

TRIADS**Revised**

Next week we will study the two conscious shocks and for that we need to learn or revise some basic facts about triads. Triads are the way both our teachings characterise the fundamental forces that operate in the universe. 'Force' here is used in a very general sense, and can apply to anything that can interact with anything else, or any energy, inner or outer.

It is easiest to start with the Indian teaching on the three Gunas (literal translation 'ropes'), which originally came from Samkhya philosophy and was then incorporated into Advaita. The main source is the Bhagavad-Gita Chapter 14, as the Shankaracharya commented:

In the 14th chapter of Gita, Shri Krishna says to Arjuna that this creation (Prakriti) has three qualities (Gunas) known as Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. The effect of these is experienced as light, activity and limitation or bondage.

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It is the 'play of the Gunas', the constant fluctuation between Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, that is responsible for all the many forms and activities we see in the both the inner and outside world. In terms of the literal translation of Gunas as ropes, the inner and outer worlds can be seen as a mesh made up of twisted ropes of three different colours.

In any situation all three Gunas are present, but one always predominates. The study of the Gunas is practical: the aim is to see the bustle of activity in the world as the play of the Gunas without being overwhelmed by it and ultimately to 'rise above the Gunas'.

All the Gunas have their place in ordinary life: there is a time for sleeping (Tamas), a time for waking (Rajas) and a time for meditating (Sattva), and even in the waking state there is a cycle between rest and activity. But what if one is trying to increase one's consciousness? To be full of Tamas is to be dull, sluggish, apathetic (or even angry or sinful?). To be full of Rajas is all activity, excitement, fire. To be full of Sattva is to have peacefulness, love, clarity. Tamas is the worst of the Gunas from this point of view, and the only way out of it (short of taking a nap) is to apply Rajas – undertake some energetic activity. Rajas on its own just burns out; activity needs to be sustained by Sattva.

Meditation is meant above all to create Sattva, and the way forward is to be grounded in Sattva.

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The System uses the idea of three forces in a different way, and it comes into its own when describing actions – the Gunas are better at describing situations. There are three forces, just as in the Indian teaching, but they have different names. Here are two sets of names and their Indian equivalents:

Rajas	Active force	Carbon	C
Tama	Passive force	Oxygen	O
Sattva	Neutralising force	Nitrogen	N

The names Carbon, Oxygen and Nitrogen came along with the convention of calling the energies of the universe 'Hydrogens'. They no longer have much meaning but they are (relatively) easy to learn.

In the System the forces are said to act in sequence (compare this with the Indian teaching where it is a question of preponderance of one force over the others). So in a particular situation there might be a pre-existing active force (C) which acts on a passive material (O) and produces a neutral force (N): we call this triad CON. In fact we have already met this triad in the descending octave of the Ray of Creation: at nearly every step CON operates. We also met another triad in the ascending octave in the creation: starting with passive matter (O), applying an active force (C) to it, producing a neutral material (N): hence the triad OCN. Both these triads produce N. What's the difference?

There are also two triads that produce C – ONC and NOC; and two triads that produce O – NCO and CNO. So there are 6 triads altogether.

In man, all activities can be described by one or another of these six triads:

TRIAD	ACTIVITIES OF MAN	TOWARDS SELF-REALISATION
CON	Physical work, repetitive work	Effort to change
OCN	Good professional work	Discrimination, meditation
NOC	Best art, poetry, music, 'Grace'	Second conscious shock
ONC	Highest intellectual activity	Insight. self-remembering
CNO	Destruction	Defective or formatory thinking
NCO	Crime	Deliberate spiritual destruction

It is the first three of these that are said to be useful for self-realisation.

These are particular examples on two scales, but by developing a taste for the different triads on these scales, triads on other scales such as society become apparent.

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Ouspensky said that the Law of Three could be understood from the Lord's Prayer. The prayer can be arranged in the form of 3 sections, each with three parts. Following Dr Roles (*Introduction to the Lord's Prayer*, 1959):

Our Father who art in heaven

Hallowed be thy name

Thy kingdom come

Thy will be done on earth as in the heavens

Give us today our supernatural bread

And dismiss from us our debts as we dismiss debts from our debtors

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil

For thine is

The Kingdom

The Power

The Glory

(For ever and ever, Amen)

What can we make of this?

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