CHAPTER VI

THE DUALISTIC PHILOSOPHIES OF DESCARTES AND SAMKHYA.

COMPARED AND CONTRASTED:

(a) Similarity:

We have discussed, in brief, the main principles of Descartes' philosophy. The fundamental assumptions of Samkhya philosophy have also been discussed. Now, it is in fitness of things to see on what points the two dualistic philosophies of east and west agree and on what points they differ. By bringing out the points of similarity and difference between these two great philosophies we do not intend to show the influence of one on the other. Our purpose here, is also not to point out the common source of inspiration of the two philosophical systems. Our main purpose is to show how great thinkers of different times, sometimes think alike. Here we will also try to negate the poet-philosopher Rudyard Kipling, who says,

"Oh East is East, and West is West,
And never the twain shall meet."

It will also help us to understand these two systems in their right perspective.

Descartes, as we know, is a great modern thinker who attempts to find out self-evident truths in philosophy.
In order to reach his goal he uses his reason fully well and does not try to follow blindly any scripture how-so-ever authoritative it may be. Thus he drags philosophy out of the dogmas of the church and places it on its own legs. He tries to replace faith with reason. This shows that Descartes represents a break-through in the long-established tradition of christian thought. It does not mean that Descartes has not taken anything from the pre-established traditions of his time. It only means that he has an independent approach towards the problems of this cosmos based mainly on human reason.

This may also be said, upto a certain extent, about Śāmkhya philosophy in India. Though Śāmkhya system does not try to repudiate all types of authority yet it does not follow it blindly. Fundamental assumptions of Śāmkhya may all be traced in our scriptures but its approach towards the problems of the universe is of a unique type. Śāmkhya thinkers try to see the problems of this cosmos in the light of reason more than in the light of faith and authority. Thus they try to take out philosophy from that theistic tradition which was established by Vedic seers and was valued most in pre-Buddhistic age. Is not, then, this attempt a break-through in the pre-established theistic tradition? Do we not find an independent approach towards the problems of the
Universe? All these questions may be answered affirmatively.

Then, for both Descartes and Sāṃkhya, the objects of this world are real. They have their independent existence and do not depend for their existence on any one's imagination. Descartes believes that these objects are the modifications of matter or body which he thinks is an ultimate existence. And it is impossible to think that the modifications of an ultimate substance are unreal. For Sāṃkhya also these worldly objects are the evolutes of prakṛti which has an ultimate and independent existence and gives rise to these manifold objects of this world. Hence, in no case, can these objects be termed as unreal or a fanciful creation of an individual's mind. In this sense both Descartes and Sāṃkhya are realists.

Here, it may also be made clear that in both these systems the substance of which these objects are made is thought to be all-pervading. It is not of limited magnitude. By attributing the quality of extension to matter, Descartes has made matter or body of unlimited magnitude. According to Descartes there is no empty space. Where there is space there is matter. It means that the matter of Descartes has an all-pervading character and is in no way of limited amount. In attributing this quality to matter, Descartes has done justice to this huge cosmos.
It is unthinkable that a huge and vast cosmos like this may be taken as a product of a stuff which is limited in size and amount. In Sāmkhya system also prakṛti is unlimited and all-pervading. We will not find even a straw in this universe in which one or the other guṇa of prakṛti is not active. So prakṛti of Sāmkhya is here, there and everywhere. Does this not indicate a point of similarity between these two dualistic systems of the world? This question may only be answered in the affirmative.

Then, both these philosophies will oppose the idea that these objects are the products of that principle which is not material in nature. In other words, they will not see eye to eye with those thinkers for whom only some spiritual principle is real and this universe is either a type of manifestation or appearance of that transcendental and trans-empirical principle. For both of them, material objects are the products of material principle. They may dislike the idea that material objects are the products of immaterial principle. In this respect, too, their attitude towards the worldly objects is realistic.

Not only this but these systems also advocate the idea that the individual objects of the world will not remain
forever. They come and go but the stuff of which they are made will remain forever. In Śāṅkhaṇa philosophy, even the state of dissolution is admitted. In this state all these empirical objects will lose their identity and will merge in the all-pervading avyakta or eternal prakṛti. Though Descartes has not admitted anything like the dissolution of Śāṅkhaṇa, yet for him also these individual objects are not to stay here forever. They may rise from matter and go to matter and matter is the principle which remains forever. Thus in this respect both these systems have similar outlook.

Moreover, according to both Śāṅkhaṇa and Descartes, we know the ultimate ground of all these objects through inference. Neither the matter of Descartes nor the prakṛti of Śāṅkhaṇa is directly perceived by us. According to Śāṅkhaṇa, we infer the existence of prakṛti on the basis of unity which we perceive in the objects of the external world. Śāṅkhaṇa thinkers have nowhere asserted that prakṛti is directly perceived by us. Either we know it through its products or by its gunas. Descartes also seems to believe that the two substances are known through their attributes.

In this connection Prof. Thilly writes that "The two relative substances exist independently of one another but both depend on God. They are fundamentally different from one

1. S.K. B.
another, and we know them only through their attributes."

Then both Śaṅkhaṇa and Descartes seem to uphold the theory of satkāraṇaṇaṇa which means that kāraṇa or cause is real and exists before and after producing the effect. In this respect they will oppose the theory which upholds that kāraṇa itself is not real and it goes away the next moment, after producing the effect. Such a theory is known as asatkāraṇaṇaṇa and is upheld by Buddhist thinkers in India. But as regards the satkāryaṇaṇa of Śaṅkhaṇa thinkers it may be stated here that Descartes has never expressed his views in so many words. But judging from his philosophical views it can be maintained that Descartes also holds similar views in this respect. The sum and substance of satkāryaṇaṇa is the view that the causal agency has necessary potency. Descartes directly or indirectly seems to uphold such a view.

Moreover asatkāryaṇaṇa may not fit in his system wherein he maintains that these worldly objects can be taken as the modifications of the extension or matter. Cūrā is nothing but a modification of milk, and it is satkāryaṇaṇa, pure and simple. Hence in this respect also both seem to possess a common outlook.

1. Thilly - History of Philosophy, P. 308.
2. S.P.S. I -117.
Further, Sāṁkhya and Descartes seem to agree up to a certain extent about the nature of space also. In both these systems, space has not been given separate and independent existence. Neither Descartes nor Sāṁkhya will see eye to eye with Nyāya- Vaiśeṣika thinkers of India who take space as separate substance having its independent existence. In Sāṁkhya system, the universal space is thought to be the form of prakṛti. Vijnānabhikṣu says that eternal space and time are of the nature of ether. They are the specific modifications of prakṛti. Thus space in Sāṁkhya philosophy, is essentially a form of prakṛti and is, therefore, universal in character. Descartes also seems to hold the view that space is a form of matter or extension. Descartes writes that "For, in truth, the same extension in length, breadth and depth, which constitutes space constitutes body......" He further writes that "After examination we shall find that there is nothing remaining in the idea of body excepting that it is extended in length, breadth and depth, and this is comprised in our idea of space, not only of that which is full of body but also of that which is called a vacuum." Thus we may maintain that Descartes and Sāṁkhya may slightly differ so far as empirical view of space is

1. S.P.B. II - 12.
3. Ibid.
concerned but as regards the essential and universal space they seem to hold a similar view. For both of them, space is a form of a universal substance which is the root cause of this universe.

The phenomenon of time is another point where similarity of views may be traced between the two systems in question. For both of them, time is not an independent category. Here it may be pointed out that for Śāmkhya thinkers time is essentially, as we have seen, a form of prakṛti or the root cause of the world. But, as regards the phenomenon of time which we apprehend in this universe, Śāmkhya thinkers hold the view that it is the product of our mind. "From the limited objects of perception which stand to one another in the relation of antecedence and sequence, we construct an infinite time order to represent the course of evolution." "Thus time, being of this nature, does not correspond to anything real, but is a product of mind, and follows as a result of perceptions or of words,"

In this connection, Descartes seems to hold the similar view when he writes that, "Thus time, for example, which we distinguish from duration taken in its general sense and which we describe as the measure of movement, is only a mode of thinking ......." It is surprising that the two systems

1. Dr. Radhakrishnan - Indian Philosophy, Vol II P. 277.
2. Ibid P.P. 277 to 278.
of philosophy, born in different times and different places, have similar views about space and time. A common man may brush aside this fact by saying that all great thinkers think alike. But we may go further and maintain that the close affinity between the views of the two great systems of philosophy of different times and countries indicates a deeper unity of thought than we can apprehend and describe at this empirical level.

As regards the knowledge of the objects Descartes seems to uphold the representative theory of ideas. It means that objects do not come in direct contact of mind or soul. Our mind is like a photographic plate on which objects are represented through ideas. Though mind or soul is the knower of these objects, yet it fails to establish a direct contact with them. It knows them indirectly. In Sāmkhya also puruṣa or the knower does not come in direct contact with the objects. This fact has very clearly been indicated by Dr. Radhakrishnan when he says that "When through sense organs buddhi comes into contact with the external objects and is reflected by it, it assumes the form of the object. The force of consciousness (cetanāsakti) reflected in the buddhi thus modified, imitates the modifications of buddhi, and it is the imitation (tadvṛttyānukāra) that is known as apprehension (upalabdhi)." Though the mechanism of knowledge may be different in both the systems yet the fact remains that neither Descartes' mind nor Sāmkhya's puruṣa comes in direct contact with the external objects.

1. Radhakrishnan - Indian Philosophy Vol II P.294-295.
According to both we know the objects indirectly.

Moreover, there seems to be some agreement between Sāṃkhya and Descartes as regards the sources of knowledge also. Sāṃkhya thinkers, as we know, accept three sources of knowledge. These sources are perception, inference and scriptural testimony. As regards perception, Sāṃkhya thinkers hold that "Knowledge produced through sense-activity is perception." And we acquire the knowledge of worldly objects through sense-activity. Descartes, as we know, is a rationalist. For him our senses may be incapable of giving philosophical knowledge but so far as these worldly objects are concerned, we have to believe our sense perception. For both Sāṃkhya and Descartes, knowledge of truth is beyond the reach of sense perception.

Then inference is also a source of knowledge in both these philosophical systems. Descartes brings in deductive or mathematical method in philosophy. He himself says, "By deduction we understand all necessary inference from other facts that are known with certainty."

This is inferential method. Though there may be some difference between the two systems about the process

2. Dr. Radhakrishnan - Indian Philosophy Vol II P. 297.
and kinds of inference, yet, it is evident that both of them regard inference as a valid source of knowledge.

Further, both of them regard scriptures as a reliable source of knowledge. In Śāmkhya philosophy, Vedas are taken as source of valid knowledge. The sutra No. 51 says that "The Vedas are self-evident from the qualities which they possess of giving us true knowledge. In this connection the views of Descartes may be gathered from his letter to the most wise and illustrious, the Dean and Doctors of the sacred faculty of theology in Paris, wherein he says that "It is absolutely true that we must believe that there is a God, because we are so taught in the holy scriptures, and, on the other hand, that we must believe holy scriptures because they come from God." Though neither of them follows scriptures blindly, yet they believe in their authority. It is also a proof of their rational approach towards the holy scriptures which are valued most in religious circles.

It is also noticeable that both Śāmkhya and Descartes have almost similar views about the erroneous perceptions or illusions. It is well-known that Śāmkhya

1. S.P.S. V. 51.
2. Philosophical Works of Descartes Vol I P. 133.
thinkers propound sadasatkhyaṭi theory to explain illusion or erroneous perceptions. Explaining this theory, Vijnānabhikṣu says, "that in the illusory perception, 'This is silver' the silver that appears in consciousness is real (sat) since it exists in the shop of a silver merchant and it is unreal (asat) since it is falsely ascribed to a nacre." Amiruddha also interprets this theory of sadasatkhyaṭi more or less in the same way. From this interpretation of sadasatkhyaṭi theory of Śāmkhya thinkers it follows that error or illusion is due to wrong judgment based on indistinct and inexact perception. It is the case of hasty judgment based on insufficient perception. Descartes also seems to hold the same view when, in explaining error, he writes that "......but what usually misleads us is that we very frequently form a judgment although we have no very exact knowledge regarding that of which we judge." It is a happy chance that the two systems of different times and countries not only believe in the same sources of knowledge but they have similar views about the problem of error also. This is also a point where both these systems meet.

1. J.N. Sinha - Indian Psychology (perception) Chapter on Illusion.
2. Ibid.
Further, for both Descartes and Samkhya this universe is composed of two independent realities. For Descartes, mind and body are the two independent substances which can explain this whole universe even including human beings. Though Descartes status of absolute substances, yet so far as our world is concerned, they can be seen as ultimate principles of which the world is composed. Matter and mind, together with the amount of motion given by God to the world, are sufficient to explain every straw of this cosmos. No intervention of any third principle is needed. This may also be said of Samkhya philosophy. Purusa and prakrti without the help of any third principle may very well give rise to the world of our senses. Thus both these systems recognise the two independent realities as the fundamental constituents of this world. Though they may differ about the nature and attributes of ultimate realities yet their belief in two independent principles remains unquestioned. That is why both Descartes and Samkhya are termed as dualists.

Here, it may also be pointed out that the next point on which both Descartes and Samkhya agree is the recognition of one principle of matter and many souls or minds. Samkhya, as we know, upholds the theory of plurality of purusas. Purusas, for Samkhya, are many, though they are

1. S.K. 18.
of the same nature, Śāmkhya thinkers could not reconcile themselves to the concept of One Transcendental Puruṣa like that of the Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara. Descartes also recognises one principle of matter having extension as its attribute. All material objects including plants and animals are the product of this principle. Against this principle Descartes also upholds the plurality of minds or human souls. Though Descartes has generally used the word 'mind' which is in the singular number, yet the plurality of minds is implied in his system. How can one mind, without having the attribute of extension, function as knower, feeler, doubter and thinker in different human beings? This difficulty can only be solved with the recognition of the plurality of minds. And Descartes has realized it fully well. Hence in this respect Descartes and Śāmkhya join their hands.

The way in which Descartes and Śāmkhya reach their dualistic motions seems to be similar to a certain extent. "The Śāmkhya philosophy assumes the reality of puruṣas and prakṛti from the fact of knowledge with its distinction between the subject and the object. No explanation of experience is possible, if we do not assume the reality of a knowing self and an object known." Similar is the case

1. Dr. Radhakrishnan - Indian Philosophy P. 248.
with Descartes also. When Descartes reached the thinker, doubter or self on the basis of the fact of doubting, he had to propound the principle of matter from which the sensations come to us and become the subject-matter of human experience. In other words, when Descartes reached the subject of knowledge, he had to posit the object also. Hence we can maintain that Descartes reached the concept of matter and mind by analysing the human experience. This point seems to be common in both Śāṅkha and Descartes.

Then Descartes has propounded the theory of interactionism to explain the relation of matter and mind—the two substances opposite in nature. It means, in simple words, that the activity of mind affects the body and that of body affects the mind. Descartes tries to explain all human actions with the help of this theory. Some form of Interactionism may also be traced in Śāṅkha philosophy. It does not mean that Śāṅkha philosophers propound interactionism in so many words, but some similarity seems to be there in this respect. According to Śāṅkha, puruṣa enlightens the buddhi, the evolute of prakṛti, by its presence only, and puruṣa also assumes the activities of buddhi as its own. Though Śāṅkha philosophers maintain that puruṣa does it under the influence of avidyā or ignorance, yet the fact of puruṣa's being influenced by prakṛti cannot be
rejected altogether. All this figurative description may be taken to mean that puruṣa influences buddhi and buddhi, in turn, influences the puruṣa and this amounts to interactionism of Descartes in plain and simple words. Here scholars may differ but in the opinion of the present writer some similarity, in this respect, may undoubtedly be established. Moreover, the double reflection theory of Vijñānabhikṣu is the clearcut indication of some sort of interactionism between puruṣa and prakṛti.

Here, it may also be made clear that for both Sāṃkhya and Descartes, human soul is immortal. For Sāṃkhya puruṣa or human soul is imperishable while human body is perishable and is destroyed after death. Human soul, according to the propounders of this system, after death, either may take another body or may be liberated but in no case it is destroyed. Descartes also upholds the view that human soul is immortal. In his own words, "From this, it follows that the human body may indeed easily enough perish, but the mind (or soul of man (I make no distinction between them) is owing to its nature immortal." Thus we may very well maintain that in both these systems human body is thought to be perishable but human soul is beyond destruction and is immortal.

Then both Sāmkhya and Descartes seem to have similar views as regards the principle of consciousness also. In Sāmkhya philosophy puruṣa is said to be the only principle of consciousness. The self is essentially conscious; consciousness is not its mode. Though buddhi also seems to have consciousness, yet it is not its own. It borrows consciousness from puruṣa. In Descartes also, mind or human soul, is the only principle of consciousness. Body is unconscious and whatever consciousness seems to be there, is due to the principle of mind or soul.

Then it may be maintained that in both these systems knowledge is valued most. Descartes, as it is well-known, aims at self-evident truths in philosophy. He wants to reach clear and perspicuous knowledge of every thing. Sāmkhya thinkers also aim at the same. For them, the aim of human life is a distinctive knowledge of puruṣa and prakṛti. They even maintain that unless this type of knowledge is attained, we cannot get rid of pains and sorrows of this world. Hence, it may be said that these systems may, no doubt, differ up to a certain extent about nature and purpose of knowledge yet it is undoubtedly true that both aim at clear knowledge. It will not be out of point to mention here, that this difference between the

1. S.P.S. 146.
nature and aim of knowledge of Descartes and Śāmkhya seems largely due to the different cultural traditions and human aspirations of east and west. Generally, occidental thinkers have been philosophising from the spectator's point of view. They valued worldly knowledge most, and devoted their lives to get it. Descartes is no exception to it. Oriental thinkers, on the other hand, have thought from actor's point of view. Here the knowledge of one's self has been the aim of human life. This difference in the cultural traditions of east and west, explains the difference between the nature and aim of knowledge of Descartes and Śāmkhya.

To acquire this knowledge and to fulfil the aim of life both the systems prescribe certain code of conduct. Descartes has impressed on us the need of having a moral code of life, whereby we may gain guidance in our daily actions. In order to live a happy life, avoiding all inconsistencies which cause unnecessary pain or sorrow, he has, for himself, formulated a moral code, which may give useful guidance to others also. The first maxim of this code is "to obey the laws and customs of my country, adhering constantly to the religion in which by God's grace I have been instructed since my childhood....." The second maxim is that of being as firm and resolute in one's actions as

one could be. The third maxim seems to be the outcome of his religious convictions. According to this maxim he should conquer himself rather than fortune. He should alter his desires, change his ambitions and set before him the goals that he can reach by his efforts. In short, he should learn the virtue of contentment. In this connection he says that he should practise moderation in word, thought and deed. His last maxim or rule of conduct for himself is to live the life of a philosopher and to cultivate his reason.

Sāmkhya thinkers also give us certain moral code of conduct to reach the goal of life. In the words of Dr. Radhakrishnan, "We can obtain discriminative knowledge only when our emotional stirrings are subdued and intellectual activities are controlled. When the senses are regulated and the mind acquires calm, buddhi becomes transparent and reflects the pure light of purusa." To reach this stage, Sāmkhya thinkers prescribe the practice of certain moral and intellectual virtues. Both these systems may slightly differ about the nature of their moral code, but they do agree to have a moral code of conduct.

In the end, it may be pointed out that to follow this moral code of conduct and fulfil the aim of life they

1. Dr. Radhakrishnan - Indian Philosophy Vol I P. 310
agree to give us the freedom of will. Unless man is free how can he realize his goal of life? Descartes realized this difficulty and has gone to say that even the freedom of will is innate. He writes that "Finally, it is so evident that we are possessed of a free-will that can give or withhold its assent, that this may be counted as one of the first and most ordinary notions that are found innately in us". The original works of Śāmkhya philosophy do not give us such a clear version about freedom of will but they seem to recognize it. In the very beginning of Śāmkhya Kārikā three types of sorrows are described. We can only get rid of these sorrows if we follow the code of conduct prescribed by Śāmkhya and acquire the necessary knowledge. All this requires freedom of will without which it will be difficult to make efforts in the right direction.

(b) Contrast:

We have seen, in brief, how the two dualistic systems agree in certain respects. But they also differ on many points. It is generally said that if the two systems agree on all points, one of them may not be an original thought. Needless to say that both Śāmkhya and the philosophy of Descartes give us something original. Hence they are bound to differ. Let us see on what points these two dualistic philosophies do not see eye to eye with each other.

First of all, it should be mentioned that both these systems seem to differ as regards the origin of philosophy. For Descartes, philosophy begins with doubt. There is a stage when Descartes doubts everything. This is indicated when he says, "At the end I feel constrained to confess that there is nothing in all that I formerly believed to be true, of which I cannot in some measure doubt." He doubts even his own hands and feet. And on the basis of this fact of doubting he reaches a self-evident truth which becomes the foundation stone of his philosophy. Thus it is Descartes' doubt which compels him to think and reach certain conclusions which have given him a place in the history of philosophy. The case with Samkhya is otherwise. Here philosophy does not begin with doubt but it begins with the fact of pain or human suffering. The three types of pains mentioned in the beginning of Samkhya Karika inspired the Samkhya thinkers to seek a way which leads to a stage free from all these pains or sufferings. And in doing that, they have given us a system of philosophy. Here it should be kept in mind that for Samkhya, philosophy only begins with pain but it does not end with it.

It is evident that Samkhya philosophy starts with concrete facts of human life. Like Buddha, Samkhya thinkers

2. S.K. 1.
came to realize that human life is full of different kinds of pains and sorrows. And the main aim of our life is to get rid of these worldly sufferings. Filled with sympathy and kindness for all human beings, these thinkers tried to give us a remedy which, according to them, can root out these evils of life forever. They were confident that worldly remedies are unable to bring out human life from the ditch of these terrible evils. To our surprise, they invented a metaphysical remedy for physical diseases. It may convince us or not but their devotion to purify human life of all impurities can hardly be doubted. Their metaphysics is for man and not man for metaphysics. In this respect, Śāmkhya philosophy is humanistic. But, on the other hand, we do not find any such aim in Descartes' philosophy. He starts with the single aim of finding out self-evident truths in philosophy. No doubt, it is an intellectual effort of the highest order but it is least humanistic. It may satisfy all persons for sometimes and some persons for all times, yet a zeal to purge human life of all types of sufferings is missing. Is not this a vital point of difference between these two dualistic philosophies of east and west? Nobody may perhaps answer this question negatively.


In this connection it may also be stated that Sāṃkhya thinkers seem to have taken life as a whole. The tendency to compartmentalize human life is missing there. And to explain human life, they have given us a systematic cosmology. Here, both man and the universe seem to be the two aspects of the same scheme. So, we find in it metaphysics, ethics, psychology, religion and even cosmology. And the efforts have never been made to separate ethics from religion or religion from metaphysics. But in Descartes this synthetic outlook towards life is absent. He seems to be concerned only with intellectual aspect of human life more than any other aspect. He seems to draw a clear-cut line of demarcation between philosophy and religion. Moreover, he has not given any systematic ethics or religion to us. Hence, we can maintain that Descartes deals mostly with one aspect of human life while in Sāṃkhya, life is taken in its entirety.

Then Sāṃkhya has given us a teleological view of this universe. Though the universe is unconscious yet it has a purpose before it. It is a process which is going towards a definite end. These objects have come into existence not for their own sake not accidentally, but for the enjoyment and liberation of puruṣa or soul. These plants, rivers, mountains and fields have a purpose. This is unconscious teleology. Descartes, on the other hand, gives us

1. S.K. 56.
a mechanical explanation of the world. He does not see any teleology in this universe. This whole cosmos with matter, motion and laws of nature at its back, is functioning as a huge machine. Neither does anything push it from the back nor attract it. Even animals are nothing but little walking machines on this earth. This is an extreme position of mechanism. Here Śāmkhya and Descartes say good-bye to each other.

Moreover, in Śāmkhya philosophy evolution of universe is admitted. The myth of creationism could not satisfy the Śāmkhya thinkers. These objects have come as a result of evolution from prakṛti. In the previous chapters, we have seen how prakṛti gives rise to mahat and mahat to aham-kāra and ahamkāra, in turn, produces other constituents of the world. We may accept or reject the evolutionary process given by Śāmkhya but it goes without saying that evolution is a cosmological fact for Śāmkhya thinkers. Descartes, on the other hand seems to favour creationism. Though he does not say that these objects as such are created, yet even the two relative substances, matter and mind, are created by God or Absolute substance. God can create and destroy matter and mind at His own sweet will. In this respect Descartes seems to agree with the Old Testament view

1. Descartes - Principles of Philosophy Part I Principle No. LII
of creationism. He gives absolute authority to God to make or unmake this universe. This can never be admitted by Sāmkhya thinkers of India.

In this connection, it may also be stated that God plays an important role in Descartes' philosophy. He does not only believe in God but proves His existence with certain arguments. He also takes help, as we have seen, of Scriptures to prove the existence of God. The idea of God is ingrained in human mind. Descartes could believe in the objectivity of sensations, only when he thought that God would not deceive him. His belief in the existence of God is stronger than his belief in any other thing of the world. But in Sāmkhya philosophy the existence of God has never been admitted. Sāmkhya thinkers do not see any necessity of God in the evolution of this cosmos. Not to speak of proving the existence of God, the author of Sāmkhya Pravacana Sūtra even seems to criticize the existence of God. The author of Sāmkhya Karikā neither refutes nor proves His existence. In preceding pages Sāmkhya attitude towards God has been discussed in detail. On the whole, Sāmkhya system remains atheistic in this sense. It is a striking point of difference between these two dualistic philosophies of the world. With the denial of God, prakṛti and puruṣa become

the absolute substances in Śāṅkhya philosophy. The two ultimate constituents of the world have not been subordinated by any other third agency. But in Descartes, matter and mind are not the absolute substances. Unlike the Śāṅkhya puruṣa and prakṛti, they can be created and destroyed. This difference may also not go unnoticed between these two systems of philosophy.

One of the most important points of difference between these two philosophies is that in Śāṅkhya prakṛti is the cause of physical as well as of the psychological world. Also, our buddhi, ahaṅkāra, manas etc. all are the evolutes of prakṛti. Thus both the types of universe, physical and psychological, are rooted in prakṛti. But Descartes will never agree with the view that the same principle which gives rise to physical world can also give rise to our psychological universe. Descartes can never believe that our intellect is the product of matter of which our body is composed. Though critics may not agree with Śāṅkhya in this respect, this is a glaring point of difference between these two philosophies.

Then the two absolute substances of Śāṅkhya philosophy are abstract in nature. The evolutes of prakṛti are concrete but prakṛti itself is avyakta and is beyond all concreteness. Puruṣa also is devoid of all concreteness and is a subtle principle which is of transcendental nature. They
are in themselves untouched, unperceived and may never be felt even in any case. But the mind and matter of Descartes are not abstract in nature as the two principles of Śāmkhya philosophy. Though mind and matter are also not perceived through senses, yet at least we can feel their qualities. For Descartes, thinking is the attribute of mind and every body of us can at least feel his own act of thinking. Extension is the attribute of matter and it is without doubt true that extension is always felt by us. In this sense, Śāmkhya philosophy can be termed as more speculative than that of Descartes.

It may also be pointed out that the prakṛti of Śāmkhya is composed of three gunas. They are not mere qualities. They are in a way substances in which other qualities inhere. They are types of real and are like three strands of one rope. These three gunas differ from each other in their nature and effect. Every straw of this universe is pervaded by these gunas. These gunas explain, up-to a certain extent, the difference in nature of different individuals. This guna theory is completely absent in Descartes' philosophy. The matter conceived by Descartes is not a rope of three strands. It is a matter which has extension, as its attribute and is, therefore, infinitely

divisible. There are no atoms of which Descartes' matter is composed. Here the concept of matter of Descartes widely differs from the Sāṃkhya concept of prakṛti.

Another point of difference between these two philosophies seems to be about the nature of motion which we find in the universe. After propounding two substances, mind and matter, Descartes must have felt the difficulty of explaining the motion which is so apparent in the world. Moreover, without motion worldly objects would have looked like a painted ship on a painted ocean. Matter, in the form of mere extension will look like a passive existence. So to bring motion in the universe Descartes takes help of the Prime-Mover or God. God has given motion to the universe.

Descartes himself has said that "God originally created matter along with motion and rest and now by his concourse alone preserves in the whole the same amount of motion that he then placed in it."

Thus, according to him motion is neither a product of matter nor that of mind. It is God's gift to the universe. And the motion which God has given to the universe is constant. It is not destroyed. It changes only its form. In Sāṃkhya philosophy, on the other hand, it is maintained that motion is not a supernatural gift. It is

1. Quoted by Prof. Thilly in his History of Philosophy. P. 309.
inherent in the very nature of prakṛti. Raajas guṇa which is one of the constituents of prakṛti, is the principle of motion or activity. This principle is operative in the whole of the universe and it leaves no room for any supernatural agency to create motion for the universe.

In the case of rest also Sāmkhya and Descartes differ. Descartes, as we have seen in the above-cited lines, believes that the rest which we find in the universe is also created by God. But in Sāmkhya philosophy tamas guṇa, one of the three constituents of prakṛti is thought to be responsible for rest.

Truly speaking, God is such a dominating power in Descartes' philosophy that He is needed at every point. God is here, there and everywhere. Every important concept is explained with the help of God. Thus Descartes' system turns out to be a type of deism in place of Dualism. Whatever are the merits and demerits of Deism will be seen in the next chapter, but here it suffices to say that Descartes' system is something more, or less, than mere Dualism. But this concept of Deism can hardly be traced in Sāmkhya philosophy. There prakṛti and purusa are sufficient to

1. S.K. 12.
2. Ibid.
explain this universe. Hence this is also a point of difference between the philosophies of Descartes and Sāṁkhya.

Then Sāṁkhya also believes in the state of pralaya or dissolution. The Sāṁkhya thinkers advocate the view that the order of the world is cyclical. There is evolution of the universe and then pralaya and this process goes on for ever. In the state of dissolution all the worldly objects go to their original source or prakṛti. And in this state the three guṇas of prakṛti remain in the state of equilibrium. When this equilibrium is disturbed by the sannidhi or proximity of puruṣa, creation starts by leaps and bounds. But this concept of dissolution or pralaya is completely absent from the philosophy of Descartes. Descartes never advocates the cyclical order of the universe. He seems to be busy with the present universe only.

Coming to the nature of puruṣa, it may be stated here that there is a lot of difference between Descartes' mind and puruṣa of Sāṁkhya. Puruṣa in Sāṁkhya is an absolute substance and is a transcendental and transempirical concept. It is conscious but inactive. It is essentially untouched by all worldly activities. It is all-pervading. The cartesian mind, on the other hand, is not inactive. At least the activities like thinking and doubting are the qualities of mind. Thus soul or mind of Descartes is not
essentially inactive. Then Descartes' mind is also not all-pervading. Though Descartes seems to believe in the plurality of minds or souls, he has nowhere said that mind or soul is all-pervading. Moreover, the mind of Descartes does not seem to be totally untouched by the world and its objects. We have seen that the puruṣa of Saṅkhya is beyond all the pleasures and pains of the world. All these things go on with the buddhi, and puruṣa is said to have assumed them wrongly as its own. But Descartes' mind or soul seems to be directly involved in all those feelings of pleasure or pain.

If it is asked as to how puruṣa, which is pure and transcendental in nature, assumes the activities of prakṛti or buddhi as its own, the Saṅkhya thinkers will reply that it is ignorance or avidyā under the influence of which puruṣa does so. And this avidyā or ignorance is beginningless and it is the cause of bondage of all of us. It is the net of avidyā due to which puruṣa falls into the trap of prakṛti. Though this avidyā is beginningless, yet it is not endless. It will go away as soon as the distinctive knowledge of puruṣa and prakṛti dawns upon the disillusioned jīva or individual soul. Now Descartes has never assumed anything like avidyā or ignorance. Mind comes in contact with matter directly without the help of any third force like that of avidyā. These assumptions of Saṅkhya are unique and can hardly be traced in the philosophy of Descartes. Though
Descartes also sometimes speaks of ignorance or wrong knowledge, it is completely in a different sense. It is not the ignorance or avidyā of Śāṅkhyā.

Another point of difference between the soul of Descartes and that of Śāṅkhyā philosophy is that in Śāṅkhyā philosophy human soul or puruṣa is eternal. But according to Descartes, soul is the creation of God. It is created by God along with matter and if He likes, He can even destroy both these entities. Thus, in no case, the mind or soul of Descartes may be said to be eternal. In one way we can say that it is immortal as it does not perish when our body perishes.

Moreover, the distinction between mind and soul is unique in Śāṅkhyā philosophy which Descartes does not seem even to be aware of. For Śāṅkhyā thinkers, mind is a product of prakṛti and is a physical entity in that sense. Its nature is totally different from that of puruṣa. It is a separate entity. But the case with Descartes is a bit different. For him, mind and soul are not the two different entities but they are one and the same thing. Here it may be pointed out that in the whole of the history of Western Philosophy, the distinction between soul and mind does not

2. Synopsis of the Six Following Meditations. P. 141.
seems to have been generally made. And consequently, Descartes could also not distinguish between them. This is a glaring point of difference between these two philosophies.

Then puruṣa of Saṃkhya philosophy is in bondage and will remain in it so long as it does not acquire the distinctive knowledge. It will go from birth to death according to the deeds performed by it. It means the doctrine of Karmavāda or deeds has been accepted by Saṃkhya thinkers without any hesitation. We cannot get out of the wheel of birth and death so long as the right knowledge does not dawn upon us. This doctrine of deeds or Karmavāda brings before us the theory of rebirth also. We all will be born again, according to our actions and will continue to be born again and again indefinitely. Now, these concepts of Karmavāda and rebirth are not found in Descartes' philosophy. Here it may be mentioned that Descartes seems to be a silent follower of Christian faith. We have seen in previous pages that he has all respect for the scriptures. In Christian religion, we do not find any trace of the theory of rebirth. Though the importance of actions is recognized in Christianity, it is different from the theory of deeds in Saṃkhya philosophy. In Christianity it is believed that on the day of judgment we shall be rewarded or punished according to our actions but it is nowhere said that we will be born again according to our actions. Moreover, the concept of Grace is also found in Christianity which
virtually does away with the doctrine of deeds or actions. Thus, we can maintain that the concepts of Rebirth and Karmavāda are not found in Descartes' Philosophy.

Then the concept of liberation is also a unique thing in Śāmkhya philosophy. We have seen, while discussing the philosophy of Śāmkhya, that man's goal of life is to get liberation. In the state of liberation, purusa detaches itself from prakṛti and regains his true position. This is a state which is beyond all worldly pains and sorrows and purusa is seated in its own self. A distinctive knowledge of purusa and prakṛti is the only way to be liberated. This knowledge is not an objective one. It is a type of self-realization which should inevitably be preceded by moral discipline. Once this knowledge comes to us we get rid of this wheel of birth and death. This type of goal of life is completely unknown to Descartes' philosophy. Descartes is busy only in explaining the universe. His realm is this physical level which we perceive and on which we act and react in our every-day life. Transcendental realm is beyond his reach and could not attract his imagination.

Then the theory of innate ideas found in Descartes' philosophy is not available in Śāmkhya philosophy. Certain truths are ingrained in human soul which it brings with it
since birth. Not only this, but Descartes thinks that God Himself has ingrained certain ideas in our minds. These ideas, according to Descartes, are the sources of true knowledge in human life. Though Sāmkhya thinkers also believe that certain Sāṃskāras come with us since birth these Sāṃskāras are nothing but our own creations and actions which are not given to us by God or any other power but for which we are responsible. They are destroyed as soon as true knowledge dawns upon us. Thus we do not find anything like innate ideas of Descartes in Sāmkhya philosophy. The soul in Sāmkhya philosophy, is untouched by any such ideas.

Moreover, for Descartes, human mind is the only criterion of true knowledge. Senses cannot give us right knowledge. And Descartes could not think anything apart from mind. It is the highest faculty of knowledge. So, mind is the first and highest source of true knowledge. But Sāmkhya thinkers could go beyond mind or maṇas. For them, mind cannot give us true knowledge. It works only at empirical level and is ineffective so far as the higher level is concerned. Here the level of self is deemed to be highest. It is the only source of true knowledge.

Then both these systems differ as regards the seat of human soul. For Descartes soul can be located at a
particular point in human body. He believes that "The soul, though united with the whole body, has its principal seat in the pineal gland of the brain." From this place, our soul conducts the movement of animal spirits. Whether this hypothesis of Descartes may be verified or not, his contention is that our soul has a definite place in our body. But Śāṅkhyā thinkers can hardly agree to this view. For them, puruṣa or human soul cannot be located at one definite place in our body. Even jīva, which is always associated with subtle body or sūkṣma sārīra, can hardly be said to have his seat in this or that part of the human organism. Though our body is conscious only due to the presence of jīva or conscious principle, we may not find it here or there like the soul of Descartes.

Here, it may also be pointed out that Descartes has eliminated mind totally from nature. They are the two different fields. For Descartes animals and even human bodies are the parts of nature. Descartes will say that the human body also like animal body, is a machine and is governed by the laws of nature. Thus he has drawn a clear-cut line of demarcation between these two spheres. Śāṅkhyā will hardly agree to this view. Here, human body is not governed exclusively by the laws of nature. A conscious

1. Prof. Thilly - History of Philosophy P. 311 Vide also Descartes - Passions of the soul Part I Article XXXI P.345.
principle presides over our body. Moreover, our body is not a machine. It has a purpose to serve and that purpose is to help puruṣa to enjoy prakṛti. Here we do not mean that our body is not at all affected by the laws of nature. The fire will not burn it or ice will not make it cold. We only mean that according to Sāmkhya we cannot understand it only as a machine.

Both these systems seem to differ in their methodology also. Descartes has brought in the mathematical method in philosophy because his aim is to reach such self-evident truths in philosophy as there are in mathematics. By mathematical method he means to deduce conclusions from axioms. And such conclusions he thinks to be sound. The use of mathematical method in philosophy is a unique thing with Descartes. This is one of the reasons why Descartes is known to be the Father of modern philosophy. His mathematical method is also known as the deductive method. In Sāmkhya system, we do not find a systematic use of this method. Its conclusions are not reached on the basis of the deductive method. Its method seems to be a speculative one. No doubt, in the use of the speculative method, Sāmkhya thinkers, seem to take the help of experience but the very fact remains that the method of philosophy with Sāmkhya
thinkers is not deductive or mathematical. This is one of the reasons that Descartes' philosophy is said to be more scientific than that of Śāmkhya.

In the end, we may point out that these two systems which have originated in two different cultures have deep-rooted differences between them. As we have seen, these systems differ in respect of their origin, purpose and even methodology. Their contents also differ. In this connection we have to keep in mind that every thinker or system of philosophy is the product of his own environment. The scientific and this-worldly attitude of the Westerners could not—but cast a deep influence on cartesian philosophy. The spiritualistic or other -worldly attitude of Indian sages from the very beginning seems to play a great role in Śāmkhya philosophical thinking. It does not mean that they have no meeting-ground at all. Frankly speaking, the similarity between these two systems is not so perceptible as the points of difference. Hence, when there are essential differences between the two systems of philosophy, the question naturally arises as to what is their comparative worth. Therefore, an attempt is made in the succeeding pages of this chapter to study them from this point of view.
(c) **A Comparative Estimate of the worth of the two Systems:**

While judging the comparative worth of the two dualistic philosophies like those of Śāṃkhyā and Descartes, we have to keep two things in mind. First, which of these philosophies satisfies our intellectual needs better than the other and, secondly, which guides us best in our worldly life. In simple words, we have to see both theoretical and practical aspects of the systems concerned.

As regards the theoretical aspects of the two systems, it may be seen that the dualism of Śāṃkhyā seems to be more independent and self-consistent than that of Descartes. The two ultimate entities of Śāṃkhyā philosophy enjoy their autonomy better than the two of the cartesian philosophy. Śāṃkhyā thinkers have taken puruṣa and prakṛti as completely independent, ultimate principles which have never been subordinated by any third principle whatsoever. Thus it remains a more consistent dualism than that of Descartes where the two substances depend on the will of God for their existence. Frankly speaking, a man of reason may feel shy of calling Descartes a dualistic thinker.

Moreover, Descartes' dualism, as we have seen, does not even seem to be self-sufficient. In Descartes' philosophy, matter and mind, minus God, are helpless to explain the world. Even the laws of Nature, including
motion and rest, are given by God. On the other hand, purusa
and prakrti of Sāmkhya do not require anything to help them to
explain the universe.

Descartes starts with mathematical method but
falls a prey to those theological assumptions which were deep-
rooted in his age. Sometimes, to our surprise, he talks
more like a theologian than a philosopher. In this respect,
Sāmkhya thinkers have done well to separate philosophy from
theology and have tried to get rid of the traditional theolo-
gical notions which may come in the way of philosophy. They
have given philosophy an independent place.

Here, it may also be noted that Descartes' attempt
to put philosophy at par with mathematics is a new idea, but,
soon after, we notice certain inconsistencies also in his
philosophy. These inconsistencies in-cline us to under-rate
his philosophical thoughts. How inconsistent it looks to
start with doubting everything but, after sometime the
gentlemans' believing even in the authority of scriptures.
At one place we find him talking in terms of Deism but at
another, he seems to go in favour of theism. We do not find
such gross inconsistencies, at least in the original books of
Sāmkhya philosophy. If they are dualists, they are dualists
throughout and if they are atheists, they are atheists consis-
tently. By this we do not mean that there are no weak points
in Śāṁkhya philosophy; we only mean that the thinkers of this philosophy are not habituated to talk opposite things with one voice. This is, no doubt, a philosophical virtue in this system.

Then, another point goes in favour of Śāṁkhya philosophy. It is a product of an age when, at least, modern scientific knowledge was completely unknown to human beings. Even then, they could free philosophical thought from the clutches of dogmatic theology. Descartes, however, though he was born at the dawn of scientific discoveries, could not make himself free from that dogmatism which gives us an impression that he was doing something other than philosophy.

Coming to the practical aspect of philosophy, we have to face a very big question which philosophers of all ages have faced. Why Philosophy? The thinkers may close their eyes to evade this 'why', but the 'why' remains. Western philosophers, in general, and Descartes, in particular, may answer this question by pointing out that the whole philosophy is an evidence of the autonomy of human reason. Well, then, the reader may press his question further and ask, 'Is autonomy of reason enough for human beings?' The answer to this question must be given in the negative. The whole history of western philosophy bears the evidence that the mere autonomy of reason
leads us nowhere. That is why thinkers like Kant had to demarcate the sphere of reason and could categorically declare that the use of reason, after certain limits, would necessarily lead us to absurdities. So, in our humble opinion, the mere use of reason without some practical goal before us, may sound much but signify nothing. Indeed, it is very charming to hear that a philosopher is philosophising in order to make us free from all the pangs of life. Do not the philosophers like Buddha, Christ, Confucius and Gandhi charm us when we see them trying to take humanity out of the sordid dreams of life? Does not Sāṃkhya philosophy, in this respect, attract us more than the mere philosophising of Descartes? The Sāṃkhya philosophers are philosophising in order to take human life out of the ditch of sufferings, but Descartes, on the other hand, seems to philosophise for the sake of philosophising. The philosophy of this type, sometimes, may appeal to our heads but our hearts are untouched. Man is not only head but also heart. Sāṃkhya philosophy tries to touch both head and heart. It is a philosophy of life rather than a mere play of reason.

Some people try to point out the practical value of Sāṃkhya system by basing the Indian medical system (Āyurveda) on the assumptions of Sāṃkhya philosophy. For them, three guṇas of Sāṃkhya philosophy correspond to the three qualities
of human body, namely, pitta, vāyu and kaffa; Pitta corresponds to rajas, vāyu to sattva and kaffa is compared to tamas. Just as equilibrium of the three guṇas is said to be the normal state of prakṛti and when this equilibrium is destroyed, disturbance starts in prakṛti itself. So the equilibrium of pitta, vāyu and kaffa is the normal state of human body but when one of these dominates over the other, bodily disturbances or diseases take place. Moreover, all the constituents of human organism are enumerated in Sāmkhyā philosophy. buddhi, shāṅkāra etc. are nothing but the different constituents of our organism. The twenty-four evolutes of prakṛti may all be traced to human organism. This statement of ours would have been a mere hypothesis, had not the author of Garaka Saṁhitā (A book on Indian Medicines) mentioned the main principles of Sāmkhyā philosophy in the very beginning of his book.

Moreover, the most practical aspect of Sāmkhyā philosophy comes to us as the Yoga system of Patañjali. If the Sāmkhyā is theory, Yoga is its practice. And in the form of this practice, the contribution of Sāmkhyā towards philosophy in general and to Indian philosophical thought in particular cannot be over-emphasised. The intellectuals of the whole world are now coming to realize the utility of Yoga-therapy in our day-to-day physical and psychological
diseases. In these days, one can easily see the Yoga centres being established almost all over the globe. Does not this credit go to the philosophical principles enunciated by Sāmkhya thinkers? One who deprives Sāmkhya philosophy of this credit, will show his ignorance about the system concerned.

Thus this brief discussion about the comparative worth of the two systems will bring home to the reader a glaring fact that this Indian dualistic thought is closer to human life than the philosophy of the western thinker, Descartes. The reader may try to read national pride in our statements but in our humble opinion these are facts which a sincere student of comparative philosophy can hardly ignore.