

Maya, the Tattvas & the Gunas

PURE CONSCIOUSNESS EXISTS BEYOND THE CREATION. God decided to come into the Creation to have an experience. At that point a change occurred. That change came in stages like the gradual changes in the colors of the dawn. In each stage there is a little less Oneness, a little more separateness. It is similar to the consciousness of a new born baby. When a baby is born, its consciousness is undifferentiated. It experiences itself as merged into everything. Gradually as the child gets older, it begins to differentiate between that which is "me" and that which is "not me." The process that makes everything seem separated is called **maya**. Each stage of separateness has its own qualities. The yogis call each stage a **tattva**. There are about 31 stages going from complete Oneness down to pure individual atom separateness. The final five of these *tattvas* give rise to what we experience as the qualities of matter and the sensations we are used to.

Creation has layers. It is subtle. In the West we pay attention only to the last most dense layer of matter. Guru Nanak and other saints and sages tell us that there are worlds upon unseen worlds. The mind senses all those seen and unseen worlds. Each of us maintains a special balance of the *tattvas* with our mind in order to have a strong body and a unified personality. The quality of our life, our mind, and our health is maintained by the *tattvas*.

The five densest of the *tattvas*, which we experience as qualities in the body and in all matter, are: earth, water, fire, air, and ether. These are the same 'elements' known to Hermetic science, Chinese medicine and medieval alchemy.

These five earthly *tattvas* are qualities in our senses and in the world. These five *tattvas* engage three types of behaviors or qualities,

The Three Gunas

Tamasic—Animal

Personality Split
Angry, Confused, Stupid
Red Spectrum
Impulsive
God as Existence

Rajasic—Earthling Human

Personality Aligned
Demanding, Positive, Active
Yellow Spectrum
Emotional, Commotional
God as Companion

Sattvic—Angelic Human

Personality Unified to Spirit
Graceful, Peaceful, Disciplined
Green Spectrum
Intuitive, Sensitive
God as Personal & Present

called **gunas**, that determine the altitude and attitude of your life. These three *gunas* are: **tamas**, **rajas**, and **sattva**.

If we use the mind in the **sattvic guna**, which is clarity and lightness, it makes us saintly and enriches us to be crowned as a Lord of the Universe. We are both connected and effective.

If we use the **rajasic guna**, which is forcefulness and will, it empowers us to be the king of the territory, to gain jurisdiction wherever we feel, see, and live.

If we use the **tamasic guna**, which is dullness, unawareness, attachment, and functioning only from need and instinct, it makes a human an animal in this world without any blessings or guidance from the heavens.

To be happy as a human being, we must recognize our basic *guna*

and live to it. We must have an effective personality. Our *tattvas* and *gunas* must support us. Our mind needs to project in unison the power of our facets to deliver our own angelic self. We must call on our own spiritual and genetic strength. We have been given everything we need.

—FROM THEMIND: ITS PROJECTIONS AND MULTIPLE FACETS

Yogi Bhajan on the Tattvas

There are five elements of which you are made: water, fire, air, ether, and earth. These five elements have five projections: lust (*kam*), anger (*krodh*), greed (*lobh*), negative ego (*ahangkar*), and attachment (*moh*).

When you are made of mud, how can you get rid of mud? When you are made of earth, how can you get rid of earth? Nobody can get rid of the five elements of which he is composed. All he can do is channel their projections.

If you go to a teacher and he says, "Get rid of them," you already know that, so what good is it to say so? It is impossible, because attachment is the earth faculty; anger is the fire faculty. How can you get away from these? You can't, because they are projections of the five *tattvas*. But you can channel them positively. You can divert this energy for positive ends.

▶ Lust (*kam*) Water—*Apas tattva*

Instead of being lustful to exploit new bodies, a man can see in a woman, not an object of exploitation, but a mother or sister image to be respected. He can keep his dignity, keep his respect, and change his attitude from exploitation to service.

▶ Anger (*krodh*) Fire—*Agni tattva*. Instead of directing anger at others, be angry at your own negativity.

▶ Greed (*lobh*) Earth—*Pritvi tattva*

Instead of being greedy to possess things, be greedy to spread truth to all people; to possess a high caliber; and to become a great saint or a great teacher.

▶ Negative ego or pride (*ahangkar*) Ether—*Akasha tattva*
Instead of being an egomaniac, identify yourself with the Infinite. Have pride and gratitude that God made you a human.

▶ Attachment (*moh*) Air—*Vayu tattva*

Instead of being attached to earthly possessions, be attached to the whole universe! Be attached to the idea of a healthy, happy, holy life; and to not wanting to see people suffer.

Maya The process that gives us the illusion of separateness.

Five Tattvas The densest of the levels of separateness, experienced as the earthly elements: earth, water, fire, air, and ether.

Gunas The three qualities of being or behavior: *sattva*, *tamas*, and *rajas*.