

aum

## Knowing ourselves by knowing the triple guṇās

- The three modes of material nature pervade everything –

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வரும் குண வடிவாய் மூலப் பிரகிருதி கலையில் தோன்றித்,  
தரும் குண மூன்றாய், ஒன்றில் தான் மூன்றாய், மும் மூன்று ஆகும்;  
இருங் குண ரூபமாகி இயைந்திடும் எங்கும்; ஆன்மாப்  
பெருங்குண வடிவாய்ப் போக சாதனம் பெத்தம் ஆமே.

varuṅkuṇa vaṭivāy mūlap pirakiruti kalaiyil tōṅṛit  
taruṅkuṇa mūṅṛāy oṅṛir rāṅmūṅṛāy mummūṅ rākum  
iruṅkuṇa rūpa māki iyaintiṭu meṅkum āṅmāp  
peruṅkuṇa vaṭivāyp pōka cāṭaṅam penta māmē

*From **kalā tatva** rises **prakṛiti**, the nature in undifferentiated (**avyakta**) form.  
When differentiated, this **prakṛiti** (nature) gives rise to  
the three modes of **guṇās** – the material nature;  
Each of the **guṇā** is of three kinds thus becoming nine.  
These **guṇās** bind to the individual souls and  
pervade everything in nature (**mūla prakṛiti**);  
Thus, become instrumental for the experience of the individual souls.*

- மெய்கண்ட சாத்திரம், சிவஞானசித்தியார், பாடல் 147  
MeikaNda Sāththiram, Siva Jnāna Siddhiyār Song 147

1. The three **guṇās** engulf and pervade everything in our material world are **satva** - the mode of goodness, **rajas** - the mode of passion and **tamas** - the mode of ignorance. All these are co-existing with each other while one predominates other two at a given time. Thus, they form nine sub groups as follows: **satva-satva**, **satva-rajas** and **satva-tamas**, **rajas-rajas**, **rajas-satva**, **rajas-tamas**, **tamas-tamas**, **tamas-rajas** and **tamas-satva**.

2. *Satva guNa* expressions are 16 in total. They are,

***sthairyam dhairyam tathā dākṣyam mārḍavam laghutā'pi ca  
santoṣam ārjavam śaucam vyavasāya kṣamā smṛtiḥ  
sauhityam paramautsukyam dānti śāntirdayā parā  
satvasya vṛttayaḥ proktā rajasaścāthakathyate***

1. ***sthairyam*** - Stability, 2. ***dhairyam*** - firmness, 3. ***dākṣyam*** - smartness / capability, 4. ***mārḍavam*** - gentleness, 5. ***laghutā*** – lightness / promptness / agility , 6. ***santoṣam*** - happiness, 7. ***ārjavam*** - integrity, 8. ***śaucam*** - purity, 9. ***vyavasāya*** - strong resolve / determination or strenuous effort / exertion / industriousness, 10. ***kṣamā*** – patience, 11. ***smṛtiḥ*** - good memory, 12. ***sauhityam*** - contentment, 13. ***parama - autsukyam*** - spiritual desire / zeal / longing, 14. ***dānti*** - self-restraint (control of outer senses according to the commentary), 15. ***sānti*** - tranquility ( control of inner senses according to the commentary), and 16. ***dayā parā*** - supreme compassion – thus, the nature of sattva has been described. The character of rajas is, then, explained.

- பௌஷ்கர ஆகமம், சுலோகம் 430

**Pushkara Āgama – verse 430**

(Translation by Dr. Maithili Thayanithy, Canada)

3. *Rajo guNa* expressions are 9 in number. They are,

***śauryam krauryam mahotsāhassābhimānassakalkatā  
dārḍhyañca nirdayatvañca bhogo ḍambho rajoguṇāḥ***

1. ***śauryam*** - heroism / valour / prowess, 2. ***krauryam*** - fierceness, 3. ***mahotsāha***= ***mahā*** + ***utsāha*** - great power / energy, or strength of will / strenuous and continuous exertion, 4. ***abhimāna*** - self-conceit, 5. ***sakalkatā*** - hostility, animosity, grudge, enmity 6. ***dārḍhyam*** – hardness / fixedness / stability / strength, 7. ***nirdayatvam*** - lack of compassion, callousness 8. ***bhoga*** - enjoyment and 9. ***ḍambha*** – lavishness. These are the nature of rajo guna.

- பௌஷ்கர ஆகமம், சுலோகம் 431

**Pushkara Āgama – verse 431**

(Translation help by Dr. Maithili Thayanithy, Canada)

4. *Tamo guNa* expressions are 9 in total. They are

***aratirmandatādainyaṃ paiśūnyaṃ gurutā tathā  
nidrādhikyaṃ madālasyaṃ nirodho mūḍhatā ca yāḥ  
tamaso vṛttayaḥ proktā vibhinnāssarvajantuṣu  
evaṃ saṃkṣepato viprā guṇātattvamudāhṛtam***

1. **arati** - dissatisfaction, 2. **mandate** – indolence / lethargy, 3. **dainyaṃ** - meanness / covetousness / stinginess 4. **paiśūnyaṃ** - wretchedness / depression / miserable state / tale-bearing or backbiting, 5. **gurutā** – Excess self proud / heaviness / weight, 6. **nidrādhikyaṃ** - somnolent, 7. **mada + ālasyaṃ** - laziness due to proudness, 8. **nirodha** - injuring others and 9. **mūḍhatā** – folly. The character of *tamas* has been explained. O sages! The **guna-tattvam** found in various living beings has been fully expounded.

- **பௌஷ்கர ஆகமம், சுலோகம் 432  
Poushkara Āgama – verse 432**

(Translation help by Dr. Maithili Thayanithy, Canada)

5. ***sattvaṃ rajasa tama iti guṇāḥ prakṛiti-sambhavāḥ  
nibadhnanti mahā-bāho dehe dehinam avyayam***

O mighty-armed Arjun, the material energy consists of three **guṇās** (modes)—**sattva** (goodness), **rajas** (passion), and **tamas** (ignorance). These modes bind the eternal soul to the perishable body.

***tatra sattvaṃ nirmalatvāt prakāśhakam anāmayam  
sukha-saṅgena badhnāti jñāna-saṅgena chānagha***

Amongst these, **sattva guṇā**, the mode of goodness, being purer than the others, is illuminating and full of well-being. O sinless one, it binds the soul by creating attachment for a sense of happiness and knowledge.

***rajo rāgātmakam viddhi triṣṇṇā-saṅga-samudbhavam  
tan nibadhnāti kaunteya karma-saṅgena dehinam***

O Arjun, **rajo guṇā** is of the nature of passion. It arises from worldly desires and affections, and binds the soul through attachment to fruitive actions.

*tamas tv ajñāna-jam viddhi mohanam sarva-dehinam  
pramādālasya-nidrābhis tan nibadhnāti bhārata*

O Arjun, **tamo guṇā**, which is born of ignorance, is the cause of illusion for the embodied souls. It deludes all living beings through negligence, laziness, and sleep.

*sattvam sukhe sañjayati rajaḥ karmaṇi bhārata  
jñānam āvṛitya tu tamaḥ pramāde sañjayaty uta*

**Sattva** binds one to material happiness; **rajas** conditions the soul toward actions; and **tamas** clouds wisdom and binds one to delusion.

*rajas tamaśh chābhibhūya sattvam bhavati bhārata  
rajaḥ sattvam tamaśh chaiva tamaḥ sattvam rajas tathā*

Sometimes goodness (**sattva**) prevails over passion (**rajas**) and ignorance (**tamas**), O scion of Bharat. Sometimes passion (**rajas**) dominates goodness (**sattva**) and ignorance (**tamas**), and at other times ignorance (**tamas**) overcomes goodness (**sattva**) and passion (**rajas**).

*sarva-dvāreṣhu dehe 'smin prakāśha upajāyate  
jñānam yadā tadā vidyād vivṛiddham sattvam ity uta  
lobhaḥ pravṛittir ārambhaḥ karmaṇām aśhamaḥ spṛihā  
rajasy etāni jāyante vivṛiddhe bharatarśhabha  
aparakāśho 'pravṛittiśh cha pramādo moha eva cha  
tamasy etāni jāyante vivṛiddhe kuru-nandana*

When all the gates of the body are illumined by knowledge, know it to be a manifestation of the mode of goodness. When the mode of passion predominates, O Arjun, the symptoms of greed, exertion for worldly gain, restlessness, and craving develop. O Arjun, nescience, inertia, negligence, and delusion—these are the dominant signs of the mode of ignorance.

*yadā sattve pravṛiddhe tu pralayaṁ yāti deha-bhṛit  
tadottama-vidāṁ lokān amalān pratipadyate  
rajasi pralayaṁ gatvā karma-saṅgiṣhu jāyate  
tathā pralīnas tamasi mūḍha-yoniṣhu jāyate*

*Those who die with predominance of sattva reach the pure abodes (which are free from rajas and tamas) of the learned. Those who die with prevalence of the mode of passion are born among people driven by work, while those dying in the mode of ignorance take birth in the animal kingdom.*

***karmanah sukritasyāhuḥ sāttvikāṁ nirmalaṁ phalam  
rajasas tu phalaṁ duḥkham ajñānaṁ tamasaḥ phalam***

*It is said the fruit of actions performed in the mode of goodness bestow pure results. Actions done in the mode of passion result in pain, while those performed in the mode of ignorance result in darkness.*

***sattvāt sañjāyate jñānaṁ rajaso lobha eva cha  
pramāda-mohau tamaso bhavato 'jñānam eva cha***

*From the mode of goodness arises knowledge, from the mode of passion arises greed, and from the mode of ignorance arise negligence and delusion.*

***ūrdhvaṁ gachchhanti sattva-sthā madhye tiṣṭhanti rājasāḥ  
jaghanya-guṇā-vṛitti-sthā adho gachchhanti tāmasāḥ***

*Those situated in the mode of goodness rise upward; those in the mode of passion stay in the middle; and those in the mode of ignorance go downward.*

***nānyaṁ guṇebhyaḥ kartāraṁ yadā draṣṭānupaśhyati  
guṇebhyaśh cha paraṁ vetti mad-bhāvaṁ so 'dhigachchhati***

*When wise persons see that in all works there are no agents of action other than the three guṇās, and they know me to be transcendental to these guṇās, they attain my divine nature.*

***guṇān etān atītya trīn dehī deha-samudbhavān  
janma-mṛityu-jarā-duḥkhair vimukto 'mṛitam aśhnute***

*By transcending the three modes of material nature associated with the body, one becomes free from birth, death, disease, old age, and misery, and attains immortality.*

***arjuna uvācha***

***kair liṅgais trīn guṇān etān atīto bhavati prabho  
kim āchāraḥ katham chaitāns trīn guṇān ativartate***

*Arjun inquired: What are the characteristics of those who have gone beyond the three guṇās, O Lord? How do they act? How do they go beyond the bondage of the guṇās?*

***śhrī-bhagavān uvācha***

***prakāśham cha pravṛittim cha moham eva cha pāṇḍava  
na dveṣṭi sampravṛittāni na nivṛittāni kāṅkṣhati  
udāsīna-vad āsīno guṇāir yo na vichālyate  
guṇā vartanta ity evam yo 'vatiṣṭhati neṅgate***

*The Supreme Divine Personality said: O Arjun, the persons who are transcendental to the three guṇās neither hate illumination (which is born of sattva), nor activity (which is born of rajas), nor even delusion (which is born of tamas), when these are abundantly present, nor do they long for them when they are absent. They remain neutral to the modes of nature and are not disturbed by them. Knowing it is only the guṇās that act, they stay established in the self, without wavering.*

**- சிவோகம் பாவனையில் ஸ்ரீ கிருஷ்ணர் பகவத்கீதை  
Sri KrishNa in Sivōham Bhāvana in Bagavat Gita 14:5-23**



*Dr. Lambotharan, the founder of Saiva Siddhanta Peedam and its wing Knowing Our Roots, is committed to sharing the wisdom of Saiva Siddhanta, the choicest theology of Tamils. He is doing this by conducting Sunday classes for kids and youth, weekly Satsang meetings, radio talk shows, speeches, writings, regular pilgrimages and field visits. He has written many articles in Tamil and English on this subject. He is carrying this out as directed by his Jnana Guru Chidamparam A. Krishnamurti (Deeksha name - Kunchithapaatha naathan) of Sivakkudil tradition in 2005. He was furnished further by Saiva scholar S. Shanmugavel of Thiruvaavaduthurai Adheenam. It is worth to mention that he is also the grandson of Saiva Siddhanta Viddhagar V. Nagalingam JPUM of Vaddukoddai who presided the Saiva Siddhanta Maha Samajam conference in 1953 in Chennai. Dr. Lambotharan is also the Founder and former President of the International Medical Health Organization – Canada (IMHO- Canada) [www.imhocanada.org](http://www.imhocanada.org), a worldwide charity mostly working among the Tamils in Sri Lanka, and Co-founder of the Toronto Tamil Sangam [www.torontotamilsangam.ca](http://www.torontotamilsangam.ca). He is also one of the founders and board of directors of the Tamil Community Centre project [www.tamilcentre.ca](http://www.tamilcentre.ca) in Toronto. He can be reached on weekly zoom meetings every Saturday 7.30 pm EST Toronto time on the following link. Meeting ID: 984 429 0374; Passcode: satsang.*



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