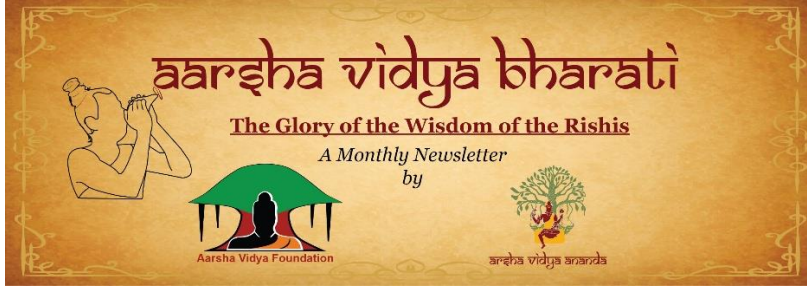

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Triguṇā-s as a journey of Self-Reflection – Report on Talks by Swamini Brahma Prajnananda

By Viveka M, Bengaluru

On the pleasant evening of 31st August, Swamini Brahma Prajnananda ji started her class with the words, “Puja Swamiji (Swami Dayananda Saraswati ji) wanted us to give talks based on the three *guṇā*-s as mentioned in the *Bhagavad Gītā*.” In that moment, I knew that the next 4 days would lead me (and about 40 other *sādhakā*-s) to look at *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas* in a completely new light. Swamini ji did just that and more over the next 4 days, as she unfolded the vision of Vedānta with respect to the *Triguṇā*-s.

In the text given for the camp, the very first sentence stated that *Māyā* and everything in it is composed of the 3 *guṇā*-s. *Māyā* is in the “*āśraya* of” (accommodated by) *Brahman*. With this profound sentence, Swamini ji made us see that, *Brahman* is where *Māyā* is. Therefore, dismissing *Māyā* as ‘not real’ and looking for *Brahman* elsewhere would be unwise. By understanding the 3 *guṇā*-s, we are essentially understanding the nature of *Māyā śakti*. This knowledge in turn will help us become ‘*Nistraiguṇyaḥ*’ - one who is free from the hold of the three *guṇā*-s.



With this background, the *Triguṇā*-s are discussed as follows:

Sattva:



Sattva is the *guṇā* of luminosity, purity, and balance. *Sattva* is *Nirmala* - without blemishes. *Sattva* is the *guṇā* which allows us to gain knowledge and experience pleasure. The *jñānendriya*-s and the *antaḥ-karaṇa* (*manah*, *buddhiḥ*, *cittam*, *ahaṅkāraḥ*) are made of the *Sattva* part of the *Pañcamahābhūta*-s.

Sattva guṇā, therefore, is aspirational for most part. For *sādhakā*-s, developing *sattva guṇā* becomes of utmost importance

because *Sattva* is a prerequisite to understand and hold the vision of Vedanta. *Sattva guṇā* leads us to do *Karmā*-s without getting overly dependent on the results. Therefore, *Sattva guṇā* makes us true *Karmayogi*-s. It also helps us in the process of *Antaḥ-karaṇa Śuddhi*. However, it is important to keep in mind that *Sattva* also has the capacity to create in us a tendency to seek happiness and get addicted to 'feeling good' all the time.

Rajas:

Rajas is the *guṇā* of movement, attachment and passion. It is because of *Rajas* that we are active and have attachments. The *Karmendriya*-s and the *Pañcavāyu*-s are made of the *Rajas* part of the *Pañcamahābhūta*-s.

Rajas (as though) binds us by making us long for something. It also makes us project a quality on an object, person, or experience. In other words, *Rajas* will make me conclude that I will feel complete if I become rich or get married or visit Dubai. *Rajas* creates in us binding desires which in turn will push us towards doing multiple *Karmā*-s. It also makes us look forward to the desired results. *Rajas* pushes us to perform activities such as *yajña*, *dāna* with the ulterior motive of showing off! *Rajas* creates deep-rooted *Vāsanā*-s which may be tough to get out of. It is of value to remember what Sri Krishna said in chapter 2 of the *Bhagavad Gītā* while contemplating about *Rajas*.



Attachment to sense objects leads to desire which leads to anger which in turn clouds judgement. As a result, one's intellect is muddled which finally leads to one's destruction. (BG 2.62, 2.63)



Tamas:

Tamas is the quality of dullness, inactivity and inhibiting the intellect. *Tamas* causes us to sleep, be lazy, and not undertake activities. The body and its organs attain its *Sthūla-rūpa* (grossified state) because of the *Tamas* part of the *Pañcamahābhūta*-s.

Tamas (as though) binds us by making us indifferent, and negligent of our duties. It makes us ignore the *Śāstra* and act from ignorance. For example, one might undertake a *Tapas* in which a hand is raised for years on end. This *tapas* is neither backed by *Śāstra* nor is it leading to anything productive. *Tamas* also causes us to perform actions with the intention of harming

others. The most well known effect of *Tamas* is it makes one dull and inactive. It takes away the motivation to undertake actions and hence pushes us towards slothfulness. *Tamas* also helps us sleep and rest which is crucial to our well-being. We have to be particularly careful with *Tamas* because *Tamas* may often be confused with *Vairāgya* (dispassion). *Vairāgya* comes through an enquiry into the nature of the world whereas *Tamas* merely causes disinterest.

For a complete understanding of the *triguṇā-s* and to bring this knowledge in all areas of our lives, we had an overview of how *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* manifest in the following areas - *Śraddhā*, food, *Yajña*, *Tapas*, *Dānam*, *Jñānam*, *Karma*, *Tyāga* (renunciation), *Kartā* (doer), *Buddhi* (mind) Happiness, *Dhriti* (resolve). We can choose how we want to be and how we do not want to be.

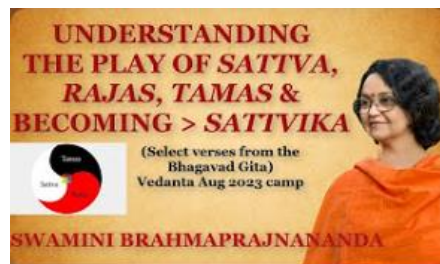
How to use the knowledge of the 3 Guṇās:

The biggest takeaway from the camp was not only the understanding of the three *guṇā-s* but also what to do with that knowledge.

All of us have within us all the *guṇā-s*. We are under the influence of different *guṇā-s* at different situations and different phases in our lives and even in a given day. While one *guṇā* may seem more attractive than the others, it is imperative to understand that all 3 *guṇā-s* are not separate from *Īśvara* and hence, the goal is to recognise *Īśvara* in everything we see.

Once we have the knowledge, we may also fall into the trap of categorising others as *Sāttvika*, *Rājasika* or *Tāmasika*. This does not contribute to our growth. We must use the knowledge to review ourselves and strive for growth. Knowing that every form is under the influence of *guṇā-s* makes us accommodating of the other. Most importantly Sri Krishna wants us not to be bound to any of the *guṇā-s*, but to be free from their grasp.

Om Tat Sat.



[Link to Playlist of the talks](#)