CHAPTER - III

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1. THE MEANING OF THE TERM GUNA

The term guna is used in various branches of Sanskrit literature like the Upaniṣads, the Purāṇas, the Mahābhārata, the Gītā etc. and in different systems of Indian philosophy. The meaning of this important term also varies in different works. The Śāṃkhyā system has accepted three gunas viz. sattva, rajas and tāmas as the constituents or components of Prakṛti. Prakṛti is a equilibrium of these gunas\(^1\). The Yoga philosophy also conforms to this view.

The term guna is derived from the Indo-European foundation gere which means twirl, wind\(^2\). The word guna is used to denote many meanings. Generally, it means quality or characteristic of a thing. Guna also means a ‘cord’, ‘string’ or ‘thread’. Larson says, “The term also comes to be employed in moral discourse, so that ‘guna’ may refer to ‘outstanding merit’ or moral excellence”\(^3\). The term is also used to denote secondary sense in the works of poetics. In Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophy this term is used to mean a quality which inheres in a substance. It is one of the seven categories accepted in this system. They accept twenty four numbers of guna\(^4\).

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1. sattvarajastamasāṁ samyāvasthā prakṛti. SS, 1.61
2. Hindu Philosophy, Bernard, Theos, P. 74
4. caturvimsatigunāḥ. TSa, P. 9
However, in the Sāṃkhya philosophy the term is used in quite a different sense from that of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas. Here the term is regarded as the constituent of Prakṛti which is one of the two ultimate reals of Sāṃkhya system. It has already been discussed that Prakṛti is the root cause of the world which is constituted of three factors, which are called guṇas. In the Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophy, it is said, “In Sāṃkhya, guṇa is a ‘cord’ or ‘thread’, a constituent ‘strand’ of primordial materiality. On another level, guṇa is ‘secondary’ or ‘subordinate’ in the sense that it is secondary to what is primary or principal (Pradhāna). On still another level, guṇa implies moral distinctions in that it refers to the activity of Prakṛti as the basis of satisfaction, frustration and confusion, or moral excelence, moral decadence, and a moral indifference.”5 According to Sāṃkhya, the term guṇa also comes to encompass the entire range of subjective and objective reality, whether manifest (Vyakta) or unmanifest (Avyakta). It becomes the ‘thread’ that runs through all of ordinary experience and throughout the natural world, tying together, as it were, the tattva realm, the bhāva realm and the bhūta realm.6

2. THE NATURE OF THE GUṆA

The theory of guṇa may be termed as the most distinguishing feature of Sāṃkhya system. In Sāṃkhya system, Prakṛti the first cause of the universe is one but complex, and its complexity is the result of its being constituted of three factors, each of which is called as a guṇa. It has already been mentioned that guṇa means a constituent element or component. It is not an attribute or quality. Hence, these guṇas are not qualities as accepted by the Vaiśeṣikas. According to

5. Larson, Gerald James & Bhattacharya, Ram Shankar, Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophy, Vol. IV, P. 65
6. Ibid.

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the Sāṃkhya, these constituents of Prakṛti are called sattvaguna, rajoguna and tamoguna and each has its characteristic function. Vijnānabhikṣu has forwarded arguments for their being called guṇas. In his view they are so called because they are either subservient to the ends of the Puruṣa or are interwined like the three strans of a rope which binds the soul to the world. But it should not be regarded as built up out of them for while it depends on them they depend just as much on it, both being equally beginningless. Actually, in the view of the Sāṃkhya, all objects mental or material of this world are the combinations of three ultimate reals which are technically called three guṇas.

The first guṇa i.e. sattva is etymologically derived from sat, meaning real or existent. Generally consciousness is granted such existence. Sattva is the potential consciousness. So, goodness and happiness are produced from the sattvaguna. Vacaspati Misra said that it is buoyant or light.8

Sattva is used to signify that power of nature that illuminates and reveals all. It manifests itself as light. Sattva is responsible for the manifestation of objects. Without the relation of sattva buddhi cannot be reflected on Puruṣa. The power of reflection in a mirror, the mind, the intellect, the luminosity of light etc. are all due to sattva. Dr. Anima Sengupta says, “Each fact of experience is a being or satta and this being or existence constitutes its intelligibility. This intelligibility or existence, therefore, is the ultimate factor in an object of experience and it is called sattvaguna by the Sāṃkhya philosophers.”9 In the Sāṃkhya Sāra, Vijnānabhikṣu explains that sattva means that which has the state

7. tesvatra śāstre śrutyaśadā ca guṇasābdahā puruṣopakaraṇaptvāt
   puruṣaśpaśubandhakatrigunātmakamahadadiraśunjīmānttvāc ca prajuṣyate. SPB on SS, 1.61
8. sukhaprakasalaghava. STK on SK, 13
of sat, i.e. goodness. Hence, the best upakaraṇa or means for Puruṣa's experience is sattvaguna.\textsuperscript{10}

The second guna i.e. rajas is derived from the root rañj, which means to colour to be attached to or moved. Rajas is used to signify that power of nature which affects and moves the other two constituents. Rajas is the activating and exciting power without which the other constituents cannot move. Its function is to move things and over-come resistance. Rajas is responsible for all motion and change that goes on throughout nature. It is the source of all activity. Rajas helps the sattva and tamas, which are motionless to perform their power. Theos Bernard says, "It gives matter its force and impetus and imparts motion to air and fire. It manifests itself as the force of the winds."\textsuperscript{11}

The third guna i.e. tamas means 'darkness'. Tamas is used to signify that power of nature which restrains, obstructs and envelops the other two constituents by counter-acting the deeds of rajas to do work and sattva to reveal. Restraining and binding are its nature. It produces the state of indifference and ignorance. Tamas hinders the power of manifestation in the mind, the intellect and thereby produces ignorance and darkness and bewilderment (moha). According to Theos Bernard: "It is responsible for the attraction and downward pull of the earth and the tendency of water to descend. It is the cause of mass, weight and inertia."\textsuperscript{12}

In his Śāṅkhyakārīka Isvarakṛṣṇa has defined the three gunas thus: sattvaguna is buoyant and illuminating, while rajoguna is stimulating and mobile. Tamoguna, on the other hand is heavy and enveloping.\textsuperscript{13}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{11} Bernard, Theos, \textit{Hindu Philosophy}, P. 74
\bibitem{12} Ibid., P. 75
\bibitem{13} sattvaṁ laghu prakāśakamistamupastambhakam calanca rajaḥ / guru baranakameva tamah .............................................................. // SK, 13
\end{thebibliography}
These three *gunas* produce pleasure, pain and sloth respectively. These three *gunas* are everchanging and do not remain static even for a moment.\(^{14}\) They are always in a state of flux.\(^{15}\) According to Sāmkhya, *gunas* are beginningless. Though these three constituents are essentially distinct in their nature, they are interdependent. So they can never be separated from one another and form a unity in trinity. They are always intermingled with one another and support each other. In other words, they are not only co-existent, but they co-here also. This intrinsic interdependence of the *gunas* excludes the possibility of the breaking up of *Prakṛti* by their separation.

These entities are substances and not *gunas* (qualities) in the Vaiśeṣika sense. Sāmkhya philosophy said that there is no separate existence of *gunas* and each and every unit of *guna* is but a unit of substance. What we call *guna* is but a particular manifestation or appearance of a subtle entity. Things do not possess *guna*, but *guna* signifies merely the manner in which a substance reacts.

Summerising the concept of *gunas* Sengupta says, “Since the whole external world is made up of these elements, each object of cognition possesses the capacity of producing three different feelings in the minds of human beings, i.e., pleasure, pain and delusion or indifference. So, from the point of view of knowledge, these three *gunas* are known as *sattva, rajas* and *tamas*, but from the point of view of feeling, they appear as pleasure, pain and delusion.”\(^{16}\)

*Gunas* are not perceived, they are beyond the senses. They are inferred from their effects. In the *Yogābhāṣya*, it is stated that the actual forms of these

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14. prityapritivijātāmakaḥ prakāśaparvṛttiniyamārthah/
   anyo’nyābhibhavāśrayajananamithunavṛttayasya ca guṇāḥ// SK, 12.
15. calanca guṇavṛttam. *Yogābhāṣya*, 2.15
Gunas do not come within belonging to vision level (range), what comes within the level of vision is presentee like Maya.\textsuperscript{17} Gunas are manifested in the worldly things because of their varying mutual exchanges and combinations give rise to all sorts of collocations.\textsuperscript{18} The manifested objects are not different from the gunas. In the Yuktidipika, it is said that the gunas in their original forms are minute. So, these are not perceived, only their effects are perceived.\textsuperscript{19}

Though the gunas show the attribute of a quality as they become apparently associated with and dissociated from the Purusa, they cannot be regarded as qualities of the Purusa. The qualities actually and constantly inhere in the substance, the gunas are not so, hence, they are regarded as substances.\textsuperscript{20} However, in the Yuktidipika, it is said that these gunas are infra-atomic quanta of reals, rather forces than substance.\textsuperscript{21} S.N. Dasgupta has opined that feeling formulates the marginal line between thought and matter, the animate and the inanimate. But the Samkhya philosophy does not accept any strict distinction between thought and matter. Matter and thought are established of the same feeling dravyas, which form the neutral borderline between matter and thought. Gunas are also these dravyas.\textsuperscript{22} According to Vacaspati Mīśra, satvā, rajas and tamas are called gunas because they exist for the sake of others.\textsuperscript{23} Activity of substance is called the guna. "But in whatever senses we may be inclined to justify the name guna..."
as applied to these subtle entities, it should be born in mind that they are substantive entities or subtle substances and not abstract qualities.\textsuperscript{24}

Another important point is that although these *guṇas* are mutually opposed, they can operate to achieve a common purpose. The opposite natures of the *guṇas* do not in any hamper them in producing the effect. When these *guṇas* act together for production of objects, they exert mutual influences upon one another and by so doing, they bring into existence new qualities and new substances. It is true that these *guṇas* possess different characteristics, but while they act, there is co-operation like that of oil, wick and flame.\textsuperscript{25} They are relatively opposed to one another. But they co-operate to produce the light of a lamp.\textsuperscript{26} So, there is co-operation of these *guṇas* to produce the things of the world. One object is called *sattvika, rājasika* and *tāmasa* in so far as it represents the predominance of *sattva, rajas* and *tamas*. When *sattva* predominates then *rajas* and *tamas* remain in conjunction with it, although in a subdued form. As soon as the influence of *sattva* weakens, due to some causes, the *sahakāra guṇas* at once become active and more prominent. Then these three *guṇas* become operative, although all of them cannot maintain the same status at the same time. These *guṇas* do not act for themselves, they act to serve the purpose of the *Puruṣa*. "The creativity of these reals is not an end in itself, on the contrary, it serves as the only means for the attainment of *puruṣa*'s end\textsuperscript{27} says Anima Sengupta. According to Vācaspāti, the *guṇas* serve the *bhoga* purpose of spirit by mere proximity.\textsuperscript{28}

\begin{itemize}
  \item[24.] Dasgupta, S.N., *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol.-1, P. 244
  \item[25.] yathā varṭṭitaile analavirodhīnī, atha milite sahānalena rūpaprakāsalakṣanāṁ kāryāṁ kurutah,... evam sattvarajastamāṁśi mithovirudhāṅyapayantyasānti svakāryāṁ kariyanti ca. STK on SK, 13
  \item[26.] pradipavacārthato vṛtiḥ / SK, 13
  \item[27.] Sengupta, Dr. Anima, *Classical Sāmkhya: A Critical Study*, P.80
  \item[28.] Tattvavaisārāda, 11-18.
\end{itemize}
It has already been mentioned that change is the nature of these gunas. They are always changing. Change belongs to the very essence of the gunas and they cannot help changing even for a moment.²⁹ According to Vijnānabhaṁkiṣu again gunas are innumerable in number; they are endless and all-pervading. But this all pervading nature of the gunas may pose a problem for them. For if the gunas are accepted as all pervading, then there will be no change in them. Vijnānabhaṁkiṣu here opines that limitedness means non-existence in a particular part of the space. But as the gunas are never non-existent in any part of the space, hence these are all pervading.³⁰ The views of the Naiyāyikas can also be cited in support of Vijnānabhaṁkiṣu. The Naiyāyikas also accept the souls, time, space, ether etc. as all-pervading. Now, according to the Nyāya system, only that object which possesses the quality of touch, occupies space, soul etc. are not endowed with touch and hence beyond the limitation of space. In Sāmkhyā philosophy also the three gunas possess the quality of touch in a very subtle form and hence these gunas do not occupy space in such a manner as to resist movement. The gunas are eternal in nature and cannot be created or destroyed. While the concrete phenomenal modes are subject to addition and subtraction, growth and decay, which changes are brought about by collocations and the actual together are ever the same. "It is just as in a game of dice: they are ever the same dice, but as they fall in various ways, they mean to us different things. All change relates to the position, order, grouping, mixing, separation of the eternally existing essentials, which are always intergating and disintergatings."

²⁹. parināmasvabhāva hi guṇā nāparināmāṇya kṣetramapya vatīṣṭhante. STKonSK, 16
³⁰. paricchinnatvamatra daiśkābhāvapratīyogī vacchedakāvacchinnatvān, tadabhāvasca vyāpakatvam. SPB on SS, 1.76
³¹. Radhakrishnan, S., Indian Philosophy, P.265
**Sattva, rajas and tamas** these subtle entities are also called *gunas* in the sense of rope because they are like ropes by which the soul is chained down to thought and matter. These may also be called *guna* or something of secondary importance, because though permanent and indestructible, they continually suffer modifications and changes by their mutual groupings and re-grouping, and thus not primarily and unalterably constant like the souls (*Purusa*). Moreover, the object of the world process being the enjoyment and salvation of the *Purusas*, the matter-principle could not naturally be regarded as being of primary importance.

All mental and material objects are the combinations in different proportions of these three ultimate reals. Dr. Anima Sengupta opines that “The conception of these *gunas* arose in the minds of these philosophers, undoubtedly as a result of their analysis of our phenomenal consciousness and its objects.”32

The three *gunas* are the sum and substance of *Prakṛti*. The *gunas* are the root of all change, the foundation of reality, the essence of all things. Before the manifestation of the objective world, they are in a state of perfect balance, equipoise. When this condition of equilibrium is disturbed, the phenomenal world beings to appear. The predominance of one or the other of these three constituents accounts for the various stages in the process of cosmic condition.

Theos Bernard says that in the course of the potential condition of *Prakṛti*, the three *gunas* are in a state of constant motion within themselves without affecting one another. This inherent subtle movement is the nature of the *gunas* and exists without effecting any objective result. Because of this inherent movement, no external cause is necessary to upset this state of balance. The initial stress in nature is the result of past action (*karma*).33

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32. Sengupta, Dr. Anima, *Classical Sāṃkhya: A Critical Study*, P.75
33. *Hindu Philosophy*, Bernard, Theos, P.75

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In the process of cosmic evolution, the three guṇas are never separated, they co-exist in everything. Never do they function separately, but one or the other may predominate. They are as intimately conjoined as an electron and proton, the constituents of an atom. As the arrangement of atoms accounts for all the elements known to science, so does the arrangement of the guṇas account for all the manifestations of nature.

It has already been mentioned that the whole external world is made up of these three elements. Each object of cognition possesses the capacity of producing three different feeling in the minds of human beings i.e. pleasure, pain infatuation or indifference. So, from the point of view of knowledge, these three guṇas are known as sattva, rajas and tamas. Everything is possessed of the three guṇas (triagunaṭmaka) and these guṇas appear as pleasure, pain and infatuation. This is made clear by an example in the Sāṅkhyaatattva-kaumudi. A beautiful and young woman is a source of delight to her beloved husband. She is again the cause of pain to her co-wives and produces delusion in the disappointed person.\(^{34}\) This is because the woman is objectively pleasurable, painful and delusive. That means there are sattva, rajas and tamas equally in the object, i.e. woman. These three guṇas which on the plane of consciousness appear as intelligence, energy and mass appear as pleasure, pain and infatuation on the plane of feeling. “Thus, the correspondence between the inner world and the outer world has been satisfactorily explained by the Sāṅkhya philosophers on the hypothesis that they represent two allied lines of development from a common source, (i.e., the three

\(^{34}\) tadyathā ekaiva strirupayauvanakulasitasampanna svaminam sukhakaroti;........ saiva stri sapatnirduhkhakaroti,........ evam puruṣāntaram tāmāvindamanāmi saiva mohayati.

STK on SK, 13
The guṇas are infinite in number but these guṇas have been brought under three types in accordance with their three different natures. When sattvagrūṇa is referred to, it does not mean one substance, rather an infinite number of subtle substances possessing the common natures of self-shiningness and luminosity. Similar is the case with second (rajas) and third (tamas) guṇas.

In Sāṁkhya philosophy both the guṇas and the Puruṣas are accepted as equally eternal. But the difference is that while the Puruṣas are pure and inactive, the guṇas are unconscious, ever-changing dynamic energy. The entire universe of diversity and change is produced out of these guṇas. The world is not static. It is out and out dynamic. The guṇas undergo constant changes or modifications. But these changes occur in two ways: Īśvarakṛṣṇa has said that svarūpa (homogeneous) and virūpa (heterogeneous) modification are the two types of modifications. In the state of equilibrium of the guṇas, during pralaya or dissolution there is svarūpaparināma. In this state the guṇas exert equal influences on one another and no guṇa overpowers the other. The starting point of the world’s evolution is called the virūpaparināma of the three guṇas. In this state there is disturbance in equilibrated state of the guṇas because of the excessive activity of the rajas. As a result there are excessive modifications in sattva, rajas and tamas and the guṇas begin to manifest their diverse characteristics.

From the above discussion we have seen that the realism of Sāṁkhya and its bed-rock is constituted of three guṇas and that these guṇas form the central

35. Sengupta, Dr. Anima, Classical Sāṁkhya: A Critical Study, P.79
36. Ibid., P.81
principle of the Saṁkhya view of the world. This interpretation of the guṇas as minute substances has, first of all been given to us by Viññānabhikṣu in his Saṁkhya-pravacana-bhaṣya. Vācaspati Miśra and Gauḍapāda do not provide us with any description of the nature of the guṇas from this point of view. It has been accepted by all eminent modern scholars. The three guṇas always exist together. There cannot be pure sattva, without rajas and tamas or pure rajas, without sattva and tamas or pure tamas without sattva and rajas. The difference between one being and another lies in the preponderance of the guṇa.

The most remarkable feature of the guṇa theory is that this theory traces the natures of men back to physical causes. Pleasure, pain and apathy not only exist as subjective and individual experiences, but have their objectively real correlatives in the external world. James Hastings said, “this whole theory of the three guṇas as taught by the Saṁkhya is a pure hypothesis, which shares the fate of very many other hypotheses of philosophy and cannot hold its ground from the modern scientific point of view. It is nevertheless an interesting essay in explanation, which to the Indian mind has appeared possessed of such convincing force that the idea has become absolutely the common property of all philosophical sanskrit literature. Even at the present day the entire circle of philosophical conceptions in India is controlled by the theory of the three guṇas”.37

3. GUṆA IN OTHER LITERATURE :

Guṇa is used in the Upaniṣads as the constituents of Prakṛti. First of all these three guṇas are mentioned as the three elements of fire, water and earth which exist in all things. In the Chāndogyopanishad,38 the three guṇas are

38. CU, 5.6.4.
illustrated as red, white and black. In the Śvetāśvataropanisad, these three guṇas are described more definitely as the constituents of Prakṛti. The terms lohita, śukla and kṛṣṇa are generally taken to denote the three guṇas as red (loīta) is taken to be the symbol of rajas, white (śukla) to be that of sattva and black (kṛṣṇa) to be that of tamas. These guṇas are present in all phenomena in different proportion. The guṇas are said to be the fetters that keep the free soul in bondage and pain. The term guṇa is explicitly mentioned for the first time in this Upaniṣad, and in one place it even mentions the word triguṇa. The names sattva, rajas and tamas, however, do not occur in this Upaniṣad. It is in the Maitrāyani Upaniṣad that the terms sattva etc. occur for the first time. The Śvetāśvataropanisad also proclaims that Absolute, by becoming enshrouded by the guṇas, appears as the individual soul. Like the Śvetāśvataropanisad, the Maitrāyani also considers that the Absolute becomes enveloped by guṇas, but these guṇas belong to Prakṛti. Being soiled by the guṇas, Brahman appears as the individual self, and falls into error of vanity and egoism, through avidyā. Rajas produces desires of various sorts and tamas, delusion and indifference. Sattva, however, produces knowledge and it, therefore, holds in itself the secret of emancipation.

✓ The Purāṇas are the basic works of Hinduism next to the Vedas. In the Purāṇas, the use of the term guṇa comes to our notice in many places. According to Bhāgavata-Purāṇa, Prakṛti is described as consisting of the three guṇas, unmanifest, eternal and homogeneous. Again, in the Matsya Purāṇa, it is stated

39. ajāmekaṁ lohitāsukla kṛṣṇaṁ / SU, 4.5
40. guṇāṅvayo yāḥ phalakarmakartā kṛṣṇa tasyai sa copabhokta/ sa visvarūpastrigunāstrivartmā prāṇādhipaṁ saṁcarati svakarmabhīḥ //Ibid., 5.7
41. yat yat triguṇamavayaktāṁ nityāṁ sadasadātmakāṁ/ pradhānaṁ prakṛtiṁ prāhurviśeṣāṁ viśeṣāvat //BP, 2.26.10.
that sattva, rajas and tamas are the three guṇas and Prakṛti is the equilibrium state of these guṇas. The creation of Martanda is clearly stated in the Matsya Purāṇa to be the effect of Rajas. The Vāyu Purāṇa speaks of the state of dissolution as the equilibrium state of the guṇas and creation as the result of tension amongst the guṇas. This Purāṇa states that Prakṛti is associated with the three guṇas. According to the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Avyakta Prakṛti is the equilibrium of the three guṇas.

The Manusamhitā also gives us an elaborate description of the guṇas. In this samhitā, it is stated that Brahmā creates the three guṇas. These guṇas effect the life of a jīva in diverse ways. The three guṇas are supposed to be present in each and every being. Sattva gives rise to knowledge, rajas creates aversion and attachment and tamas to ignorance. All pious and venerable deeds owe their origine to the sattvaguṇa, while the enjoyment of worldly pleasures etc. is due to the predominance of the element of rajas. Tamas, on the other hand encourage greed, sluggishness, irreligious mood etc.

Guṇa is described as one of the most important issues in the great epic Mahābhārata where Prakṛti is the root cause of the world which is the equilibrium of the three guṇas viz. sattva, rajas and tamas. The nature of the

42. sattvam rajatamaścaiva guṇatrayamudahṛtam / śāmyāvasthetiresāmaprakṛtih parikṛtiḥ // MP, 3.14
43. rajogunamayaṁ yat tad rūpaṁ tasya mahātmana / Ibid., 2.36
44. guṇasāṁyeye layo jñeyo vaiśāmyye śṛṣṭirucye / VaP, 5.79
45. Cf. guṇasāmyye tattastasmin................. // VP, 1.2.27
46. mahāmanteśeva cātmanāṁ sarvāṁ tri-guṇāṁ rājan / Manusamhitā, 1.15
47. sattvam rajatamaścaiva trīn vidyādaśanaṁ guṇāṁ / yairvyaśyeyāṁ sthito bhāvāṁmahāṁ sarvāoṣeṣataṁ // sattvam jñānam tamo jñānam rāga-devasau rājaṁ śṛṁtāṁ / etadvyāptimadetāṁ sarvabhūtasrītaṁ vapūṁ // Manusamhitā, 12.24,26
48. Cf. pradhāna prakṛtim yate guṇasāmyye vyavasthite // Mahābhārata, 12.205.57
gunas are explained in the Santiparvan of the Mahabhārata. Ananda (bliss), prītiḥ (pleasure), prakāśyāṁ (illumination), sukhāṁ (happiness), śuddhi (purity), ārogyāṁ (good health), kṣama (forbearance), dhṛti (steadiness) etc. are the characteristics of the sattvaguna. In this parvan, it is also stated that rūpa (grace), aīśvarya (sovereignty), vigraha (separation), kāma (desire), krodha (anger), darpa (ego) etc. are the natures of the rajoguna. Similarly Moha (delusion), aprakāśa (darkness), ajñāna (ignorance) etc. are the natures of the tamoguna.

In the Santiparvan of the Mahabhārata, we have found the description of the fruits of the gunas. The fruits of sattva is satisfaction, pleasure, enjoyment, passiveness, patience etc. These are produced from the detachment of mind or antahkarana. The result of the rajas are the opposite of the sattva i.e. anger, unpassiveness, pain, grief, greed etc. are the results of rajas. Delusion, sleep, fear, carelessness, dream etc. are also the results of tamas. The gunas perform like concealings in relation to Puruṣa and being enshrouded by them, the soul suffers misery and delusion. On the ground of these three gunas living beings are divided into three kinds viz. sattvika, rajasika and tāmasika. The sattvika beings are in a higher world. The rajasika beings are born as men and tāmasika beings are born as lower animals.
The Mahābhārata also points out that it is because of the gunas of Prakṛti that the Puruṣa also appears as having gunas. For the purpose of evolving the world, Prakṛti creates different gunas. Just as thousand lights can be lighted from one lamp only, similarly Prakṛti creates different gunas. From one gūṇa of the Puruṣa. ⁵⁴

From the above discussion we can say that regarding the concept of gūṇa, there is not much difference between the Mahābhārata and the Sāṁkhya philosophy.

The concept of gūṇa is further elaborated in the Gīta, where it is said that sattva, rajas and tamas are supposed to be produced from Prakṛti. ⁵⁵ In the Gīta, ⁵⁶ it is stated that there is no living being on earth or god in the heaven who is not pervaded by the three gunas produced from Prakṛti. The gunas bind the immortal self to the corporeal body. On account of sattva’s purity, it is illuminating and flawless. It binds the self through self-identification with pleasure (sukhasamgena) and wisdom (jnānasamgena). ⁵⁷ Rajogūṇa is the source of passion (rāgamakā). It is born of attachment and desire. Rajogūṇa binds the self through attachment to action. ⁵⁸ Tamogūṇa is born ignorance and is the deluder of all beings. It overcomes the illumination of knowledge and leads to many

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⁵⁴. yathā dipasahasraṁ dipam marṣyaṁ prakurvate / prakṛtisthathā vikurute puruṣasya gūṇān bahun // Ibid., 12.313.16
⁵⁵. sattvam rajastama iti gūṇāḥ prakṛtisambhavāḥ / Gīta, 14.5
⁵⁶. na tadasti prthivyāṁ divi deveṣu va puṇap / sattvāṁ prakṛti jaimuktaṁ yadebhīḥ syat tribhirgūṇāḥ // Ibid., 18.40
⁵⁷. tatra sattvāṁ nirminalatvat prakāsakam sṛṣṭāḥ / sukhasamgena vadhnati jnānasamgena // Ibid., 14.6
⁵⁸. rajo ragatmakāṁ viddhi tṛṣṇāsamudbhavam / tannivadhnāti kaunteya karmasaṁgena dehinam // Ibid., 14.7
errors. It binds all living beings through error, sloth and sleep.\textsuperscript{59} These three \textit{gunas} predominate differently at different times. When \textit{sattvaguna} predominates over \textit{rajas} and \textit{tamas} then pleasure, happiness and knowledge are produced. When \textit{rajas} predominates over \textit{sattva} and \textit{tamas} then greed, efforts, endeavours for different kinds of action and the rise of passions, emotions and desires are produced. And when \textit{tamas} predominates over \textit{sattva} and \textit{rajas}, there is ignorance, lethargy, errors, delusions and false beliefs.\textsuperscript{60} It is also stated, in the \textit{Gītā}, that the fruit of \textit{sattva} action is good and faultless. The fruit of \textit{rajas} is sorrow and that of \textit{tamas} is ignorance.\textsuperscript{61} Those persons rise up who stay in \textit{sattva}. Those persons dwell in the middle region who stay in \textit{rajas} and those of \textit{tamasika} nature go downward i.e. to hell.\textsuperscript{62}

The three \textit{gunas} are born of \textit{Prakṛti} and they constitute our experience stuff. The \textit{gunas} are regarded as the general characteristics of all mental inclinations. These are also the sources of different kinds of action. The \textit{sattvika} actions are prompted by the quality of \textit{sattva} and are done under its influence. The \textit{rajasika} actions are those which are prompted by the \textit{rajoguna} and done under its influence. And the \textit{tamasika} actions are those which are prompted by \textit{tamoguna} and are under its influence. Here, it is also stated that if in the state of \textit{sattvaguna}'s preponderance; a person dies, then he goes to better worlds after death. If at the time death, there is a preponderance of \textit{rajas}, then the individual is born as man, and if there is an excess of \textit{tamas}, he (the individual) is born as

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{59} tamastvajñanajānam viddhi mohanan sarvadehinām /
pramādāśayanidrabhistannivadhnā tīrtha// Ibid., 14.8
\item \textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 14.11-13
\item \textsuperscript{61} karmāṇah sukṛtasāvahāḥ śattvaṁ nirmalam phalam /
rajasastu phalaṁ dulīkhamajñānaṁ tamasāḥ phalaṁ // Ibid., 14.16
\item \textsuperscript{62} ūrdhvavāc gacchanti sattvasthā madhye tiṣṭhanti rajasāḥ /
jaghaṇyagunavṛtthā adho gacchanti tāmasāḥ // Ibid., 14.18
\end{itemize}
lower animals. In other words, the Prakṛti of birth is fully limited by the guṇas.

In the chapter II of Gītā, Arjuna is advised to transcend this circle of empirical existence. Knowledge is also estimated as sātvika, rajasika and tāmasika. "Sātvika knowledge helps us to realise the one unchangeable reality in the midst of the apparent diversity of the world. Rājasa knowledge inspires us to make a scientific approach to important problems in the field of knowledge, while tāmasa knowledge refers to narrow and superstitious beliefs that always place obstacles on the path of self-realisation. This conception of the guṇas reveals that the Gītā too has used this world in the sense of psychical states and not in the sense of the ultimate constituents of the objective basis of the universe."

In the world, birth, death, old age and sorrow exist in the three guṇas. Therefore, the real and the highest goal of human life is to seek liberation from the net work of these three guṇas. They produce and simultaneously nurse in themselves the secret of emancipation. The three guṇas produce the world on account of the experience of the Puruṣa and also to set the Puruṣa free. The guṇas also exhibit the tendency to withdraw within themselves there by dissolving the world show for the liberated Puruṣa. The man, who with increased sātvika knowledge, can understand the Puruṣa as pure, all-pervading, ever unenshrouded and devoid of all influences of the three guṇas (even being encased in the body), is not disturbed by any physical or mental agitation. Such a man is not afraid of the miseries of the world, and the world actually ceases to exist for him.

From the above discussion, we have seen that these guṇas are not only metaphysical elements but also carry an ethical significance, and a distinction of values is involved in the manner in which they have been presented to us in the

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63. Sengupta, Dr. Anima, The Evolution of the Samkhya School of thought, P. 88
The sattvaguna is bestowed a place of superiority over rajas and tamas. The rajas is also placed higher than the tamas. But the three guṇas are equally regarded by the writer of the Gītā which is the source of bondage for human being and as such belonging to the phenomenal world. The actual seer is beyond those three guṇas and knows the self as free from and unaffected by these guṇas. The guṇas have no place in the Divine Prakṛti. They are regarded as sources of bondage from which the human being in its highest spiritual endeavour aspires to liberate itself.

4. RADHANATH PHUKAN'S VIEW OF GUṇA

In his Sāmkhya-darsāna, Radhanath Phukan has also discussed the concept of guṇa. Now let us see what is the view of Radhanath Phukan regarding this very important concept and find in what respect Phukan’s view differs from others.

Regarding the concept of guṇa Radhanath’s view is noteworthy. The translation of the term guṇa as “three constituent elements” given by Colebrook has been strongly criticized by Radhanath. It is true that Colebrook’s explanation of the term guṇas has been accepted by modern scholars. But Phukan has questioned the very term constituent element. He points out that the Sāmkhya philosophy has divided all the constituents of the world into twentyfour categories. Besides these there cannot be any other constituent element. The word element itself is meaningless according to Phukan. He says, “Moreover, now that we know

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65. Gītā, 14.19, 20
66. Phukan, Radhanath, SKI, P. 583
67. Idid.
that words like 'elements', 'substance' or matter have disappeared from modern Physics never again to return, it is high time that Colebrooke's definition of the word *Guna* should be revised. It cannot be accepted without further elucidation.\(^6\)

From the viewpoint of Psychology, Radhanath has pointed out that *gunas* cannot be the qualities. It is held by some that the objects are the assemblage of their primary qualities. Hence, Sāṅkhya's *gunas* must be held to be identical with those qualities which are pleasure, pain and indifference. But this idea is contradicted by Psychology. Psychology has abolished all primary and secondary qualities of matter and reduced them to mere ideas of the mind. The qualities which have no objective existence, apart from a human mind, cannot be the cause of all the changes and transformations in the Physical world.\(^6\) Referring to *kārīka* 38, Radhanath Phukan says that according to the Sāṅkhya, the *tanmātras* give rise to pleasure, pain or indifference in a human mind. *Tanmātras* are nothing but the smallest divisible fractions of *gunas*. It is quite in accordance with the teachings of modern Psychology. Hence, no clear idea of the meaning of the term *guna* of Sāṅkhya philosophy\(^7\) can be found from there translations.

Radhanath Phukan has tried to explain the theory of *guna* from the viewpoint of modern science and Psychology. Phukan has maintained that *guna* is the name given to the 'mode of action of nature'.\(^7\) According to Radhanath Phukan, there are three types of mode of action of nature viz., *sattva, rajas* and *tamas*. Like all Sāṅkhya teachers Radhanath Phukan also upholds that *sattavaguna* is illumining. *Rajas* is stimulating and accelerating, while *tamas* is heavy and

\(^{6}\) Ibid.
\(^{6}\) Ibid.
\(^{7}\) Ibid.
\(^{7}\) SD, Phukan, Radhanath, P. 360; *Srimadbhagavadgītā*, Phukan, Radhanath, P. 4 (Introduction).
restraining. These guṇas produce pleasure, pain and sloth respectively. In the words of Radhanath, “1. Sattvā illumines moving bodies in their true position (Prakāśa). 2. Rajas is ‘Action’ (using the word ‘action’ in its scientific sense) which brings about change or destruction. It is thus active (Pravṛtti). 3. Tamas is ‘Retardation of action’ (Niyama)”\(^7\) These guṇas or the modes of action of the same energy cannot be thought of separately. Whenever there is any action in the world, all the three guṇas are there working together in harmony. Among these guṇas one guṇa is working predominantly at a time, while the other two guṇas helping the first.\(^3\) This idea is explained by him with the example of the growing of a tree. A tree grows by the action of the acceleration. When a tree grows a little, then sattvaguṇa enters into play, on account of its tendency to retain a body in its own state of motion or rest. Then tāmas enters to the help of sattvā. Acting together they delay the growth for a moment. After that when retardation starts, then sattva playing with rajas surpasses the retardation. The tree again starts to grow and again it is checked and so on.\(^7\)

According to Radhanath Phukan, both sense world (Bhāva sarga) and physical-world (linga-sarga) are produced from energy (sakti).\(^5\) Modern science also upholds the view that there is nothing except energy or power in this world.\(^6\) In this world, there are only three mode of action of nature (three actions of energy) viz., Mass, Momentum and Stress which is proved by Einstien. In support of his view, Radhanath Phukan refers to the view of Sri Aurobindo who thinks that

\(^{72}\) Phukan, Radhanath, SKI, P. 588.
\(^{73}\) Ibid., P.587.
\(^{74}\) Ibid., P.588.
\(^{75}\) JR, Phukan, Radhanath, P. 483.
\(^{76}\) Ibid. P. 484, Srimadbhagavadgītā, Phukan, Radhanath, P. 4
**gunas** are the “three essential modes of action of nature.” Sri Aurobindo said, “The idea of the three essential Modes of Nature is a creation of the ancient Indian thinkers and its truth is not at once obvious because it was the result of long psychological experiment and profound internal experience,......... These Modes are termed in Indian books qualities, Guṇas and were given the names- Sattva, Rajas and Tamas........ Ordinarily used for psychological self analysis, these distinctions are valid also in Physical Nature.”

Radhanath Phukan has clearly pointed out that thoughts and energy are only two forms of the same thing. Energy gives rise to thoughts and thoughts become energy when they come out from the mind. Thoughts are very subtle energy which are not perceived by our sense-organs, while gross energy which strikes our sense-organs are vibrations of lower frequencies. In the view of Radhanath Phukan, in the physical world, activity of energy is governed by these three **gunas**, which correspond to Newton’s Three Laws of Motion.

Newton, the great physicist has postulated the three Laws of Motion which form the basis of classical physics and which govern modern physics also. Regarding the bodies in motion, Galilieo was the first to infer from his study that when a velocity is imparted to a body it continues to move with the same velocity provided no force acts on it. E. very object has a tendency to remain in its own state which is called inertia. There are two types of inertia, viz. Inertia of rest and Inertia of motion. Inertia of rest is the property of matter by virtue of which it tends to persist in the state of rest and Inertia of motion is the property of matter by virtue of which a moving body tends to continue in its state to uniform motion.

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77. SKI, Phukan, Radhanath, P. 583
79. SKI, Phukan, Radhanath, P. 583
After Galileo, Newton, who was a great scientist, made a systematic study of motion and extended the idea of Galileo to Newton's law. In 1686, Newton arrived at three laws of motion which go by his name.81

Newton's first law of motion is that in the absence of an unbalanced force, a body continues its state of rest or keeps moving with a uniform velocity.82 Newton's first law can be divided into two parts. One is definition for force and the other is inertia of material bodies. The first part states that in absence of an unbalanced force a body by itself cannot start its motion and the second part states that in absence of an unbalanced force a body moving with uniform velocity must continue to move with the same velocity in the same direction for ever.

Newton's second law of motion is that the rate of change of momentum of a body is proportional to the unbalanced force and it occurs in the direction of the unbalanced force. The quantity of motion contained in a body is called its linear momentum or momentum. By virtue of motion, a body acquires a quality which enables it to exert a force on the agent used for stopping the body. That quality depends on its mass and velocity. It is a common experience that stronger force is required in stopping more massive body. Also faster the body moves, harder is to stop it. Thus the quantity of motion in a body is related to its mass and velocity and is termed as momentum.83

According to Newton's third law of motion, to every action there is always an equal and opposite reaction.84 "The law gives information about the origin of forces. When two bodies interact with each other, one of the two forces is

81. Ibid.
82. Ibid.
84. Elements of Physics, Chaudhury, Dr. Amulya, P. 107.
termed as action and the other is called reaction. They occur simultaneously. Which force is action and which one is reaction is completely arbitrary. So no distinction should be made between them."85

Motion of power can be only three types. "In classical Physics, they are called inertia, acceleration and reaction and in modern Physics, mass (or energy), momentum and stress."86

According to the second law of Thermodynamics the entropy always increases, it never decreases. This law also introduced the new physical concept of entropy. The second law of thermodynamics gives the conditions for conversion of heat into work which is the fundamental law of physics. In fact it rests largely on the invention and the development of the heat engines. Entropy corresponds to change from organized state towards disorganization. It is a thermal property of a system that remains constant during an adiabatic change.87 According to modern science, there is a limit to the transformation of universal energy, that is, increase of entropy. This is the state of 'Thermodynamic Equilibrium' of modern science. At this state there is no active energy, no light, heat or anything. It is an infusion of energy leading to a fresh creation. Regarding the suggestion of the Thermodynamics Eddington said, ".................. the present course will repeat itself many times over an infinite number of times in fact before it reaches infinity. Don't ask me whether I really believe or expect you to believe that this will happen. Logic in Logic. That's all I say."88 Radhanath Phukan accepts the view of modern science. He says that there is no end to the transformation of the gunas

85. Chaudhury, Dr. Amulya, Elements of Physics, P. 107
86. Phukan, Radhanath, SKI, P. 587.
87. Elements of Physics, Chaudhury, Dr. Amulya, Pp. 128, 133.
and that the said transformation has an object. As there is a limit to tearing a piece of paper into shreds, so also there is a limit to the transformation of universal energy, that is, increase of entropy. Similarly the transformation of guṇas also always increases, it never decreases. But Phukan points out that “It is obvious that such transformation of the Guṇas, or what is the same thing as increase of entropy, cannot continue indefinitely.”89 The final state when there is no transformation of the guṇas, the state of Thermodynamic equilibrium of modern science is nothing but the Mahāpralaya mentioned in the śāstras. This is the final destruction of the universe upheld by the religious books. It is firmly established by the second law of Thermodynamics. “Scientists and theologians alike must regard as somewhat crude the native theological doctrine which suitably disguised, is at present to be found in every text book of thermodynamics, namely, that some billions of years ago. God wound up the material universe, and has left it to change ever since......... It is one of those conclusions from which we can see no logical escape... only it suffers from the drawback that it is incredible.”90

It has already been said that all Vyaktas are mobile and prakāsāka, pravṛttī and niyama are the functions of sattva, rajas and tamas respectively.91 Again pleasure, pain and sloth are produced from sattva, rajas and tamas respectively. The three guṇas apply equally to the action of energy and thoughts. When our mind is in its normal state of rest then we feel pleasure. Phukan said that this action of thoughts is sattvaguna which corresponds to ‘Inertia’ of the Physical world. He has clearly pointed out that inertia does not mean interness, but it is

89. Phukan, Radhanath, SKI, P. 575.
91. SK, 12; Phukan, Radhanath, SD, P. 362.
an effort of a moving body to remain in its own state of rest or motion. When thought come to our mind then there is agitation and we feel pain. This is called *rajas*. It is equivalent to Newton’s ‘acceleration’. And *tamas* can be called reaction which gives rise to ignorance or moha. “Again, when dark thoughts, e.g. violent anger or lust, enter into our mind, they bring about a retardation of the normal functions of the mind. In the physical world such action of energy would be called ‘Reaction’ (Newton’s Third Law of Motion).”

From the foregoing discussion we see that Radhanath Phukan’s treatment of *guna* is somewhat different from other *Samkhya* caryās and also from some modern scholars. The concept of *guna*, which is a key concept in *Samkhya* philosophy has been discussed in detail by him and this discussion bears the testimony of his origine thinking.

His criticism of the English translation of the term *guna* constituent element or quality is based on the scriptural evidence, because *guna* is never accepted by the *Samkhya* as a quality or as an element. Hence, the meaning of the word *guna* as the mode of action of nature given by him is more appropriate from the scriptural point of view. These three *gunas* correspond to Newton’s ‘Three Laws of Motion’. Again, Radhanath Phukan explained the *guna* from the modern psychological point of view.

Lastly according to him, there is no difference between the Newton’s view i.e., modern science and the ancient *Samkhya* caryā, the difference is only the different ways of explanation.

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92. Phukan, Radhanath, SKI, P. 587.
93. Ibid.
94. Ibid., Pp. 587-588