Psycho-Philosophical Aspect of Trigunas

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Abstract:

The Sankhya is a philosophy of dualistic realism attributed to the sage of Kapila. The origin of the name “sankhya” is shrouded in mystery. According to some thinkers, the name “sankhya” is an adaptation from ‘sankhya’ meaning number, and has been applied to this philosophy because it aims at a right knowledge of reality by the enumeration of the ultimate objects of knowledge. According to others, however the word ‘sankhya’ means perfect knowledge (samyag-jnana) and a philosophy in which we have such knowledge is justly named Sankhya.

It admits two ultimate realities, namely, purusa (consciousness) and prakriti (matter), which are independent of each other in respect of their existence. The purusa is an intelligent principle, of which consciousness (caitanya) is not an attribute but the very essence. It is the self which is quite different from the body, the sense and the mind (manas). It is beyond the whole world of objects and is the eternal consciousness which witnesses the changes and activities going on in the world, but does not itself act and change in any way. Thus it is the transcendental act self or pure consciousness. It is absolute, independent, free, imperceptible and unknowable through other agencies, above any experience by mind or senses and beyond any words or explanations. Prakriti is the ultimate cause of the world. It is an eternal unconscious principle (jada) which is always changing and has no other end than the satisfaction of the selves. It accounts for whatever is physical, both mind and matter-cum-energy or force.

Sattva, Rajas and tamas are three constituents of prakriti which holds them together in a state of rest or equilibrium (samyavasittha). The three are called Gunas.

Guna depending on the context means “string, thread or strand”, or “virtue, merit, excellence”, or “quality, peculiarity, attribute, property.” In Sankhya philosophy, a gua is one of three “tendencies, qualities”: sattva, rajas and tamas. They are not qualities or attributes in any sense. Rather, they are three substantial elements which constitute prakriti like three chords making up a rope. The existence of the gunas is inferred from the qualities of pleasure, pain and indifference which we find in all the things of the world. The reason why they are called gunas is either their being subservient to the ends of the purusa which is being intertwined like the three strands of a rope which binds soul to the world. The gunas are not perceived by us. They are inferred from the objects of the world which are their effects. Since there is an essential identity (tadatmya) between the effect and its cause, we know the nature of the gunas from the nature of their products. All objects of the objects of perception (e.g. tables, pots, etc) are found to possess 3 characters capable of producing pleasure, pain and indifference, respectively. The same things are pleasurable to some person, painful to another, neutral to the third.
TRIGUNA

The concept of Guna dates back to Atharva Veda, it was discussed in Bhagavad Gita and later included in Sankhya Darsana. The concept of Triguna has been utilized to explain personality in the modern era. The development of consciousness is apparently rooted in this concept of Triguna. These are known as **Sattva**, called as stability; **rajas** called as activation and **tamas** called as inertia. Manas has been ascribed the functions which are mental functions and processes (Manovriti-manopraavriti).

Jiva (a living being) is that state in which purusa is bonded to prakriti in some form. The universe is described by this school as one created by purusha-prakriti entities infused with various permutations and combinations of variously enumerated elements, senses, feelings, activity and mind. During the state of imbalance, one or more constituents overwhelms the others, creating a form of bondage, particularly of the mind. The end of this imbalance, bondage is called liberation or kaivalya by the Sankhya school. There are the most important concepts related to personality and self, which can help in developing indigenous personality theories.

- SATTVA: Priti, Pleasure, Prakash, Illumination
- RAJAS: Apriti, Disagreement, Pravriti, Activity
- TAMAS: Visida, Despair, Niyama, Restraint.

The three guṇas lead to different kinds of temperament. The three qualities:

- Sattva (originally “being”, “existence”, “entity”) has been translated to mean balance, order, or purity. This typically implies that a person with more of Sattva has a positive or even orderly state of mind. Such a person is psychologically kind, calm, alert and thoughtful. It is that element of prakriti which is of the nature of pleasure, and is buoyant of light (lagger), and bright or illuminating (praksha). The manifestation of objects in consciousness (jnana), the tendency towards conscious manifestation in the senses, the mind and the intellect, the luminosity of light and the power of reflection in a mirror or the crystal are all due to the operation of the element of sattva in the constitution of things. Similarly, all sorts of lightness in the sense of upward motion, like the blazing up of fire, the upward motion, like the blazing up of fire, the upward motion, like the blazing up of fire, the upward course of vapour and the winding motion of air are induced in things by the elements of sattva. So also pleasure in its various forms, such as satisfaction, joy, happiness, bliss, contentment, etc. is produced by things in our minds through the operation of the power of sattva inherent in them both. It is a state of harmony, balance, joy and intelligence. Sattva is the guna that yoginis achieve as it reduces rajas and tamas and thus makes liberation possible. To increase sattva one has to reduce both rajas and tamas, eat sattvic foods and enjoy activities and environments that produce joy and positive thoughts. Sattvic foods include whole grains and legumes and fresh fruits and vegetables that grow above the ground. All of the yogic practices were developed to create sattva in the mind and body. Thus practicing yoga and leading a yogic lifestyle strongly cultivates sattva. It is the quality of balance, harmony, goodness, purity, universalism, holism, creativity, construction, positivism, peacefulness and virtue.

- Rajas (originally “atmosphere, air, firmament”) lead one to activity. This type of activity is explained by the term Yogaksham, which is composed of two words: Yoga & Ksham. Yoga in the present context is acquiring something that one does not have. Ksham means losing something that one already has. Rajas is the force that creates desires for acquiring new things and fear of losing something that one has.

- Tamas (originally “being”, “existence”, “entity”) was translated to mean balance, order, or purity. It is the principle of activity in things. It always moves and makes other things move. That is, it is both mobile (cala) and stimulating (upastambhaka). It is on account of rajas that fire spreads, the wind blows, the senses follow their objects and the mind becomes
restless. On the affective side of our life, rajas is the cause of all painful experiences and is itself of the nature of the pain (dukkha). It helps the elements of sattva and tamas, which are inactive and motionless in themselves, to perform their functions.

It is a state of energy, action, change and movement. The nature of rajas is of attraction, longing, and attachment and a raja strongly binds us to the fruits of our work. To reduce rajas avoid rajasic foods, over exercising, overwork, loud music, excessive thinking and consuming excessive material goods. Rajasic foods include fried foods, spicy foods and stimulants. It is the quality of passion, activity neither good nor bad and sometimes either self-centredness, egoism, individualization, movement and dynamism.

In Hinduism, rajas or rajas-guna is the quality of activity. If a person or thing tends to be extremely active, excitable or passionate, that person or thing is said to have a preponderance of rajas. Rajas are viewed as being more positive than tamas, and less positive than sattva, except, perhaps, for one who has “transcended the gunas”. The (eventual) fruit of rajas is pain, even though the immediate effect of rajas is pursuit of pleasure. Persons who are “movers and shakers” may be characterised as rajasic. Rajas provide raw get-up-and-go power consuming food too quickly is rajasic. Stimulant foods also called mutative foods, mutable foods or rajasic foods which tend to provoke mental restlessness. Such foods include: tea, coffee, cola drinks, chocolate, hot spices and salt.

**Rajas can be again sub typed into the following six types (Rao et al., 1990)** -
- Asur Type
- Rakshasa Type
- Pisacha Type
- Sarpa Type
- Preta Type
- Sakuna Type

**Quotes From Bhagawat Gita** -
“The result of virtuous activities in sattva is declared purity, the result in rajas is misery, and the result in tamas in nuisance.” (BG 14:16)

“O Arjuna, when greed, restless exertion with great endeavour for frutitive activities, agitation of the senses, incessant desire for sensual indulgence, when all these arise, rajas predominates.” (BG 14:12)

➢ **Tamas** (originally “darkness”, “obscurity”) has been translated to mean “too inactive”, negative, lethargic, dull or slow. Usually it is associated with darkness, delusion or ignorance. A tamas quality can imply that a person has a self-destructive or entropic state of mind.

It is the principle of passivity and negativity in things. It is opposed to Sattva in being heavy (guru) and in obstructing the manifestation of objects (varanaka). It also resists the principle of rajas or activity in so far as it restrains (niyam) the motion of things. It counters the power of manifestation in the mind, the intellect and other things and thereby produces ignorance and darkness and leads to confusion and bewilderment (moha). By obstructing the principle of activity in us it induces sleep, drowsiness and laziness. It also produces the state of apathy or indifference (visada). Hence the sattva, rajas and tamas have been compared respectively to whiteness, redness and darkness.

It is a state of darkness, inertia, inactivity and materiality. Tamas manifests from ignorance and deludes all beings from their spiritual truths. To reduce tamas we need to avoid tamasic foods, over sleeping, overeating, inactivity, passivity and fearful situations. Tamasic foods include heavy meats and foods that are spoiled, chemically treated, processed or refined. It is the quality of imbalance, disorder, chaos, anxiety, impurity, destruction, delusion, negativity, dullness or inactivity, apathy, inertia or lethargy, violence, viciousness and ignorance.

Tamas cannot be counteracted by tamas. It might be easier to counteract it by means of rajas and it might be more difficult to jump directly from tamas to sattva. The result of a life led by tamas is demerit: demotion to a lover life form. Tamas corresponds to what Buddhism calls “delusion” one of the three roots of evil. Also, out of the five hindrances, two of them sloth and doubt - are caused by tamas. Persons who are ‘couch potatoes’ may be characterised as tamasic. Overeating is tamasic. Static foods which lead to a duller, less refined state of mind and are not good for the body include: meat, fish, eggs, etc.

**Tamasic type can be subtype**- (Rao et al., 1990)-
- Pashava Type
- Matsya Type
- Vanaspatya Type

**Quotes from Bhagavad Gita** -
“You should know, O Arjuna, tamas as the cause of delusion enslaving all embodied beings born of nuisance, by negligence, listlessness and somnolence.” (BG 14:8)

“Succumbing to death in rajas one takes birth among those beings attached to frutitive activities; similarly dying in tamas, one takes birth from the womb of an animal.” (BG 14:15)

According to Samkhya School, no one and nothing is either purely Sattvik or purely Rajasik or purely Tamasik. One’s nature and behaviour constitute a complex interplay. Of all of all three gunas, in varying
degrees. In some, the conduct is Rajasik with significant influence of Sattvic guna; in some it is Rajasik with significant influence of Tamasik guna and so on. The balance of Gunas of everything and everyone can change and it does. However, change in one quality faces inertia from other 2 qualities in Indian worldview. Change needs internal or external influence or reinforcement as knowledge and force to transform. The mind’s psychological qualities are highly unstable and can quickly fluctuate between the different gunas. The predominant gunas of the mind acts as a lens that affects our perceptions and perspectives of the world around us. All gunas create attachment and thus bind one’s self to the ego.

“When one rises above the three gunas that originate in the body; one is freed from birth, old age, disease, and death; and attains enlightenment.” (BG 14:20)

While yogi/nis goal is to cultivate sattva, his/her ultimate goal is to transcend their misidentification of the self with the gunas and to be unattached to both the good and the bad, the positive and negative qualities of all life. In Indian mythology, Vishnu is envisioned with more Sattva, Brahma with more Rajas and Shiva seen with all three Gunas.

REFERENCE-
2. Dheerendromohan Dutta(M.A.,Ph.D) & Satishchandra Chatterjee (M.A.,Ph.D)- An Introduction To Indian Philosophy

Links-
https://www.sattvicsage.com/sattvic