

Satva: Finding The Middle Way

The *Samkhya* school of classical yoga philosophy describes the universe and all its qualities using three main humors, called [gunas](#). These are *Rajas*, *Tamas*, *Sattva*. Everything in the Universe from seasons to personalities demonstrates some combination of these *gunas*. Understanding the ancient but basic principle of the *gunas* can help you live a life that feels perfectly balanced for you.

Rajas: Fire



The first of the humors is called *Rajas* and is generally considered the quality of building, full of fire, energizing, active, prone to change, etc. Think of summer as the season with the most *Rajas*—it's hot, things are growing (building) and thus changing. A stage of life that demonstrates a lot of *Rajas* is the years when you're learning the most and growing the most or demonstrating a lot of ambition to make your way in the world, the early and mid-adult stage.

Tamas: Ice

The perfect counterbalance of *Rajas* is



Tamas which is generally known as grounding, calming, and inert. *Tamas* is demonstrated in seasons like winter when everything is still, cold, and frozen. The stages of life that demonstrates the most *Tamas* are early childhood (think cubby baby that sleeps a lot) and when we retire from work or start to slow down in our later years.

Sata: The Middle Way

Rajas and *Tamas* are not only demonstrated in major periods of life, but also in your day-to-day energy, feeling, and attitude. Regardless of stage of life, you might generally be a very active



person but due to a lot of busyness or a heavy workout, you might be feeling a little *Tamasic* and need to chill out on the couch with some ice cream and Netflix. Other days, you might be feeling gobs and gobs of energy and want to tackle a project. This is *Rajas*.

Now, the balance between *Rajas* and *Tamas* is called *Satva*. *Satva* is the perfect “Goldilocks” of the two extremes. *Satva* is what we are aiming for in all of our physical, mental, and spiritual practices. Sometimes we must skillfully negotiate our efforts or ease in these practices to find ourselves

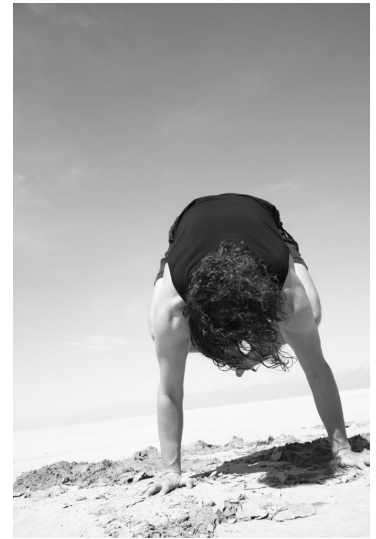
demonstrating *Satva*. *Satva* feels balanced—energized but not spastic, clear and open-minded without being lost in the clouds, energized without feeling out of control.

In the ancient text of the Yoga Sutras, Patanjali the author suggests balancing all of our efforts between effort (*Rajas*) and ease (*Tamas*) to find the perfect middle way and to find success in our endeavors. Doing so promotes longevity, productivity, and joy in the practice.

Even after a vigorous asana practice, savasana is the essential balancing act at the end that helps you to walk away feeling *Satvic* for the rest of the day. Similarly, after a Restore yoga practice it might sometimes helps to go on a gentle walk. Just like Goldilocks, the middle way feels most comfortable, the most like home.

For those of us who love to bliss out on *Rajas* and train or play really hard, don't worry. Just remember that there is a time to sit and meditate too. Also, those of us who could indulge in *Tamas* and stay on our cozy meditation cushions all day long and then celebrate with a box of [Hatch Family Chocolates](#), well, maybe you could try at least try going for a walk afterwards.

Most importantly, these principles remind us that balance is not only comfortable, but optimal. If you need to add more *Tamas* to your life, more ease, try a [Yoga Nidra](#) (guided meditation) or Restore class. If you could balance out some sluggishness by adding a little *Rajas*, try a [Vinyasa Flow](#) class.



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Scott Moore is a senior teacher of yoga and mindfulness in the US (New York, Salt Lake City, LA) and abroad and the author of [Practical Yoga Nidra: The 10-Step Method to Reduce Stress, Improve Sleep, and Restore Your Spirit](#). When he's not teaching or conducting retreats, or traveling to teach, he also writes for Conscious Life News, Elephant Journal, Mantra Magazine, Medium, and his own [blog](#) at [scottmooreyoga.com](#). Scott also loves to run, play the saxophone, and travel with his wife and son. Check out his [yoga retreats and trainings in places like Tuscany, France, and Hong Kong](#), his [online Yoga Nidra Course](#) and his [Yoga Teacher Mentor Program](#). Scott just moved back to Salt Lake City after living in Southern France with his family.