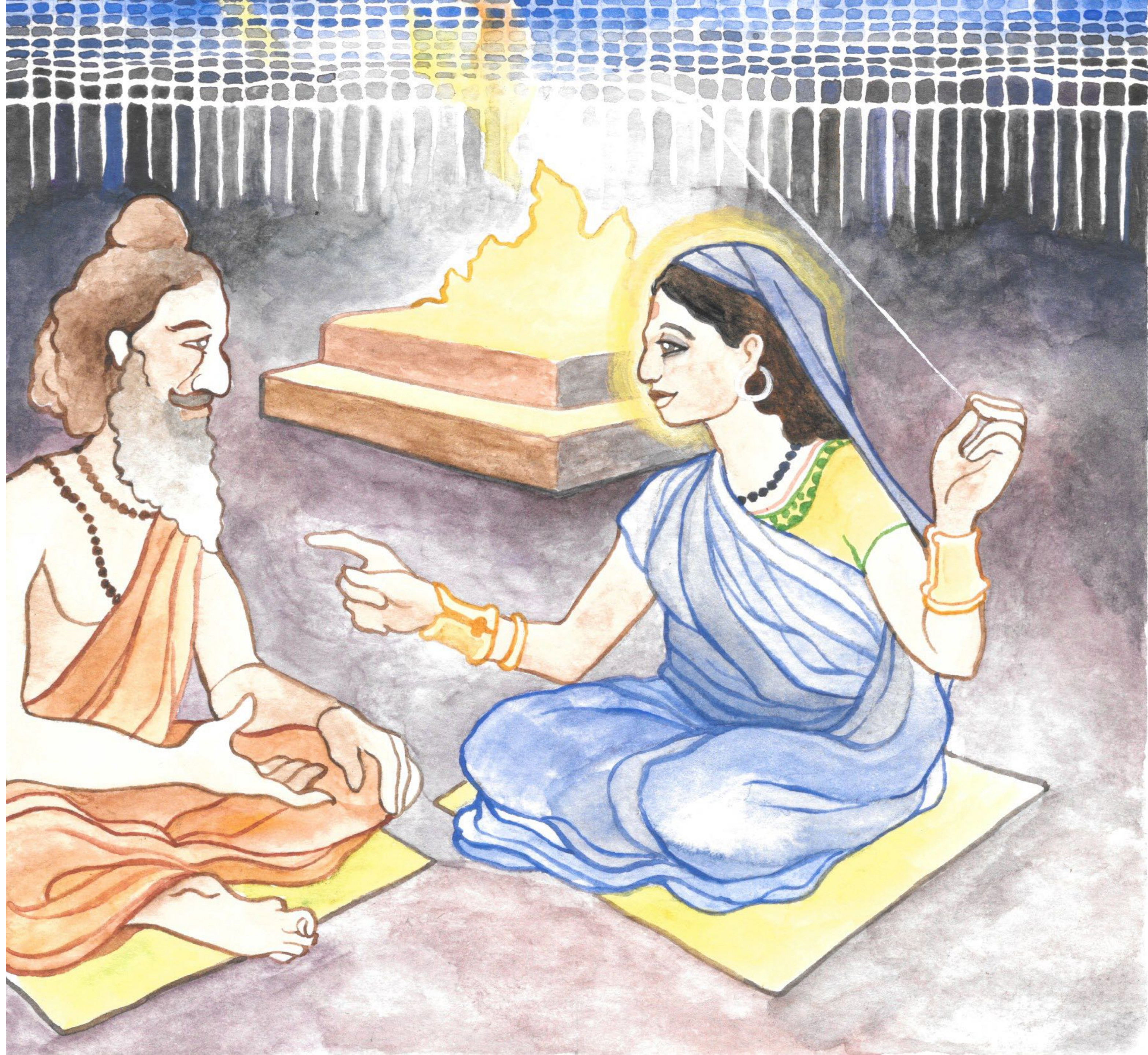


# Free Fridays

## THE THREE GUNAS

For our third talk on  
Friday, March 7th, 2025  
we will discuss **GUNAS**.

- What is a Guna?
- What are the 3 Gunas?
- How can awareness of the Gunas help me.
- How the Gunas manifest in the world.



ॐ ॐ ॐ

श्री गुरुभ्यो नमः हरिः ॐ

Sri Gurubhyo Namah Harih Om

*Salutations to the Gurus!*

ॐ सह नाववतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।

तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहै ।

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

aum saha nāvavatu | saha nau bhunaktu | saha vīryam karavāvahai |

tejasvi nāvadhītam astu mā vidviṣāvahai |

aum śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ ||

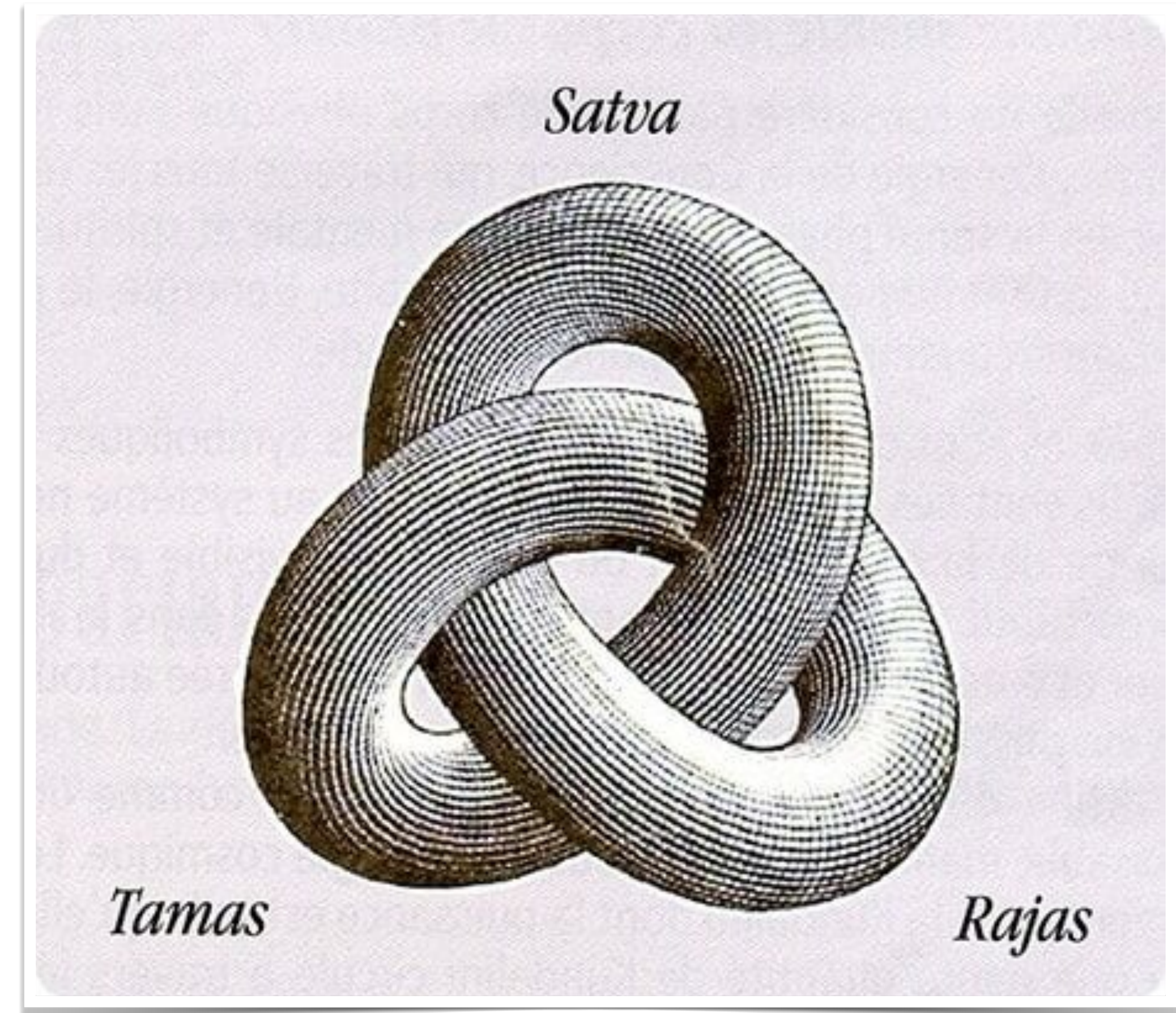
*Aum. May that Brahman protect us together. May it nourish us together.*

*May we both gain great vitality. May our learning be brilliant.*

*May we never argue. Om peace, peace, peace.*

# General Definition of Guna

- A general definition of Guna is a rope, a thread, or a quality
- It indicates form
- Most commonly, guna refers to the three qualities that make up the manifest universe
  - Sattva - harmony
  - Rajas - activity
  - Tamas - inertia



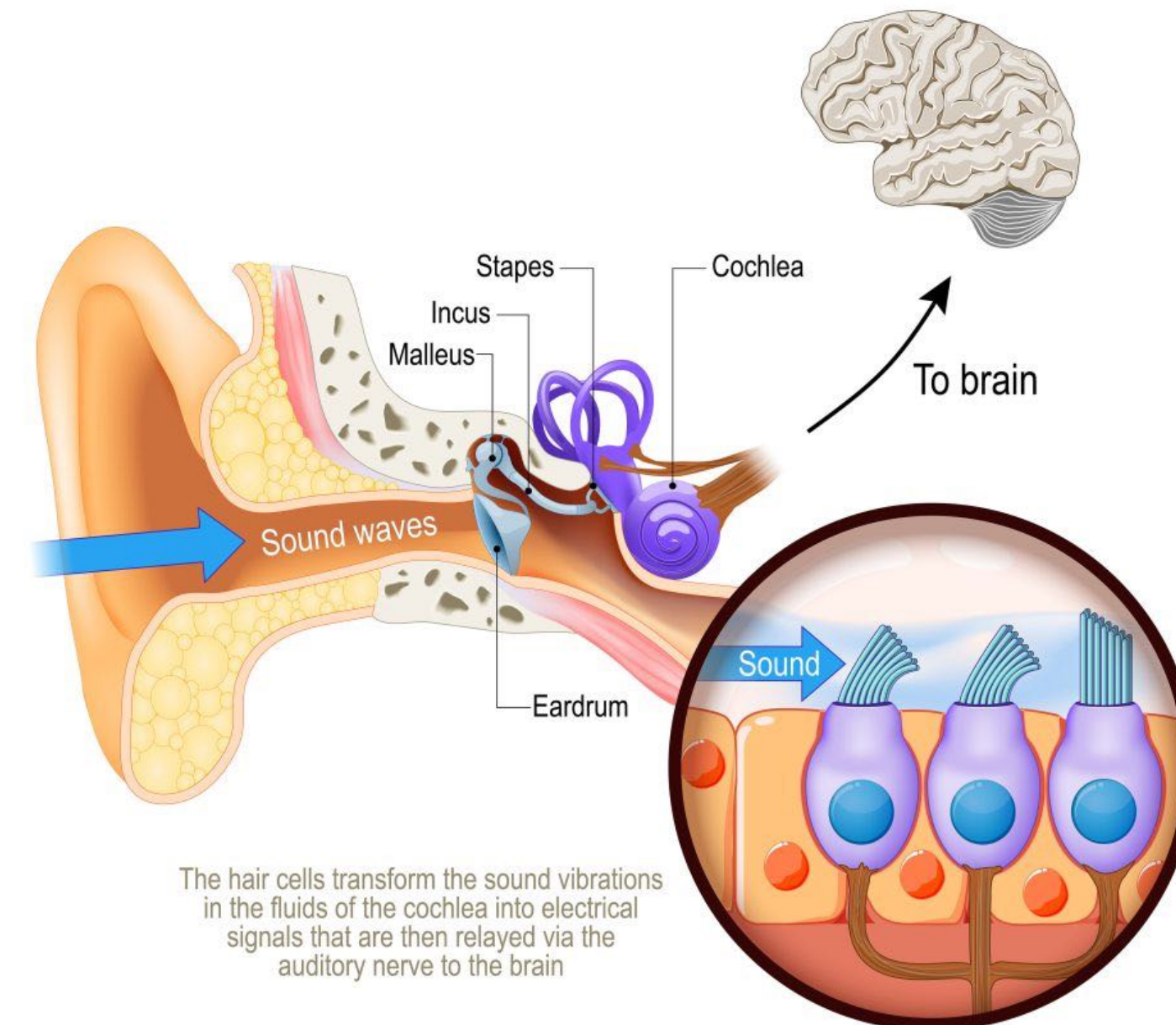
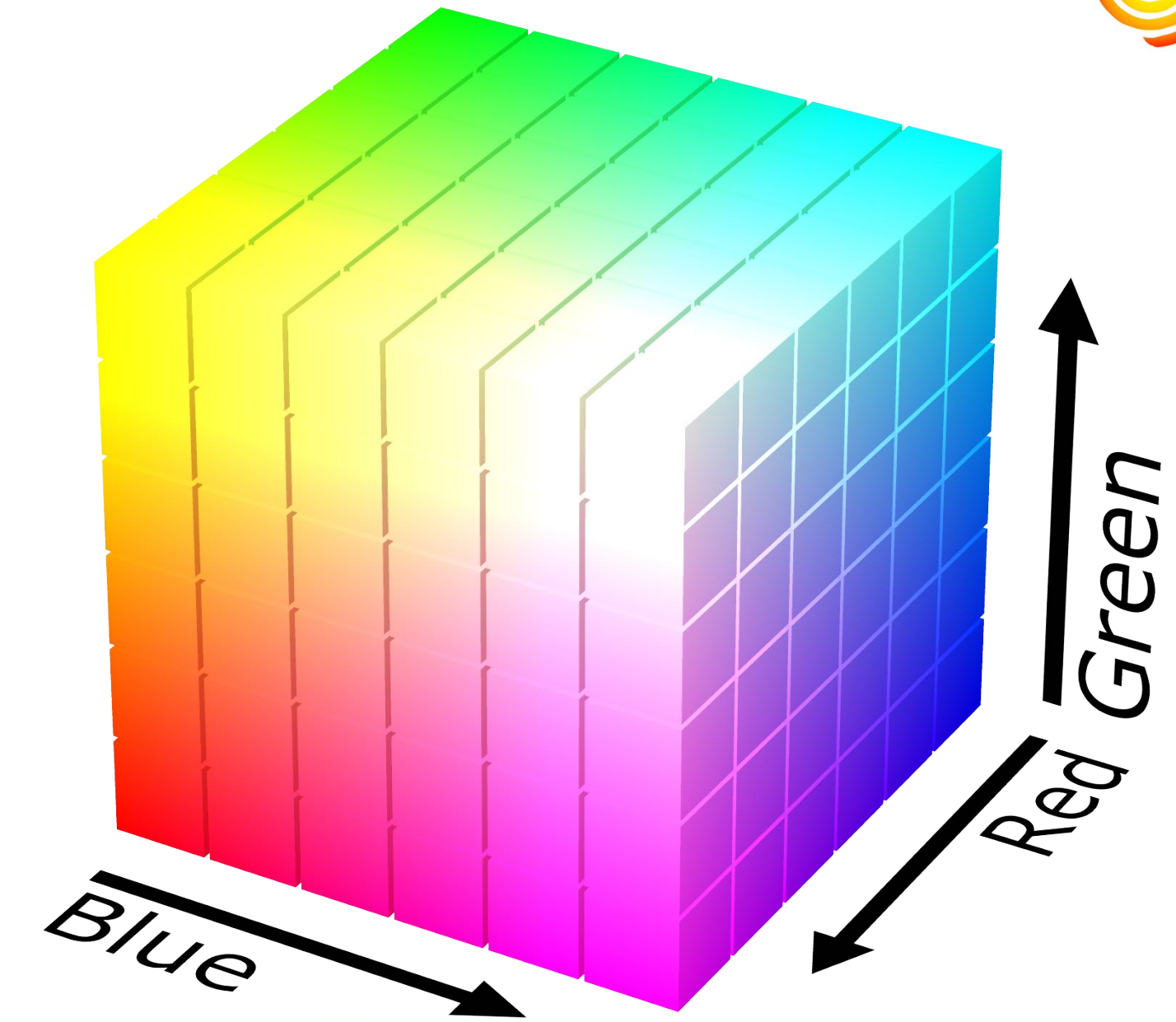
# Which is the best Guna?

- Gunas are not good or bad.  
They are qualities and interact with each other
- The candle example:
  - Wax is **tamasic**
  - Flame is **rajasic**
  - Light is **sattvic**
- The coconut example:
  - Shell is **tamasic**
  - Pulp is **rajasic**
  - Water is **sattvic**



# Experience as Gunas

- **RGB** - red green and blue
  - Everything exists in the spectrum of these colors
  - Everything that exists in the universe exists in combinations in the three gunas
  
- **A-U-M**
  - Three basic sounds create all sounds
  - **A** is rajas
  - **U** is sattva
  - **M** is tamas



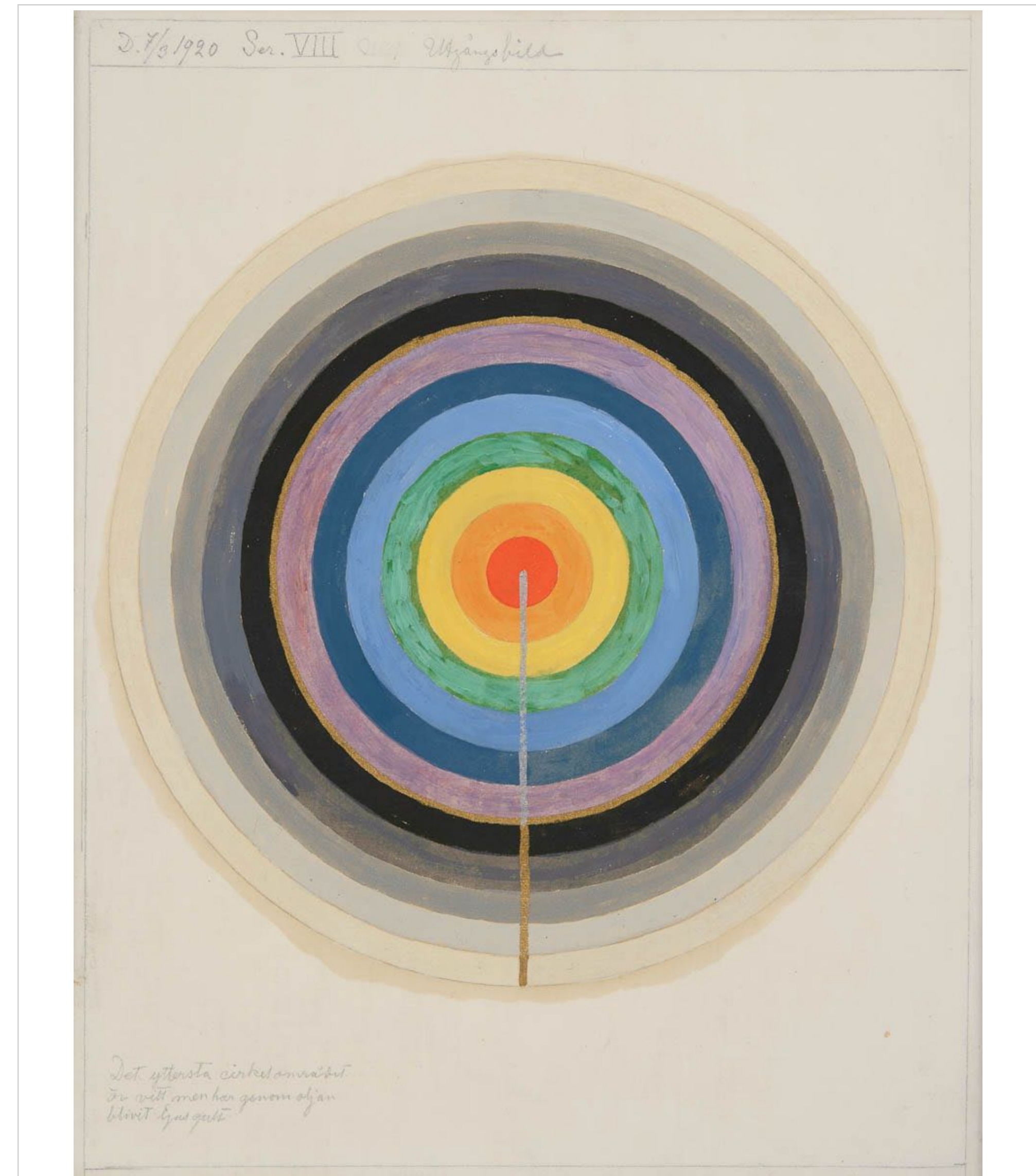
# Lifestyle Influences Gunas

- We can work towards sattva through our lifestyle: food, company, literature.
- Get up early
- Do yoga
- Pranayama
- Meditate
- Read a spiritual book
- Be nice to people
- Practice patience and forgiveness
- Drink lots and lots of coffee
- Careful food choices



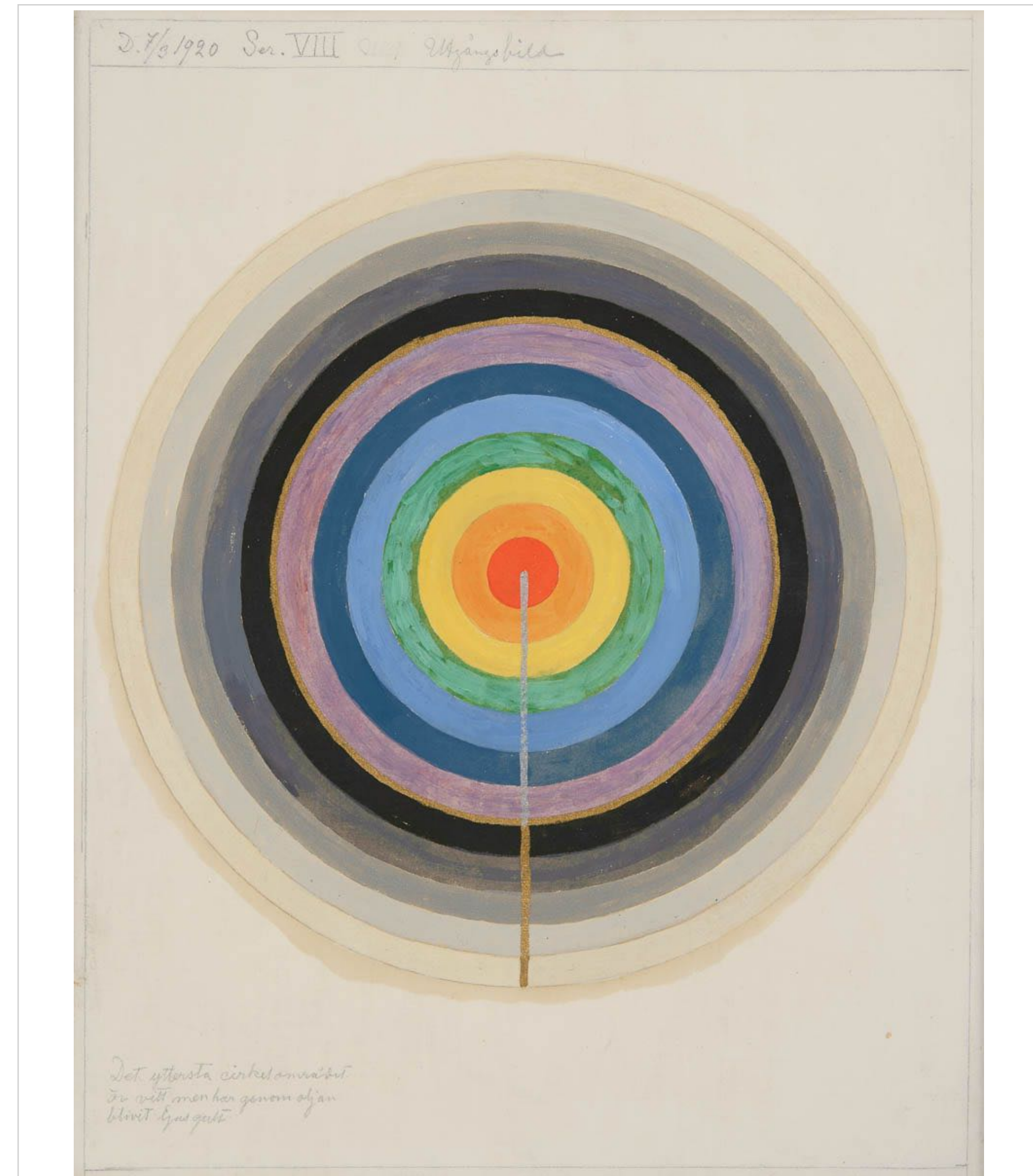
# Gunās in and out of balance

- Gunas in balance reflect their strengths
- **Sattva** is illumination, bouyant, light, reflective, kind, and listening
- **Rajas** is activity, creativity, motion, inspiration, and motivation
- **Tamas** is restraint, steadiness, consistency, cohesion, stability, and firmness



# Gunās in and out of balance

- **Gunās** can go out of balance
- Too much **tamas** leads to laziness and stubbornness
- Too much **rajas** leads to lack of focus, hyperactivity, and a tendency to become overpassionate or zealous
- Too much **sattva** leads to over intellectualization and intellectual arrogance
- **Gunās** effect our individual perception





# Gunās in Yoga

- The gunas cause all creation to occur
- They are to be brought into an equilibrium
- When they merge into an equilibrium they cease creating forms
- In an equilibrium, sattva is dominant as reflection
- In that state of reflection, the Seer knows itself as distinct from forms
- Then the Seer rests in the witness state and does not identify with changing forms



# Gunās in Sāmkhya

- Prakriti, nature, is the cause of all creation and manifestation.
- Prakriti is made up of the three gunas.
- The gunas are not qualities but constituents or ingredients of Prakriti
- Though distinct in nature, they are interdependent and cohere to each other. When they move out from the equilibrium of Prakriti into manifestation, they change in regard to their ratio, proportion, and effect
- Prakriti is either in an equilibrium, where there is no manifestation, or manifest, and then the gunas are always in motion
- Each guna embodies a distinct aspect of manifestation.
  - **Sattva**, what is lightness, pure and fine
  - **Rajas**, activity, movement
  - **Tamas**, solid, enveloping, and covering.

# Gunās in Advaita Vedānta

- **Gunās** are qualities
- Building blocks of the manifest universe
- Spiritual liberation is to transcend the **gunās**
- Vijnana and manomaya kosha are influenced by **sattva**
- Pranamaya kosha influenced by **rajas**
- Annamaya kosha by **tamas**
- Brahman is the beginningless, eternal, conscious, existence
- Maya is the limiting or covering property of Brahman
- **Maya is composed of the three gunās**, which create innumerable upadhis, both macrocosmic and microcosmic
- An example of a macrocosmic upadhi is **Ishvara**
- An example of a microcosmic upadhi is a **person (jiva)**

# Gunās in Bhagavad Gītā

14.5 Gunas are the material nature in 3 modes: goodness, passion, ignorance

14.6 Sattva, goodness is illuminating, and the characteristics are happiness and knowledge

14.11 The mode of goodness manifests when the gates of the body are illuminated by knowledge

14.17 Knowledge develops from sattva

14.7 Rajas, passion, unlimited desires, bound by the results of actions

14.17 Greed develops from rajas

14.8 Tamas, ignorance, delusion, characterized by laziness, sleep, and bondage

14.17 Foolishness and delusion develops from tamas

14.20 When one transcends the three gunas, they are freed from birth, death, old age, and is liberated

# Gunās in Food, Bhagavad Gita

17.8 Foods dear to those in the mode of **sattva** increase the duration of life, purify one's existence and give strength, health, happiness and satisfaction. Such foods are juicy, fatty, wholesome, and pleasing to the heart.

17.9 Foods that are too bitter, too sour, salty, hot, pungent, dry and burning are dear to those in the mode of **rajas**. Such foods cause distress, misery and disease.

17.10 Food prepared more than three hours before being eaten, food that is tasteless, decomposed and putrid, and food consisting of remnants and untouchable things is dear to those in the mode of **tamas**.



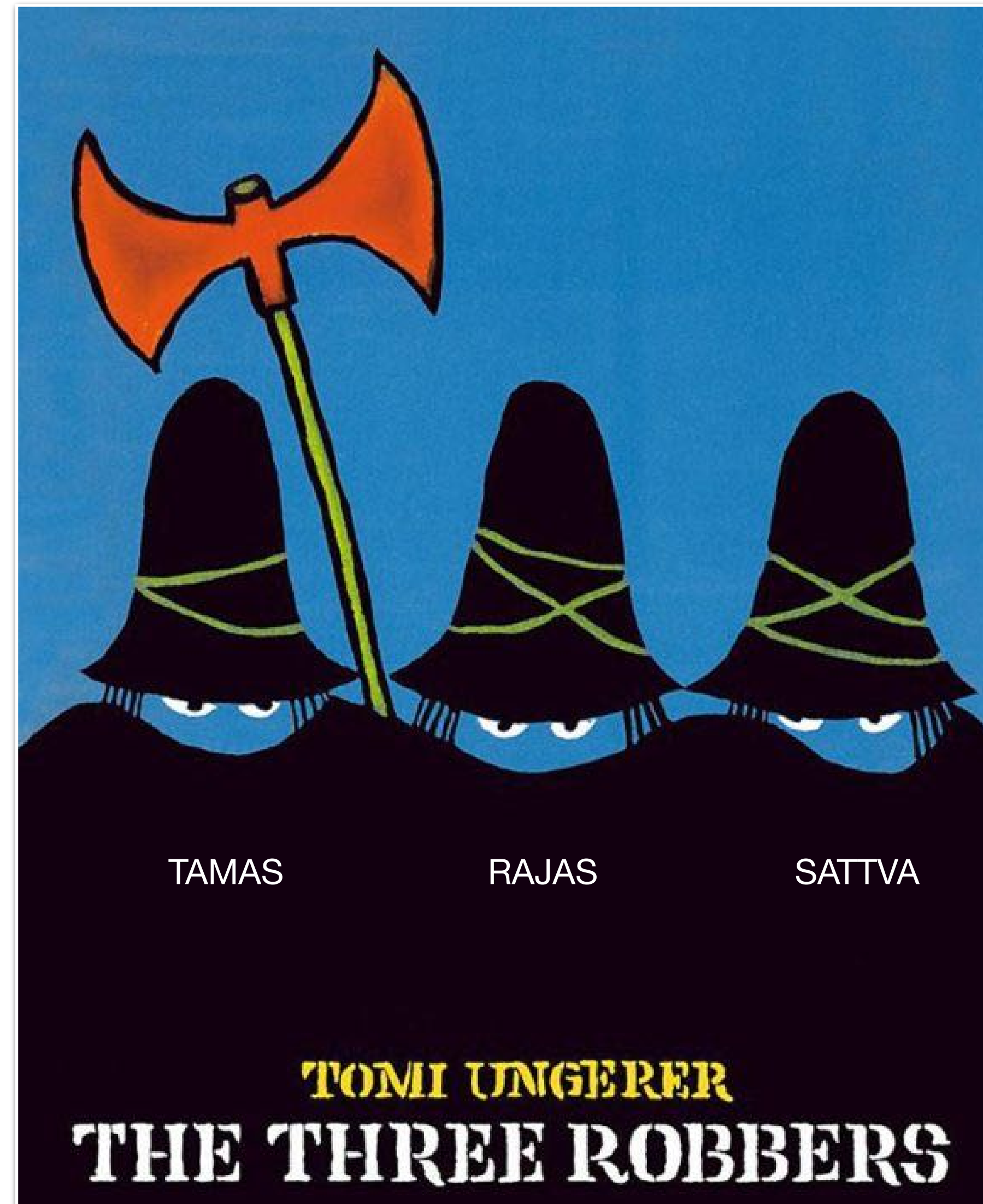
# Transcending the Gunas in Bhagavad Gita

14.22-25:

“O son of Pāṇḍu, he who does not hate illumination, attachment and delusion when they are present or long for them when they disappear; who is unwavering and undisturbed through all these reactions of the material qualities, remaining neutral and transcendental, knowing that the modes alone are active; who is situated in the self and regards alike happiness and distress; who looks upon a lump of earth, a stone and a piece of gold with an equal eye; who is equal toward the desirable and the undesirable; who is steady, situated equally well in praise and blame, honor and dishonor; who treats alike both friend and enemy; and who has renounced all material activities – such a person is said to have transcended the modes of nature.”

# The Story of the Three Robbers

Once upon a time ...



*There is a book >>> not about the Gunas*

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते  
पूर्णश्च पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥  
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

aum pūrṇamadaḥ pūrṇamidam pūrṇāt-pūrṇamudacyate  
pūrṇasya pūrṇamādāya pūrṇamevāvaśṣyate ||  
aum śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ ||

Aum! That is infinite, and this (universe) is infinite.

The infinite proceeds from the infinite.

Having taken the infinitude from the infinite (universe),

It remains as the infinite alone.

Aum! Peace! Peace! Peace!