CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 A Note on the Śrīmadbhagavadgītā

The history of India has been witnessing the magnanimous glories of its literature, art, science, music, philosophy, tradition and heritage all through. In almost every field, India and its people have earned worldwide recognition and appreciation for its unique philosophical ideas towards life though sometimes it had to bear with criticism and negative comment also. It is a matter of privilege for Indians to be a part of this culture and tradition. It is really a matter of pride for every citizen of India that it is the owner of the longest epic Poetry in the domain of world literature. Every citizen of India is proud to declare oneself to be the descendent of that folk which gave us the great literature called the Śrīmadbhagavadgītā (SBG). This work is very popular not only in India but the essence of this work has been attracting the mind of its reader in every corner of the universe. This work has received the status of a guide book as it has been contributing in the process of shaping the lives and thoughts of many people through generation since time immemorial. The celebrated epic Poetry Mahābhārata which was composed by Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa in one lakh verses¹ is regarded as the longest poem in the arena of world literature. In his book Arthur A. Macdonell has recognised the Mahābhārata as the longest poem known to literary history which is

¹ iti mahābhārata śatasahasryāṁ saṁhitāyāṁ vaiyāsikyāṁ ādiparvaṁ
pañcavimśatadhikadvaiśatatamo’dhvāyaḥ/
equal to about eight times as much as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* put together.² Though
the SBG is a part of this epic Poetry, it has achieved its own identity in a spectacular
manner. There are eighteen chapters in the *Mahābhārata* called parvans. The SBG
belongs to the Sixth Chapter of the *Mahābhārata* which is entitled as *Bhīṣmaparva*.
The *Mahābhārata* narrates the story of the Kuru family of ancient India. The story
begins at the *Naimiṣāranya* where Sauti, the son of Lomaharṣa, at the request of
other sages present there, has started to tell the story which was earlier depicted by
the sage Vaiśampāyana to Janamejaya at the great snake sacrifice organised by
Janamejaya, the son of the Parīkṣiṭ. The mighty Kuru King Śāntanu has his son
Bhīṣma by his first wife Gaṅgā. His second wife Satyavatī gives birth to two sons,
Citrāṅgada and Vicitrāvīrya. Citrāṅgada dies in a battle without getting married.
Vicitrāvīrya also dies childless, leaving his two widows Ambikā and Ambālikā.
Being very much anxious with the thought that the Kuru dynasty will be ruined
without an heir, Satyavatī called Vedavyāsa, her son by sage Parāśara before her
marriage to Śāntanu. To keep the request of Satyavatī, Vyāsa begets two sons
Dhṛtarāśtra and Pāṇḍu to those two widows of Vicitrāvīrya and another son Vidūra
to one maidservant. As Dhṛtarāśtra was blind by birth Pāṇḍu became the king. But
Pāṇḍu took retirement to the forest installing Dhṛtarāśtra at the throne. Hundred sons
are born to Gāndhārī by Dhṛtarāśtra and Pāṇḍu has five sons to his two wives viz.
Kuntī and Mādrī. Pāṇḍu dies early and the sons of Pāṇḍu are raised in Dhṛtarāśtra’s
care. As the children grow up, Yudhiṣṭhira is declared as the legal heir to the throne
of Hastināpura, the kingdom of the Kuras. But, Duryodhana, the eldest son of

Private Limited, Delhi, 1990, p. 237
Dhṛtarāṣṭra is unhappy at his father’s decision. In this way the wrath between the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas starts growing and this ultimately lead to the great battle of Kurukṣetra. The story of the battle remains as prelude to the story of the SBG. So it can be said that the contents of the SBG originates in the battlefield of Kurukṣetra where the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas take their weapons to fight against each other for the possession of the kingdom claimed by each group in their own way. The SBG narrates that after arriving at the battlefield, Arjuna, on whom the main responsibility of winning the battle is kept by Lord Kṛṣṇa, becomes demoralised as he sees his kith and kin around him with whom he will have to fight for his own profit. So the depressed Pāṇḍava takes the vow of refraining from the battle. Lord Kṛṣṇa, who undertakes the role of the charioteer of Arjuna, noticing his apathy for the battle, delivers His speech before Arjuna to boost up him for taking weapons for the battle. As a result of listening to the grave advice of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna regains his lost spirit and wakes up from his deep slumber of depression which results in the commencement of the battle. The story of the SBG ends here. From the story of the Mahābhārata it is known to all that Arjuna at the end, fights with his enemy with strength and valour of a Kṣatriya warrior and ultimately wins the battle.

In the very outset of the First Chapter of the Bhīṣmaparva, it is said that the great sage Vedavyāsa meets Dhṛtarāṣṭra and asks him whether he wants the power of his eyes so that the king would be able to see the upcoming affairs. Dhṛtarāṣṭra in this regard says that he does not want to see the deaths of his near ones. But he requests the sage to please him with something through which he would remain
informed of the events accurately time to time. The sage Vyāsa then grants a boon to Sañjaya with ultra vision so that he would be able to inform the king every minute detail of the battle. Thus come two individuals attached directly to the SBG i.e. Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Sañjaya who being the listener and the speaker respectively remain as two main characters in the outer boundary of the story of the SBG. So, the intricacy of this great book is that here the composer has adjusted two sets of speaker and listener in a very interesting manner. Another interesting fact is that here the poet himself is indirectly involved in the commencement of the happenings.

On the basis of the plan of the poet, in the first stage the speaker Sañjaya narrates the happenings of the battlefield and the listener Dhṛtarāṣṭra, being unable to see due to his blindness, hears from his companion word by word and in a similar manner in the second stage the speaker is Lord Kṛṣṇa who speaks about the Ultimate Truth in life and Arjuna, the listener listens to the words of his friend, philosopher and guide.

There are eighteen (18) chapters in the SBG called adhyāyas and there are seven hundred (700) verses among which one (1) verse comes from the mouth of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, forty two (42) verses are the utterance of Sañjaya, eighty three (83)

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3 na rocaye jñātivadhaṁ draṣṭuṁ brahmaṁśisattama/
yuddhametat tvāseṣeṇa śṛṣṇyāṁ tava tejasā// Mahābhārata, Bhīṣmaparva, II.2
4 cakṣuṣā sañjayo rājan divyenaiva samanvitaḥ/
kathayiṣyati te yuddhaṁ sarvajñaśca bhaviṣyati// Ibid., II.10
5 sañjaya uvāca/ SBG., I.2

b) tameva bhagavadupadiṣṭamarthaṁ kṛṣṇa dvaiśayayā saptabhiḥ ślokaśatairupanibandha, Śrīdharīvyākhyā, Ibid., p. 8
verses come as the words of Arjuna and five hundred seventy four (574) verses are seen to come from the mouth of Lord Kṛṣṇa. But it is found that this division of the number of verses varies in some other editions of the SBG. Bal Gangadhar Tilak has mentioned that there are some editions of this work according to which there are altogether seven hundred forty five (745) verses in the SBG of which six hundred twenty (620) verses are from the mouth of Lord Kṛṣṇa, fifty seven (57) from Arjuna, sixty seven (67) from Sañjaya and one (1) from the mouth of Dhṛtarāṣtra. It is important to note here that though there are differences in opinion regarding the total number of verses of the SBG yet, the more acceptable view that runs in the society is that this great work is the amalgamation of seven hundred verses placed in eighteen chapters. In the Mahābhārata, published by Gitapress, Gorakhpur, the verses of the SBG cover the narration of the chapters from 25th to 42nd of the Bhīṣmaparva of the Mahābhārata. This may be pointed out here that the number eighteen in connection with the chapters of the SBG synchronizes with the eighteen parvans of the Mahābhārata.

The SBG is primarily a book on philosophy. In his book S.K.Dey has mentioned that the SBG, according to the experts, shows full knowledge of the previous philosophies and religious literature. Not only by Indian scholars even by a good number of Western scholars this book has been honoured as a great work of

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7 śatātāni savirinśāṇi śokānāṁ prāha keśavāḥ
   arjuna saaptapaṅcāsat saptaṭaśṭīṁ tu sañjayaḥ/

8 Vide, De, Sushil Kumar, Aspects of Sanskrit Literature, Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1959, p. 42
philosophy. Tradition confirms the fact that in a piece of writing it is obvious to have impressions of other type of available compositions and the SBG is not exceptional in this case. In the SBG there is an amalgamation of numerous beliefs which though appears to be conflicting sometimes, at one point all those beliefs are seen to have been destined for one common goal. The synthesis of these apparently contradictory thoughts turn to be a marvelous poetical creation of the great sage Vyāsa and it has become famous under the name Śrīmadbhagavadgītā. This book is the essence of all the Vedic doctrines - *tadidāṁ gūḍāśāstram samastavedārthasārasamgrahabhātām*. In this book, the influence of the Vedas and several Upaniṣads can be explicitly shown on the basis of various references used here. The Upaniṣads declare the existence of the Ultimate Reality i.e. Supreme Brahman Who is one and without a second, Who is attributeless, eternal and nondual. He is without birth and death and is the cause and He is the Lord of the whole universe. The Real is without sinews, without scar and is untouched by evil. The SBG supports these statements of the Upaniṣads by establishing the philosophy that Ātman is unmanifest, unthinkable and unchanging, it is beginningless and is neither existent nor non-existent. Again, the Supreme Self is

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11 anādyanantaṁ mahataṁ paraṁ dhruvaṁ nicāyya tanmṛtyumukhāḥ pramucyate// *Kathopaniṣad*, I.3.15

12 ajo nityaḥ śāsvato’yam purāṇo na hanyate hanyamāne śārīre//' Ibid., I.2.18

13 sa paryājgāčchukramāyamāvraṇamasnāvira śuddhamapāpāviddhām// *Īṣopaniṣad*, 8

14 avyaktō’yamacintyo’yamavikāryo’yamucyate/ SBG., II.25

15 anādimat paraṁ brahma na sattannāsaducyate/ Ibid., XIII.12
said to be imperishable and it is without qualities.\textsuperscript{16} The contradictory natures of Ātman are widely described in the passages of several Upanisadic works which establishes the difficulty in expressing the empirical determinations of this Soul.\textsuperscript{17} It is obvious because the Upanisadic work simultaneously narrates that Ātman is resting and yet restless, it is far and yet it is the nearest of all, it is inside and at the same time outside of all.\textsuperscript{18} In the SBG such expressions regarding the soul and the Supreme Soul are very common.\textsuperscript{19} Again Upaniṣads reveals the fact that such works support the existence of God as well as the omnipresent nature of God and in the SBG also the same idea is described in almost every second line. The basic tenets of almost all the orthodox philosophical schools of India are also projected in the SBG. The SBG says that one who knows the soul (\textit{puruṣa}) and nature (\textit{prakṛti}) together with their all sub-elements, though he performs every action, he is not born again.\textsuperscript{20}

This is the concept of \textit{mokṣa} i.e. liberation according to Sāmkhya Philosophy. The other Sāmkhya doctrines like the concept of the three guṇas (attributes) are also elaborated in the SBG. In the Fourteenth Chapter known as \textit{guṇatrayavibhāga}, the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{16} anādītvānirguṇatvāt paramātmāyamavyayāh/ \citep{ibid., XIII.31}
\item \textsuperscript{17} Vide, Radhakrishnan, S., \textit{Op.cit.}, Introductory Essay, p. 23
\item \textsuperscript{18} a) tadejati tannajati taddūre tadvantike/ 
\hspace{1cm} tadantarasya sarvasya tatu sarvasyāsya vāhyataḥ/ \textit{Īsopaniṣad}, 5
\hspace{1cm} b) vrñcachha taddivyamacintyarūpaṁ
\hspace{1cm} sukṣmāca tat sukṣmataraṁ vibhāti/
\hspace{1cm} dūrāt sudūre tadihāntike ca
\hspace{1cm} paśyatsvihaiva nihitaṁ guhāyāṁ// \textit{Muṇḍakopaniṣad}, III.1.7
\item \textsuperscript{19} a) bahirantaścā bhūtānāmacarān ca rameva ca/
\hspace{1cm} sukṣmatvāttadaviʃye aṁ dūrāntah ca cantike ca tāt/ \textit{SBG.}, XIII.15
\hspace{1cm} b) avibhaktāṁca bhūteṣu vibhaktamiva ca sīhitam/ \citep{ibid., XIII.16}
\item \textsuperscript{20} ya evaṁ vetī puruṣāṁ prakṛtiṁ ca guṇaiḥ saha/
\hspace{1cm} sarvathā vartamāṇo’pi na sa bhūyo’bhijāyate// \citep{ibid., XIII.23}
\end{itemize}
SBG says that the three attributes born out of prakṛti compel puruṣa to act accordingly.\textsuperscript{21} The SBG also speaks about the Yoga Philosophy. In its Sixth Chapter which is entitled as ātmasaṁyamayoga, the SBG directs its opinion towards the practice of yoga which is also found in Patañjali’s Yogasūtra. It is said here that yoga is that concept when by the practice of meditation the mind is at rest and the Self has been discovered with the process of the constant thought in it.\textsuperscript{22} Again the doctrine of Vedā́nta philosophy establishes that the whole world is the creation of Brahman, it survives on Brahman and it dissolves in Brahman. The reflection of such ideas is very common in the SBG. When Arjuna wants to know the secret of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Lord says that He is the origin of all and the whole creation proceeds from Him.\textsuperscript{23} He is the beginning, existence and the end of all beings.\textsuperscript{24} Among the different sections of the Vedā́nta school of Philosophy, the Advaitavedā́nta does not accept Brahman and God as two distinctive existences, but in the SBG Lord Kṛṣṇa represents Himself as the First of gods - divyam ādidevam ajāṁ vibhum.\textsuperscript{25} Thus study in this field can decipher that the SBG is an amalgamation of specimens of various philosophical theories and thoughts projected in a different way under the cover of the poetical expression. It may appear as confusing at the very beginning of the study; but as one intends to enter deeper and deeper in this field, the confusions and contradictions would disappear with the advent of the knowledge and truth of

\textsuperscript{21} sattvavāḥ rajastama iti guṇāḥ prakṛtisambhavāḥ/
nivadhantā mahābāho dehe dehinamavyayam//  Ibid., XIV.5

\textsuperscript{22} yatroparamate cittaṁ niruddhaṁ yogasevayā/
yatra caiv tmanāṁ tmaṁ na paṁyantān tmanā tu∼tmani tmanā tmanā//  Ibid., VI.20

\textsuperscript{23} ahaṁ sarvasya prabhavo maṁtāḥ sarvaṁ pravartate//  Ibid., X.8

\textsuperscript{24} ahamādiśca madhyaśca bhūtānāmanta eva ca//  Ibid., X.20

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., X.12
the One and the Ultimate. In the SBG, all the philosophical ideas are put together along with the main stream of subject matter of the book in a systematic way and this successful synthesis leads to the eradication of the difficulties faced in the way of understanding the grave philosophical thoughts and mystic theories. It is true that if one understands the meaning of the verses of the SBG properly, the doctrines of all other Orthodox Philosophical schools of India can be known without any problem. This can be proved on the basis of the huge popularity gained by this book in the whole world from time immemorial. The popularity of the SBG soars high as its teaching is not restricted to any particular religion, caste, creed or language, neither its messages are confined within the boundary of a country. It establishes the slogan of the basic concept of humanity.\footnote{But what we can do with profit is to seek in the Gita for the actual living truths it contains, apart from their metaphysical form, to extract from it what can help us or the world at large and to put it in the most natural and vital form and expression we can find that will be suitable to the mentality and helpful to the spiritual needs of our present-day humanity.” Sri Aurobindo, Essays on the Gîtâ, The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol. XIX, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Pondicherry, 1997, p. 5} Many renowned personalities are seen to receive the source of peace, relaxation and happiness in the words of this great work. We can take here the name of Mahatma Gandhi, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, S. Radhakrishnan, Annie Besant, Leo Tolstoy, Albert Einstein etc. in this regard. It is the source of spiritual inspiration to man and woman in the past and it will be so in the future too.\footnote{Still it may be said that most of the main clues are there and that after all the later developments of spiritual experience and discovery we can still return to it for a large inspiration and guidance.” Ibid., pp. 562-563} Besides this, the whole SBG is full of instructions that lead us to the path of human values, morals and ethics either through \textit{karmayoga} or through the medium of \textit{bhaktiyoga} or
through *jñānayoga* and, by following those ennobling instructions forwarded by the Lord Kṛṣṇa one can easily lead a life of moralistic and ethical vision. Through the doctrines of *karmayoga* the SBG teaches the duty of a man and the way of accomplishing it without expecting the result. Through the doctrines of *bhaktiyoga* the SBG teaches the way and means of supreme devotion which can set the particular goal with the power of full concentration. Through the doctrine of *jñānayoga* this immortal work teaches how the advent of the supreme knowledge eradicates the useless and momentary ideas of the human mind. So it can be said that the SBG is not a single book but it is a successful fusion of the doctrines of Indian Philosophy and in this way it can be termed as the epitome of Indian culture.28

Indian Philosophy and culture go hand in hand. Indian culture maintains the sanctity of the theory of renunciation which is one of the essential principal doctrines of the SBG. The unique feature of Indian culture lies in its belief in the immortality of Soul and in the life after death until the attainment of self-realisation. The SBG says that the Soul can never be a subject either to birth or to death. It enters into a new body after death of the human being just like one wears new clothes changing one’s old worn out dress.29 This and such other narrations regarding the ultimate truth of the Soul establishes the SBG as the repository of all ideas and norms that any human being seeks for living a peaceful and meaningful life. It is important to note here that

28 “Its influence is not merely philosophic or academic but immediate and living, an influence both for thought and action, and its ideas are actually at work as a powerful shaping factor in the revival and renewal of a nation and culture.” Ibid., p. 562

29 vāsāṁsi jīrṇāṁ yathā vīhāya
cavāṇī gṛññāti naro’parāṇī/
tathā śarāṇī vīhāya jīrṇā
nyanyāṇi sarīyāti navāṇi dehī//  SBG., II.22
because of its Vedantic nature, the SBG is considered to have a canonic dimension in this school of philosophy and it is adjusted with the Upaniṣads and the Brahmaśūtras under the concept of the prasthānatraya.30

1.1.1 The Title of the Śrīmadbhagavadgītā

Though the SBG is commonly known as the Gītā31 or the Bhagavadgītā,32 the complete title of the SBG is Śrīmadbhagavadgītā. But as the nature of this work bears a close similarity with the Upanisadic principles and as in the colophon of every chapter of the SBG the term upaniṣad33 has been adjusted, the practice of using the title of the SBG as the Śrīmadbhagavadgītupaniṣad is also prevalent in common parlance. This term literary means the upaniṣad which is sung (gītā) by the Lord (śrīmatā bhagavatā). Though the source of this title cannot be pointed out with conviction, this title connotatively implies that the verses which come out in the musical way from the mouth of the Lord are given the status of an Upaniṣad. It seems that after understanding the depth of the intricacy of the basic principle of the SBG, it has been equated with the status of an Upaniṣad. This title needs to be explained elaborately. The term Gītā implies that which is sung. A song requires musical notations which is not available in connection with the verses of the SBG.

30 “The Gītā has been recognized for centuries as an orthodox scripture of the Hindu religion possessing equal authority with the Upaniṣads and the Brahma Sūtra and the three together form the triple canon (prasthāṇa-traya).” Vide, Radhakrishnan, S., Op.cit., Introductory Essay, pp. 15-16
31 gītādhyayanaśīlasya prāṇāyāmaparasya ca

naiva santi hi pāpāni pūrvajanmakṛtāni ca/ Gītāmāhāmyam, 2
33 iti śrīmadbhagavadgītāsūpaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyāṁ yogasāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaravāde/
Moreover, a literary piece needs some basic emotional vibes to be elevated to the position of a song which we find in the verses of the Gītagovinda. But the backdrop of the ślokas of the SBG coming out of the mouth of the Lord cannot afford to get the place of a song or achieve any musical notation apparently. The battlefield of Kurukṣetra, which is the place of the origin of the verses of the SBG, does not construe the status of a song or any kind of music anyway. Moreover, the term upaniṣad cannot be taken here by the nomenclature only as the term upaniṣad is a technical word used in the Vedic world to mean a special type of literary work belonging to each Veda. And there is no Upaniṣad available under any Veda with the title Śrīmadbhagavadgītōpaniṣad. But the study in this regard reveals the fact that the term upaniṣad has been used here in the sense of rahasyavidyā.34 The field of study that deals with the empirical nature of ātmā and paramātmā etc. comes under the jurisdiction of what is called rahasyavidyā. The SBG can be called an Upaniṣad in this sense as the basic principle of the work is to propagate this empirical knowledge of high stature. It is very much important to note here that at the end of each chapter of the SBG, the terms śrīmadbhagavadgītā and upaniṣad are attached separately along with the specific sub title of the respective chapter, cf.

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\text{iti śrīmadbhagavadgītāśūpaniśatsu brahmavidyāyāṁ yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṁśāde arjunaśivaśādayo go nāma prathamo’dhyāyāḥ.}
\]

In such expressions the term upaniṣad is applied in the sense of an adjective of the word śrīmadbhagavadgītā which establishes its status as the one that deals with ātmavidyā or rahasyavidyā – the kernel of the Upaniṣads. From the expression in the

34 “...the word Upanishad is usually explained by Indian writers by rahasyam (i.e. “secret”, Anquetil’s secretum tegendum).” Deussen, Paul, The Philosophy of the Upanishads, trans. by A.S.Geden, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, Delhi, 2011, p. 10
colophon used at the end of each chapter of the SBG, it can be assumed that the
textual part of the Mahābhārata which is sung by the Lord, is entitled as
Śrīmadbhagavadgītā and it is adjusted with the term upaniṣad. The nature of this
work is conspicuously saṁvāda type that means, it is expressed in a conversational
way. The SBG is the result of the conversation between the Lord and his disciple
Arjuna. Such a method of composing literary works had been prevalent in India
since Vedic time.35 As the verses of the SBG are compared with songs sung by the
Lord, it is called the Śrīmadbhagavadgītā.36 Here it can be said that the term giṅā
remains suggestive in the title. The verses are given the status of song as those can
mesmerize the heart of a listener immediately, a quality which a song or a musical
piece possesses in general. Without the application of any musical notation or tune,
the verses of the SBG can create an all encompassing effect that fills the heart
subsequently. In this connection the words of the Lord can be taken as the proof
itself. In the Tenth Chapter of the SBG, while the Lord was associating Himself
with the strongest member belonging to different groups like that among the āditya,
fyotīsa, marut and so on, He claims Himself as the Sāmaveda among all the Vedas
as He says vedānāṁ sāmavedo’ṣmi.37 While explaining this expression the
Nilakanṭhī commentary specifically mentions that the Lord has equated Himself
with the Sāmaveda because of the musical beauty of this particular Veda.38 This
opinion is again found in the Madhusūdanī commentary where it is specifically said

35 Yama-Yamī saṁvāda (Ṛgveda, X.10), Purūravā-Urvasī saṁvāda (Ṛgveda, X.98),
Saramā-Pani saṁvāda (Ṛgveda, X.108)
36 śrīmadbhagavatā gīyate
37 SBG., X.22
38 sāmavedo gānena ramaṇīyatvāt,  Nilakanṭhīvyākhyā, Pansikar, Wasudev Laxman
that because of the musical beauty of the Sāmaveda it is the most attractive among
the group of four and that is why the Lord has taken this in his expression.\textsuperscript{39} Thus,
these explanations can help the reader to adjust the term gītā in the title of the book
because the Lord Himself exposes this through His conversation, His inclination
towards song in general. Otherwise He would have equated Himself with the
Yajurveda which is placed in higher position in connection with yajña or Vedic
carmakāṇḍa or He may compare Himself with the Rgveda which always keeps the
position of hierarchy in the Vedic tradition. So there is no harm in connecting the
term gītā with the words of Lord Kṛṣṇa though the expressions are predominantly of
mystic and philosophical in nature and the goal is the harsh battle. Coming to the
term upaniṣad in connection with its attachment the title of the SBG, it can be said
that this particular work can rightly be called an Upāniṣad as it is said to be the
repository of all the teachings of Upanisadic work.\textsuperscript{40} It can be said that with natural
human tendency of using a short title, the SBG became popular as the Bhagavadgītā
and more precisely it came to be known as the Gītā.\textsuperscript{41} Many scholars have
composed their work on this particular book using the word gītā in the title of their
works.\textsuperscript{42} The stalwarts like Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi,
Bal Gangadhar Tilak, S. Radhakrishnan etc. have comfortably used the term gītā in
course of their reference to this book. In many commentaries to this work, it is often
termed as Gītāśāstra by different scholars of various ages.

\textsuperscript{39} caturṇāṁ vedānāṁ madhye gāṇamādhuryeṇātiramaṇīyaḥ sāmavedo’hamasmi,
Madhusūdanivyākhyā, Ibid.

\textsuperscript{40} sarvopaniṣado gāvo dogdhā gopālanandanaḥ/
pārtho vatsaḥ sudhīrdbhoktā dūgdharī gītāṁṛtam mahat// Gītāmāhātmyam, 6

\textsuperscript{41} Vide, Ch. I, fn. 31

1.1.2 Date and Time of the Śrīmadbhagavadgītā

As a part of the Mahābhārata the date of the SBG implies the date of the Mahābhārata itself. It is to be mentioned here that no definite date or time period can be attached to the story of the great epic because of some basic irregularities regarding the story attached under the title, several interpolations found in connection with the story, the language used in the narration, various anecdotes adjusted in different context of the story and the like. So there are divergent views regarding the date and time of this work. Winternitz has remarked in his book that the present form of the Mahābhārata is not earlier than the 4th century B.C. and not later than the 4th century A.D.\(^4^3\) His interpretation is based on the references regarding Kumārila, the great Indian philosopher who quotes numerous passages from the Mahābhārata in his compositions and who has also referred to the epic as a great specimen of smṛti literature compiled by Vyāsa. The date of Kumārila is taken as 700 A.D. The eminent prose writers Bāṇa and Subandhu (600-650 A.D.) were also familiar with the stories of the Mahābhārata and this is proved by the references they have used in their compositions. In his book, Arthur A. Macdonell has also elaborately discussed the age of the Mahābhārata which points towards the fact that the original form of the epic came into existence about 5th century B.C.\(^4^4\) In Macdonell’s book also the references of Kumārila and Bāṇa are uttered as evidences in this connection. Besides these, Macdonell has mentioned another point that in many places of India, land grants dated between 450 A.D. to 500 A.D. are seen

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which mention the Mahābhārata as an influencing work that teaches the award for pious donors and punishment for impious robber or plunderers.\textsuperscript{45} Oriental scholar like P.V.Kane is of the opinion that the Mahābhārata in its extant form cannot be placed later than the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century A.D. and that a large portion of it may be at least as old as 500 B.C.\textsuperscript{46} C.V.Vaidya has clearly mentioned that if the Gītā is an old part of the Mahābhārata and if it is pre-Buddha and pre-Pāṇini, one must come to the date that have been fixed by him. The dates assigned by Western scholars to the present Mahābhārata and to Pāṇini are different from those that have been assigned by this scholar. But the date of Buddha is certain and uncontroverted and as the SBG is clearly pre-Buddha, as it does not mention any of his views and the SBG is seen to take notice of all the then existing systems of thought, the date of the SBG must at least be taken to be some centuries before 500 B.C.\textsuperscript{47} So, from all these it can be inferred that the probable date of the Mahābhārata is 5\textsuperscript{th} century B.C. which coincides with the date of the SBG too.

In this context the explanation of S. Radhakrishnan is noteworthy. This scholar has dealt upon the important point in this regard that there may remain confusion in connection with the utterance of seven hundred verses by the Lord at a stretch in the battlefield. This observation leads to the assumption that Lord Kṛṣṇa might have noted some important points to Arjuna in the battlefield which later on turned out to be this extensive work on the basis of explanation and similar

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., p. 241
\textsuperscript{46} Kane, P.V., History of Sanskrit Poetics, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1961, p. 331
\textsuperscript{47} cf., Vaidya, C.V., History of Sanskrit Literature, Vol. IV, Parimal Publications, Delhi, 1986, p. 46
observation added to that. Radhakrishnan is of opinion that the original SBG arose about 200 B.C. and received the present form in the 2nd century A.D. by some follower of the Vedānta.

1.1.3 The Commentaries on the Śrīmadbhagavadgītā

So far many a good commentaries have been written on the SBG. Among these the name of Śaṅkarācārya comes in the first position as his work on the SBG is believed unanimously to be the oldest one. Many commentaries came up at later period on the basis of the views forwarded by Śaṅkarācārya. Thus developed Yamunācārya’s Gitārthasamgraha, Rāmānuja’s Gitābhāṣya, Madhvācārya’s Gitābhāṣya and Gitātātparya, Vallabhācārya’s Gitārthavivaraṇa, Keśavānandabhaṭṭācārya’s Tattvaprakāśikā, Śrīdharaswāmi’s Gitāsubodhini, Dhanapati’s Bhāsyotkarādipikā, Abhinavagupta’s Gitārthasamgraha, Nilakaṇṭha Suri’s Bhāratabhāva, Śrīmadbhagavadgītāgūḍhārthadīpikā of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, Gitābhāṣyavivecana of Ānandagiri, Tatparyachandrikā of Śrī Vedānta Deśika, Ānandavardhanā’s Jñāna-karma-samuccaya, Daivajñā Paṇḍita’s Paramārtha prapā, Jayaṭhī’s Prameyadīpikā, Puruṣottama’s Amṛtataraṅgini, Rāghavendra’s Arthasaṅgraha, Rāmakaṇṭha’s Sarvatobhadra, Sadānanda’s Bhāvaprakāśa, Śaṅkaraṅana’s Tatparyabdhiṇī, Veṅkatanātha’s Brahmānandagiri, Veṅkatanātha’s Tatparyacandrikā, Sridharmadattasarma’s Gūḍhārthatattvālōka etc. All these works mark their presence in the field of study on the SBG and have become almost indispensible to know the proper message of the book by and large.

49 Ibid.
Leaving aside the Sanskrit commentaries, there are numerous commentaries on the SBG composed in the vernacular languages of India. Jñāneśvara’s Jñāneśvarī (Bhāvārthadīpikā) and Vāmana Paṇḍita’s Yathārthadīpikā are commentaries on the SBG written in the Marathi language which could put impact in the mind of Bal Gangadhar Tilak.\(^{50}\)

### 1.1.4 Various Translations of the Śrīmadbhagavadgītā

The first English translation on the SBG was done by Charles Wilkins in 1785.\(^{51}\) After that J. Cockburn Thomson offered his English edition in 1855 and Edwin Arnold’s poetic translation of the SBG came up as “The Song Celestial”. William Quan Judge of London has offered his scholarly discourses on the SBG in the last part of the 19\(^{th}\) Century and these were later published as his own edition. The French version of the SBG by Philippe L. DeCoste under the name \textit{La Bhagavadgītā} also received fame. At present we come across more than 1400 editions of the SBG published in more than fifty languages of the world.\(^{52}\) It also includes the \textit{Bhagavadgītā As It Is} by Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. The verses of the SBG are translated into almost all the Indian languages and also into some of the foreign languages like English, Greek, Latin, German, French etc.\(^{53}\) Bhaṭṭadeva who is regarded as the father of the Assamese prose literature\(^{54}\) composes \textit{Kathāgītā}

\(^{50}\) Tilak, Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar, Op.cit., p. 41
\(^{51}\) Wilkins, Sir Charles (ed. & trans.), \textit{Bhagavad Geetā}, London, 1785
\(^{52}\) Sources from Internet
\(^{53}\) Tilak, Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar, Op.cit., p. 28
\(^{54}\) Vide, Sarmah, Satyendranath, \textit{Asamiyā Sāhityar Itivṛtta}, Bani Prakash Mandir, Guwahati, 1959, p. 142
on the basis of SBG which is a valuable work in this field. In the Kathāgītā, the veteran writer has discussed the āṭkā of Śaṅkara, Bhāskara, Dāmodara and Śrīdharā and has tried to shed light on the complex philosophical elements of the SBG through the style of prose to make it easily understandable for the common people. The translation of the SBG into the Assamese language by Radhanath Phukan\textsuperscript{55} can be considered as an authentic work in Assamese literature. The explanations and discussions which are done from the scientific viewpoint make this translation distinctive among the group. Besides this, many other Assamese translations of the SBG are available here and there. The English translation of the SBG by Wilkins could bring uproar in the Western world and many people could get the test of the immortal philosophy of the SBG through this work. The English translation by Radhakrishnan\textsuperscript{56} is also of great importance. In Bengali language, there are a good number of translations of the SBG among which the one attributed to the great scholar Mahamahopadhyaya Pramathnath Tarkabhusan\textsuperscript{57} can be given special position for its expanded expositional deliberation. The Gītārahasya by Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak is another translated version of the original SBG composed in Marathi language originally.

1.1.5. Expositions and Essays on the Śrīmadbhagavadgītā

Besides the commentaries and the translations there are many works on the SBG available in different language which though do not come under the

\textsuperscript{55} Phukan, Radhanath (ed. & trans.), Śrīmadbhagavadgītā, Publication Board of Assam, 1988


\textsuperscript{57} Tarkabhusan, Pramathnath (ed. & trans.), Śrīmadbhagavadgītā, Dev Sahitya Kutir Private Limited, 7\textsuperscript{th} edn., 2001
jurisdiction of either commentary or translation of SBG categorically, do establish their importance in connection with any type of study in this regard. This form of expanded analysis has established many ideals and ideas on the doctrine of the SBG under different perspective. In this connection we can refer to the work like Sri Aurobindo’s *Essays on the Gita*, Mahatma Gandhi’s explanation and the exposition, Radhakrishnan’s *The Bhagavadgita*, the exposition composed by Lala Lajpat Rai, Swami Vivekananda’s perception on the philosophy of the SBG and so on. The towering Indian personalities like Sri Aurobindo, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, and Annie Besant have expressed their solidarity towards the philosophy of this book and they have established the importance of the SBG in their expositions and analysis from their respective standpoint. Mahatma Gandhi has clearly mentioned that when he was in the midst of confusion and tension he always used to open the SBG and as soon as he read a verse from it he could find the ray of light directing the right way of life.58 Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak has explained the various topics of the SBG in his *Gitārahasya* to make the meaning of the commentaries easier and understandable for general people so that there may be more popularity and utility of the SBG in the common parlance. Another freedom fighter of India Lala Lajpat Rai in his book *The Message of The Bhagawad Gitā* says that when India was in need of the spirit of action while passing through some crucial moments, the SBG was there to weave

58 “When doubts haunt me, when disappointments stare me in the face, and I see not one ray of light on the horizon,” Gandhi wrote in the 6 August, 1925, issue of Young India magazine, ‘I turn to the Bhagavad Gita, and find a verse to comfort me; and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming sorrow. My life has been full of external tragedies and if they have not left any visible or invisible effect on me, I owe it to the teaching of the Bhagavad Gita.” Fischer Louis, *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi*, Harper Collins Publishers, 2006, p. 44
that very spirit by its message of *karma*.\(^{59}\) In the book *Essays on the Gītā*, Sri Aurobindo has remarked that the influence of the SBG is not philosophic or academic but immediate and living also.\(^{60}\) Swami Vivekananda was also greatly influenced by the teachings of this great work. In many of his discourses he uttered references from this book and in many occasion while delivering lectures on the SBG, this great thinker has explained the message of action, nature of non attachment, knowledge of self etc. in a very lucid manner.\(^{61}\) All these have created a vast and wide range of study on this treasure of which India can be ever proud.

\(^{59}\) “A nation’s prosperity and success depends upon wisdom like that of Krishna and on bravery like Arjuna. The one without the other is incomplete and defective. Efficiency can best be secured by a combination of both. This is the corollary to the Bhagawad-Gīta; disinterested performance of one’s duty, without attachment to its fruits, at any cost and any risk, being its burthen this is a message for all times to come and foe men in general, be they of any colour or clime; but this is THE message for the descendants, successors and countrymen of Krishna and Arjuna, swayed as they are, at present, by the forces of ignorance, superstition, chicken-heartedness and false ideas of Dharma and Karma. In unswerving loyalty to this truth- at circumstance- lies the salvation of the present-day Indians.” Rai, Lala Lajpat, *The Message of The Bhagawad Gītā*, Rangildas M. Kapadia, Messers. M. Bhandare & Co., Bombay, pp. 66-67

\(^{60}\) Sri Aurobindo, Op.cit., p. 562

\(^{61}\) “Now, Arjuna is under the control of this emotionalism. He is not what he should be – a great self-controlled, enlightened sage working through the eternal light of reason. He has become like an animal, like a baby, just letting his heart carry away his brain, making a fool of himself and trying to cover his weakness with the flowery names of “love” and so on. Krishna sees through that. Arjuna talks like a man of little learning and brings out many reasons, but at the same time he talks the language of a fool. “this stage is not sorry for those that are living nor for those that die.”(Krishna Says:) “You cannot die nor can I. there was never a time when we did not exist. There will never be a time when we shall not exist. As in this life a man begins with childhood, and (passes through youth and old age, so at death he merely passes into another kind of body). Why should a wise man be sorry?” and where is the beginning of this emotionalism that has got hold of you? It is in the senses. “it is the touch of the senses that brings all this quality of existence; heat and cold, pleasure and pain. They come and go.” Man is miserable this moment, happy the next. As such he cannot experience the nature of the soul …. “Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. I, Mayavati Memorial Edition, Kolkata, Advaita Ashrama, 2009, pp. 460-461
1.1.6. Other works connected with the name Gītā

There are many other works which are commonly associated with the term gītā. But in any case those are completely different from the original Gītā. For instance, in the Kūrmapurāṇa one comes across the portions called Īśvaragītā and Vyāsagītā. The second part of this purāṇa i.e. uttarārdḍha starts with the part Īśvaragītā.62 There are altogether eleven chapters in this Isvaragītā. Every chapter of the Isvaragītā is concluded in the same way as it is found in the original one. Thus the end says that iti śrīkūrmapurāṇe uttarārdḍhe īśvaragītāsūpaniṣatsa brahmaviddyāyāṁ yogaśāstre ṛṣivyāsasaṁvāde prathamo’dhyāyaḥ. Again, from the next chapter of this very purāṇa which constitute the Twelfth Chapter of uttarārdḍha, the Vyāsagītā takes its course. The end of this Vyasagītā also bears the similar expression like that of the Īśvaragītā.63 In the Viṣṇupurāṇa, the Seventh Chapter in the 3rd part is entitled as Yamagītā.64 There is another Yamagītā found in the 382nd Chapter of the Agnipurāṇa.65 The Brahmagītā is included in 239th Chapter of the 1st khaṇḍa of the Garuḍapurāṇa.66 In the Devībhāgavatapurāṇa, the portion from the Thirty First Chapter to Fortieth Chapter of the 7th skandha is called Devīgītā.67 In the Aśvamedhikaparva of the Mahābhārata we find the Anugītā, where Arjuna requests Lord Krṣṇa to recite the teachings again which Lord has

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63 iti śrī kūrmapurāṇe uttarārdḍhe vyāsagītāsūpaniṣatsu brahmaviddyāyāṁ yogaśāstre ṛṣivyāsasaṁvāde dvādaśo’dhyāyaḥ, Ibid., p. 105
64 Viṣṇupurāṇa, with the commentary of Śrīdharmābhiṣṣṭi, published by Biharilal Sarkar, Kolkata, 1294 sāl
65 Srikrishnadas, Khemraj (ed.), Agnimahāpurāṇa, Nag Publishers, Delhi, 3rd edn., 2004
66 Srikrishnadas, Khemraj (ed.), Garudamahāpurāṇa, Nag Publishers, Delhi, 3rd edn., 2003
67 Srikrishnadas, Khemraj (ed.), Devībhāgavatapurāṇa, Nag Publishers, Delhi, 1986
imparted before, as Arjuna has forgotten those because of his negligence.\textsuperscript{68} But it is important to note here that these works have borrowed the name \textit{gītā} only to project the sanctity of the concerned subject matter and in no way those can come in the jurisdiction of the SBG. Again in Indian society, people understand the SBG in reference to the term \textit{gītā} although there are several other works which keeps the term \textit{gītā} in their title. So it can be said undoubtedly that the greatness of the SBG is an established phenomenon in the world parlance.

It is important to note here that the summary of the SBG is given in the 381\textsuperscript{st} Chapter of the \textit{Agni purāṇa}\textsuperscript{69} and also in 237\textsuperscript{th} and 238\textsuperscript{th} Chapters of the \textit{pūrvakhaṇḍa} of the \textit{Garuḍapurāṇa}.\textsuperscript{70} The \textit{Viṣṇusmṛti} quotes verses from the SBG verbatim in its Twentieth Chapter.\textsuperscript{71} Therefore, it can be assumed easily that the SBG bears a strong influence on various purāṇas which are again regarded as the masterpieces in their own sphere.

\section*{1.2 A Note on the Term \textit{kāvyā}, its Nature and Scope}

The Sanskrit term \textit{kāvyā} generally denotes poetical composition or Poetry. Etymologically \textit{kāvyā} signifies a work done by a poet.\textsuperscript{72} Therefore, Poetry is the expression of a poet who expresses his ideas, feelings or emotions through words. \textit{Kāvyā} technically means poetical composition with an organised plot by a single

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{68} yat tad bhagavatā proktaṁ purā keśava sauhṛdān/
    tat sarvaṁ pūruṣavāyāghra naṣṭaṁ me bhraṣṭacetasāḥ// \textit{Mahābhārata}, XVI.6
\item \textsuperscript{69} Srikrishnadas, Khemraj, Op.cit., p. 259
\item \textsuperscript{70} Srikrishnadas, Khemraj, Op.cit., p. 155
\item \textsuperscript{71} Krsihnamacarya, V. (ed.), \textit{Viṣṇusmṛti}, with the commentary of \textit{Keśavavajayanti} of Nandapandita, Vol. I, The Adyar Library and Research Centre, Madras, 1964
\item \textsuperscript{72} kaveḥ karma kāvyam, commentary on Vṛkṣṭ. I.2, ed. by Sushil Kumar De with the commentary of Kunataka, Firma K.L.Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 3\textsuperscript{rd} edn., 1961, p.3
\end{itemize}
Regarding the definition of a kāvyā the Sanskrit poets, especially the rhetoricians have furnished their divergent views in their respective works. Bhāmaha has said that words along with meaning constitute Poetry. If it is so then a sentence can also be called Poetry, because every sentence must contain words and it can convey a meaning as it is known to all that only meaningful words make a sentence. But in practical world it is seen that each and every sentence cannot achieve the status of Poetry. Only the possession of a meaning does not fulfill the requisite criteria of Poetry. Poetry is unique in itself. In Poetry the greatest charm lies in the fact that it is vibrated with the feeling of sentiment i.e. rasa without which a sentence cannot produce any poetic effect. In Poetry one sentence is joined with another having the contentment of both word and meaning. Through the striking portrayal of the feelings done by a poet, a piece of Poetry is able to arrest the attention of the connoisseur who can relish its taste. The definition of kāvyā is also found as ramaṇīyārthaprātipādakaḥ śabdaḥ kāvyam. Vakroṭjīvītakāra Kuntaka has said that the essence of Poetry lies in the characteristics of having striking expression. The kavi or the poet is the possessor of that power of delivering

73 Vide, Williams, Monier Monier, A Sanskrit English Dictionary, p. 280
74 śabdārthau sahitau kāvyam, Kavīmlk., I.16
75 vākyāṁ syādyogyaṭākāṅkṣāsattiyuktah padoccayaḥ, Sahd., II.1
77 Rasagāṅgādhara, Ch. I, ed. & trans. by Sandhya Bhaduri with the commentary of Nāgēśa Bhaṭṭa, Ānana I, Sanskrit Puṣṭak Bhandar, Calcutta, p. 2
78 śabdārthau sahitau vakrakavyāpārāśāliṇī/ bandhe vyavasthitau kāvyāṁ tadvidāḥlādakārīṇī// Vkrktj., I.7
magical expression through which he is able to make a normal event or statement a new and captivating one. To make a piece more beautiful or embellished the poet uses various literary ingredients like ṛtī, guṇa, alaṁkāra, dhwani etc. thus giving the chance to the advent of various schools like dhwani school, rasaschool, ṛtī school and the like. Many a Sanskrit rhetorician have accepted alaṁkāra i.e. figure of speech which has the capacity to adorn the Poetry, as the essence of kāvya. Vāmana has said that a description which is full of alaṁkāra is accepted to be a piece of kāvya. Ṣṛṣṭi, Rudraṭa also belong to the school of alaṁkāra who have recognised alaṁkāra as the most important element of poetical composition. They are of the view that a lady is not praised to be beautiful or attractive unless she wears ornaments like necklace, bracelets, ear rings etc. Likewise a kāvya remains charmless and unattractive without the application of figures of speech which are called the ornaments of Poetry. But the important point to be noted here is that an embellished Poetry may not be called a good Poetry if it does not carry the proper meaning of the desired expression and it becomes only a dull Poetry with decorative words and meaning. Therefore, Poetry needs something more than alaṁkāra which makes it more appealing and attractive besides the existence of decorative words and meaning. Ānandavardhana has argued that it is nothing but dhwani i.e. suggestion itself that is more charming than the expressed sense. He has accepted dhwani as the soul of Poetry and said that it is called the best poetical composition in which the suggested sense shines more than the expressed one. He has also accepted that

79 kāvyam grāhyamalaṁkārōt/ Kavlmkṣv., I.1.1
80 kāvyasyātmā dhvaniḥ/ Dhvanl., I.1
81 sarveṣvēva prabhedeṣu sphaṭatvenāvabhāsanan/
suggestion helps to relish the sentiment i.e. *rasa* which according to Viśvanātha Kavirāja is called the soul of Poetry.  

Viśvanātha Kavirāja, after refuting all the views of his predecessors furnishes his opinion and affirms in this regard that without *rasa* a sentence cannot be called Poetry as it is the soul of it without which mere unification of words and meaning becomes lifeless. Therefore to be a Poetry or *kāvya* the most important element is the existence of sentiment and other poetic elements such as *alāṅkāra, guṇa, rīti*, etc. being its subordinate, remain the cause of the upliftment of the sentiments only.  

Though in composing a piece of Poetry the existence of various literary elements are necessary, the main aim of the poet is to bring the taste of the sentiment. With the help of poetic deliberation the poet tries to fill the heart of the readers and submerge their mind in that ocean of sentiment.

The term *kāvya* also refers to inspiration. In this connection we can quote the words of Mammaṭabhaṭṭa where he has said that *kāvya* earns fame, wealth, expertise in various field, protects one from evils and brings immediate relief and delight like the advice given to a man by his consort. *Kāvya* is really proved to be an inspiration for the poet as it brings name and fame as well as wealth which are the expected goal of human life. Poetry makes people understand what is good or what is bad. It not only works as the healer from diseases but also as the entertainer to the readers. Viśvanātha Kavirāja has also mentioned that from *kāvya* both the poet

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82 vākyarā rasātmakaṁ kāvyam/ Sahd., I.3
83 utkarṣahetavaḥ proktā guṇālaṅkārārātiyayaḥ// Ibid.
84 Vide, Apte, Vaman Shivram, *The Student’s Sanskrit English Dictionary*, p. 147
85 kāvyarā yaśāse‘ṛthakṛte vyavahāravide śivetarakṣataye/ sadyaḥ paranirvṛtyaye kāntāsammitatayopadesayuje// Kavp., I.2
and the reader can easily achieve the four puruṣārthas i.e. dharma (righteousness), artha (wealth), kāma (desired object) and mokṣa (liberation). He has also explained the point that as all the desired things can be achieved through Poetry with ease and enjoyment, one becomes more attracted to this type of composition than towards the Vedas which are said to be śāstras and that is why which seem dry and difficult to understand. Sanskrit rhetoricians have laid a good volume of place on the discussion of the varieties of Sanskrit kāvya. Kāvyas are seen to be subdivided in various ways. The most popular form of division speaks of three varieties of Sanskrit Poetry viz. uttamakāvya, madhyamakāvya and adhamakāvya. On the basis of the varieties of Sanskrit Poetry, the different types of kavi are also associated in the realm of Sanskrit Rhetorics.

Sanskrit rhetoricians have accepted the term sāhitya as the synonyms of the term kāvya. The term sāhitya connotatively implies the state of going together sahitayorbhāvah sāhityam. Thus the term sāhitya denotes the intermingling of word and meaning which is hinted in the expression śabdārthau sahitau kāvyam.

1.3 A Note on the Term śāstra, its Nature and Scope

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86 caturvargaphalaprōptih sukhādaldpadhiyāmapi/ kāvyādeva yatastena tatsvarūpariñ nirūpyate// Sahd., I.2
87 idamuttamamatiśayini vyāṅgye vācyād dhvanirbudhaiḥ kathitaḥ/ atādrśi gujībhūtavyāṅgye tu madhyamam/
śabdacitraṁ vācyacitramavyāṅgyaṁ tvavaraṁ smṛtam// Kavp., I.4,
88 Vide, Sastri, Manoranjan, Sāhitya Darśana, Chandra Prakash, Guwahai, 6th edn., 2012, p. 5
89 Commentary on Vkrktj., I.17, p.27
90 Kavlmk., I.16
The term śāstra means a treatise which is generally considered as a sacred book.\textsuperscript{91} The equivalent term for śāstra in English language is taken to be scripture which means the sacred writing of a religion. The term scripture also literally indicates to something which is written through script or letter.\textsuperscript{92} This term also refers to a work on instruction, advice or good counseling.\textsuperscript{93} Śāstra in general, is thought to be the composition of any authoritative personality from which one can acquire the knowledge of good that should be followed and of bad that should be discarded immediately.\textsuperscript{94} From the standpoint of the subject matter, a śāstra is the amalgamation of rules and codes of the society that instructs in its own way the norms of a particular arena of human life. Vedas are considered to be the first written scriptures of the human world and these remain the source of instruction for the whole universe. India is a place of śāstras. In each field of study there are śāstras which are followed as the work of accepted norms. Every society has its own scriptures and those are accepted as codified laws by the people belonging to that society. Indian tradition speaks of the existence of scriptures in almost every sphere of knowledge. As a result, the Indians are proud to have dharmaśāstra, arthaśāstra, kāmaśāstra, darśanaśāstra, vyākaranashaśāstra, chandaśāstra etc. These works establish the basic principles of each field and thus can enhance the comprehensive

\textsuperscript{91} Vide, Apte, Vaman Shivram, Op.cit., p. 553
\textsuperscript{92} Vide, \textit{Merrian Webster’s Encyclopedia of Literature}, p. 1006
\textsuperscript{93} Vide, Macdonell, Arthur Anthony, \textit{A Practical Sanskrit Dictionary}, p. 313
\textsuperscript{94} pravṛttiṝvā nivṛttiṝvā nityena kṛtakena vā/
puriṃsām yenopadiśyeta tacchāstramahidhīyatē// As quoted in the
Vyākaraṇamahābhāṣyam, Vide, Joshi, Bhargava Shastri
Bhikaji (ed.), \textit{Vyākaraṇamahābhāṣyam}, with \textit{Bhāṣyaprādīpa} of Kaiyāṭa
Upādhyāya & \textit{Bhāṣyaprādipoddotyōta} of Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa, Vol. I, Chaukhamba
Sanskrit Pratishthan, Delhi, Reprint, 2014, p. 9
knowledge in the respective arena. A man becomes wise if he follows the advice of
the scriptures. In the SBG also Lord Kṛṣṇa has said that let the scripture be the guide
to Arjuna in deciding what should be done and what should not be done and from
the teachings of the concerned scripture Arjuna should follow the course of his
duty.\textsuperscript{95} In the Hitopadeśa, it is sad that who does not possess the knowledge of
śāstra remains blind. Because śāstra is the universal eye which removes doubts and
discloses the nature of the things that remain unnoticed or hidden from view in other
way.\textsuperscript{96} Hemachandra Barua has mentioned in his dictionary that śāstra is of fourteen
types viz. six Vedāṅgas, mīmāṁsā, nyāya, daṇḍa, āyurveda, smṛti, gandharvaveda,
dhanurveda and kāvyā.\textsuperscript{97} Indian tradition relates the fact that the term śāstra is often
used at the end of a particular composition after the term denoting the main topic of
discussion, or it is sometimes applied collectively to the whole body of the work of
teaching on any particular subject as in the cases vedāntaśāstra, nyāyaśāstra,
tarkaśāstra, alaṁkāraśāstra etc.\textsuperscript{98} In the Kāvyamīmāṁsā, Rājaśekhara has discussed
elaborately the concept of śāstra with its varieties and sub varieties. He is of the
opinion that the work which has teaching essence is honoured in this world as
śāstra.\textsuperscript{99} In this context Rājaśekhara has furnished his view that for composing

\textsuperscript{95} tasmāčāstraṁ pramāṇaṁ te kāryākāryavyavasthitau/
jñātvā śāstravidhāṅktaṁ karma kartumihārhasi// SBG., XVI.24
\textsuperscript{96} anekasaṁsayocchedi parokṣārthasya darśakam/
sarvasya locanaṁ śāstraṁ yasya nāstyandha eva saḥ// Hitopadeśa, prastāvikā, 10
\textsuperscript{97} Vide, Barua, Hem Chandra, Hemakoṣa, p. 990
\textsuperscript{98} Vide, Apte, Vaman Shivram, Op.cit., p. 553
\textsuperscript{99} saritāṁiva pravāhāstucchāḥ prathamāṁ yathottaraṁ vipulāḥ/
ye śāstrasamārthbā bhavanti lokasya te vandyāḥ// Kavms. Ch. II, ed. by
C.D.Dalal and R.A.Sastry, revised & enlarged by K.S.Ramaswami Śastri Siromani,
Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, Delhi, Reprint, 2010, p. 4
Poetry, the knowledge of śāstra is must. Without the knowledge of śāstra a person cannot achieve proficiency in Poetry. Mammaṭabhaṭṭa also affirms that the proficiency arising out of the study of śāstra and observation on the behaviour of the human world remain as one of the causes of the origin of kāvyā. Thus according to these rhetoricians, before entering into the field of Poetry one must go through the rules and norms established by the scriptures. Rājaśekhara has divided śāstra into two broad divisions viz. apauruṣeya and pauruṣeya. In apauruṣeya section the scriptures like four Vedas and six Vedāṅgas fall whereas the pauruṣeya variety includes Purāṇa, Ānvīkṣikī, mūnāṁsā and smṛti. Thus in the opinion of Rājaśekhara there are altogether fourteen branches of knowledge. Rājaśekhara has placed the kāvyavidyā i.e. the knowledge of Poetry in the fifteenth position and he opines that it is regarded as the best amongst all. According to Rājaśekhara, Poetry includes both prose and verse form where poet can exhibit his own writing skill. Poetry can also give beneficial instructions for the well being of the society. That is why Poetry can be included in the list of the scriptures. But at the same time Rājaśekhara again opines that only the achievement of proficiency in scriptures is not sufficient for the composition of Poetry. A kāvyā, though bears the basic concept of instructional nature, generally differs from other varieties of śāstra as it turns out to be more attractive and popular for its ability to create charm and delight. Thus it can be said that the concept of kāvyā and śāstra does not remain at two far ends. Those are, rather, in many cases seen to be amalgamated for the betterment of the society.

100 śāstrapūrvavatāt kāvyānāṁ pūrvarṇ śāstrēśvabhiniviśet, Ibid., p. 2
101 śāktimipuṇatā lokaśāstrākāvyādyavekṣapāt/ kāvyajñāśīkṣayā)bhyāṣa iti hetustadbhave// Kavp., I.3
102 “sakalavidyāsthānaikāyataṁ pañcaddiśaṁ kāvyaṁ vidyāsthānaṁ” iti yāśāvṛtyāḥ/ gadyapadyamayatāt kavidharmatāt hitopadeśakatvācca taddhi śāstrānyanudhāvati, Kavms., Ch. II, p. 4
There is no hard and first rule that a śāstra should be free from poetical charm, neither there is any such norm that a kāvyā should remain away from giving instruction to its reader. The study in this field, rather, discloses the fact that in many cases a very good poetical piece can be a major source of instruction and again a typical śāstra may be replete with various literary elements. When in a composition the elements of both the scripture and that of Poetry are combined it bears some special beauty in itself.\textsuperscript{103} Rājaśekhara, probably brooding on these characteristic features of composition has established three-fold divisions of poet viz. śātrakavi, kāvyakavi and ubhayakavi where each type of poet is regarded as the best in his own sphere. Rājaśekhara has again divided the variety of śātrakavi into three categories. According to him the first is one who composes scripture alone. In this category we may take the name of Kauṭilya and his composition Arthaśāstra can be regarded as a composition of this class of Poetry. The second is one who composes Poetry intermingled with the elements of scripture. Vedavyāsa can be marked as a representative of this type of śātrakavi and his Mahābhārata may be considered to be a Poetry of this division. The third is one who composes scripture with the poetic elements and in this section the name of Bhaṭṭadeva may come whereas his composition Bhaṭṭikāvyā can be taken as a scriptural work with poetical aspect.\textsuperscript{104} Thus it is seen that the literary world of Sanskrit can boast of the existence of all these types of compositions.

\textsuperscript{103} yacchāstraśaṅskāraḥ kāvyamanugṛhaṇāti śāstraikapraṇaṭā tu niṅgraṇāti/ kāvyasarśāṅskāro’pi śāstravākyapākanunruṇaddhi kāvyāikapraṇaṭā tu viruṇaddhi, Ibid., Ch. V, p. 17

\textsuperscript{104} tatra tridhā śāstrakaviḥ/ yah śāstraṁ vidhatte, yaśca śāstre kāvyam sarṇividhatte, yo’pi kāvyā śāstrārthaṁ nidhatte, Ibid.

31
1.4 Aims and Objectives of the Proposed Thesis

The SBG is primarily a philosophical work where the doctrines of the principal Upaniṣads and Indian philosophical systems are amalgamated along with other teachings. It is often called a religious book or scripture. All over the world, countless works have been composed on the basis of the philosophy projected through the SBG. Though this work appears to be a philosophical treatise, there remains another aspect of this book which has not been discussed elaborately so far. It can be said that under the apparel of the philosophical discourse coming out of the conversation between Lord Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, this work bears a dazzling stamp of literary charm and grandeur. If the existence of the literary elements in this great work is judged under proper forum the SBG can come out as one of the finest specimens of literary composition. The Mahābhārata is an epic Poetry which bears all the literary qualities and beauty. M.Winternitz in this regard says that Indians themselves consider the Mahābhārata as an epic, as a work of the art of Poetry (kāvyā), but at the same it is also considered as a text book of morals (śāstra) of law and philosophy based on ancient tradition (smṛti). He again opines that for these reasons this book is endowed with indisputable authority and since more than 1500 years it has served the Indians as much for entertainment as for instruction and sublime edification.105 Commenting on the SBG, Winternitz says ‘This episode in the Mahābhārata is the most beautiful, nay the only truly philosophical poem we can find in all the literatures known to us.’106 In this connection the words of Macdonell can be remembered as he says that the Mahābhārata claims not only to

106 Vide, Ibid., p. 409
be a heroic poem (kāvya), but it can also claim to a compendium of teaching in accordance with the Veda, smṛti or work of sacred tradition, which expounds the whole duty of man, and according to him it is intended for the religious instruction of all Hindus.\footnote{107} Being a part of the Mahābhārata, the SBG can also demand the poetic charm. The SBG has come out in the format of verses like the Mahābhārata. Ānandavardhana, the great rhetorician has called the Mahābhārata a kāvya with Śānta as the predominant sentiment.\footnote{108} Thus being an integral part of the great epic, the SBG also stands as a specimen of literary composition. This work has its own style and get up. The apparently unintelligible doctrines of different philosophies become more comprehensible by the lucid and easy diction of the SBG. Every verse has a sweet sounding rhythm for which it creates the charm of a unique musical piece. Its charm and musical appeal can attract the heart of those who do not even understand the meaning of the words used here. Not only in India but in foreign countries also there are many people, who can chant the whole SBG. In some schools, it is mandatory to read and chant some verses of it and because of its easy and melodious rhythm, a child can recite it without much effort. Besides these, the metres, the figures of speech, the application of suggestion, the style, the literary qualities used in this piece of composition etc. are sufficient enough to establish the literary aspect of the SBG as well. C.V.Vaidya has mentioned that the SBG throughout its length strikes one with the beauty of its language and the charm of its

Poetry, a merit which no patched up work can possess. There are many scholars who have admitted in their respective works that the SBG is a beautiful literary piece. In this connection we can take the names of Radhakrishnan, Vivekananda etc. Radhakrishnan specifically refers to the poetic excellence of this work in his book. But, as far as our knowledge goes, there is no such project where the literary aspects of this valuable and interesting book have been dealt with on the basis of illustration, elaboration and elucidation. There are various commentaries, translations, articles, expositions, note of utility etc. on different aspects of the SBG which have been published not only in India but also from different corners of the globe. But no work particularly based on the discussion on the literary aspect of this poem has been found till date. The main aim and objective of the present dissertation is to find out the literary elements of the SBG and thus to establish this piece as a great specimen of poetical composition.

1.5 Methodology

The method used in this project is explanatory and analytical and a comparative analysis is tried to be incorporated in the body of the present thesis as and when required. In pointing out the literary elements of this work the well

111 “The greatest incident of the war was the marvelous and immortal poem of the Gita, the Song Celestial.” Swami Vivekananda, Op.cit., Vol. IV, p. 95
112 “It is not an esoteric work designed for and understood by the specially initiated but a popular poem which helps even those “who wander in the region of the many and variable.” Radhakrishnan, S., Op.cit., Introductory Essay, p. 11
established books on Sanskrit Poetics have been taken up as the base. The hypothesis that the SBG is a beautiful piece of Poetry will continue throughout the process of study. In the concluding part this hypothesis is established as the result of the study on the basis of the analytical experiment done in all the previous chapters.