



Yoga for life\_

### The Gunas



Energy has three qualities, known as Gunas that exist

together in equilibrium. They are the forces of nature that are with us from birth.

The 3 gunas are **Sattva** (purity, luminosity); **Rajas** (activity, passion, dynamism, the process of change); and **Tamas** (solidity, inertia).

Once energy takes form, one quality of the three predominates. But no matter which quality predominates, an element of the other two will be present. In line with nature, the 3 forces shift, creating imbalance and instability. But the gunas must be thought of as complementary to each other and their interplay is very important.

Iyengar gives examples to explain the gunas:

In the human body, **tamas** predominates because the body mass needs to be made up of dense bones, muscle needs solidity and firmness - we desire to be covered with firm, not slack, flesh.

Yet density in the brain is not desirable. Rather, **rajas** should predominate - we strive for a clever, lively and quick mind.

Yet a muscle-bound body will move slowly - an excess of **tamas** is not desirable. An excess of **rajas** in the mind causes us to be agitated, overthinking, unable to hold our attention to anything.

Here yoga comes in. We exert the body and eventually we penetrate through to the mind. When the effort to execute asana seems effortless, we can work on the mind. But if we give up with our practice along the way, the **tamas** (inertia) returns. A good yoga practice brings a feeling of lightness and vitality (**sattva**). When the mind is calm and clear we come to **sattva**. \*\*

In today's fast-paced world with constant stimulation from all quarters, it is inevitable that **tamas** and **rajas** predominate.

\*\* If, through the practice of yoga, you wish to learn how to relax yet remain alert and aware, you are striving to give **sattva** a more prominent role in your life. The adjective luminosity encompasses the clear, alert and tranquil state achieved through effective yoga practice.

Throughout your yoga practice, you observe the interplay between the 3 gunas and make adjustments to balance them up and eventually bring the beauty of **sattva** to the surface.

Mindful of the workings of the gunas within yourself, you can heal diseases and avoid physical, emotional and mental pain.