

REVISITING TRIGUNAS IN AYURVEDA: PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS AND THERAPEUTIC APPLICATIONS**Dr. Ira Ashutosh Joshi^{1*}, Dr. Swati Chobhe², Dr. Shweta Kutte³, Dr. Swati Chaudhari⁴**

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is the ancient and first science which has identified importance of the healthy mind in healthy body. The definition of Swastha (healthy person) in Ayurveda consists of balanced state of Doshas, Agni, Dhatus, Malas and also Prasannata (happiness) of Atma (soul), Indriyas (sense/motor organs) along with Prasannata of Manas (mind). Healthy and happy mind is the prerequisite of health according to Ayurveda. Sattva, Rajas and Tamas are the Trigunas which were adapted from Sankhya Shastra to Ayurveda. In Ayurveda, they were first described by Charaka. They are also called as Mahagunas by Sharangdhara. Sattva, Rajas, Tamas are main governing elements of mind, they are responsible for mental functioning in humans. Along with the functioning of mind also they play important roles in many aspects of life. To understand mental regulation in Ayurvedic perspective, study of Trigunas is essential. This

review revisits multi-dimensional nature of Trigunas ranging from cosmic creation (Sushruti Utpatti), manifestations on human mind to therapeutic applications while treating some psychosomatic conditions.

KEYWORDS: Manas, Trigunas, Sattva, Rajas, Tamas, Ayurvedic psychology.

INTRODUCTION

Vata, Pitta, Kapha are Sharir doshas which govern the functioning of body (Sharira). Though Sattva, Rajas, Tamas are enlisted as Gunas of human mind, but Rajas and Tamas can cause disturbances in mental functioning upon increasing. Hence, they are called as Doshas of Manas.^[1] Sattva is Guna(quality) of mind, as it does not cause any harm on increasing.

Ayurveda states body-mind relationship very clearly as follows^[2]

Sharangadhara links Sharira Doshas with Manas Doshas such as, Vata is linked to Rajas, Pitta is linked to Sattva, Kapha is linked to Tamas.

Sattva represents light, clarity, purity. Rajas represents activity. Tamas represents inertia, laziness etc. Though these qualities are completely opposite to each other, they are capable of dominating, suppressing and overpowering each other. Due to this interchangeability, they are able to show their manifestations since the beginning of creation of universe to mental traits in humans.

Roadmap of article

- 1) Role of Trigunas in Cosmic creation
- 2) Role of Trigunas in formation of Mahabhutas
- 3) Manifestations of Trigunas on human mind
- 4) Clinical importance of Trigunas
- 5) Clinical importance of Sattva Guna
- 6) Sattvavajay Chikitsa
- 7) Medhya Rasayanas for intellect/memory.

1) Role of Trigunas in Cosmic creation

Sushruta in Sharirsthana states that the Sattvik, Rajasic and Tamasic are Ahankaras (ego) that trigger to create universe, human beings, their organs as well as Panchamahabhutas.

As Rajas Ahankara is active amongst these, it activates both Sattva and Tamas Ahankara, to form Panchatanmatra in Shrushti and Ekadash Indriya in humans respectively.

Sattva+Rajas=Ekadash Indriyas (5 jnyanendriyas,5 Karmendriyas, Manas)^[3]

Tamas+Rajas= Panchatanmatra which then forms Panchamahabhuta.^[4]

Panchamahabhutas are the bases of formation of the universe. Predominance of Trigunas is seen in Mahabhutas as follows-

2) Role of Trigunas in formation of Mahabhutas^[5,6]

Sattva Guna is predominantly involved in formation of the Akasha Mahabhuta, Rajas is predominant in Vayu Mahabhuta, predominance of Sattva and Rajas forms Agni Mahabhuta, predominance of Sattva and Tamas forms Apa (Jala) Mahabhuta, Tamas Guna forms Pruthvi Mahabhuta. Akasha Mahabhuta possesses Prakashak(illuminating) property same as Sattva, Vayu Mahabhuta possesses Chalatva (moving, active) quality same as Rajas Guna. Prakashak and Chanchala qualities of Sattva and Rajas are seen in Agni Mahabhuta. Swatcha (pure), Prakashak (illuminating), Gurutva (heaviness), Acchadana are properties seen in Apa Mahabhuta due to its formation by Sattva and Tamas Guna. Prithvi Mahabhuta has Acchadana property which is due to Tamas Guna.

3) Manifestations of Trigunas on human mind

Manifestations of Trigunas are first described in Sushruta Sharirasthana 1 as follows^[7]

The Sattvika possess non-cruelty, they treat everyone equally, forbearance, truthfulness, duty oriented, believing in authority of Vedas/God, knowledge, decision making, memory, patience, and non-attachment (they perform good deeds irrespective of the outcome) The Rajasika are full of sorrow, with wandering nature, lack firmness, egoistic, untruthful, non-compassionate, proud, joyful, have many desires, and anger.

The Tamasika become deeply disappointed go in state of deep sadness easily, they are atheist, have unrighteous conduct, they sometimes have obstruction of intellect (they can't take decisions properly) ignorant of their duties, poor intelligence, they are lethargic and sleepy.

In Charaka Samhita, many Bhavas (qualities) are enlisted they are formed in Garbha(foetus) in womb, one of them is Sattvaj Bhav (mental qualities), they can also be classified on the basis of Sattva, Rajas, Tamas as these are the elements which regulate the functioning of human mind. They are classified as follows.^[8]

Table No. 1: Sattvaj Bhav from Charaka Samhita.

Sattvik Bhav	Rajasic Bhav	Tamasic Bhav
शौच Purity, cleanliness	द्वेष Hatred, aversion	तंद्रा Laziness, drowsiness
स्मृती Memory, recollection	उत्साह Enthusiasm	मात्सर्य Envy, jealousy

तृप्ती Satisfaction, contentment	शौर्य Courage	भय Fear
भक्ती Devotion/attachment	तीक्ष्णता Sharpness, decisiveness	----
पुष्टी Nourishment, strength	क्रोध Anger	----
त्याग Renunciation	अनवस्थितत्व Instability, restlessness	----
गांभीर्य Seriousness, depth	----	----

From the above table, it is clear that, Trigunas play an important role since the very beginning of life starting from the womb. Manas Bhav (mental qualities) are also formed by Trigunas and Trigunas also manifest on human mind traits.

Yoga Shastra also encompasses literature about Trigunas. Yoga mainly focuses on regulation of thoughts, emotional responses management. The manifestation of Trigunas has said to cause 5 Chittavruttis (states of consciousness) in humans which are described in Patanjali Yogasutras as follows^[9]

The five states/levels of chitta [mind consciousness] are

- 1) Kshipta (restless/distracted),
- 2) Mudha (dull/ignorant)
- 3) Vikshipta (distracted/scattered),
- 4) Ekagra (one-pointed/focused),
- 5) Niruddha (controlled/restrained).

Table No. 2: Chittabhumis from Yogasutra.

Chittabhumis	Dominant guna	State of mind
Ksipta	Rajas	Completely restless, running after objects
Mudha	Tamas	Dull, sleepy, misled
Vikshipta	Sattva + Rajas	Occasionally focused, but distracted
Ekagra	Pure Sattva	steady
Niruddha	Beyond Trigunas	All fluctuations stopped (to be achieved in yoga)

These Chittabhumis can also be correlated with States of consciousness/levels of consciousness in modern sciences. From this it can be stated that, Trigunas are the causative foundations of Chittavruttis, they play a crucial role in consciousness of mind in all situations.

Clinical importance of Trigunas

As Stated previously, Trigunas govern the mind, its functions and emotional responses. They are assessed by Sattva Parikshana and Sattva Sarata in Ayurveda.^[10,11] These are two important prerequisites in Dashavidha Parikshana.

Rajas and Tamas are Doshas of Manas, they cause for some symptoms which affect mental well-being of the individual and also their social behaviour.

Manifestations of Rajas and Tamas on Manas affecting mental well-being are enlisted follows^[12]

Table No. 3: Manifestations of rajas and tamas gunas.

Rajas manifestations	Tamas manifestations
desire(□ □ □), anger (□ □ □ □), greed (□ □ □), delusion (□ □ □), envy (□ □ □ □ □ □), pride(□ □ □), agitation(□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □).	intoxication(मद), sorrow(शोक), fear(भय).

Clinical importance of Sattva Guna in managing Sharira and Manas Vyadhis is explained in Sushruta Samhita as follows-

4) Clinical importance of Sattva Guna

A Sattvika individual does not become troubled (Viklaya) even in problematic situations and is not inclined toward addictions (Vyasana). During surgical procedures, such a person remains peaceful, emotionally stable, and faces the procedure with bravery. Owing to strong mental resilience, a Sattvika individual generally does not require psychological support from others and is capable of enduring both physical and mental pain.^[13]

A Rajasa individual is able to bear pain only when encouraged or supported by others. In contrast, a Tamasa individual has very poor pain tolerance and is unable to bear pain effectively, even after getting support and encouragement from others.^[13]

Treating mental disorders is possible with increasing the strength of Sattva Guna and managing its dominance over both other Gunas. This is done with the help of Sattvavajay Chikitsa which is mentioned in Charaka Samhita.^[14] Sattvavajay Chikitsa encompasses following

6) Sattvavajay Chikitsa

1) Balancing the Tridoshas

Maintaining equilibrium among Vata, Pitta, and Kapha to support overall physical and mental health as Tridoshas are connected with Trigunas.

2) Enhancing Sattva Guna of the Mind

Cultivating clarity, purity, harmony, and positivity in thoughts and emotions. Sattva Guna Vriddhi does not cause any harm, in turn it decreases Rajas and Tamas.

3) Resolving Mental Disorders

Addressing and treating psychological imbalances and disorders.

4) Balancing Dhi-Dhruti-Smriti

Stabilizing the core mental faculties — intellect Dhi, retention Dhruti, and memory Smriti — to stay on the right path.

5) Nidana Parivarjana

Avoiding harmful exposures by preventing Asatmendriyarthasamyoga and Prajnaparadha — i.e., keeping away from wrong sensory inputs and mistakes caused by poor judgment.

6) Balancing and Regulation of Thought and Mind

Achieving stability and control over thinking patterns and mental processes.

7) Achieving Chitta Vritti Nirodha

Gaining control over desires and emotions to attain mental calm.

8) Attaining Atma-Indriya-Mano Prasannata

Experiencing happiness and contentment of the soul, senses, and mind.

Along with Sattavajay Chikitsa, Rasayana (rejuvenation therapy) Chikitsa also plays an important role in managing psychological conditions.

7) Medhya Rasayanas for intellect/memory according to Charaka

Juice of Mandukaparni (*Centella asiatica*), Powder of Yashtimadhu (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) with milk, Juice of Guduchi (*Tinospora cordifolia*), Paste (Kalka) of Shankhapushpi (*Convolvulus prostratus*)^[15] are described as Medhya Rasayanas in Charaka Samhita.

Table No. 4: Medhya Rasayanans according to Charaka Samhita.

Medhya Rasayana	Falashruti (desired effect)
1) □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□(Dvitiya Bramharasayan) ^[16]	□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□(increasing sattva guna in mind)
2) □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□(Amalakayas rasayan) ^[17]	□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□(intellect and Indriyas nourishment)
3) □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□(Kālyanak Ghruta) ^[18]	□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□(empowering strength to Manas)
4) □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□(Prāpurana Ghruta) ^[19]	□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□(intellectual empowerment)
5) च्यवनप्राश (Chavaanprash) ^[20]	स्मृती, मेधावृद्धी(increase memory and grasping)
6) षष्ठ हरीतक्यादी रसायन (Shastha Harityakadi Rasayana) ^[21]	श्रुतं अवतिष्ठते(remembrance)

The concept of Trigunas — Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas — provides a profound framework in Ayurveda for understanding the human mind and its influence on overall health. As adapted from Sankhya Shastra and elaborated by Charaka, these three gunas govern emotional responses, cognitive functions, and behavioral patterns. The Ayurvedic ideal of Swastha emphasizes not only the balance of Doshas, Agni, Dhatus, and Malas, but also the Prasannata of Atma, Indriyas, and Manas, highlighting that a healthy and happy mind is fundamental to true health. By revisiting the multi-dimensional role of Trigunas in cosmic creation, their manifestations in the human psyche, and their therapeutic applications, this review underscores their relevance in managing psychosomatic conditions and promoting mental regulation. Enhancing Sattva Guna while balancing Rajas and Tamas can serve as a key strategy in Ayurvedic mental healthcare. Thus, the study of Trigunas remains essential for achieving holistic well-being and for integrating ancient Ayurvedic wisdom with contemporary approaches to mental health.

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