The Indian concept of *gunas* namely *Sattwa*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas* is perceived to be useful in organizational behaviour research and practice.

Analysing data collected from 310 executives of 13 organizations, Kaur and Sinha identify four factors — *Tamas Guna*, *Rajas Positive Guna*, *Sattwa Guna*, and *Rajas Negative Guna* and discuss the relationship of these variables with some organizationally relevant variables.

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**Introduction**

According to the Sankhya school of Indian philosophy, the entire physical universe, including the human mind is a manifestation of *mula-prakriti* or primordial *prakriti* (Hiriyanna, cited in Chakraborty, 1987, p 76). This *prakriti* has three constituents, namely *sattwa*, *rajas*, and *tamos*. All matter and empirical phenomena, including the mind, is matter-manifest in endless combinations of these three *gunas* (Chakraborty, 1987, p 76). There are no single words in English to translate these three *gunas* (or psychogenic substances as termed by Chakraborty, 1985), but certain suggestive words could be the following ones. Illumination for *sattwa*, movement for *rajas*, and obstruction for *tamos* (Chakraborty, 1985, pp 187-188). The *gunas*, according to Chinmayananda (1967, p 234), may also be understood in terms of Unactivity (*sattwa*). Activity (*rajas*), and Inactivity (*tamos*). The characteristics associated with these three *gunas* are mutually different. For instance, *sattwa* is characterized by purity, serenity, poise, calmness, discrimination, transparency, compassion, clarity, goodness, altruism, dispassion, contentment, etc.; *rajas* is characterized by love of fame, passion, lust, strife, impatience, jealousy, pride, display of power, etc., and *tamos* is characterized by anger, greed, ignorance, stolidity, resistance, inertia, forgetfulness, confusion, darkness, brutality, etc. (Chakraborty, 1985, pp 187-188).

It needs to be realized that people could have the characteristics of more than one *guna* at the same time with the predominance of any one of them. The *sattworo-rajasic*, *rajaso-sattvic*, *tamso-rajasic*, and similar combinations of *gunas* are distinctly possible. In such combination types, the first of the two *gunas* is more likely to be the dominant characteristic.

The consequences of each of these three *gunas* are different. The *sattwa*, *rajas*, and *tamos* correspond to *sukha*, *dukh*, and *moha* respectively (Chakraborty, 1987, p 78). The *Bhagavad Ceeta* (Chapter 14, *shloka* 16) suggests that the fruit of good action is *sattvic* and pure, the fruit of *rajas* is pain, and the fruit of *tamos* is ignorance. It also says (*shloka* 18) that those who follow *sattwa* go upwards, the *rajasic* remain in the middle, and the *tamasic* who follow the course of the lowest *guna* go downwards (Sastry, 1981). Thus, *sattwa* is superior to
Thus, the Indian viewpoint posits that the attainment of sattwa guna is a desirable goal. Hiriyanna (cited in Chakraborty, 1987, p 78) suggested that it is possible to alter the existing proportions of the three gunas, so that the proportion of the sattwa guna undergoes substantial increment. "The strengthening of sattwa hastens our approach towards a purer mind, taking it closer to the purusha or poorna or atman aspect of our being. Our idiosyncracies and biases then begin to be reduced, for sattwa is the substance of purity and light itself. And thus we can move closer to understanding things as they are" (Chakraborty, 1987, p 78).

A correspondence can be seen between the attitude of modern man toward life and some of the characteristics of the rajas. These include love of fame, pride, display of power, etc. Theguna viewpoint apparently subscribes to the view that the route of the welfare of the humankind goes through spiritual well-being for which an exalted sattwa is a prerequisite. The exaltation of the sattwa, however, may not necessarily imply a cessation of the "worldly" human endeavours. "The implication really is: progress and achievement have to be turned towards the inner world of man also. Then only the worth and value of so-called progress and achievement in the external world can be judged in proper perspective" (Chakraborty, 1987, p 79).

Some enunciations of the concept of guna are available in literature but they are, by and large, theoretical in nature. For instance, the expanded treatises on gunas are available in the writings of Aurobindo (1977) and Vivekananda (1976). Almost no systematic account of any empirical work in the work organizational setting is available (although some empirical works have appeared recently—Mohan and Sandhu, 1986, 1988). The present work is another attempt in this direction.

**Method**

**Sample**

The sample consisted of 310 male executives from low, middle, and high hierarchical levels of 13 work organizations located in three cities of Uttar Pradesh and one city of Maharashtra.

**Measure**

The guna questionnaire was adapted from Chakraborty (1985) and Sastry (1981). It consisted of 37 items.

**Procedure**

The data used in the present study were collected as a part of a larger study (Kaur, 1989) that had included several other measures as well. A pilot run of the interview schedule consisting of a large number of items (pertaining to this measure) was conducted on a small number of prospective respondents from a few organizations. The final instrument was prepared keeping in view the insights and experiences gained during the pilot run.

**Results**

The responses were subjected to factor analysis. The PA2 option of the SPSS (Hull and Nie, 1981) package program was used in conjugation with oblique rotation. The following "stands" were taken in using the factor analytic result:

a) Extraction of factors was stopped after the eigen value dropped below unity.

b) Belongingness of items to specific factors was kept non-overlapping in the sense that no item was included in more than one factor.

c) Only those items were retained in a particular factor which had a loading of equal to or more than 0.50 on that factor but did not have a cross-loading of equal to or more than 0.30 on any other factor simultaneously.

d) Single item factors, that is, if a factor had only one item left in it that had a loading of equal to or more than 0.50, either by itself or as a result of adherence to the stand mentioned in clause 'c' above, were not retained because they were known to be notoriously unreliable.

The factor naming was accomplished by a panel of five persons out of which two had doctorates and three had a master's degree in psychology. The factor loadings, the item contents, and the constructs from which the respective factors had been extracted were kept in view while naming the factors.

The guna questionnaire consisted of 37 items which were reduced to nine significant factors out of which four factors were retained (Table 1) on the basis of the stands mentioned above.

The first factor, labelled Tamos Guna (TG), consisted of three items, namely desponding, forgetfulness, and ignorance. This factor explained 43.5 per cent variance. The second factor explaining 20.2 per cent variance
The means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's (1951) "standardized" alpha coefficient for each guna dimension are presented in Table 2. The Pearson product moment correlations of guna dimensions with some of the organizationally relevant variables, namely leadership, work ethic, personal effectiveness, self-actualizing behaviour, and organizational effectiveness were calculated. Table 2 shows that Tamas Guna was correlated negatively with work ethic, personal effectiveness, self-actualizing behaviour, and organizational effectiveness. Rajas Positive Guna had insignificant relationships with all except work ethic with which it had a negative relationship.

The study aimed at an empirical analysis of the Indian concept of guna on the assumption that this construct would be of interest from the organizational behaviour perspective. Consequently, the construct of guna was operationalized and the data were subjected to factor analysis. Owing to specific stands, four factors emerged from the analysis. These were identified as Tamas Guna, Rajas Positive Guna, Sattwa Guna, and Rajas Negative Guna.

The first three factors were rather straightforward from the viewpoint of various stands most researchers would opt for. The fourth factor might not be as straightforward from the statistical point of view. Nevertheless, it was an interesting finding and a meaningful factor in the framework of the guna construct. Given that this fourth factor may be retained although with some caution, this study was perhaps the first one to identify the dimension of Rajas Negative on an empirical basis.

If one arranges the means of the guna dimensions (Table 2) in descending order after dividing the ob-

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**Table 1: Factor Pattern of Guna Questionnaire**

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<th>Item No.</th>
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**Discussion**

The study aimed at an empirical analysis of the Indian concept of guna on the assumption that this construct would be of interest from the organizational behaviour perspective. Consequently, the construct of guna was operationalized and the data were subjected to factor analysis. Owing to specific stands, four factors emerged from the analysis. These were identified as Tamas Guna, Rajas Positive Guna, Sattwa Guna, and Rajas Negative Guna.

The first three factors were rather straightforward from the viewpoint of various stands most researchers would opt for. The fourth factor might not be as straightforward from the statistical point of view. Nevertheless, it was an interesting finding and a meaningful factor in the framework of the guna construct. Given that this fourth factor may be retained although with some caution, this study was perhaps the first one to identify the dimension of Rajas Negative on an empirical basis.

If one arranges the means of the guna dimensions (Table 2) in descending order after dividing the ob-
tained means by the corresponding number of items constituting that dimension, one gets 3.36, 3.08, 2.21, and 2.07 (termed "adjusted means" hereafter) corresponding to the Sattwa, Rajas Positive, Rajas Negative, and Tamas gunas. An internal comparison of means by Newman Keuls test (cited in Winer, 1962, p 80) showed that each of the means was significantly different from one another. Here was an indication that the various gunas were "present" in that order in the sample. However, a more relevant question would be whether these gunas are required amongst organizational members in the same order. Besides, looking at the order of magnitude of adjusted means, one might suspect the social desirability effect at play as they seemed to be arranged in an increasing order of desirability as one goes from Tamas to Sattwa.

Of course, many more efforts would be required to establish generalizabilities. For instance, the measuring tool of the guna construct employed in the present study sought to gather whether the gunas were possessed by the respondents in their own make-up. It may be argued that an inherent difficulty in such an approach is that from the obtained scores which served as the basis for the means and some other statistical coefficients (Table 2), it becomes difficult to infer in real and organizationally more definitive terms that the Sattwa, Rajas Positive, Rajas Negative, and Tamas are required amongst organizational members in that order. One way to overcome this difficulty might have been to include responses from the respondents in the Sample about such gunas in the relevant others. Then the gap between the mean scores might be interpreted for the existing and the obtained (for relevant others) data sets. Unfortunately, the subsequently required data set was not available with the investigators. The issue is recognized and may be dealt with in subsequent research endeavours in quantitatively more valid ways. However, speaking in qualitative terms with support from Tables 1 and 2, an attempt would be made to discuss the issue at hand.

The configurations or the constituents of the four identified gunas, as mentioned in the Results section also, are as follows:

- **Sattwa** consisted of (a) patience, (b) poise, (c) self-control, and (d) serenity.
- **Rajas Positive** consisted of (a) love of fame, (b) passion, and (c) power.
- **Rajas Negative** consisted of (a) strife, and (b) unrest.
- **Tamas** consisted of (a) despondency ("desponding" actually), (b) forgetfulness, and (c) ignorance.

Going by sheer face validity of the constituents of these gunas, one may not be much too off the track in arguing that the Sattwa Guna consists of characteristics (i.e., patience, poise, self-control, and serenity) that may be treated as almost prerequisites for handling complex situational structures and processes that mark most modern organizations.

Given the constituents of the other three gunas mentioned above, it also may not be difficult to see that the hierarchical sequencing of the gunas may "possibly" be required in that order. After all, why should despondency and forgetfulness (Tamas) or strife and unrest (Rajas Negative) for that matter be required over what

### Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Guna Dimensions with Other Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>LPC</th>
<th>LMX</th>
<th>WE</th>
<th>PE</th>
<th>SAB</th>
<th>OE</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<td>-05</td>
<td>-15</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>1.70</td>
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<td>.73</td>
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</table>

OE = Organizational Effectiveness
TG = Tamas Guna
RPC = Rajas Positive Guna
SG = Sattwa Guna
RNG = Rajas Negative Guna

Note: The decimal points have been omitted from correlation coefficients. The magnitudes of correlation coefficients for significance levels at p < 0.05 and p < 0.01 for df = 308 should be 0.1118 and 0.1464 respectively.
characterizes Sattwa and Rajas Positive among the organizational members? Tamos and Rajas Negative seem to be rather clearly undesirable gunas. However, the constituents of Rajas Positive (love of fame, passion, and power) may perhaps be treated as somewhat desirable in the modern day organizational context because love of fame may provide the basis of work motivation, passion might trigger commitment, and power may be a prerequisite to effective leadership and control. Thus, the obtained order of the gunas may well be the order of their desirability amongst organizational members.

Further, as the findings reported here are part of a larger study, the data were available on several other constructs. In order to provide a more meaningful perspective, some organizationally relevant constructs were selectively chosen to show their relationships with the gunas. The selected constructs were (a) leadership, (b) work ethic, (c) personal effectiveness, (d) self-actualizing behaviour, and (e) organizational effectiveness.

Leadership would be represented by two relatively well-known conceptualizations, the least preferred coworker score or LPC (Fiedler, 1967), and the leader-member exchange (score) or LMX (Graen, Novak, and Sommerkamp, 1982). It may be pointed out that a high LPC score may also be interpreted as people or participative orientation, and a high LMX score on the used measure would represent an individual’s close linkages with the superior. It may be noted that most of the measures used in the larger study were either a modified version of the original source or were freshly developed by Sinha and Kaur (1986) on the basis of the writings of the respective authors. The LPC measure was adapted from Fiedler (1967) and consisted of 16 items. The leader-member exchange (LMX) measure consisting of 6 items was adapted from Duchon, Green, and Taber (1986), and Graen and Schemmann (1978). The work ethic measure consisting of 8 items was adapted from Blood (1969). The personal effectiveness measure consisting of 8 items was mainly newly constructed apart from one item “coping with unexpected problems” that was taken from Sutton and Ford (1982). The self-actualizing behaviour measure consisting of 9 items was adapted from Maslow (in Atkinson, Atkinson and Hilgard, 1983, p 402) and Maslow (cited in Schneider and Alderfer, 1973, p 489). Finally, organizational effectiveness was measured through a 4-item questionnaire developed by Sutton and Ford (1982).

The arguments presented in favour of the issue of desirability of the gunas amongst organizational members may get supportive indications from Table 2 wherein the correlation (coefficients) of the gunas with six other organizationally relevant constructs are presented. Out of the six, Sattwa correlates significantly and positively with five and Rajas Positive with three attributes. Rajas Negative, on the other hand, correlates negatively with two and Tamos does so with four attributes.

Concluding Remarks
The matter presented above and the findings contained in Table 2 point to the following:

A clear superiority of Sattwa Guna over other guna dimensions is visualized as it had positive relationships with all "desirable" constructs except the LPC score. Similarly, clear undesirability of Tamos Guna is also visible owing to its negative (or insignificant) relationships with most of the variables. A differential pattern of relationship with the two dimensions of rajas were also quite visible. Rajas Positive Guna was related to the LPC score, the work ethic, and self-actualizing behaviour, whereas Rajas Negative Guna was negatively related with work ethic. Thus, it seemed worthwhile to differentiate between positive and negative rajas gunas. Earlier interpretations, though mostly theoretical, tend to view rajas guna as something related to dukha (Chakraborty, 1987 p 78), pain (Bhagavad Geeta, Chapter 14, Shloka 16), and middle stature (Bhagavad Geeta, Chapter 14, Shloka, 18). The results of the present study point to the fact that it is the Rajas Negative, and not rajas as such, that may be related to dukha, and that may need increasing disciplining as suggested by Chakraborty (1985). Chakraborty (1985) also suggested that Likert's (1961, 1967) system-4 leadership style cannot be generated by the predominance of rajas. However, insofar as the LPC measure may be treated as a representative of participative style (the main stay ground of the system-4), the Rajas Positive Guna did appear to be related to LPC although only just so. Of course, there seems to be no denying the fact that Sattwa Guna would be "the guna" to be acquired, enhanced, and retained. There also seems to be some supportive indication to Chakraborty's (1987, p 76) contention that sattwa is superior to rajas, and rajas to tamos in terms of their aid to the mind for a true understanding of facts and events; at least insofar as such understanding may get reflected in the organizationally relevant constructs like leadership, work ethic, personal effectiveness, self-actualizing behaviour, and organizational effectiveness.

This study is aimed at making a beginning in the direction of empirical operationalization, exploration,
and validation of the Indian concept of guna. It should be noted that no spiritual, religious, or mystic allegiance is aimed at, and the interest in gunas is purely academic. Apparently, as suggested by the obtained results, the construct of guna holds some promise for being used in organizational behaviour research and practice.

References


