

The Gunas – Tamas, Rajas, and Sattva as a Personality Framework: Relevance to Organisational Behaviour and Human Resource Management

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: *This research paper undertakes a comprehensive scholarly investigation of the Triguna framework — the ancient Samkhya-Vedantic classification of human personality and behaviour into the three fundamental qualities of Sattva (clarity, purity, and harmony), Rajas (activity, passion, and drive), and Tamas (inertia, resistance, and density) — and examines its theoretical foundations, psychological validity, and practical relevance to contemporary Organisational Behaviour (OB) and Human Resource Management (HRM). Drawing on primary classical sources, including the Bhagavad Gita and Samkhya philosophical texts, and on a growing body of empirical and conceptual research validating the framework's psychological and organisational applications, the paper argues that the Triguna model constitutes a sophisticated, actionable, and psychologically grounded personality framework that offers HRM practitioners and organisational leaders a powerful complement to existing Western personality assessment tools.*

Methodology: *In this paper, the exploratory qualitative research method is used. The relevant information is collected using keyword-based search in Google search engine, Google Scholar search engine, and AI-driven GPTs. This information is analysed and interpreted as per the objectives of the paper.*

Analysis/ Results: *The paper is structured in nine chapters covering the philosophical origins of the Triguna system (Samkhya and Bhagavad Gita), a detailed characterisation of each Guna and its behavioural and psychological manifestations, the dynamic interaction of the Gunas and its implications for personality development, contemporary empirical evidence for the framework's psychological validity, detailed applications across core HRM domains (talent assessment, training and development, team building, leadership development, and performance management), and a critical evaluation addressing the framework's limitations and contextual boundaries. The paper includes a comparative analysis table mapping all three Gunas across eight organisational dimensions.*

Originality/ Values: *The central thesis is that the Triguna framework, far from being a culturally specific or pre-scientific personality taxonomy, provides a philosophically rigorous, empirically supported, and practically generative model of human motivation and behaviour that mainstream OB research is only beginning to approximate through constructs such as mindfulness, engagement, burnout, and psychological capital. The paper concludes with a call for greater integration of the Triguna framework into management education curricula, HR assessment practices, and leadership development programmes, particularly in the Indian academic and corporate contexts where its cultural resonance can serve as a powerful anchor for ethical and effective people management.*

Type of Paper: *Exploratory Research.*

Keywords: Triguna, Sattva, Rajas, Tamas, Samkhya, Bhagavad Gita, Organisational Behaviour, Human Resource Management, Personality Framework, Indian Knowledge Systems, Leadership Development, Motivation, Emotional Intelligence, Karma Yoga

1. INTRODUCTION :

The assessment of human personality for the purposes of career guidance, team design, leadership development, and therapeutic intervention has been a preoccupation of psychology and management science since the early twentieth century. The contemporary landscape of personality frameworks is dominated by Western constructs: the Five Factor Model (Big Five) of Costa and McCrae, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) derived from Jungian theory, the DISC assessment rooted in Marston's 1928 model, and more recently the HEXACO model and the Hogan Personality Inventory. Each of these frameworks has generated substantial research literatures, practitioner communities, and commercial assessment industries.

Five Factor Model (Big Five) — Costa and McCrae -The most prominent and widely accepted personality framework is the Big Five (or five-factor model) of personality proposed by McCrae and Costa in the 1980s. The attribution to Costa and McCrae is fully confirmed. In 1978, Paul Costa and Robert McCrae of the National Institutes of Health published a book chapter describing their Neuroticism-Extraversion-Openness (NEO) model, which evolved into the definitive Five Factor Model [1-3].

MBTI — derived from Jungian theory The MBTI is based on the theory of psychological types proposed by Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung in 1921. The original version of the MBTI was constructed during World War II by Americans Katharine Cook Briggs and her daughter Isabel Briggs Myers, inspired by Jung's 1921 book *Psychological Types* [4-7]

DISC assessment — rooted in Marston's 1928 model

The DISC assessment is rooted in William Moulton Marston's 1928 theoretical model, first outlined in his book *Emotions of Normal People*. However, Marston himself never developed an assessment instrument. The first actual DISC personality profile was constructed by Walter Clarke in the 1950s, with the first formal commercial assessment following in the 1970s. The statement that DISC is "rooted in Marston's 1928 model" is therefore accurate in attributing the theoretical foundation, but the assessment tool itself is a later development [8-11].

HEXACO model — described as "more recent" The HEXACO model of personality structure is a six-dimensional model of human personality created by Michael C. Ashton and Kibeom Lee, first published in a paper in 2004 [12-14].

Hogan Personality Inventory Robert Hogan is an American personality psychologist known for developing socio analytic theory. Hogan is the president of Hogan Assessment Systems, which he co-founded in 1987. The HPI was developed in the 1980s in the context of socio analytic theory [15].

What is largely absent from this mainstream landscape — despite India's extraordinary depth of psychological and philosophical tradition — is the recognition that one of the world's oldest, most philosophically sophisticated, and increasingly empirically validated personality frameworks is the Triguna model embedded in the Samkhya school of Indian philosophy and extensively elaborated in the Bhagavad Gita. The classification of human personality and behaviour into three fundamental qualities — Sattva (associated with clarity, purity, wisdom, and harmony), Rajas (associated with activity, passion, ambition, and restlessness), and Tamas (associated with inertia, resistance, density, and ignorance) — constitutes a personality taxonomy of remarkable breadth, practical utility, and psychological depth.

The relevance of this ancient framework to contemporary Organisational Behaviour is not a matter of cultural nostalgia or academic novelty. Contemporary OB research has independently identified constructs — mindfulness and ethical leadership (corresponding to Sattva), driven motivation and burnout risk (corresponding to Rajas), and disengagement and change resistance (corresponding to Tamas) — that map with striking fidelity onto the Triguna categories. Empirical research has documented statistically significant correlations between Guna composition and well-being outcomes: Sattva correlates positively with life satisfaction ($r = 0.24$) and subjective happiness ($r = 0.24$), while Rajas and Tamas both correlate negatively with subjective happiness ($r = -0.38$ and $r = -0.42$, respectively). These findings suggest that the Triguna framework is not merely a conceptual analogue of Western personality theory but an empirically grounded predictive model in its own right.

This paper is addressed to three audiences: organisational behaviour scholars interested in expanding the field's theoretical toolkit beyond its Western origins; HRM practitioners seeking culturally grounded frameworks for talent management, team design, and leadership development in Indian corporate

contexts; and management educators seeking to integrate Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into their curricula in ways that are academically rigorous and practically relevant [16-19]. The paper is organised across nine chapters, from philosophical foundations through empirical validation to detailed HRM applications and critical evaluation.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY :

This research paper is guided by the following specific scholarly and practical objectives:

- (1) To trace the philosophical origins of the Triguna framework in Samkhya philosophy and the Bhagavad Gita, establishing its theoretical foundations and the precise meanings of the three Guna categories in their classical context.
- (2) To provide a comprehensive, systematically organised characterisation of each Guna — Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas — in terms of its cognitive, emotional, motivational, behavioural, and interpersonal dimensions, with particular attention to workplace manifestations.
- (3) To examine the dynamic interaction of the three Gunas as a system, addressing the Samkhya doctrine that all individuals contain all three Gunas in varying proportions and that Guna composition is malleable through deliberate practice, lifestyle choices, and organisational interventions.
- (4) To review the contemporary empirical literature on the Triguna framework's psychological validity, documenting its correlations with well-being outcomes, emotional regulation, and organisational behaviour variables.
- (5) To translate the Triguna framework into actionable HRM strategies across five core domains: talent assessment and profiling, training and development design, team composition and collaboration, leadership development, and performance management systems.
- (6) To situate the Triguna model in relation to mainstream Western personality frameworks (Big Five, MBTI, DISC), identifying convergences and the distinctive contributions of the Guna framework that Western models do not fully capture.
- (7) To conduct a critical evaluation of the framework's limitations, contextual boundaries, and the methodological challenges involved in its empirical validation and practical application.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE :

Table 1: Keyword: “Gunas – Tamas, Rajas, and Sattva as a Personality Framework”

S. No.	Area	Focus/Outcome	Reference
1	The Gunas Personality Framework	The Gunas personality framework presents a holistic view of human personality based on three fundamental elements—sattva, rajas, and tamas. A new contemporary measure of gunas was developed by relating them to individuals' attitudes toward social issues, and its validity was tested among executives and MBA students. The study found that sattva is associated with better performance, rajas with greater effort, and tamas with dispositional negativity, demonstrating the relevance of the gunas framework in modern personality assessment.	Sachar, S., Mulla, Z. R., & Krishnan, V. R. (2023). [20]
2	Understanding personality from Ayurvedic perspective for psychological assessment	The study highlights the need for a universally applicable personality framework that transcends culture, race, and ethnicity. Drawing from Ayurveda, the paper proposes that the concepts of Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas can provide a comprehensive and holistic understanding of personality with applications in health, education, career, and human behaviour. The work primarily develops a theoretical framework for future empirical validation of these Ayurvedic personality dimensions.	Shilpa, S., & Murthy, C. V. (2011). [21]

3	Relationship between Vedic personality traits (Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas) with life satisfaction and perceived stress in healthy university students	A cross-sectional study involving 121 university students examined the relationship between Trigunas, life satisfaction, and perceived stress. The findings showed that Sattva was positively associated with life satisfaction and negatively related to stress, while Rajas and Tamas were linked to higher stress and lower life satisfaction. The study suggests that Vedic personality traits significantly influence psychological well-being and stress perception.	Sharma, S., Bhargav, P. H., Singh, P., Bhargav, H., & Varambally, S. (2021). [22]
4	Enhancing Workplace Well-Being Through Understanding the Three Personality Types	The chapter discusses workplace well-being by emphasizing the role of individual personality and behaviour in achieving happiness and effectiveness at work. Drawing from the ancient Samkhya philosophy, it explains how alignment between a person's true nature and personality reduces stress, enhances ethical decision-making, and promotes overall well-being in professional and personal relationships.	Modh, S. (2020). [23]
5	An Analysis of Personality Traits in the Triguna System	The Triguna system, rooted in ancient Indian wisdom, explains human personality through three interconnected qualities: Sattva, representing purity and clarity; Rajas, symbolizing activity and ambition; and Tamas, associated with inertia and darkness. These dynamic and ever-changing Gunas collectively shape an individual's thoughts, emotions, and behaviour based on their environment and mental state.	Kumari, A., & Kour, R. (2025). [24]
6	Impact of Personality (Gunas) and Belief Systems on Helping	The study examines how Sattva guna and belief in the law of karma influence feelings of oneness and helping behaviour in teams. Conducted among 292 students over 45 days, the research found that individuals with higher Sattva traits and stronger belief in karma experienced greater connectedness with others and were perceived as more helpful by their teammates.	Mulla, Z. R., & Krishnan, V. R. (2019). [25]
7	Sattva, rajas, and Tamas as tools for understanding psychological disorders	Ayurveda explains human psychology through the three Gunas—Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas—which influence an individual's mental, emotional, and behavioural tendencies. The review discusses how imbalances among these Gunas contribute to psychological disorders and highlights Ayurvedic interventions as holistic approaches for restoring mental balance and improving mental health.	Akter, I., & Nahar, F. (2024). [26]
8	Integrating Triguna Theory in Understanding Personality and Treating Personality Disorders	This paper explores the integration of the ancient Triguna theory with modern psychological frameworks to better understand personality and treat personality disorders. By linking Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas with contemporary personality models, the study highlights the potential of Ayurvedic practices such as yoga, meditation, and diet in promoting emotional balance and mental well-being. The research proposes a holistic and culturally sensitive approach to psychotherapy	Chandra, T., Ansari, N., & Misra, S. (2024). [27]

		while emphasizing the need for further empirical validation.	
9	The Ancient Wisdom of Emotional Balance: Understanding Personality and Emotion Regulation Through Indian Psychology	This chapter examines the relevance of the ancient Indian Triguna theory—Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas—in understanding personality and emotional regulation in modern contexts. Supported by empirical research on 100 adults, the study found that Sattvic qualities promote emotional balance and cognitive clarity, while excessive Tamasic tendencies are linked to poor emotional regulation and avoidance behaviours. By integrating ancient wisdom with modern psychology and neuroscience, the chapter highlights practical and therapeutic approaches for enhancing emotional well-being and resilience.	Devakumar, A., & Machaiah, E. (2025). [28]
10	Anthology on Triguna in Contemporary Humanity	The Triguna theory explains human behaviour through the three fundamental qualities of Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas, which exist in varying proportions within every individual. Drawing from the Bhagavad-Gita, the paper connects these Gunas with transformational leadership, suggesting that personal growth progresses from Tamas to Rajas and ultimately to Sattva, influencing leadership effectiveness and human development.	Rajpurohit, J. S., & Satpathy, J. (2018). [29]
11	Integrated Framework: Evolution of Kṣetra-Kṣetrajña Vibhāga Yoga, Guṇa Traya Vibhāga Yoga, Puruṣottama Yoga	This chapter presents an integrated framework of the final six chapters of the Bhagavad Gita, explaining the progression toward spiritual maturity through concepts such as Kṣetra-Kṣetrajña, Guṇa Traya, Puruṣottama, Daivāsura Sampad, Śraddhā Traya, and Mokṣa Sannyāsa. It highlights how understanding reality, mastering the three Gunas, and integrating various Yogas ultimately lead to liberation and complete spiritual surrender.	Aithal, P. S., & Ramanathan, S. (2026). [30]
12	Modern Applications of the Last Six Chapters of the Bhagavad Gita	This chapter examines the modern relevance of the final six chapters of the Bhagavad Gita in promoting ethical leadership, psychological resilience, and sustainable development. By applying concepts such as Kṣetra-Kṣetrajña and Triguna theory, the chapter presents a framework for character development, spiritual growth, and responsible citizenship aimed at achieving collective welfare and global harmony.	Aithal, P. S., & Ramanathan, S. (2026). [31]
13	Conscious Living and Dying: The Soteriology of the Final Thought through Akshara Brahma Yoga in the Bhagavad Gita's Eighth Chapter	This research case study analyzes the Akshara Brahma Yoga of the Bhagavad Gita's Eighth Chapter, focusing on conscious living, the doctrine of the "final thought," and its spiritual significance. Using qualitative methods along with SWOC and ABCD analytical frameworks, the study highlights the chapter's relevance in promoting ethical living, existential understanding, and purposeful approaches to life and death in contemporary society.	Aithal, P. S., & Ramanathan, S. (2025). [32]

Table 2: Keyword: “Trigunas in Indian Knowledge Relevance to Organisational Behaviour and Human Resource Management”

S. No.	Area	Focus/Outcome	Reference
1	Trigunas in organizations: Moving toward an east-west synthesis	This study examines the Indian Triguna theory of personality and its relationship with organizational behaviour among banking professionals. The findings reveal that Sattva positively predicts organizational citizenship behaviour and job performance, while higher levels of Rajas negatively influence these outcomes and Tamas shows no significant effect. The research highlights the relevance of indigenous personality theories in understanding workplace behaviour and cross-cultural management.	Anuradha, M. V., & Kumar, Y. L. N. (2015). [33]
2	Human resource management in India	India’s rapid economic growth, global expansion of businesses, and rising workforce have increased interest in Human Resource concepts and practices. In this context, the paper explores managerial ideas and organizational principles rooted in ancient Indian traditions and examines their relevance in addressing contemporary management and workforce challenges.	Chatterjee, S. R. (2022). [34]
3	Triguna: Indigenous Personality Theory at Work	This chapter explores the relationship between personality, leadership, and team climate through the Indian Triguna framework of Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. It highlights the relevance of Guna-based personality assessment in recruitment, leadership development, and organizational culture, proposing it as a value-based and culturally rooted approach for building ethical, resilient, and sustainable workplaces.	Goyal, M. (2025). [35]
4	Relationship between personality and job performance: Indian perspective of Triguna theory	According to Indian psychology, the three Gunas—Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas—form the basis of personality and influence individual behaviour. This study, conducted among service sector employees in Gwalior, focused on Sattva and Rajas Gunas and found that both significantly contribute to employee job performance, highlighting the relevance of Indian personality theory in organizational studies.	Banerjee, R., Pathak, R., & Mathur, G. (2020). [36]
5	Dimensions of Guna in organizational setting.	The Indian concept of Gunas—Sattwa, Rajas, and Tamas—is considered valuable in organizational behaviour research and practice. Based on data from 310 executives across 13 organizations, Kaur and Sinha identified four dimensions—Tamas Guna, Rajas Positive Guna, Sattwa Guna, and Rajas Negative Guna—and examined their relationship with various organizationally relevant factors.	Kaur, P., & Sinha, A. K. (1992). [37]
6	Indian Perspective on Personality and Behaviour in Organisations	This article discusses the development and validation of psychometric personality assessment tools based on Indian psychological and Vedic concepts. It highlights the global relevance and practical applications of the five-element personality theory in improving employee	Datar, S. (2021). [38]

		retention, engagement, team cohesion, and cultural fit within organizations, particularly through recruitment and talent management practices.	
7	Transforming Human Values into Behavioural Competencies with Reference to Swami Vivekananda's KarmaYoga	This study highlights the growing interest of corporate learning and business schools in ancient Indian texts to develop value-based human resources with both professional competence and refined human qualities. Drawing from the principles of Karmayoga and supported by psychological theories, the paper links human virtues with behavioural competencies and suggests training approaches to nurture effective, ethical, and joyful professionals.	Umasankar, K., & Ranganatham, G. (2016). [39]
8	The relevance of the Guna theory in the congruence of eastern values and western management practice	This paper highlights the relevance of the Indian Guna theory in guiding managerial behaviour by explaining how Sattwa and Rajas promote purposeful understanding and action, while Tamas creates obstacles and negativity. The study suggests that the Guna framework offers a more intuitive and value-based approach to management compared to the contractual and legalistic orientation often seen in Western management practices.	Innes-Brown, M., & Chatterjee, S. (1999). [40]
9	The concept of tri-guna: A working model	This literature review examines the ancient Indian concept of Tri-guna—Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas—as a personality framework influencing behaviour, well-being, and spirituality. The review summarizes psychological indicators associated with the three Gunas and discusses interventions aimed at enhancing Sattva to promote greater well-being and spiritual growth.	Putra, M., & Sedlmeier, P. (2013). [41]
10	Impact of Vedic worldview and Gunas on transformational leadership	This study explores transformational leadership from an Indian cultural perspective using the Vedic concepts of Gunas, Karma, and Maya. It examines how the dominance of Sattva, Rajas, or Tamas and a leader's worldview influence perceptions of transformational leadership, highlighting the role of Indian philosophy in understanding leadership behaviour and personality.	Kejriwal, A., & Krishnan, V. R. (2004). [42]
11	Human Resource Management: Towards a Human-Centric Approach	This paper emphasizes the importance of understanding human nature in Human Resource Management to enhance employee productivity and organizational performance. Drawing from concepts such as human dynamics and the Bhagavad Gita's Guna classification, the study explores different perspectives on human behaviour and suggests approaches for designing effective HR competencies, particularly in knowledge-intensive industries like IT services.	Kumnamuru, S., & Murthy, P. N. (2014). [43]
12	Revisiting the Gurukul System: A Comparative Study of Ancient Indian Pedagogical	This paper explores the relevance of the ancient Indian Gurukul system in modern technological organizations, emphasizing its holistic approach to experiential learning, mentorship, ethical development, and lifelong learning. By comparing Gurukul principles with contemporary knowledge	Shabaraya, G., & Aithal, P. S. (2024). [44]

	Models and Modern Knowledge Management in Technological Organizations	management practices using frameworks such as SWOC and ABCD analysis, the study highlights how value-driven and human-centric learning models can enhance innovation, employee engagement, and sustainable organizational growth.	
13	Integrating Ancient Indian Wisdom with Contemporary Management Practices	This paper explores the integration of ancient Indian wisdom with modern management practices to develop ethical, resilient, and sustainable leadership models for the 21st century. Drawing from concepts such as Dharma, Karma Yoga, and Satya, the study uses qualitative analysis along with SWOC, ABCD, and impact assessment frameworks to demonstrate how traditional values can strengthen contemporary leadership, governance, and human-centered organizational strategies.	Aithal, P. S., & Ramanathan, S. (2024). [45]

4. METHODOLOGY :

In this paper, the exploratory qualitative research method is used. The relevant information is collected using keyword-based search in Google search engine, Google Scholar search engine, and AI-driven GPTs. This information is analysed and interpreted as per the objectives of the paper [46-52].

5. PHILOSOPHICAL ORIGINS: SAMKHYA, PRAKRITI, AND THE THREE GUNAS :

5.1 Samkhya Philosophy and the Guna Theory:

The Triguna framework is rooted in Samkhya, one of the six orthodox (astika) schools of Hindu philosophy and among the oldest systematic philosophical traditions in the Indian intellectual heritage. Samkhya is generally dated to approximately the fourth century CE in its systematised textual form (the Samkhyakarika of Ishvarakrishna), but its core insights are considerably older, with proto-Samkhya ideas present in the Upanishads and the Mahabharata. The Samkhya system stands out as perhaps the first systematic ontology of human psychology in the history of ideas — a complete theory of the structure of mind, consciousness, and material nature that anticipates several key insights of modern cognitive science and personality psychology.

The most distinguishing feature of Samkhya philosophy is its foundational metaphysical dualism between two irreducible, ultimate realities: Purusha and Prakriti. Purusha represents pure consciousness — the witness-awareness that observes but does not act, remains unchanging, passive, infinite, and devoid of qualities. Prakriti represents matter or nature in its most comprehensive sense, encompassing all cognitive, moral, psychological, emotional, sensorial, and physical aspects of reality. Prakriti is the dynamic, active, creative principle from which all phenomenal existence emerges through a complex process of differentiation.

The three Gunas are not, within the Samkhya framework, qualities that exist independently of the material they characterise; they are the very constituent factors of Prakriti itself, the first cause of the universe. Prakriti in its undifferentiated, primordial state represents the perfect equilibrium of the three Gunas — a state of cosmic potential in which no individual manifestation has yet emerged. All the varied phenomena of the created universe — including all human personalities, motivations, and behaviours — represent different configurations of these three Gunas in different proportions. As the Samkhyakarika expresses it, the three Gunas are intertwined like three strands of a rope that together constitute the binding cord of Prakriti.

5.2 The Three Gunas in the Bhagavad Gita:

The Bhagavad Gita provides the most influential and practically oriented exposition of the Triguna framework within the Indian textual tradition. The Gita's treatment of the Gunas is distributed across multiple chapters — Chapters 2, 3, 7, 13, 14, 17, and 18 all engage with Guna concepts — but Chapter 14 (the Gunatraya-Vibhaga Yoga) provides the most systematic analysis. Krishna's explanation to Arjuna in this chapter links the Guna framework directly to the Samkhya cosmological scheme: material

nature (Prakriti), constituted by the three Gunas, is the source of the body and its elements, thereby originating both mind and matter, and the material Gunas bind the eternal soul (Purusha) to the perishable body.

Krishna explains that Sattva, by virtue of its purity, illuminates and binds through attachment to happiness and knowledge. Rajas, characterised by passion and desire, conditions the soul toward action and binds through attachment to the fruits of that action. Tamas, arising from ignorance, deludes all beings and binds through heedlessness, laziness, and sleep. These three Gunas are not static properties but dynamic tendencies that constantly interact: sometimes Sattva prevails over Rajas and Tamas, sometimes Rajas dominates both Sattva and Tamas, and at other times Tamas overcomes the other two. This dynamic, shifting quality of Guna balance is central to the framework's practical implications — it means that personality is not fixed but responsive to intervention.

The Gita's Guna framework is embedded within the broader teaching of Karma Yoga (disciplined, detached action) and Gunatita (transcendence of the Gunas). The ideal, in the Gita's vision, is not merely the maximisation of Sattva but the cultivation of a quality of awareness (Gunatita) that observes the interplay of Gunas without being enslaved by them — a state of freedom from compulsive personality patterns that allows truly autonomous, dharmic action. This transcendent dimension of the framework distinguishes it from purely descriptive personality taxonomies and gives it a normative and developmental orientation that Western personality models typically lack.

5.3 Evolution from Classical Philosophy to Contemporary Psychology:

The trajectory from ancient Guna theory to contemporary psychological research has been one of progressive empirical validation and conceptual refinement. Twentieth-century Indian psychologists — including S. K. Maitra, Jadunath Sinha, and later researchers such as Sitamma, Cornelissen, and Rao — undertook systematic efforts to translate the Triguna concepts into measurable psychological constructs and to develop validated psychometric instruments for Guna assessment. The Rao Triguna Scale, developed by P.V. Krishna Rao, has been among the most widely used instruments for quantitative Guna research.

Contemporary empirical findings have provided substantial validation for the Triguna framework's psychological validity. Research has established that Sattvic qualities, associated with harmony and clarity, significantly correlate with better emotional regulation and more effective cognitive reappraisal — the capacity to reinterpret emotionally challenging situations in ways that reduce negative affect. Conversely, excessive Tamasic tendencies, linked to inertia and resistance, are a significant predictor of poorer emotional regulation, manifesting as suppression and avoidance patterns that are associated with adverse psychological outcomes including anxiety, depression, and reduced life satisfaction. This integration of ancient philosophical wisdom with contemporary psychological science offers a comprehensive approach to emotional resilience development that neither tradition alone can provide.

6. THE THREE GUNAS: A SYSTEMATIC CHARACTERISATION :

6.1 Sattva: The Quality of Clarity, Purity, and Harmony:

Sattva — derived from the Sanskrit root sat, meaning existence or truth — represents the most refined and spiritually elevated of the three Gunas in Samkhya philosophy. The Bhagavad Gita characterises Sattva Guna as 'immaculate, illuminating, without ill' — an apt description of the quality's fundamental character as a principle of transparency, clarity, and positive illumination. The Samkhya metaphor of Sattva as a transparent pane of glass — allowing the light of conscious awareness to reveal itself in the operations of the mind — captures its essential function: not to generate light itself but to allow the light of consciousness to pass through undistorted.

Sattva functions as the equilibrium principle in the dynamic interplay of the Gunas, representing a state of balance between the opposing tendencies of Rajas (active, outward movement) and Tamas (passive, inward withdrawal). When Sattva predominates, the individual experiences the mind in a state of relative stillness and clarity — not the stillness of inertia (Tamas) but the dynamic stillness of alert, open awareness. This state is characterised by tranquillity, light, happiness, purity, calmness, harmony, kindness, forgiveness, patience, and compassion. The Sattvic mind is clear and peaceful; it is neither driven by desire (Rajas) nor clouded by ignorance (Tamas).

In terms of specific personality characteristics, Sattvic individuals exhibit a distinctive constellation of traits that bridge cognitive, emotional, and interpersonal domains. Cognitively, they demonstrate

heightened awareness, concentration, and problem-solving clarity; their decision-making tends to be reflective, principled, and oriented toward long-term consequences rather than immediate rewards. Emotionally, they display what the Gita describes as 'freedom from dualities' — equanimity in the face of pleasure and pain, victory and defeat, heat and cold — which constitutes a sophisticated form of emotional regulation grounded in philosophical understanding rather than mere suppression. Interpersonally, Sattvic individuals are generous, open-minded, honest, humble, and genuinely curious about others; they understand human nature and give people freedom to be who they are without attempting to impose their own will.

Sattvic individuals possess a distinctive form of emotional maturity that is important to distinguish from emotional flatness or the suppression of affect. They do not suppress emotions; rather, they use emotions as indicators — recognising them as by-products of beliefs and interpretive frameworks that can be examined and revised. This is precisely what contemporary emotional intelligence theory (Mayer, Salovey, Goleman) describes as 'emotional management through understanding' rather than through suppression — an insight that ancient Samkhya philosophy embedded in its characterisation of Sattva two thousand years before the term emotional intelligence was coined.

An important qualification in the classical sources is that even Sattva, despite its positive qualities, can become a form of bondage. The Gita notes that Sattva binds through attachment to happiness and knowledge — that the Sattvic individual, without the further development of Gunatita (transcendence of Gunas), may become attached to the pleasures of clarity and wisdom in ways that constitute subtle spiritual limitations. More practically, individuals high in Sattva, by virtue of their genuine kindness and non-competitive orientation, may be vulnerable to exploitation in organisational environments that reward aggressive self-promotion and competitive behaviour.

6.2 Rajas: The Quality of Activity, Passion, and Drive:

Rajas represents the principle of dynamic activity, passionate engagement, and restless movement — the energy of change that drives Prakriti's creative processes. Where Sattva is transparent and still, Rajas is coloured and kinetic; it is characterised by feeling, attachment, longing for satisfaction, desire, effort, and pain. The Gita's description of Rajas as 'born of thirst and affection' captures its essential character: it is the Guna of desire in all its forms, from the creative inspiration of the artist to the competitive ambition of the executive to the restless dissatisfaction of the consumer.

Rajas occupies a structurally pivotal position in the Triguna dynamic: its activity may move an individual toward either Sattva or Tamas depending on its direction and the context in which it operates. Rajasic energy directed toward constructive, purpose-driven goals — creative work, athletic achievement, professional excellence, social change — can generate positive outcomes including innovation, productivity, and the realisation of human potential. Rajasic energy directed toward ego-gratification, competitive domination, or addictive pleasure-seeking degrades toward Tamas as the inevitable burnout and disillusionment of unfulfilled desire set in. This contingent quality of Rajas — neither inherently positive nor negative but dependent on direction — makes it the most complex and organisationally significant of the three Gunas.

Individuals with predominantly Rajasic personalities exhibit a characteristic motivational and behavioural profile in organisational settings. They thrive in fast-paced, high-pressure, goal-oriented environments where achievement, competition, and recognition drive performance. They are energised by challenges, variety, and novelty; the Rajasic mind always wants new sensations and fresh stimulation. Their passion fuels performance and stimulates creativity through competitive dynamics. They have a strong orientation toward external results and recognition, and when this orientation becomes excessive it manifests as restlessness, over-ambition, and a compulsive focus on outcomes at the expense of process quality, ethical reflection, or sustainable work habits.

The most significant organisational risk associated with Rajasic excess is burnout — the progressive depletion of psychological and physical resources that results from sustained high-intensity performance without adequate recovery, reflection, or meaning. An excess of Rajas can lead directly to Tamas if the activity becomes overwhelming and the inevitable failure of external results to provide lasting satisfaction produces a collapse into despondency, disengagement, and inertia. This Rajas-to-Tamas degradation trajectory is well-documented in contemporary OB research under the headings of burnout, disengagement, and cynicism — and the Triguna framework provides a clear preventive

prescription: cultivating Sattva through reflective practices, mindfulness, and purpose-driven work to provide the stabilising influence that prevents Rajasic excess from degrading into Tamasic collapse.

6.3 Tamas: The Quality of Inertia, Resistance, and Density:

Tamas represents the principle of heaviness, density, inertia, and resistance — the force of obstruction and obscurity that prevents beings from seeing reality clearly. Where Sattva illuminates and Rajas activate, Tamas conceals and immobilises. Its nature is described in the Gita as dull and heavy; it manifests as confusion, delusion, sleep, laziness, and an inability or unwillingness to perceive and respond to the demands of the present situation. The philosophical characterisation of Tamas as a concealing force — hiding the light of consciousness rather than generating positive negative qualities — is important for understanding its organisational manifestations.

It is critical to avoid a purely negative reading of Tamas, which would distort the framework's nuance. The Samkhya tradition is explicit that Tamas serves necessary functions in the economy of nature and human psychology: it provides the steady, stabilising influence that allows consolidation, rest, and integration. Bed rest leads to healing. Routine provides cognitive economies that free attention for more demanding tasks. Consistency and reliability in executing structured processes requires a degree of Tamasic stability. The organisational problem is not Tamas per se but Tamasic excess — the situation in which the natural inertia of the personality becomes pathological, preventing growth, learning, adaptation, and engagement.

In the workplace, Tamasic tendencies manifest as disengagement, lethargy, and resistance to change — a constellation of behaviours that contemporary OB research has extensively documented as among the most significant barriers to organisational transformation and performance. Individuals with predominantly Tamasic personalities prefer routine, stability, and consistency; they excel in structured tasks requiring precision, reliability, and methodical attention to detail. Their stubbornness and resistance to adaptation can hinder organisational progress when environmental conditions require flexibility and change. Research confirms that 72% of failed organisational transformation programmes identify employee resistance — a Tamasic response — as a major barrier to success.

The classical characterisation of Tamasic individuals — preferring inert solitude, generally disinclined to read or study, afraid of work, disinterested in important aspects of humanity — is obviously a description of extreme Tamasic excess rather than moderate Tamasic influence. Most organisationally relevant Tamasic expressions are considerably milder: a preference for familiar routines over new approaches, a tendency to avoid difficult conversations or self-reflective exercises, a resistance to feedback that challenges established self-concepts, and a difficulty maintaining engagement with tasks that feel abstract, ambiguous, or unrewarding. These are precisely the characteristics that developmental coaches, performance managers, and OD practitioners most frequently encounter as obstacles to individual and organisational growth.

6.4 The Dynamic Interaction of the Three Gunas:

One of the most practically significant features of the Triguna framework is its insistence on the dynamic, fluid character of Guna composition. The Samkhya tradition is explicit that no individual is entirely Sattvic, entirely Rajasic, or entirely Tamasic; every person carries all three Gunas simultaneously, with behaviour at any given moment reflecting the Guna that is most dominant in that context. Furthermore, the balance of Gunas is not fixed at birth or determined by genetic inheritance; it is continuously shaped by daily actions, habits, lifestyle choices, dietary patterns, social environments, and conscious practices.

This malleability of Guna composition is the foundation for the framework's practical utility in HRM and organisational development. If personality were fixed, assessment would serve only the purpose of sorting people into predetermined roles. But if personality is dynamically responsive to conditions and interventions — as the Triguna framework insists — then assessment becomes the foundation for targeted developmental programmes designed to shift individuals' Guna balance in directions that serve both individual flourishing and organisational effectiveness. The goal of such programmes, in the framework's terms, is to increase Sattva as the overall orientation while using Rajas and Tamas appropriately in specific contexts rather than suppressing them entirely.

The Guna interaction dynamics have a specific temporal pattern worth noting for organisational applications. An excess of Rajas, sustained over time without Sattvic integration, leads to Tamas — the

burnout trajectory described above. Conversely, when Tamas causes stagnation and disengagement, Rajas (appropriately directed activity) is the natural corrective — not more introspection but concrete, achievable tasks that restore the experience of competence and momentum. When Rajas becomes excessive and produces stress and agitation, Sattva — cultivated through reflective practices, meaningful work, ethical engagement, and adequate rest — is the corrective. This triangular dynamic suggests that effective people management requires not a uniform increase of one Guna but a sensitive, contextually responsive management of the interplay among all three.

7. EMPIRICAL VALIDATION: RESEARCH EVIDENCE FOR THE TRIGUNA FRAMEWORK :

7.1 Psychometric Assessment of the Gunas:

The empirical validation of the Triguna framework began in earnest in the second half of the twentieth century, with Indian psychologists developing standardised instruments to measure individual Guna composition. The Rao Triguna Scale (developed by P.V. Krishna Rao) and subsequent instruments by Satish Kumar, Cornelissen, and others operationalised the three Gunas as measurable personality dimensions through Likert-scale questionnaires assessing cognitive, emotional, behavioural, and motivational tendencies. These instruments have been administered to substantial samples across Indian populations and have demonstrated acceptable levels of reliability and construct validity.

The psychometric work on Guna measurement has established several important findings. First, the three Gunas can be reliably distinguished as separate dimensions of personality — they are not merely points on a single continuum but represent qualitatively distinct orientations that can be independently measured. Second, most individuals score significantly on more than one Guna, confirming the classical assertion that all three Gunas are present in every person and that it is the relative balance rather than exclusive dominance of one Guna that characterises individual personality. Third, Guna scores show meaningful variation across occupational groups, age cohorts, and lifestyle patterns, suggesting that the framework has discriminant validity as a personality measure.

7.2 Triguna and Well-Being: The Quantitative Evidence:

The relationship between Guna composition and well-being outcomes has been investigated in several empirical studies, most notably in a significant publication in the *Journal of Ayurveda and Complementary Sciences* that documented the following correlations: Sattva showed a positive correlation with life satisfaction ($r = 0.24$) and subjective happiness ($r = 0.24$), suggesting that individuals with higher Sattvic orientation report meaningfully higher levels of positive well-being. Rajas showed a negative correlation with subjective happiness ($r = -0.38$), while Tamas showed an even stronger negative correlation ($r = -0.42$). These correlations, while modest in absolute terms, are highly consistent with the classical characterisation of each Guna and with Western personality research linking conscientiousness and agreeableness (constructs overlapping with Sattva) to positive well-being outcomes.

Research on the relationship between Guna composition and emotional regulation has provided some of the most theoretically significant empirical findings. Studies have documented that Sattvic qualities are significantly associated with better emotional regulation through cognitive reappraisal — the most adaptive form of emotion regulation in contemporary psychological theory — while Tamasic tendencies are associated with suppression and avoidance patterns, which are consistently linked to adverse psychological outcomes in the clinical literature. This finding connects the ancient Guna framework directly to contemporary research on emotional intelligence and psychological resilience, providing an empirical bridge between traditional Indian psychology and Western clinical and organisational psychology.

7.3 Triguna in Organisational Contexts: Empirical Findings:

Research specifically examining Guna composition in organisational contexts has produced findings that are directly relevant to HRM practice. Studies of training programme preferences among employees classified by dominant Guna have found that Sattvic employees score highest in preferences for ethics and mindfulness-based training programmes, while Rajasic employees show the strongest preferences for high-performance and competitive training modules, and Tamasic employees respond best to discipline-based, repetitive, and motivational interventions with concrete immediate tasks and

structured accountability mechanisms. This Guna-differentiated pattern of training preferences provides an evidence-based rationale for the customisation of learning and development programmes by employee Guna profile.

Research has also documented that Sattva shows a positive correlation with life satisfaction and ethical leadership behaviour, while Rajas is associated with ambition, competitive drive, and the risk of burnout, and Tamas is associated with disengagement, resistance to change, and lower performance in dynamic environments. These findings provide an empirical foundation for the HRM applications discussed in the following chapter, grounding practical recommendations in documented relationships between Guna composition and organisational outcomes.

8. TRIGUNA FRAMEWORK: THE COMPARATIVE TABLE :

The following table provides a comprehensive comparison of the three Gunas across eight dimensions relevant to organisational behaviour and HRM practice. This synthesis integrates classical textual sources with contemporary empirical research findings.

Table 3: Comparative Guna Profile Across Eight Organisational Dimensions (Synthesised from Classical Sources and Contemporary Empirical Research)

Dimension	Sattva	Rajas	Tamas
Core Quality	Purity, clarity, wisdom	Activity, passion, drive	Inertia, darkness, stability,
Symbolic colour	White	Red / Orange	Black / Grey
Decision style	Reflective, ethical, calm	Fast, goal-driven, ambitious	Slow, avoidant, routine-bound
Workplace strength	Conflict resolution, mentoring, ethics	Sales, innovation, competitive roles	Process, precision, structured tasks
Risk / Excess	May be exploited; over-idealistic	Burnout, chaos, ego-conflict	Disengagement, resistance to change
Training preference	Ethics & mindfulness programs	High-performance & competitive modules	Discipline-based, motivational coaching
Performance appraisal	360° feedback & mentoring metrics	KPI & target-driven evaluation	Developmental feedback & counselling
Well-being correlation	$r = +0.24$ (life satisfaction)	$r = -0.38$ (subjective happiness)	$r = -0.42$ (subjective happiness)

9. HRM APPLICATIONS: TRANSLATING TRIGUNA WISDOM INTO PRACTICE :

9.1 Talent Assessment and Guna Profiling:

The first step in applying the Triguna framework to HRM practice is the development of meaningful Guna profiles for individual employees and teams. HR managers begin this process through systematic behavioural observation: noting whether individuals are generally calm and balanced (Sattvic), energetic and driven (Rajasic), or preferring stability and routine (Tamasic) in their day-to-day work behaviour. This observational approach can be supplemented by structured Guna assessment instruments — adaptations of the Rao Triguna Scale or more recent validated instruments — that provide quantitative Guna profiles for individuals and teams.

The practical value of Guna profiling for talent management lies in its integration of motivation, decision style, stress response, and growth orientation into a single coherent framework, rather than measuring these as separate, unrelated personality attributes. A Guna profile captures not just what an individual is like in current circumstances but how they are likely to respond to pressure, change, challenge, and developmental opportunity — information that is highly relevant for role assignment,

team design, succession planning, and coaching. The profile also points directly toward appropriate developmental interventions: a predominantly Rajasic individual with burnout risk needs Sattvic development (mindfulness, reflective practice, purpose clarification); a predominantly Tamasic individual needs structured Rajasic activation (concrete achievable goals, accountability structures, motivational coaching).

An important caution in implementing Guna profiling is the risk of reductive labelling — treating individuals as fixed 'types' rather than as dynamic configurations of all three Gunas. The classical framework is explicit that Guna composition is malleable and context-dependent; the same individual may manifest different Guna dominance in different situational contexts (high-pressure deadlines versus creative brainstorming sessions versus structured process execution). Effective Guna profiling acknowledges this contextual variability and focuses on patterns rather than fixed categories.

9.2 Customising Training and Development Programmes:

One of the most immediately actionable applications of the Triguna framework in HRM is the customisation of learning and development programmes to match the dominant Guna orientation of different employee groups. The empirical evidence reviewed in Chapter V establishes clear differential preferences across Guna types for different training modalities, and effective L&D design should reflect these preferences rather than delivering one-size-fits-all programmes that serve some employees well while alienating others.

For Sattvic employees, training programmes should emphasise ethical leadership development, mindfulness and reflective practice, philosophy and values-based decision-making, systems thinking, and collaborative problem-solving. These individuals thrive in learning environments that prioritise depth over breadth, process over outcome, and inner development over technical skill acquisition. They respond well to Socratic discussion formats, case-based ethical reasoning, mentoring relationships, and contemplative practices. They are ideal candidates for senior leadership development programmes with a strong ethics and governance orientation.

Rajasic employees benefit most from high-performance training modules, competitive simulations, goal setting and achievement workshops, innovation challenges, and high-intensity skill development programmes with clear, measurable outcomes. Their learning motivation is outcome-driven: they want to know specifically how a training programme will make them better, faster, or more successful. They respond poorly to abstract or philosophical content that lacks a clear performance connection. The crucial developmental challenge for Rajasic employees is the cultivation of Sattvic balance — introducing mindfulness, reflective practice, and purpose clarification as complements to their dominant performance orientation — to prevent the burnout that Rajasic excess predictably produces.

Tamasic employees require the most carefully designed developmental interventions, as their tendency toward inertia and resistance to change can make standard training programmes ineffective or actively counterproductive. Discipline-based programmes with highly structured progression, concrete immediate tasks, regular accountability check-ins, and motivational coaching are most likely to engage Tamasic individuals productively. The key is to provide sufficient structure and immediate reinforcement to activate the Rajasic energy needed to overcome inertia, while simultaneously providing the psychological safety and gradual challenge escalation that prevents the overwhelm that would return a Tamasic individual to disengagement. Peer learning formats and buddy systems can be particularly effective for this group.

9.3 Building Balanced Teams through Intentional Guna Mixing:

The Triguna framework provides a principled basis for team composition that goes beyond the conventional approaches of role-based team design (Belbin) or cognitive style diversity (MBTI-based team building). The framework's insight — that balanced teams, in which all three Gunas are represented, foster better collaboration, creativity, and resilience than teams dominated by a single Guna — has direct implications for how HR professionals and team leaders should approach team design.

A team composed entirely of Sattvic individuals may achieve remarkable ethical clarity and internal harmony but may lack the Rajasic energy needed for competitive performance and the Tamasic stability needed for consistent execution of detailed, repetitive processes. A team dominated by Rajasic individuals may achieve spectacular short-term results but will be vulnerable to internal conflict (as multiple ambitious individuals compete for recognition and dominance), burnout, and the erosion of

ethical boundaries under performance pressure. A team dominated by Tamasic individuals will be reliable and consistent but resistant to change, innovation, and the adaptive responses that dynamic environments require.

The optimal team composition from a Guna perspective integrates Sattvic wisdom and ethical guidance (particularly valuable in leadership and conflict-resolution roles), Rajasic energy and ambition (essential for innovation, competitive performance, and change initiatives), and Tamasic reliability and precision (invaluable for quality assurance, compliance, and process execution). Guna-based team design thus complements competency-based role allocation by attending to the motivational and energy dynamics of team composition, not just the technical skills required.

9.4 Leadership Development Through Sattva Enhancement:

The Triguna framework's implications for leadership development are perhaps its most significant contribution to contemporary management practice. The classical characterisation of Sattvic leadership — ethical, empathetic, transparent, oriented toward collective well-being, committed to long-term vision over short-term gain, exercising authority through trust rather than fear — maps with remarkable precision onto what contemporary leadership research identifies as the most effective and sustainable leadership style: servant leadership, authentic leadership, and transformational leadership with an ethical foundation.

Leadership development programmes informed by the Triguna framework should therefore focus not merely on building Sattvic traits (though this is important) but on managing the dynamic balance of all three Gunas in the leader's profile. Effective leaders need sufficient Sattva for ethical clarity, long-term vision, and authentic stakeholder relationships; sufficient Rajas for decisiveness, competitive performance, and the energy to drive organisational change; and sufficient Tamas for consistency, persistence, and the stabilising reliability that followers need to trust their leaders. The developmental challenge is to cultivate the Sattvic foundation while channelling Rajas constructively and preventing Tamasic excess.

Organisations should implement specific Sattva-enhancement practices in their leadership development programmes: meditation and mindfulness training, philosophical reading and discussion circles, ethical case analysis, reflective journalling, mentoring relationships with senior leaders of demonstrated wisdom and integrity, and regular immersive experiences that remove leaders from performance pressure and reconnect them with the deeper purposes of their work. Research on mindfulness in leadership contexts supports the value of these practices: mindfulness training is associated with improved emotional regulation, ethical decision-making, and authentic leadership behaviour — all characteristic of Sattvic development.

9.5 Performance Management Aligned with Guna Characteristics:

Performance management systems designed without attention to Guna differentiation are likely to be systematically unfair and ineffective — rewarding Rajasic performance styles while undervaluing Sattvic contributions and failing to develop Tamasic employees. A Guna-informed performance management framework recognises that different individuals contribute differently to organisational effectiveness and requires different assessment and development approaches to capture and cultivate those contributions.

Sattvic employees contribute most visibly through their mentoring relationships, their ethical influence on team culture, their conflict resolution, and their long-term vision contributions — all of which are undervalued by conventional KPI-based performance systems that reward quantifiable output. Their performance should be assessed through 360-degree feedback processes that capture their influence on team dynamics, ethical culture, and collaborative effectiveness, alongside mentoring metrics that quantify their developmental contribution to colleagues. Compensation and recognition systems should reward not only individual output but contribution to collective capability.

Rajasic employees respond strongly to goal-based KPIs and target-driven evaluation — they are naturally motivated by clear, challenging, measurable objectives and by the recognition that comes from exceeding them. However, an exclusively output-focused performance system for Rajasic employees reinforces the very excess that creates burnout and ethical risk. Well-designed performance systems for Rajasic individuals should include process quality metrics alongside output metrics, regular check-ins

on workload sustainability, and explicit evaluation of ethical conduct and collaborative behaviour that prevent Rajasic performance from coming at the cost of others' well-being or organisational integrity. Tamasic employees require performance systems designed around developmental milestones rather than absolute output targets, with frequent, constructive feedback cycles that provide the structure and reinforcement they need to maintain engagement and motivation. Counselling support and attitude reorientation programmes should be available for Tamasic employees who are struggling with chronic disengagement, and structured professional development plans should provide clear pathways for growth that prevent the stagnation that deep Tamasic dominance produces.

10. CRITICAL EVALUATION: THE TRIGUNA FRAMEWORK IN SCHOLARLY PERSPECTIVE :

10.1 Relationship to Western Personality Frameworks:

The Triguna framework occupies a distinctive position relative to the mainstream Western personality models that currently dominate HRM practice. Compared with the Five Factor Model (Big Five), the most extensively validated personality framework in Western psychology, the Guna framework shares some conceptual overlap: Sattva shows convergent validity with Agreeableness and Conscientiousness, Rajas with Extraversion and low Agreeableness, and Tamas with Neuroticism and low Conscientiousness. However, the Triguna framework is not simply a three-factor version of the Five Factor Model; it incorporates a dynamic systems perspective (the Gunas constantly interact and their balance shifts), a developmental orientation (Guna composition can be changed through deliberate practice), and a normative framework (Sattva is explicitly valued as the highest quality) that the descriptive Five Factor Model lacks.

The MBTI's sixteen types, derived from Jungian archetypes of Extraversion/Introversion, Sensing/Intuition, Thinking/Feeling, and Judging/Perceiving, have even less structural overlap with the Guna framework — they describe cognitive styles and information-processing preferences rather than the motivational and energetic qualities that the Gunas characterise. The DISC framework's four quadrants (Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, Compliance) show closer parallels: Dominance and Influence map onto Rajasic qualities, Steadiness onto Tamasic stability, and Compliance onto a mix of Sattvic and Tamasic characteristics. However, none of these Western frameworks incorporates the Triguna model's insight that the Guna balance is dynamically malleable and that cultivating Sattva is a developmental goal with both psychological and ethical dimensions.

10.2 Methodological Challenges in Guna Research:

The empirical research programme on the Triguna framework faces several methodological challenges that must be acknowledged in any comprehensive scholarly assessment. First, the translation of ancient Sanskrit concepts into measurable psychological constructs inevitably involves interpretive decisions that may not fully capture the nuance of the original philosophical categories. The Rao Triguna Scale and similar instruments operationalise the Gunas primarily through self-report questionnaires, which are subject to the well-documented limitations of self-report methods in personality research — including social desirability bias, limited self-insight, and the tendency for responses to reflect situational rather than dispositional characteristics.

Second, most empirical Guna research has been conducted on Indian samples, which limits the generalisability of findings to other cultural contexts. The question of whether the Triguna framework functions as a universal personality taxonomy or as a culturally embedded framework that resonates particularly strongly within the Indian philosophical tradition has not been definitively resolved. Cross-cultural studies comparing Guna profiles and their validity across different national and cultural contexts would significantly advance the framework's empirical standing.

Third, the normative dimension of the Triguna framework — its explicit ranking of Sattva as the highest Guna — creates potential complications for its use as a neutral assessment tool in HRM contexts. A personality framework that explicitly values one personality orientation over others is not culturally neutral, and its application in performance appraisal and selection contexts requires careful attention to fairness, inclusion, and the avoidance of discrimination against individuals whose natural Guna orientation tends toward Rajas or Tamas.

10.3 The Potential of Integration with Modern Constructs:

Despite these limitations, the potential for integrating the Triguna framework with contemporary OB and HRM constructs is substantial and largely unrealised. The framework's characterisation of Sattva maps onto the psychological capital construct (PsyCap) of Luthans and colleagues — particularly its components of hope, resilience, and optimism — and provides a philosophical foundation for PsyCap development that goes beyond the purely cognitive-behavioural orientation of most PsyCap interventions.

Human Competitive Edge Psychological Capital (PsyCap) is a positive psychological state of development characterized by four key components: hope, efficacy, resiliency, and optimism. These components are often referred to as the "HERO Within" and are essential for organizations seeking sustainable growth and competitive advantage. PsyCap can be developed through various strategies, including training, coaching, and fostering positive leadership and teamwork. It has been utilized in various settings, from administration and communication to education, and has been applied in both formal and non-formal organizational contexts.

The framework's analysis of Rajas and its burnout risk maps onto Maslach's job demands-resources model and provides a clear cultural-philosophical rationale for the recovery and renewal practices that JD-R theory recommends. The Tamasic disengagement trajectory maps onto Kahn's engagement theory and provides a personality-based explanation for the chronic disengagement that engagement surveys consistently identify in 30-40% of organisational populations. Kahn's engagement theory defines employee engagement as the degree to which individuals bring their full selves—physically, emotionally, and cognitively—into their work roles, influenced by meaningfulness, safety, and availability.

11. CONCLUSION: ANCIENT WISDOM FOR THE MODERN WORKPLACE :

This research paper has undertaken a systematic, multi-dimensional investigation of the Triguna framework — Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas — as a personality framework with specific relevance to Organisational Behaviour and Human Resource Management. The paper's central argument has been established through philosophical analysis, empirical review, practical application mapping, and critical evaluation: the Triguna model constitutes a sophisticated, empirically supported, and practically generative personality framework that offers contemporary HRM practitioners a powerful complement to existing Western personality assessment and development tools.

The framework's most distinctive contributions to OB and HRM may be summarised as follows. First, it provides a holistic, integrated personality model that captures motivational energy, cognitive style, emotional orientation, and ethical character within a single coherent framework — a breadth of coverage that no single Western personality instrument achieves. Second, it insists on the dynamic, malleable character of personality, framing individual differences not as fixed traits to be measured and managed but as developmental orientations to be cultivated and transformed through deliberate practice and organisational intervention. Third, it provides a normative orientation — the ideal of Sattva as the foundation of ethical, effective, and sustainable human behaviour — that connects personality development to larger philosophical and ethical commitments, giving HRM practice a depth of purpose that purely descriptive personality frameworks cannot provide.

The practical implications for HRM practice are substantial and immediately actionable. Guna profiling differentiated training design, intentional team composition, Sattva-oriented leadership development, and Guna-aligned performance management together constitute a comprehensive IKS-grounded approach to talent management that can transform how Indian organisations understand and develop their people. For management educators, the integration of the Triguna framework into OB and HRM curricula offers a pedagogically powerful way to ground classical Indian psychology in contemporary organisational contexts, developing in students the dual competence in traditional wisdom and modern practice that the Indian business environment increasingly demands.

The Bhagavad Gita's vision of the Gunatita — the individual who has transcended the compulsive dominance of any single Guna and acts from a place of free, clear, purposeful awareness — represents the highest ideal of human personality development in the Triguna tradition. In organisational terms, this translates into the vision of a leader who is simultaneously calm and decisive, principled and pragmatic, stable and responsive to change — a vision that neither the Five Factor Model nor the MBTI can articulate but that the ancient wisdom of the Triguna framework expresses with remarkable

precision. Ancient India's contribution to the science of human personality deserves a place not on the margins but at the centre of twenty-first century management education and practice.

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