**12.** **Human personality, The 3 Gunas of Nature**                                             May 26, 2011 at 1:00pm

The 3 Gunas of Nature In the philosophy of Yoga, all matter in the universe arises from the fundamental substrate called Prakriti. From this ethereal Prakriti the three primary gunas (qualities) emerge creating the essential aspects of all nature—energy, matter and consciousness. These three gunas are tamas (darkness), rajas (activity), and sattva (purity). All three gunas are always present in all beings and objects surrounding us but vary in their relative amounts. We humans have the unique ability to consciously alter the levels of the gunas in our bodies and minds. The gunas cannot be separated or removed in oneself, but can be consciously acted upon to encourage their increase or decrease. A guna can be increased or decreased through the interaction and influence of external objects, lifestyle practices and thoughts. Tamas is a state of darkness, inertia, inactivity and materiality. Tamas manifests from ignorance and deludes all beings from their spiritual truths. To reduce tamas avoid tamasic foods, over sleeping, over eating, inactivity, passivity and fearful situations. Tamasic foods include heavy meats, and foods that are spoiled, chemically treated, processed or refined. Rajas is a state of energy, action, change and movement. The nature of rajas is of attraction, longing and attachment and rajas strongly bind us to the fruits of our work. To reduce rajas avoid rajasic foods, over exercising, over work, loud music, excessive thinking and consuming excessive material goods. Rajasic foods include fried foods, spicy foods, and stimulants. Sattva is a state of harmony, balance, joy and intelligence. Sattva is the guna that yogi/nis achieve towards as it reduces rajas and tamas and thus makes liberation possible. To increase sattva reduce both rajas and tamas, eat Sattvic foods and enjoy activities and environments that produce joy and positive thoughts. Sattvic foods include whole grains and legumes and fresh fruits and vegetables that grow above the ground. All of the yogic practices were developed to create sattva in the mind and body. Thus, practicing yoga and leading a yogic lifestyle strongly cultivates sattva. The mind’s psychological qualities are highly unstable and can quickly fluctuate between the different gunas. The predominate guna of the mind acts as a lens that effects our perceptions and perspective of the world around us. Thus, if the mind is in rajas it will experience world events as chaotic, confusing and demanding and it will react to these events in a rajasic way. All gunas create attachment and thus bind one’s self to the ego. “When one rises above the three gunas that originate in the body; one is freed from birth, old age, disease, and death; and attains enlightenment” (Bhagavad Gita 14.20). While the yogi/nis goal is to cultivate sattva, his/her ultimate goal is to transcend their misidentification of the self with the gunas and to be unattached to both the good and the bad, the positive and negative qualities of all life.