

Triguṇa and chitta bhūmike in Yoga practitioners

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According to Indian thought, triguṇa represents essential energies of the mind and individual's personality is determined and dependent on triguṇa viz., satva, rajas and tamas. The three guṇa influence the physical and mental activities of every individual. Vyasa in his commentary on Patanjali's Yoga Sutra distinguishes between five states of mind viz., kshipta, mūdha, vikshipta, ekāgra and niruddha. Each of these states of mind involves certain cognitive and personality characteristics, which are associated with satva, rajas and tamas. It is stated that yoga practices lead to enhancement of satva and regulation and decline of rajas and tamas. To examine this 60 YP and 60 normal controls (n=120) were studied using Vedic Personality Inventory and Chitta bhūmike Inventory. The scores on the two inventories were correlated. The obtained correlations in both the groups indicate that kshipta and mūdha states of mind are negatively correlated with satva and positively correlated with tamas, as discussed in Yogic literature. Only in yoga practitioner group kshipta and mūdha shows positive correlation with rajas. Scores of Vikshipta, ekāgra and niruddha sub-scales do not show significant correlations with the three guṇa. The t-tests show that the two groups differed significantly on chitta bhūmike but not on the three guṇa.

Keywords: yoga, triguṇa, chitta bhūmike

Triguṇa is a unique concept of Indian tradition. The three guṇa are - satva, rajas and tamas. Together they constitute Prakṛti, the phenomenal universe, as distinct from Purusa the principle of pure consciousness. This dualist system, which affirms Prakṛti and Purusa as two fundamental Realities is known as Saṅkhya Darsana, which is different from the non-dualist system also known as Vedānta Darsana that affirms Consciousness alone as Reality. Patanjali who has propounded Yoga tradition of India known as Ashtāṅga Yoga accepts Saṅkhya Darsana as its philosophical framework or paradigm. Patanjali's Yoga system is a practical methodology of transforming one's ordinary consciousness to achieve the ultimate state of well-being as generally understood in Indian tradition, which is transcendental or spiritual, that is different from how those who adhere to a materialist and reductionist paradigm understand it (Salagame, 2013).

The dualism of Saṅkhya system holds that the three guṇa i.e., satva, rajas and tamas themselves play a role in different degrees and proportions both in matter and mind. All the three are present in both, with satva characterizing the so-called mind and tamas so-called matter. The former is subtle and the latter is gross. Hence they can be said to be on a continuum and thus is different from Cartesian dualism which speaks of a dichotomy of mind and matter. The Indian philosophical systems, in general, consider the mind as subtle matter and different from Consciousness (Salagame, 2013). Such a view is gaining ground in the recent developments in biological and physical sciences also (Capra & Luisi, 2014).

There are many psychological characteristics and traits associated with, satva, rajas and tamas in several Indian sources (Swaroop, Salagame, & Kallhalla, 2016). Modern psychologists of India have also taken interest in studying the three guṇa for their psychological implications and they are characterized differently. For example, satva is understood as 'stability', rajas as 'activation' and tamas as

'inertia' (Mathew, 1995). Another way is understanding them as 'principles of illumination (satva), of energy (rajas) and of inertia (tamas)' (Murthy & Kumar, 2007). Even western psychologists have also taken interest in this (Wolf, 1998-1999).

Bhagavad-Gita is the most ancient and important source to understand their meaning as applied to human behaviour. The cardinal characteristic of satva is illumination (prakāsha); of rajas is action (pravṛtti); and of tamas delusion and confusion (moha) (BG, Ch. 14, v.22) (Salagame, 2013). Thus, moving away from delusion and confusion towards illumination with regard to the nature of reality and self is the essence of Indian spirituality and Patanjali's Yoga system is one methodology for achieving this transformation.

In this paradigm Patanjali uses the word 'chitta' in a broad sense, that can be considered to represent the whole of psyche or mind as referred in modern psychology. According to Vyasa, one of the commentators on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, chitta can be in five different states, viz., distractions (kshipta), confused (mūdha), puzzled (vikshipta), concentrated (ekāgra) and controlled (niruddha). These states of mind partake of many physical and psychological characteristics and they are determined by satva, rajas, and tamas. The relation between them is as follows: 1. kshipta, is when the mind is distracted by rajasic impulses; 2. mūdha, is when it remains inert, as in sleep, on account of tamas; 3. vikshipta, is when the distraction alternates with tranquillity caused by satva; 4. ekāgra, is when the chitta stripped of rajasic and tamasic propensities and attains to one-pointedness as a result of the sātvic trait. Finally, niruddha is when all modifications remain totally restrained and abide by potencies (Iyengar, 1993; Subramanian, 2008).

Although the concept of chitta bhūmike was contributed by Vyāsa, over a period of time various philosophers, practitioners, experts and scholars have given different explanations and interpretations. They have noted that practice of Yoga system of Patanjali essentially involves a change in the chitta bhūmike, the state of mind, and it is only when a person is predominantly characterized by a vikshipta state of mind he/she will be drawn towards spirituality. Kshipta and mūdha states of mind are

materialistically oriented and a person who is predominated by inertness and distractions will not have any inclination toward practising yoga as a way of life. The aim of the present study is to examine the relationship between five states of mind and the three guṇas among a group of YP, as discussed in Yoga Sutras.

Method

A group of YP and an NCG were administered a set of inventories that are developed based on indigenous Indian concepts. YP was contacted in different yoga training centres in Mysore city. Normal controls were studied from the general population. YP were interviewed to document their experiences related to yoga practices. The obtained data were examined for the group differences and also the correlation between the variables under consideration.

Participants

YP (YP) undergoing yoga training in four different centres were contacted and their participation in the study was solicited. Those who volunteered were included in the study. Though there are no known and well-established norms regarding the amount of yoga practice required to bring about a substantial change in the person, only those who practised yoga for a minimum of one year continuously were included. The length of yoga practice varied from a minimum of one year to a maximum of 22 years. The participants included both male (30) and female (30) from different age groups (11-20, 21-40 & 41-70). A sample of NCG (NCG) was drawn from the general population of Mysore city for comparison. The demographic details are as below.

Table 1: Age - mean, SD

	n	YP				NCG			
		Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Total	60	11.00	66.00	31.52	14.37	15.00	58.00	29.53	12.77
Male	30	12.00	66.00	32.03	15.38	15.00	54.00	29.23	13.48
Female	30	11.00	60.00	31.00	13.54	17.00	58.00	29.83	12.24

Table 2: Educational level

Educational level	YP		Total	NCG		Total
	Male	Female		Male	Female	
SSLC	10	08	18	04	05	09
PUC	06	02	08	13	09	22
Degree	11	14	25	05	14	19
P.G	03	06	09	07	02	09
MPhil/Ph.D.	--	--	--	01	-	01

Table 3: Religious affiliation

Religion	YP		Total	NCG		Total
	Male	Female		Male	Female	
Hindu	29	30	59	29	28	57
Christian	01		01	01	01	02
Muslim	-		-	-	-	-
Jain					01	03

Table 4: Employment status

Employment status	YP		Total	NCG		Total
	Male	Female		Male	Female	
Student	15	10	25	19	11	30
Self employed	12	03	15	03	-	03
Employed	03	08	11	08	07	15
Retired	-	01	01	-	-	-
House wife	-	08	08	-	12	12

Table 7: Type of family

Type of family	YP		Total	NCG		Total
	Male	Female		Male	Female	
Joint family	11	06	17	17	09	26
Divided family	19	24	43	13	21	34

Table 8: Marital status

Marital status	YP		Total	NCG		Total
	Male	Female		Male	Female	
Married	16	18	34	12	18	30
Unmarried	14	12	26	18	12	30

Instruments

Personal Data Sheet: The demographic details sheet, prepared by the investigator to obtain information regarding age, gender, education, occupation marital status, and religion was administered to both the groups. For YP group additional questions related to their Yoga training and practice were asked.

Vedic Personality Inventory (V.P.I) (Wolf, 1998-1999): Wolf developed a test consisting 56-items designed to assess personality based on the concept triguṇa described in the Vedic literature. There are seven options to respond to the statements viz., 1 very strongly disagree, 2 strongly disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 neutral 5 somewhat agree, 6 strongly agree, and 7 very strongly agree. The reliability of the questionnaire was estimated using Chronbach's formula and the obtained value for the three subscales ranged from .93 to .94. An elaborate scoring procedure developed by Wolf provide a standardized score for each of the three guṇa in percentages.

Chitta Bhūmike Inventory (Jayasheela & Salagame, in press): An inventory was developed by this investigator (first author) specifically to assess chitta bhūmike among the participants, as part of her doctoral research. This inventory consists of 25 statements, five items each related five different states of mind viz., kshipta, mūdha, vikshipta, ekagra, and niruddha. Each statement carries FIVE possible answers (A-Always, B-Often, & C-Sometimes D-Rarely E-Never). Test responses on each item were scored on a five-point scale. Each item gets a score of 5,4,3,2, and 1 according to the specified answered viz." Always", "Often", "Sometimes". "Rarely"

and "Never". It was unidirectional scoring. Higher the score on each sub-scale indicates the greater presence of respective chitta bhūmike related qualities. Each of the sub-scales related to five states of mind is separately scored and considered for data analysis. A total score is not permissible due to the inherent nature of the states of mind since they progressively differ very much. The test has content and constructs validity since it was developed in consultation with three experts on Yoga Sutras who practice and teach them. Cronbach alpha for YP group ranged from 0.5 to 0.8 for the five sub-scales. The Cronbach alpha ranged from 0.2 to 0.4 in NCG for the five sub-scales. Test-retest reliability computed on a separate sample of post-graduate students in Psychology with a two-week gap yielded significant correlations on three of the five sub-scales kshipta, vikshipta and ekāgra - 0.529, 0.556 and 0.648 at 0.01 level. Mūdha (M, M1) and Niruddha (N, N1) sub-scales scores did not correlate.

Statistical analysis

The data obtained from the two inventories are analysed using independent samples t-test and Pearson correlation techniques to examine the group differences and the extent relationship between the three guṇas and the five chitta bhūmike.

Results

The t-test on the group differences (YP & NCG.) (Table 9) show that the two groups do not differ significantly on satva, rajas and tamas. But the groups show significant differences on the five sub-scales of chitta bhūmike.

Table 9: Independent sample t-test: YP and NCG

	YP		NCG		Df	Df	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Satva	44.05	8.231	42.40	5.79	118	1.27	.207
Rajas	28.78	4.71	29.81	3.47	118	1.37	.174
Tamas	25.57	5.36	26.18	4.42	118	-0.69	.493
Kshipta	10.65	4.81	14.27	3.05	118	-4.92	.000
Mūdha	9.48	3.88	13.18	2.76	118	-6.02	.000
Vikshipta	20.95	2.96	16.98	3.37	118	6.84	.000
Ekagra	20.30	2.68	14.48	3.33	118	10.55	.000
Niruddha	19.50	2.98	13.83	3.18	118	10.06	.000

When we consider the correlations within and between the guṇa and the chitta bhūmike, we find that among the YP Satva significantly correlates negatively with Rajas ($r = -.74^{**}$), Tamas ($r = -.83^{**}$), Kshipta ($r = -.49^{**}$) and Mūdhā ($r = -.44^{**}$). Rajas significantly

correlates positively with Tamas ($r = .27^{**}$), Kshipta ($r = .32^{**}$), and Mūdhā ($r = .29^{**}$). Tamas has significant positive correlations with Kshipta ($r = .44^{**}$), and Mūdhā ($r = .37^{**}$).

Table 10: Correlation between triṅṅas and chitta bhūmike among YP.

	Satva	Rajas	Tamas	kshipta	Mūdhā	Vikshipta	Ekagra	Niruddha
Satva								
Rajas	-.74**							
Tamas	-.83**	.27**						
Kshipta	-.49**	.32**	.44**					
Mūdhā	-.44**	.29**	.37**	.73**				
Vikshipta	.09	-.06	-.08	-.39**	-.39**			
Ekagra	.16	-.17	-.09	-.41**	-.42**	.64**		
Niruddha	.09	-.10	-.06	-.39**	-.44**	.57**	.80**	

*significant at 0.05 level, **significant at 0.01 level, n=60

This is in agreement with what Yoga literature claims and generally affirmed in the Indian traditions. However, the three guṇa do not show any significant correlations with the other three states of mind Vikshipta, Ekagra, and Niruddha. This is contrary to the expectations because it is said that satva gradually increases in these three states.

When we consider the correlations among the sub-scales of chitta bhūmike we find that Vikshipta significantly correlates negatively with Kshipta (-39^{**}) and Mūdhā (-39^{**}) and positively with Ekagra

(.64**) and Niruddha (.57**). Ekagra has significant negative correlations with Kshipta (-41^{**}) and Mūdhā (-42^{**}), significant positive correlation with Niruddha ($r = .80^{**}$). Niruddha has significant negative correlations with Kshipta (-39^{**}) and Mūdhā (-44^{**}). These findings are also in accordance with the claims of the Yoga tradition. A similar pattern of results can be found in the correlations obtained for the scores of NCG (see Table 11).

Table 11: Correlation between triṅṅas and chitta bhūmike among NCG.

	Satva	Rajas	Tamas	kshipta	Mūdhā	Vikshipta	Ekagra	Niruddha
Satva								
Rajas	-.64**							
Tamas	-.79**	.06						
kshipta	-.26*	.02	.35**					
Mūdhā	-.25*	.13	.21	.33**				
Vikshipta	-.05	.20	-.06	.14	.15			
Ekagra	-.01	.00	.02	.12	.15	.34**		
Niruddha	-.15	.09	.10	.22	.07	.16	.49**	

*significant at 0.05 level, **significant at 0.01 level n=60

Satva significantly correlates negatively with Rajas ($r = -.64^{**}$), Tamas, ($r = -.79^{**}$), Kshipta ($r = -.26^*$), and Mūdhā, ($r = -.25^*$). Tamas has a significant positive correlation with Kshipta ($r = .35^{**}$), Rajas does not correlate significantly with any other variable. Among the chitta bhūmike sub-scales Kshipta correlates significantly and positively with Mūdhā (33**). Ekagra has a significant positive correlation with Vikshipta. ($r = .34^{**}$), Niruddha has a significant positive correlation with Ekagra ($r = .49^{**}$). Here also the three guṇa does not show any significant correlation with the other three states of mind Vikshipta, Ekagra, and Niruddha.

Discussion

The classical text on Yoga Psychology in Indian tradition is sage

Patanjali's Yoga Sutra. It provides a comprehensive understanding of the nature of human psyche and its evolution towards a higher state of awareness culminating in union with the transcendental Reality. It provides a technology for the transformation of one's state of mind and charts the course in detail. It is grounded in Samkhya metaphysics. Patanjali defined Yoga as chitta vrtti nirodha; the restriction of the fluctuations of consciousness (Feuerstein, 1989). Yoga is a lifelong process of understanding the necessities of life, managing the mind, and human potential and transforming the personality (Niranjanananda, 2001). State of one's mind, chitta bhūmike, of a person who starts practising yoga plays a significant role serving as a baseline in this lifelong journey.

We find in this study the two groups differ significantly ($p = .000$)

in their scores (Table 1) on the five sub-scales of Chitta Bhūmike Inventory, with the YP group having a higher score on Vikshipta, Ekagra, and Niruddha and lower score on Kshipta and Mūdhā compared to the NCG. This is in accordance with the claims of the Yoga tradition. It means that YP have achieved a certain degree of spiritual development compared to the NCG, though only 21.67% of the participants reported that spiritual development was their primary motivation to commence yoga practice, as compared to those who considered physical benefits (48.33%) and psychological benefits (30%) as their primary motivation respectively.

In contemporary times yoga practices are encouraged primarily to achieve certain physiological benefits and psychological development. The emphasis on spiritual development is not given much importance. When we consider the results in this background it is quite meaningful that the YP does not differ statistically significantly from NCG in satva, rajas and tamas related qualities. But both the groups have higher mean scores on satva as compared to rajas and tamas. In a pre-post study on the practice of Yoga Nidra Bhushan (2007) reports that the practice of yoga nidra substantially increased the level of satva guṇa and significantly decreased the level of rajas and tamas guṇas in the practising female subjects in comparison to their control group. Among the male subjects, a substantial increase in satva guṇa has been found but the decrease in the level of rajas and tamas guṇas has not been found significant (Bhushan, 2007).

Satva guṇa is characterized by qualities such as cleanliness, truthfulness, gravity, dutifulness, discipline, mental equilibrium, respect for superiors, contentment, sharp intelligence, sense control, and staunch determination. Attributes of rajas guṇa include intense activity, desire for sense gratification, little interest in spiritual elevation, dissatisfaction with one's position, the envy of others and a materialistic mentality. Qualities associated with tamas guṇa include mental imbalance, anger, ignorance, arrogance, depression, laziness, procrastination, and a feeling of helplessness (Wolf, 1998-1999). Krishna explains in the Bhagavad-gita that the speech of a person predominantly in sattva guṇa is "truthful, pleasing, beneficial, and not agitating to others" and that a satvic person is characterized by "satisfaction, simplicity, self-control and purification." Bhagavad-gita describes the rajasic activity as "action performed with great effort by one seeking to gratify his desires, and enacted from a sense of false ego," and a person predominated by rajas guṇa is described as "greedy, always envious, impure, and moved by joy and sorrow." "The quality of tamas overcomes the illumination of knowledge and leads to many errors. Tamas, being a product of ignorance, blinds all living beings and binds them down

with carelessness, idleness and sleep" (Wolf, 1999).

In conclusion, it can be said that the practitioners of Yoga did differ from a group of normal controls in terms of what characterizes their state of mind with reference to chitta bhūmike as described in yoga literature. Among the three guṇas, satva did show a significant negative correlation with rajas, tamas, kshipta and mūdhā sub-scales thereby affirming the claims of ancient Indian thinkers in general that purification of chitta (mind in the generic sense) leads to the manifestation of satva. Since satva is associated with many qualities that are currently viewed as characteristics of well-being one can state that practice of yoga not only enhances the general well-being it also leads to a realm beyond. Current concepts of hedonia and eudaimonia are more to do with kshipta and vikshipta states of mind, and as one progress through ekāgra and towards niruddha, one may pass through states of well-being that are associated with transcendence and spirituality.

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