

GunaTraya Model: An Effective Model for Total Quality of Mind and Organisational Development

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Abstract

Ancient Indian Knowledge is a rich source of psychology and philosophy which can be effectively used for the contemporary organisational issues. Guna Traya model of personality concept envisaged in Sankhya Philosophy and other scriptures explain the different personalities, their developments and their effects. In modern times, some studies were done on application of this concept for personality development of individuals as well as institutional development. This paper makes a systematic analysis of description of Gunas, factors affecting their formation, twelve dimensions of gunas, relationship of gunas with demographic features of people, dynamics of team combinations with different types of personalities of people and Sanskãras reinforcement model of human quality development. At the end, the paper makes suggestions on how to create Sattvik environment for organisational development.

Introduction

Important school of Vedic knowledge is Sãnkhya Darśana. An important doctrine of this school is Guṇa (GuṇaTraya/ Trigūṇa) and offers a great help to understand concepts of personality and its types. While the antecedents of this doctrine is found in Cãndagya Upaniṣat, the names of the Guṇas 'Sattva', 'Rajas' and 'Tamas' appear together for the first time in Maitrãyani Upaniṣat (Keith, 1949). These were fully developed and described in Sãnkhya Kãrika, Bhagavadgīta, Yōgasūtra and their several commentaries. Based on the description in these texts, different authors have described the Guṇas.

Wolf (1998) states that Sattva Guṇa is characterized by qualities such as cleanliness, truthfulness, gravity, dutifulness, detachment,

discipline, mental equilibrium, respect for superiors, contentment, sharp intelligence, sense control, and staunch determination. Attributes of Rajo Guṇa includes intense activity, desire for sense gratification, little interest in spiritual elevation, dissatisfaction with one's position, envy of others, and a materialistic mentality. Qualities associated with Tamas include mental imbalance, anger, ignorance, arrogance, depression, laziness, procrastination, and a feeling of helplessness.

The word Sattva is derived from 'Sat' or that which is real or existent. 'Sat' also means perfection and therefore, Sattva element is that which produces goodness and pleasure (Radhakrishnan, 1948). Rajas is the principle of motion. Sãnkhya accounts for the causation of the universe on the basis of this Guṇa of motion. Sattva and Tamas Guṇas in themselves are immobile. They are rendered active

because of the energizing influence of Rajas. All work comes from Rajas, the principle of energy, which overcomes the resistance of matter and supplies even intelligence with the energy which is required for its own work of conscious regulation and adaptation (Seal, 1915).

The three Guṇas- Sattva, Rajas and Tamas- also promote different kinds of temperament based on the dominance of one or the other Guṇas. No personality is exclusively Sattvic, Rajasic or Tamasic. In words of Yogi Aurobindo, all men have in them in whatever degree the Rajasic impulse of desire and activity and the Sattvic boon of light and happiness, some balance, some adjustment of mind to itself and its surroundings and objects, and all have their share of Tamasic incapacity and ignorance. Individuals are born with certain personality patterns that gradually change as a result of interaction with the environment. Das (1991) found support for the claim that the three *Guṇas* are exclusive of each other. The *Guṇas* might initially vary in their dominance in determining the personality of an individual but gradually the individual's personality mostly settles on one (Das, 1991). A person could thus be *Sattvic*, *Rajasic*, or *Tamasic* depending on which of the three *Guṇas* is dominant. The balance of *Guṇas* of everything and everyone can change and does. Change needs internal or external influence or reinforcement, as knowledge and force to transform. The force to change comes from *Rajas* Guṇa, while *Sattva* Guṇa empower towards harmonious and constructive change, while *Tamas* Guṇa checks or retards the process.

Factors which influence the formation of Guṇas

Śrīmat Bhāgavata (11.8.10) mentions the following ten factors as conducive to the growth of Guṇas :

“The sacred lore, water, progeny, place, time, occupation, birth, thought, mystic formulas and purificatory rites- these ten factors are conducive to the Guṇas i.e., to their growth”.

That is to say, these factors promote that very Guṇa with which they are associated.

Radhakrishnan (1948) states that the dominant Guṇa could be identified along 12 different dimensions. One could be Sattvic on one dimension, Rajasic on another, and Tamasic on yet another. The 12 dimensions and the characteristics of each Guṇa along each of those dimensions are explained in the box.

Table 1: Twelve Dimensions of Guṇas

Dimensions	Type of Guna		
	Sattva	Rajas	Tamas
Faith	Worships divine, value all divine tendencies	Worships power and wealth	Worships ghostly spirits
Food	Likes food that increases their vital force, energy, strength, appetite, and health. Such food is juicy, soothing, savoury, fresh, and agreeable	Prefer food that is violently bitter, sour, salty, hot, pungent, acidic, and burning.	Take pleasure in food that is stale, tasteless, cold, insipid, putrid, rotten, and impure.
Sacrifice	Sacrifice willingly as a duty without desire for fruits thereof	Sacrifice that is performed for outward show, in the hope of divine reward	Sacrifice that is performed without faith and with complete disregard to Dharma
Austerity	Austerity of body, of mind, and of speech	Practiced for ostentation and for gaining praise and honour, fleeting and unstable.	Practiced with foolish obsessions of hurting oneself or hurting others
Gift	Gift given as a matter of duty, without expectation of any return, at a suitable place and time, and to the deserving person	Gift that is given either with the hope of receiving in return or with a view of winning merit or grudgingly	Gift that is given to an unworthy person at the wrong time and place disdainfully, without regard to the feelings of the person who receives it.
Obligatory Work	Does obligatory work with a sense of duty, abandoning attachment to the outcomes	Shirk from difficult work from fear of pain or bodily trouble	Total abandonment of one's allotted task due to delusion.
Knowledge	Enables one to see the underlying oneness in all things despite the superficial diversities	Makes one see various entities of distinct kinds and many souls in different beings.	Shrouds all knowledge, rendering one incapable of seeing either the different souls or the underlying oneness.
Action	Act with non -attachment	Act with self-conceit for want of fruits thereof. Such action involves much dissipation of energy	Act in delusion without assessing one's capabilities to perform the same and be heedless of harm to others.
Agent	An agent who is free from attachment, non -egoistic, endued with fortitude and enthusiasm, and unaffected by success or failure	Passionate, greedy, malignant, impure, and easily elated or dejected	Unsteady, vulgar, arrogant, dishonest, malicious, indolent, despondent, and procrastinating.
Intellect	Know the path of work and renunciation, right and wrong action, fear and fearlessness, and bondage and liberation	Decides erroneously between right and wrong	Mistakes wrong for right and sees everything distorted,
Determination	Never wavers; gain control over their mind, vital energies, and senses	Seek wealth or do duty looking for reward and personal advantage.	Obstinacy; makes a person stubbornly refuse to shake off dullness, fear, grief, low spirits or vanity
Happiness	Experienced through realization of the ultimate reality.	Arises from the contact of objects with senses and is short-lived, ultimately graduating into pain	Brutish contentment in stupor and sloth and obstinate error. Such happiness begins and results in self-delusion

In modern times, a few studies were made on some

aspects of Guṇa Trayas and its application to organisational behavior.

Kewalramani (2013) made an empirical study on the relationship of with certain demographic variables of managers- management level, mode of recruitment, number of years in service, type of organization, age, education, type of family and wife's working position. The findings are as follows.

Table 2: Relationship of Gunas and Demographic Variables of Managers

Management level	Lower level managers have more Rajas and Tamas than higher level managers
Type of organization	Service sector managers are found higher on Rajas than manufacturing sector managers.
Experience	With experience Rajas acquires significance
Mode of recruitment	Mode of recruitment (direct/through promotion) does not have any significant effect on Guṇas
Age	Age has no significant effect on dominance of Guṇa
Education	Graduate managers are higher on both Rajas and Tamas than Post Graduate managers
Wife's working position	It has no significant effect on Guṇas
Family system	Managers from joint families are higher on Sattva than managers from nuclear families. The managers from nuclear families are higher on Tamas than managers from joint families

Kumar and Thomas (2013) made a study on effect of Guṇas on creativity of managers. They found that Sattvic managers can handle any kind of situation and can be productive in their work. These individuals can achieve the goals with planning, effective utilization of the resources, and can perform well. Rajasic managers have the ability to be creative but are unable to have divergent thinking. These managers need direction

and planning to execute their ideas. They have knack for excelling in service oriented jobs where communication and high energy are important characteristics. Sattvic-Rajasic managers need guidance in directing their energy, there is a need to bring awareness in the managers about their personality to perform effectively. They can work in sales, executive, and HR profiles, where they can bring change with effective utilization of their qualities of passion and reasonability. Narayanan and Krishnan (2003) studied relationship between Guṇas, Karma - Yoga and transformational leadership. Results demonstrated that three Sattva dimensions (sympathy, motivation to work and accepting pain) enhance transformational leadership and two Rajas dimensions (attribution, and right and wrong) reduce Karma Yoga.

Rastogi (2004) made an attempt to relate TriGuṇa to seven constructs of psychological well-being from western perspective. The seven constructs included self-acceptance, positive relation with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, satisfaction with life and personal growth. A revealing observation of the research was that Tamas was found to be negatively and Sattva to be positively correlated with all the seven constructs of psychological well-being. The relationship of Rajas with the constructs, vacillate from negative to positive. Zaidi and Singh (2001) reported significant effect of Sattva and Rajas Guṇa on depression, the former leading to low depression and latter to high depression. Rao and Harigopal (1979) found a significant negative correlation between memory scores and Tamas. Kaur and Sinha (1992) showed that three *Sattva* dimensions (sympathy, motivation to work, and accepting pain) enhanced transformational leadership and two *Rajas* dimensions (attribution and right and wrong) reduced *Karma-Yoga*. Sebastian and Mathew (2002) found that PSI experience (freedom from compulsive action patterns) was positively related to *Sattva* and *Rajas* for females. *Sattva* and *Rajas* might combine to exert beneficial effects.

Kejriwal and Krishnan (2004) conducted a study on Impact of vedic worldview and Guṇas on transformational leadership and found that Sattva and Vedic worldview separately enhance transformational leadership whereas Tamas reduces it. Sattva-Rajas combination also enhances transformational leadership but the effect is not more than the effect of Sattva alone. Sattva and Vedic worldview together do not enhance transformational leadership more than what Sattva alone does. They recommended that organizations can enhance transformational leadership by using the Guṇa framework and by reinforcing the vedic worldview by design training programmes to develop Sattva and reduce Tamas, build team-orientation and self-sacrifice for directing energies towards superordinate goals and base organizational policies on a competency framework built around Sattva and a vedic orientation.

The dynamics of Guna Theory

Sharma (2008) developed the theory of 'Total Quality of Mind' based on the philosophy of Guṇa Traya. This model is a very potential model to develop Sattva in the minds of all stakeholders in organization and thus ensure enduring progress in performance of the organization. The salient features of the model are:

Every person is a combination of all Guṇas, with different proportions and when one Guṇa dominates, the other subdues. As a result of this Guṇa dynamics, four dominant combinations emerge as:

1. The dominance of harmony seeking behavior or Sattva Guṇa
2. Intense activity with harmony seeking orientation or the Rajas with Sattva combination
3. Intense activity with some inertial content, or the Rajas with Tamas combination

4. Complete inertia or Tamas

Table 3: Description of Four Dominant Combinations of Guṇas

Personality Type	Dominant Self Orientation	Driving Force	Illustration
Sattva (r)	Self-realization(r)	Welfare of all	Intuitive, holistic, visionaries
Rajas -Sattva(s)	Self-sacrificing(s)	Social/ collective interest	Social activists, social reformers
Rajas -Tamas(a)	Self actualization(a)	Self Interest	Typical Professional Manager
Tamas(i)	Self indulgence(i)	Minimum critical effort	Managers with low drive

Source: Sharma (2008)

Based on their mental orientation different types of persons are named as 'r', 's', 'a', 'i'.

1. Sattva /Self Realization('r') Types: Persons in whom the Sattva Guṇa completely dominates over the Rajas and Tamas Guṇas. These persons are driven by the idea of 'Welfare for All'. They display a high degree of ethical and spiritual perfection. They are the leaders of the moral growth of organizations.

2. Rajas-Sattva / Self Sacrificing ('s') Types: Are persons in whom the Rajas Guṇa dominates and Sattva Guṇa appears as back up. These people are driven by the selfless desire to improve the living conditions of people. Most social activists, social reformers, administrators and managers driven by the desire to undertake activities for the larger social concern. Thus, they have a high degree of 'eco-orientation' or concern for others.

3. Rajas-Tamas/ Self Actualization('a') Types: Are people with a high drive for the pursuit of their self interest. Such people tend to manipulate resources, including people to their personal advantage. They are likely to display high degrees of administrative and calculative modes of thinking. The accumulative instinct is the prime mover. These

people have a high degree of 'ego- orientation' i.e., self centeredness. They are characterized by lust for power, zeal for achievement at any cost and greed for control over resources.

4. Tamas/Self Indulgence ('i') Types : They display neither the drive of the Rajas type nor the willingness to do good things for the larger interest. They just put in the critical minimum effort to survive in the organization. Most motivational techniques tend to fail in the case of persons of this type.

Effect of Relationship of different personalities on Performance of Employee

The performance of an employee depends not only on the type of his / her personality but also the type of person with whom he/she is working with. Therefore, in an organization, interpersonal interactions and relationships of different combinations may lead to different types of performance like progress in performance or group conflicts and decay in performance or manipulating and reporting the performance than actual performance. Table 4 presents different combinations of relations of employee A and employee B as a team. In the table self- realization, self- sacrificing, self actualization, self indulgence are represented by letter r,s,a, i respectively.

Table 4: Dynamics of team combination with different types of personalities of employees

Personality type of employee A	Personality type of employee B			
	R	S	A	I
R	r,r	r, s	r,a	r,i
S	s,r	s,s	s,a	s,i
A	a,r	a,s	a,a	a,i
I	i,r	i,s	i,a	i, i

Source: Sharma (2008)

Each cell has different implications for the nature of the relationship between two persons. Some interactions strengthen the bonds, others lead to problems. These type of interactions can be observed in all organizations and groups. Thus this framework can also be useful in analysing group dynamics in organizations

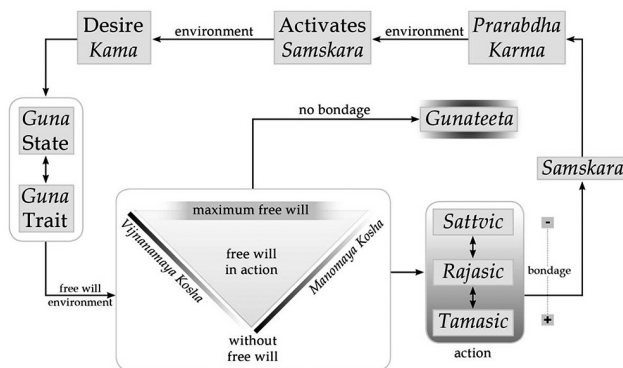
Sanskāras-Reinforcement Model Of Human Quality Development

Once the combination of the *Guṇas* is determined, it strongly binds the person in this birth. They almost guide every behavior of his. How does a particular *Guṇa* emerge at a given time? What factors determine that? Why *Guṇas* are required? These are some of the common questions. Basically, we are propelled to exhaust our *Karmas* by involving in action. This fruition of the fruits of Karma starts from our *Sanskāras* (all the impressions of our previous experiences, including earlier births). Our *Sanskāras* create a desire, which is an attempt of expression of *Sanskāras*. This expression of desire requires certain vehicle to convey and that can be attributed as *Guṇas*. *Guṇas* are the means through which our *Sanskāras* are expressed in terms of thoughts of desires, which impel us into action. There are deeper implications to this. As the impetus of *Sanskāras* cannot be suppressed; similarly, inhibition of expression of behaviors through one of the *Guṇas* or through any of their combinations is not equally possible. Like the force of gravity on earth, the laws of *Guṇas* are always acting on us, hence we cannot neglect them, so the best approach would be to understand them and use them according to our needs. When a particular *Samskara* finds suitable environment outside, for its expression, that *Samskara* would emerge and manifest itself. This gives the reason, why a particular thought must arise in our mind at a given time or situation? Time and situation provide congruent environmental support for the expression of *Sanskāras*. We can control the manifestation of *Sanskāras* by controlling the inner nature or by carefully choosing the external environment. That is the

reason, it is considered very important to have a congenial environment for one's growth, because a good external environment might inhibit the emergence of ill *Sanskāras* and promote manifestation of good *Sanskāras*. Once the *Sanskāras* manifest, they happen through one of the *Guṇas*. This conceptual framework can be further expanded to incorporate the element of free will as attempted in Figure 1.

The *Prarabdha* Karma, which is available for fruition in this birth, activates *Sanskāras* according to the influence of the environment including imagination from memory. As a *Samskara* gets activated, it creates a desire. Desire propels a person into action, the expression of the action happens through *Guṇas*. Before action is actually executed, there is an element of "free will," which is the inherent capacity to execute choices. Action can be executed with or without free will. Action with maximum utility of free will leads to no bondage and that is *Guṇateeta* state. Actions with decreasing gradation of free will cause bondage and strengthen further *Sanskāras*. Such actions are expressed through one of the possible combinations of the *Guṇas*. Hence, the key to freedom from actions is action without attachment by consciously using the free will, with awareness. Use of free will decide whether an action will lead to further bondage or freedom.

Figure 1: Model of Karma, Guṇa, Samskara and Free Will in Action



Source: Ilavarasu et al. (2013)

Importance of the Study for Organisational Development:

Every organization wants to achieve its vision, which may be in terms of financial targets or rendering service. The performance of the organization depends on the personality i.e., Gunas of people working in the organization. Swamy Vivekananda said that each soul is potentially divine and the divinity can be manifested either by action (Karma Yoga), or Psychic Control (Raja Yoga) or Devotion (Bhakti Yoga) or Philosophy (Jnana Yoga) or all of them, which is generally called as Integrated Yoga. The previous discussion makes it clear that by creating a suitable environment in the organization and practice of Yoga by people in the organization, the personalities of people in organization can be transformed to be Sattvik. Such Sattvik personalities can enhance organizational performance and enable the organization to achieve its vision.

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