DHARANA
International Journal of Business

https://doi.org/10.18311/DBIJB/2025/53045

# Effect of Yoga on *Trigunas* on Management Educators and Senior Citizens

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## Abstract

The *Triguna* theory, rooted in Indian tradition, has garnered significant attention from Indian psychologists, leading to the development of indigenous models of human behaviour, particularly concerning personality. This study investigates the impact of yoga practice on the *Trigunas—Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas* on individuals. A random sample comprising 91 management educators, 43 senior citizens, and 53 yoga practitioners was selected for this research. Descriptive statistical methods and t-tests were employed to analyse the data. The findings reveal a significant difference in the *Triguna* scores between management educators and yoga practitioners, as well as between senior citizens and yoga practitioners. Notably, the practice of yoga was found to significantly reduce *Rajoguna* levels.

**Keywords:** Personality, *Rajas, Sattva, Tamas, Trigunas*, Yoga Practice

**JEL Classification:** I12, I31, Z12, D91, J24

**Cite this article as:** Suresh, N. (2025). Effect of Yoga on *Trigunas* on Management Educators and Senior Citizens. *DHARANA - International Journal of Business, 16*(2), 72–78. doi: https://doi.org/10.18311/DBIJB/2025/53045

## Introduction and Literature Review

Since the early 19th century, scholars across various disciplines have shown a growing interest in exploring Indian scriptures through the lens of psychology. One of the earliest and significant efforts in this direction was *The Science of Emotions* by Bhagavan Das (1905), which aimed to integrate philosophical insights from Indian traditions with the developing field of psychology. This pioneering work laid the groundwork for a broader intellectual curiosity about what is now referred to as "Indian psychology" (Cornelissen, Misra, & Varma, 2011a & b; Rao, Paranjpe, & Dalal, 2008; Rao & Paranjpe, 2016).

Subsequent research endeavours delved deeply into Indian scriptures, not merely as philosophical or spiritual texts but as rich

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sources with potential empirical applicability in psychological science. While the volume of such studies remains limited compared to Western psychology, the investigations undertaken have been thought-provoking and steadily progressive. The emerging body of literature emphasises the need to recognise and incorporate indigenous knowledge systems into the global psychological discourse, despite the relatively slow pace of mainstream acceptance.

## Indian Psychology

The term "Indian Psychology" has historically been subjected to misinterpretation, often being narrowly associated with general psychological studies originating from India. However, its true scope, as emphasised by early proponents like Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo, is distinct and profound. In his lectures in the United States, Swami Vivekananda clearly differentiated Indian Psychology from its Western counterpart. He emphasised its focus on consciousness and inner transformation." Later, Sri Aurobindo reiterated similar ideas in his essays on education and human development.

"In the early 20th century, the Buddhist scholar Mrs Rhys Davids also contributed to the concept by using the term in her academic work. Later, Sinha (1958), an Indian philosopher trained in modern psychology, authored a comprehensive three-volume series titled *Indian Psychology*. His work provided a structured intellectual foundation for future research and dialogue in this field." Despite these efforts, Indian psychology has progressed gradually. However, its evolution shows a consistent deepening of insight and scope."

At its core, Indian Psychology focuses on consciousness as its central theme. This emphasis distinguishes it from other psychological traditions that mainly stress behaviour and cognition within materialist-reductionist frameworks." K. Ramakrishna Rao *et al.,* (2008) articulate this distinction clearly, stating: "Indian psychology is a distinct psychological tradition rooted in the native Indian ethos. It manifests in the multitude of practices prevailing in the Indian subcontinent for centuries. Unlike mainstream psychology, Indian psychology is not overwhelmingly materialist or reductionist in character. It goes beyond the conventional third-person forms of observation to include the study of first-person phenomena such as subjective experience in its various manifestations and associated cognitive phenomena. It does not exclude the investigation of extraordinary states of consciousness and exceptional human abilities. The quintessence of Indian nature is its synthetic stance that results in a magical bridging of dichotomies such as natural and supernatural, secular and sacred, and transactional and transcendental. The result is a psychology that is practical, positive, holistic, and inclusive."

Matthijs *et al.,* (2011) emphasised that Indian psychological concepts are not merely historical curiosities. Instead, they represent living traditions that actively contribute to modern theoretical frameworks and therapeutic practices." By drawing on Vedic and Yogic traditions, Indian Psychology demonstrates how ancient insights can provide innovative solutions to contemporary psychological challenges.

The recognition of diverse psychological roots across world cultures has grown, with many

Western psychologists acknowledging the depth of non-Western traditions. Kim and Berry (1993), for instance, emphasised the value of psychological wisdom found within various cultural heritages, urging a broader and more inclusive global psychology.

Hall and Lindsey (1989), reflecting specifically on Asian traditions, observed:

"Asian psychology has proved remarkably durable, surviving longer than two thousand years; Western personality theories are quite young by comparison. Virtually every eastern meditation system transplanted to the West—Transcendental Meditation, Zen and the like—stems from this psychology or another much like it."

They further note that Eastern psychologies offer not only theories of consciousness but also articulate and practical theories of personality. Unlike Western psychotherapies, which often emphasise symptom relief and surface-level behavioural change, Eastern approaches seek profound inner transformation. They aim to alter states of consciousness to transcend the habitual patterns that confine personality, promoting liberation and self-realisation. Compared to the rigorous and lifelong disciplines demanded by Eastern traditions, Western psychotherapeutic methods appear relatively elementary, akin to introductory courses in self-development.

One concept from Indian Psychology that has received significant attention, especially in the context of human motivation and personality, is the *Triguna* theory (Murthy & Kumar, 2007). According to this model, human behaviour and mental disposition are influenced by three fundamental qualities: *Sattva* (purity, harmony), *Rajas* (activity, passion), and *Tamas* (inertia, darkness). Understanding these dynamics provides profound insights into personal development and therapeutic intervention, offering a uniquely holistic model for psychology and personality theory.

## *Trigunas* According to the *Samkhya* Philosophy

The *Samkhya* system, one of the oldest philosophical schools of India, is founded on the doctrine of ontological dualism between *Prakriti* (primordial nature) and *Purusha* (individual souls). According to *Samkhya*, the entire cosmos, including matter, life, and mind, emerges through the evolution of Prakriti, whose sole purpose is to facilitate the realisation and liberation of an infinite number of *Purushas*. The strict dualism between *Prakriti* and *Purusha* constitutes the fundamental philosophical framework of the *Samkhya* system.

*Prakriti*, the primal cause of the material universe, is composed of three fundamental constituents known as the *Gunas*: *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas*. Contrary to a superficial understanding that treats *Gunas* as mere qualities, the *Samkhya* philosophy asserts that the *Gunas* are substantial entities—the most fundamental elements that constitute Prakriti itself. They are termed "*Gunas*" because they function as the strands that weave the fabric of Prakriti, much like the intertwined threads of a rope. Additionally, they are responsible for binding the *Purusha* to empirical existence through the dynamics of nature.

The *Gunas* are considered substances rather than attributes for several reasons: they possess inherent qualities, they can combine and

separate (conjunction and disjunction), and they are capable of undergoing modifications. While they are not directly perceptible, their existence is inferred based on their observable effects in the phenomenal world.

Each *Guna* has a distinct nature tied to human experience:

1. *Sattva* embodies pleasure and illumination; it is the principle responsible for the manifestation of knowledge and clarity in consciousness. *Sattva* leads to balance, purity, and wisdom.
2. *Rajas* is associated with pain and restless activity; it represents the principle of dynamism, motion, and energy, propelling individuals towards action and ambition.
3. *Tamas* signifies delusion, inertia, and obstruction; it manifests as darkness, ignorance, resistance, and the tendency to maintain the status quo.

Thus, the three *Gunas* respectively perform the functions of manifestation (*Sattva*), activity (*Rajas*), and restraint or inhibition (*Tamas*). Together, they produce the essential emotional and behavioural experiences of pleasure, pain, and delusion in living beings.

In exploring the psychological implications of the *Trigunas*, Bhagavan Das (1955) proposed an interaction theory of *Gunas*, highlighting the complex interplay between these three forces in shaping human personality. According to this perspective, understanding the influence of the *Gunas* is crucial for a comprehensive grasp of individual differences in psychological disposition and behaviour.

Importantly, Bhagavan Das emphasised that in real-life manifestations, the *Gunas* rarely operate in isolation. Instead, they function in varied combinations and proportions, giving rise to the diversity and complexity observed in human personalities. Since *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas* interact fluidly, influencing and modulating one another, the characteristics derived from them can often appear fragmentary, overlapping, and incomplete when viewed through a rigid analytical lens. As a result, any definitive categorisation of personality traits based on the *Triguna* model must acknowledge the nuanced and dynamic nature of these interactions.

Thus, the *Samkhya* exposition of *Trigunas* offers not only a metaphysical explanation of the universe but also an intricate psychological framework, suggesting that inner transformation and self-realisation involve the conscious modulation and transcendence of these three fundamental constituents.

# Research Design

## Objectives of the Study

The present study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To examine the effect of yoga on the summative percentage scores of management educators and management educators who are also yoga practitioners.
2. To assess the effect of yoga on the summative percentage scores of senior citizens and yoga professionals.

## Hypotheses of the Study

The study seeks to test the following hypotheses:

**H1:** There is a significant difference in the summative percentage scores between

management educators and management educators who are yoga practitioners.

**H2:** There is a significant difference in the summative percentage scores of *Trigunas* between senior citizens and yoga professionals.

## Research Methodology

For the study, a reliable and validated research instrument developed in earlier research was employed to collect primary data. A psychometric questionnaire specifically designed to address the research objectives and hypotheses was administered to the target population, comprising management educators and senior citizens. The questionnaire consisted of 36 items aimed at measuring the distribution of the *Trigunas*—*Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas*—in individuals.

The research methodology thus focused on quantitative analysis using structured data collection, ensuring the precision and relevance of responses to the study's core inquiries.

## Sampling

A random sampling technique was used to select participants for the study. The final sample consisted of 91 management educators, 53 yoga practitioners (for comparison with management educators), 43 senior citizens, and 53 yoga practitioners (for comparison with senior citizens). Descriptive statistics were employed to summarise the data and provide initial insights. To test the hypotheses, an independent samples t-test was conducted. The results revealed a significant difference in the summative *Triguna* scores between management educators and yoga practitioners, as well as between senior citizens and yoga practitioners.

These findings underscore the impact of yoga practice on the psychological profiles associated with *Trigunas*, highlighting a possible transformative influence of yogic disciplines across different age and professional groups.

# Data Analysis

Table 1 shows that at the 5% level of significance, the calculated t-value is 4.06. The critical value for a one-tailed test is 1.66, and for a two-tailed test is 1.98. Since the calculated t-value exceeds

**Table 1.** Mean scores – Management educators and yoga practitioners

| | Management Educators (M.E) | Yoga Practitioners (Y.P) |
|---|---|---|
| Mean | 62.76 | 57.87 |
| Variance | 35.30 | 56.42 |
| Observations | 91 | 53 |
| Hypothesised Mean Difference | 0 | |
| Degrees of Freedom (df) | 90 | |
| t Statistic | 4.06 | |
| P(T<=t) One-Tail | 5E-05 | |
| t Critical One-Tail | 1.66 | |
| P(T<=t) Two-Tail | 0.0001 | |
| t Critical Two-Tail | 1.98 | |

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances
Source: Desk Research

**Table 2.** Mean scores – Senior citizens and yoga professionals

| | Senior Citizens (S.C) | Yoga Professionals (Y.P) |
|---|---|---|
| Mean | 61.93 | 58.47 |
| Variance | 39.92 | 57.66 |
| Observations | 43 | 58 |
| Hypothesised Mean Difference | 0 | |
| Degrees of Freedom (df) | 98 | |
| t Statistic | 2.50 | |
| P(T<=t) One-Tail | 0.0070 | |
| t Critical One-Tail | 1.66 | |
| P(T<=t) Two-Tail | 0.0141 | |
| t Critical Two-Tail | 1.98 | |

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances
Source: Desk Research

the critical values, it falls in the rejection region. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. It is concluded that there is a significant difference between the summative percentage scores of *Trigunas* among Management Educators and Yoga Practitioners.

Table 2 indicates that at the 5% level of significance, the calculated t-value is 2.50. The critical values for a one-tailed and two-tailed test are 1.66 and 1.98, respectively. Since the calculated t-value falls within the rejection region, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, it can be inferred that there is a significant difference between the summative percentage scores of Trigunas among Senior Citizens and Yoga Professionals.

## Conclusion

Among the three *Gunas* — *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas* — typically, one *Guna* dominates an individual's disposition. To lead a happy, healthy, calm, and contented life, it is important to balance all three *Gunas*. The appropriate proportion of each *Guna* required varies depending on environmental factors, the nature of work, physical constitution, and spiritual goals. *Rajas*, characterised by activity, energy, and movement, plays a crucial role in life's dynamism. However, an excess of *Rajas* can result in anxiety, restlessness, and hyperactivity. The findings of this study suggest that simple yoga practices can effectively reduce the dominance of *Rajas Guna* and foster a more harmonious personality structure. Thus, yoga emerges as a powerful tool for modulating the balance of *Gunas* and enhancing overall well-being.

## Limitations of the Study

The present study is subject to certain limitations. Potential sources of error include the administration of the questionnaires, the varying levels of participation and motivation of the respondents, and external factors affecting the participants' performance. Working professionals, in particular, may have faced constraints such as limited leisure time, fatigue, stress, and mood fluctuations, which could have influenced their responses and the study outcomes. These factors may limit the generalisability of the findings.

## Scope for Further Study

The application of Eastern philosophies, such as the *Triguna* theory, to personality development and organisational behaviour is an emerging field with immense research potential. Whether in leadership, workplace performance, or personal well-being, Eastern theories offer profound insights into adapting to the dynamic global work environment. As organisations become increasingly diverse and globally interconnected, there is a growing need for research that explores how yogic practices impact job performance, leadership styles, and life satisfaction. Future research could employ qualitative methodologies, longitudinal studies, and mixed-methods approaches to gain deeper insights into the long-term effects of Yoga on the *Gunas*. This study represents a small but significant step toward a broader exploration of Yoga's role in contemporary life and leadership, offering a foundation for further research in this promising area.

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