified both by the science of physics and by an ancient cosmological science. An ultimate goal of human life is not explored in this paper, yet it is presupposed to be Consciousness *purush*, which like the sun, enlivens by its presence of illumination. Both Nature and Consciousness are considered as eternal and universal, but separate principles. Three dynamic cosmic forces belong to the principle of nature or materiality, each one having different qualities. The 3 cosmic energetics are explored here in the following ways: as substratum of the created universe, their dimensions and qualities, and their psychological impact upon human cognition.

## Three Dynamics Substratum/Causes of the World

The science of physics identifies three dynamic energetics that sustain life. Observably, these match three dynamic substratum energies of creation described in ancient scriptures of India. In physics, there is light, kinetics or motion, and dullness or inertia. Stated in the 2700year ago cosmological scripture *Samkhya*, sage-meditator Kapila states that the universe is said to have evolved from three dynamic energetics *gunas*: light *sattva*, motion *rajas*, and dullness *tamas*. An essential question is whether light, motion, and inertia identified by physics is one and the same as the three cosmic energetics *gunas*.<sup>1</sup>

The operation of the *gunas* are a simple, yet multi-dimensional operation that unceasingly interact to this very day. The light, kinetics/motion, and inertia or mass belonging to physics, are an integral part of our ability to live. The operation of the world would cease and die-out in a short time without these cosmic qualities, and especially if there is no light. If light alone ceased for a period of days, many items

and creatures would quickly die-out. So, the importance of the three cosmic energetics is essential to life itself.

The Samkhya Cosmology describes three underlying qualities as the cause for the created world. The continual interaction of the three qualities *gunas* underlies everything from microorganisms to every form including humans. Two of the *gunas* are stationery (*sattva* and *tamas*), yet they directly affect intention and proportion. The three *gunas* work together and create varying and innumerable proportions of light, dullness, and movement. The resulting combinations are the substratum of every aspect and dimension of life. The Rajo-guna moves between Sato-guna and Tamo-guna, continually reorganizing the proportions. The result of the changing and varying qualities is the phenomena of each season, object, creature, thought, emotion, form, and more. The proportions are seen in the uniqueness of plants, animals, humans, processes, formations, sensations, intellect, egos, will, thoughts, emotions, all that is animate and inanimate.<sup>2</sup>

Humans are the last creature to evolve, and they have the most advanced intellectual capabilities. Unlike other creatures, humans can determine their own path in life. People can choice, delve into a subject, and create unique systems. No matter how simple or complex a creature is, the physical, neurological form will be pervaded by consciousness which is the essential factor that enlivens. Nature does not enliven. Nature only works due to the presence of illumination. Humans, having the most advanced intellect, neurological system, and form are able to discern and discriminate unlike other creatures. Hence humans can discern, plan, achieve, and grow in knowledge. Humans can discern between the aspects that characterize each of the three *gunas*. They can come to know whether their senses, their intellect and their ego are more Sattvic, or Rajasic, or Tamasic. With this knowledge, combined with mental intention, humans can shift their mind to select by choice, the dominance of a particular *guna*.<sup>3,4</sup>

It could seem that the essence of light, motion, and dullness (*sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*) are a substratum of cosmic forces residing only in the sky, but the *gunas* are universal and apparent on earth in

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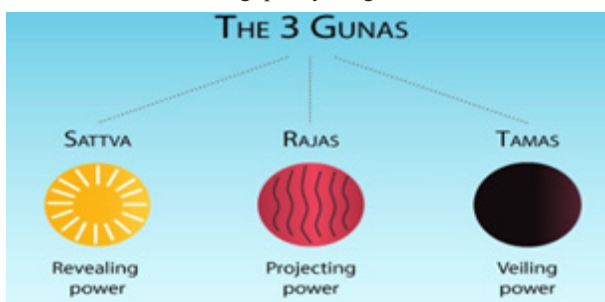
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every form. In fact, that which is subtle, and that which is obviously detected through the five senses are non-other than the three gunas in manifestation.

Light, kinetic movements, and inertia seem best understood according to their operations. Example: Trees can be described according to varying proportions of light, movement, and dullness. The spectrum of colors in the tree is the 'light'. 'Action' is in the movement of growth and decay and in the motion of air as it moves the leaves. 'Dullness or inertia' is apparent in the tree's mass and density. Each is unique in characteristics of size and shape.

### Qualities and Dimensions of the Energetics

Figure 1 shows Sattva guna as an orange color of light, closest to the radiating sun, and having the power to reveal and give clarity. Rajas guna is red because action can create heat and project due to radiation of the heat. Tamas guna is the black color, absent of light, and therefore it is the veiling quality of ignorance.



**Figure 1** Shows Sattva guna as an orange color of light, closest to the radiating sun, and having the power to reveal and give clarity.

### ~Essential Qualities of the Gunas~

The qualities of Sato-guna embody that which we desire in a harmonious life. This includes clarity, intelligence, pleasantry, attention, truth, and happiness. The qualities of Tamo-guna are the opposite of Sattva. Tamasic qualities include dullness, density, doubt, confusion, resistance, and indifference. Stability, required for many things to succeed, is also an aspect of tamo-guna. Rajo-guna, characterized by activity and action, is the transformational agent that moves energy between Sattva and Tamas. Example: The state of sleep is an example of tamo-guna predominance, yet the proportions of gunas during the sleep are what describes the quality of the sleep.<sup>5</sup>

Tamasic guna brings a heaviness to the body and mind necessary for sleep; rajasic guna is the amount of restlessness and dreaming; sattvic guna is the degree of pleasantry and peacefulness of the sleep. Throughout one night of sleep, the guna predominance might shift many times, or a few times. This can depend on several factors including physiology based on food eaten on that day, mental mindset, and psychological mood.<sup>6</sup>

Thoughts, emotions, and actions are a result of the shifting proportions of the 3 gunas. Different types of dreams can be characterized by the dominance of one guna and supported by the other two. Never separate, the gunas operate together as the cause and manifestation of the entire world, seen and unseen.

Rajas moves between sattva and tamas, continually seeking balance among the three gunas. This shifts the dominance and proportion among the gunas both in the cosmos and in the mind. Does light, kinetics, and inertia work together in the same way according to the science of physics?<sup>7</sup>

### ~Three Gunas Create Five Basic Elements~

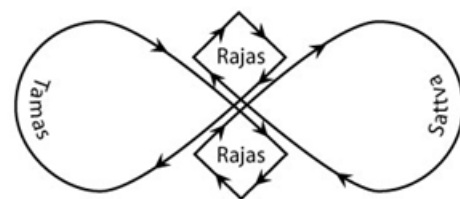
The first creation performed by the 3 energetics was the five elements: ether/space, air, fire, water and earth. Could this be considered a parallel for what science calls the 'big bang'? The 5 elements in turn became the process of evolution for the rest of creation.

In science, the table of elements identifies 92+ basic substances. It would be an interesting study to explore the makeup of all elements identified by science\_\_ relative to their varying combinations of the 5 basic elements. This would mean that hydrogen, nitrogen, carbon, etcetera each have a quality and quantity unique to the 5 basic elements. Gaseous formations will contain more ether and air, volatile formations will contain more fire, and dense formations will contain more water and earth. Earth is an element which consists of all five elemental substances. For instance, soil has solidity; it holds water; it can be porous like air; it has ether/space between granules, and it holds heat, a quality of fire.<sup>8</sup>

### Energetics Affect Cognition Intentions, Thoughts, Choices

Humans have a psycho-physiological constitution to enable them to achieve goals, make choices, plan, and live life according to a particular lifestyle. The human form is characterized by a complex nervous system and psyche with varying qualities and proportions of light, motion, and dullness. No one is found to be exactly like another in form, nervous system, or psyche because of the constant shifting gunas. This action is due to rajas guna pulling between sattva and tamas. Consider the example of the differences in guna quality and quantity that occur between an athlete and an engineer professional. The athlete will have more rajasic physical movement, but the engineer will have more rajasic mental activity. Even in the situation of twin infants, each is born with a unique psychophysiology.

Figure 2 illustrates the three gunas relative to movement and dominance. Rajas continually moves and pulls. Correspondingly, increases and decreases occur in the proportions of Sattva and Tamas. Any of the three gunas may be dominant in position and the other two supportive. The gunas remain together like a braid or rope of three strands. This underlies the claim and feeling by some that change occurs in everything moment to moment, including in the human mind. So also, the question arises whether there is a way to control the energetics that continually flow into the mind.



**Figure 2** Illustrates the three gunas relative to movement and dominance.

### ~Antahkarana \_ five senses, intellect, ego, chitta~

The human mind is complex, and each person as explained is unique with varying tendencies and abilities. Yet each person's mind consists of three aspects that work together. These are the senses, the intellect, and the ego, called *antahkarana*. Basically, the senses *manas*, gather content and information from external environment or

from memory. The intellect *buddhi* identifies and analyses the content, and the ego *ahamkar* either accepts or rejects the results from the intellect. This is a process that describes the three aspects of mind working together as one unit.<sup>9</sup>

Chitta is the relationship of the mind to the 3 gunas. The mind of three aspects has the ability to manage the three cosmic energetics that continually enter and affect cognition. Two people with the same content in their minds, but holding different dominance of the gunas, will view situations in different ways, reflecting differences in clarity and understanding.

Example: Even though it is dark outside (tamasic energy) in the early morning, the sattvic intentioned mind can get up more easily than the tamasic intentioned mind. A sattvic-intentioned mind accompanied by rajas will find it easier to make changes. A tamasic attitude of mind will have more resistance and find reasons to defend procrastination. In the above example, though the atmosphere of early morning may be tamasic due to darkness or heaviness due to the season, the sattvic mind can override more easily the influence of the tamasic energy. So, a person's mind has the ability to decide mindset, feelings, and emotions about what characterizes it and one's lifestyle.<sup>10</sup>

A person who has a large amount of tamasic energy can make new decisions and choices by shifting their intentions and desire to be more sattvic. By so doing, lethargic energy will be reduced, simultaneously, an increase of rajasic action will occur. It is the will contained in the ego that has the last say, as it accepts or rejects the intellect's intentions and ways of viewing situations. It is this very process that allows a person to make choices, change, organize, focus attention, acquire skills, and more.

Example: It is moderately raining and time to go out of the house. With a sattvic dominant attitude, a person thinks this is no problem, and the person unites with rajasic energy to feel okay about leaving the house. On the contrary, a tamasic attitude will more likely hold back with resistance and prefer to wait out the rain. The sattvic dominant mind will seek to keep the mind pleasant. A tamasic attitude will have more doubt, dullness, attachment, and resistance.

Looking closely at varying creatures, structures, seasons, the qualities of light, darkness, density, ignorance, resistance, and more - can be revealing to one's awareness and perceptions. It is most efficacious to examine and self-determine the guna the gunas that you want to characterize your life. In this way, a person with sattvic mentality coupled with appropriate rajas, can live in the present and conduct their life in a more conscious way. Sattva and rajas working together characterizes a close relationship to the principle of consciousness or illumination. Here can be found the motivation and qualities needed for developing concentration, focus, attention, clarity, making changes, and achieving aims.

In the case of ordinary life filled with routine, the mind can become bored and stressed. Negative thinking and depression can set in. In this instance, if the mind's thoughts and emotions are examined, it will become apparent which guna is dominant.

Depression has a tamasic density and lethargy too. By making a mental intention to be more sattvic, the mind begins to have more sattvic feelings of lightness, and less oppression. Following a transformation, emotions of wellbeing and happiness make a person become more active. Here the psychophysiological gunas in the mind - body have shifted from tamasic to sattva plus rajas, directed by the will.<sup>11</sup>

The three gunas can be viewed as a psychological tool, and a model for transformation. Using the will to increase sattvic qualities of light

and inspiration can be done as an experiment. By observing the effects of willful intentions, a person feels happier about themselves and the power to make choices that affirm their preferences to live, work, and interact consciously.

The sattvic energetic plus appropriate rajas energy is closely aligned to the cosmic principle of consciousness. It can become the path to the spiritual heart and to final liberation. On the other hand, tamasic energy is based on inappropriate clinging and paves the way for more pain and suffering.

~Tools for Transformation~

Yoga, pranayama, meditation, self-reflection, and determination are examples of tools that shift dullness into activity and light. In this way, tamo-guna is transformed into rajo-guna and sato-guna. The results will be more psychological clarity and action.<sup>12</sup>

## Summary and Implications

In conclusion, the effect of 3 cosmic energetics on our psyche and our life is all encompassing. Whether it is considered as a discovery by science or as a cosmological substratum, the qualities of light, action, and dullness are present in our world\_ externally and psychologically. The three key qualities continually shape, guide, and influence our lives. Yet as humans, we are the one species that can direct the cosmological gunas that flow in our mind. A one-pointed mind can influence the three mental energetics to increase mental clarity, physical energy, or whatever is needed.

Increasing knowledge about the qualities, dimensions, and interactions of the gunas, can also increase knowledge about oneself. Through willful desire to increase intentions and methods of light/sato-guna, there will be an increase in kinetics/rajo-guna, and an automatic reduction in dullness/tamo-guna. Here is indicated a way to motivate oneself to become co-creator of one's own quality of life.

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None.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declared no have conflict interest for the study.

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