

THE THREE GUNAS – PAT 2

Vedanta Center of Atlanta

Br. Shankara

July 24, 2022

GOOD MORNING... ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Guest speaker Swami Aug 7 (details in Thursday's e-commns)
- A local increase in Covid-19 variant infections makes it necessary to suspend in-person gatherings, until further notice. The Chapel will be open every day for your personal use.
- There will be NO Seva Saturday in August.
- **Your Center will be closed during August:** there will be no classes and no Sunday talks, except for the guest speaker on Aug 7. Evening Arati will continue as usual, and the Chandi hymns will be chanted in Sanskrit and in English.

CHANT • WELCOME • TOPIC

July is a month for study of Karma Yoga, a spiritual path leading to the abandonment of selfishness. As a karma yogi, you practice offering your actions and their results, as well as your perceptions, thoughts, and feelings to the Divine Presence.

In many Ramakrishna Mission centers, this prayer is chanted by the congregation, in unison, at the end of a puja's homa fire ceremony:

“No matter what I may have done, said or thought, in waking, dreaming or dreamless sleep, with my mind, my tongue, my hands or my other members, may all that be an offering to the Divine Presence.”

Even before fully knowing this Presence, you hold firmly to the belief that the Presence *is within* each person or other living being that you interact with or serve. Working and abiding in this spirit, you are increasingly able to release attachment to your activities and their results. This yields the freedom and contentment promised by Karma Yoga.

“Even a little practice of this yoga will save you from the terrible wheel of rebirth and death ...” — Sri Krishna, Bhagavad Gita, Ch. 2

CAVEAT

The Three Gunas — Part 2

Why concern yourself about the 3 gunas? Because your misunderstanding of them is part of what Sri Krishna calls your basic delusion about yourself — that you are the doer.

Krishna points out in Bhagavad Gita, though it seems that you are doing things and thinking thoughts, it is in fact the three Gunas. He says that when you gain insight into the operations and functions of the three Gunas (sattwa, rajas, tamas), you will be free of all attachment, and therefore free of suffering.

This freedom is written about in “The 9th Step Promises” of Alcoholics Anonymous:

“If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through ... We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.”

Steps 1 through 9:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

This is Karma Yoga in action and practice! Sri Ramakrishna said, “God alone is the Doer. Everything happens by His will,” The Master insisted, the actions you take and the thoughts you think are not your own; they are in fact God’s thoughts and actions, expressed by the Gunas.

This morning we will define and discuss the Gunas – their source and their effects.

Equilibrium – Dis -Equilibrium – yearning for a return to Equilibrium

What are the gunas? Within time-space-causation they appear to be:

Inertia (tamas)

Electricity (rajas)

Gravity (sattwa)

— **John Dobson: “The Equations of Maya”**

According to Samkhya philosophy, the source of all reality and experiences is Prakriti or nature. In its pure original form, it is the unmanifest, primal resource, the sum total of the universal energy. Prakriti is without a cause, (yet is) the cause and source of all effects, "the ultimate basis of the empirical universe".

Through a process of continuous evolution over many billions of years, Prakriti, as the 3 gunas, manifests its latent potentials and effects into various forms, energies, and elements ...

NOTE: Prakriti and the Gunas are identical – Gunas are the very nature of this primal force, and its expression.

This creative process first evolves 24 cosmic principles:

(1) Mahat (the great cause): Prakriti in its dynamic aspect.

(2) Buddhi: the discriminating, reasoning, and causative intelligence

(3) Ahamkara: the ego-principle: I Am discriminating, reasoning, and causing ...

(4) Manas: the mind or the sixth sense (a recording attribute)

(5-9) The five sense organs [eyes, nose, ears, tongue and the skin]

(10-14) The five organs of action [mouth, feet, hands, organ of excretion and organ of procreation]

(15-19) The five subtle elements [sound, touch smell, form or color and taste]

(20-24) The five gross elements [earth, water, air, fire and ether]

These 24 cosmic principles are continually creating and evolving, as the three gunas: sattva (, the revealing power, gravity), rajas (the projecting power, electricity), and tamas (the concealing power, inertia)

In innumerable combinations, they are the source and energies of continuous evolution that give rise to manas (mind), and its projections: the organs of perception and action, and the subtle and gross elements.

You witness all this as Saguna Atman. According to Karma Yoga, the path of action, how do you as that Atman gain insight into the operations and functions of the gunas?

Swami Sridharananda: “Divinize your life! Make of your life a continuous, unbroken interaction with the Divine...”

Prabhavananda: “Whatever you do, whatever you do! give it a Godward turn!”

Conversation and Q&A

CLOSING CHANT