Guna is one of the important issues used in different systems of Indian thought and in other branches of Sanskrit literature. Prakṛti is constituted by the three Guṇas of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. It is said to be the state of equilibrium of these three Guṇas.

Prakṛti, the first cause of the Universe is one and complex, and its complexity is the result of its being constituted of three factors, each of which is called as a Guṇa.

Now the question is: what are these Guṇas? Guṇa, in Sāmkhya, means a constituent element or component and not an attribute or quality. Here, by the Guṇas of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, we are to understand the elements of the ultimate substance called Prakṛti. The reason why they are called Guṇas is either their being subservient to the ends of the Puruṣa which is other than themselves, or their being interwined like the three strands of a rope which

1. prakarotīti prakṛtīḥ pradhānāṁ sattvarajastamasāṁ
   sāmyāvasthā. STK under Sk. 3.
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. These three constituents again, though essentially distinct in their nature, are conceived as interdependent, so that they can never be separated from one another and from a unity in trinity. In other words, they not only co-exist but also cohere. This intrinsic interdependence of the Guṇas excludes the possibility of the breaking up of Prakṛti by their separation. Although they are called Guṇas, yet they are not ordinary qualities or attributes like the Guṇas of the Nyāya-Vaisēṣika system. They themselves possess qualities like lightness, activity and heaviness etc. They are extremely fine and ever-changing elements. They make up Prakṛti which is nothing apart from them. They are not the qualities which Prakṛti, the substance, possesses; on the other hands, they themselves constitute Prakṛti. They are called Guṇas (Guṇa means 'quality', 'secondary' and 'strand of a rope') because they are the elements of Prakṛti which alone is called substantive; or because they are subservient to the end of the Puruṣa, or because they are interwined, like the strands, to make up the rope of Prakṛti, which binds the Puruṣa.

These entities, however, are substances and not mere qualities. But it may be mentioned in this connection.
that in Sāṁkhya philosophy there is no separate existence of qualities, it holds that each and every unit of quality but a unit of substance. What we call quality is but a particular manifestation or appearance of a subtle entity. Things do not possess quality, but quality signifies merely the manner in which a substance reacts; any object we see seems to possess many qualities, but the Sāṁkhya holds that corresponding to each and every new unit of quality, however fine and subtle it may be, there is a corresponding subtle entity, the reaction of which is interpreted by us as a quality. This is true not only of mental qualities of external objects but also of mental qualities as well. These ultimate entities were thus called Guṇas probably to suggest that they are the entities which by their various modifications manifest themselves as Guṇa or qualities as well. These ultimate were thus called Guṇas probably to suggest that they are the entities which by their various modifications manifest themselves as Guṇa or qualities. These subtle entities may also be called Guṇas in the sense of ropes because they are like ropes by which the soul is chained down as if it were to thought and matter. These may also be called Guṇas as things of secondary importance, because though permanent and indestructible, they continually suffer modifications and changes by their mutual groupings and regroupings and thus not primarily and unalterably constant like the souls.
(Puruṣa). Moreover, the object of the world process being the enjoyment and salvation of the Puruṣas, the matter principle could not naturally be regarded as being of primary importance. But in whatever senses we may be inclined to justify the name Guṇa as applied to these subtle entities, it should be born in mind that they are substantive entities or subtle substances and not abstract qualities.

Johnston states the names for the three Guṇas, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, remained unchanged throughout the literature, though not always free from ambiguity; for, Sattva has many other meanings and in particular, it is used occasionally in early Sāmkhya and the Yoga-Sūtras to express the corporeal, as distinct from the spiritual, individual. On the other hand, the term 'Guṇa', besides its general meanings, is used in three different technical senses in early Sāmkhya to indicate - (1) the three factors of the Avyakta, (2) the objects of the senses parallel to the Buddhist term Kāmaguṇa which probably originated in the period of the early dogmatism before the rise of Abhidharma, (3) a Vikāra in extension of the previous sense, each Tattva by which it is produced; this

2. ES, p. 29.
last use is quite clear in the *Mahābhārata*, XII, 1143ff. and XIV, 11121 and 11399 and probably in a number of other passages as well. To distinguish between these different uses is hardly possible in many places where more than one of them would fit the context; thus in the *Gītā* III.5 and 27, it is probable, but not absolutely certain, that the secondary evolutes should be understood. Though Ṛṣibrāhmaṇa describes in detail how the Guṇas enter into each tattva, the earlier accounts limits their activity. To the sphere of the Aavyakta, of which they are factors. Secondly, the group as such was not necessarily known to the earliest Sāṃkhya, seeing that there reference to them in the Kathopaniṣad or other Upaniṣads of about the same date, though later speculation about them may well have been influenced by Ch. U. VI, 4 and 5. The earliest mention of the group is probably to be found in the epithet Trīvṛta of the Brahmačakra at Svet. Up.1,4, but the various occurrences of the word Guṇa in the Upaniṣad are most easily understood as signifying the inferior Tattvas and possibly once in the phrase Sarvendriyaguṇabhāsam ,III, 17, as the objects of senses. The allusions in the Maitri Up. belong to a later stage of speculation and their consideration is best deferred.

According to Anima Sengupta, the most distinguishing characteristic of the Sāṃkhya System is its Guṇa theory which holds that mental and material objects of this
Phenomenal world, are the combinations in different proportions of the three ultimate which are technically known as 'Triguna'. 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. Each fact of experience becomes a fact of experience by virtue of its relation to consciousness. There is something special in it, i.e. some sort of intelligibility, for reason of which is easily gets related to the totality of experience of a particular person. Consciousness is revelation; and if we are to become conscious of something, then that thing must have some common characteristic by virtue of which it can be revealed as being related to the latter as its objects. When "this chair" becomes an object of my consciousness or thought, it become so, only because it possesses within itself the capacity of becoming revealed, as soon as it comes in touch with consciousness. This capacity cannot be discovered in the so-called qualities of the chair, because the qualities can be abstracted and still the object can be conceived of as existing and getting related to consciousness without contradiction. This power, therefore, exists in the very being of the object and can very well be identified with that (being).

3. EST, p. 16.
Each fact of experience is a being or Sattva and this being constitutes its intelligibility. This intelligibility, therefore, is the ultimate factor of an object of experience and it is, therefore, called Sattva-Guṇa by the Sāṃkhya philosophers. Now, the object of experience also possesses certain characteristics like resistance, impenetrability, shape and form which are, in fact, due to the presence of 'massiveness' in objects. Therefore, Tamo-Guṇa is another element present in the object besides its intelligibility. The object undergoes changes. It changes from state to state as well as from form to form. There is no monotonous lingering of the same character in any object. This change or movement is due to the presence of the second principle which is named "Rajo-Guṇa". Thus, Sattva, Raja and Tama are the three Guṇas which are responsible for all sorts of experience of a Puruṣa. These are objective, ultimate and irreducible elements of experience.

These Guṇas are not the so-called qualities of the Vaiśeṣika-System because they themselves possess the characteristics of lightness, movement and heaviness. One quality cannot be thought of as possessing other qualities.

4. sattvāṁ laghu prakāsākamiṣṭamupastāṁbhakāṁ calaṁ ca rajaḥ / SK, K., 13
5. sattvādīni dravyāṇi na vaiśeṣika guṇāḥ saṁyogavibhā-gavattvāt. laghutvacalatva- guruvādīdharmatvācca SPB under Sa.S. 1/61.
These Guṇas, of course, become seemingly associated with and dissociated from the Puruṣa. Still they cannot be regarded as qualities of the Puruṣa since qualities actually and constantly inhere in the substance. So, these Guṇas are "Dravyas" or substances. All objects of this world both mental and physical are the results of the different permutations and combinations of these three ultimate reals. Our thoughts and ideas which, too, possess a character different from that of the physical world, are not, in fact, outside the realm of these three Guṇas. These are as much the effects or the modifications of the ultimate reals as the so-called physical things. The only difference lies in the fact that in the mental sphere, the element of Sattva predominates, whereas in the sphere of the physical universe, Tama-Guṇa is present in all our ideas of objects, otherwise, these mental products could not assume the forms of their objects in order to make the experience of an individual possible. In fact, in every cittavṛtti, the inseparable union of the Guṇas is detectable. (cittavṛtti becomes manifested, it assumes the form of its viṣaya and this needs movement). Our phenomenal consciousness as well as its objects are due to the functioning of these three Guṇas which are the sole productive forces

6. TV, Ch. 11-13.
of this universe.

But our experience does not possess a cognitive aspect only; it has also a feeling aspect which is more pervasive than the cognitive one. Prof. S.N. Dasgupta, while analysing the concept of Guṇa has shown how feeling formulations the marginal line between thought and matter the animate and inanimate. From feeling complexes, we can easily descend to matter complexes and from matter complexes we can go up to feeling-complexes very smoothly. That is why, there is always the likelihood of mistaking a feeling-complex for a matter-complex and vice-versa. The system of Sāmkhya also does not recognise any rigid distinction between thought and matter. Both thought and matter are constituted of the same feeling substances which form the neutral border line between them. The Guṇas are these (feelings) substances. Since the whole external world is made up of these three elements, each object of cognition possesses the capacity of producing three different feelings in the minds of human beings, i.e., pleasure, pain and infatuation or indifference. So, from the point of view of knowledge, these three Guṇas are known as Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, but from the point of view of feeling they appear as pleasure, pain and

7. HIP (Vol.1), pp. 242-43
infatuation. A lovely woman, for instance, excites the feeling of pleasure in the beloved person, the feeling of pain in the co-wife and the feeling of infatuation in the disappointed person. This, she can do, simply because she is objectively pleasurable, painful and delusive. In other words, Sattva, Raja and Tama which, on the place of consciousness, appear as intelligence - stuff, energy and mass and on the plane of feeling as pleasure, pain and infatuation have themselves been transformed to create that lovely woman. The lovely woman is not merely the assemblage of ideas in some mind as is held by the idealistic philosophers, nor is she absolutely different from thoughts or feelings, as is ordinarily held by the realistic philosophers. Thought and thing, matter and the so-called intellectual processes do not lie in two absolutely distinct regions, and therefore, the establishment of any kind of direct action and interaction between them (as is actually observed in our daily life) is not at all difficult. Thus, the correspondence between the inner world and the outer world has been satisfactorily explained by the

8. tad yathā ekaiva strīrupayauvanakulasampannā svāminām sukha karoti ............................................ saiva strī sapatānduvahākaparoti ..................... evam puruṣāntaram tāmavind amānām saiva mohayati.

STK under SK. K. 13.

9. Ibid.
Sāmkhya philosophers on the hypothesis that they repress two allied lines of development from a common source, i.e., the three Guṇas. These three reals, thus, on their supposition, are neither mental nor physical. Like those neutral stuff, the Guṇas also get arranged in different relations, when arranged in a different way, they appear as physical or material.

Now, these reals are called Guṇas because they act as ropes for binding puruṣa and also because they are subordinated to the Puruṣa whose interest they serve.

They are infinite in number but they have been brought under three types in accordance with their three different characteristics. When we speak of Sattva Guṇa we do not mean one substance only; rather we refer to an infinite number of subtle substances possessing the common characteristics of self-shiningness and luminosity. Similar is the case with Rajas and Tamas.

These Guṇas, when they act together for the production of objects, external mutual influences upon one another, and by so doing they bring into existence new qualities and new substances. An object is called Sāttvika, Rajasa and Tāmasa in so far as it represents the predominance of Sattva, Raja or Tamoguṇa. But even when Sattva-Guṇa predominates Raja and Tama remain in conjunction with it, although in a

10. YB. 11-13; (b) SPB under Sā.S i, 127.
subduced form. As soon as the influence of Sattva weakens, due to some causes, the ‘Sahakāri’ Guṇas at once become active and more prominent. In each act of production these three Guṇas become operative, although all of them cannot maintain the same status quo at the same time. In revelation, it is not Sattva alone that is active, but Sattva dominates Raja and Tama. The Guṇas, no doubt, possess different characteristics, but while they act, there is co-operation or co-mingling like that of oil, wick and flame.

If these three are not arranged in proper subordination and super-ordination, there will be a terrible conflict resulting in chaos and confusion. But their proper manipulation will bring about creation of new things and new varieties, just as the proper manipulation of wind, bile and phlegm contributes to the substance of the physical body.

When light is produced, it is produced for the enjoyment of some conscious being and not for the benefit of oil, wick and flame. Similar is the case with the conjunction of these Guṇas. The creativity of these reals is not an end in itself; on the contrary, it serves as the only means for the

\[\text{11. sattvaṁ laghu \ldots... pradipavaccārthato vṛttih /} \]

\[\text{SK. K.13} \]

Also: yathā vartitaile analavirdhini atha ca milite sahānalena rupaprakāśālakṣanaṁ kāryaṁ kurutaḥ \ldots....
evaṁ sattvaṁ rajastamāṁsi mitho vruddhaṁ api svakāryaṁ kariṣyanti ca. \hspace{1cm} \text{STK under Ibid.}
attainment of Puruṣa’s end. Bhoga (enjoyment) and Apavarga (liberation) are the puṇḍarīka, and the Gaṇa-stuff creates this ceaseless flow of modifications and complexities for his enjoyment and liberation. All products are, therefore, Upakaranas for Puruṣa’s experience, but the Gaṇas, while creating the realm of experience, do not get mixed up with Puruṣa like salt and water. Rather they serve the bhog purpose of Puruṣa by mere sannidhi or proximity. 12 Of course, this sannidhi does not mean nearness in space; rather it means that Puruṣabodha and Gaṇa-bodha form indistinguishable parts of the same idea, and are cognized as identical though mistake.

The Gaṇas and the Puruṣas are thus, the main principles accepted in the philosophy of Sāṁkhya. Both the categories are equally external, but while the Puruṣas are pure and inactive principles of consciousness, the Gaṇas are the unconscious everchanging, dynamic energy of the universe. The ceaselessly undergo change, but changes take place in these ultimate constituents in two ways, which are known as Svarupa-parināma and Virupa-parināma. Svarupa-parināma exists in the state of equilibrium of the three Gaṇas when they exert equal influences without creating any form of commotion. In this stage Sattva changes into Sattva, Rajas into Rajas and Tamas into Tamas. This state of equilibrium is absolutely indeterminate, undifferentiated and indefinite.

12. TV, II, 18.
and it is called Prakṛti.\(^{13}\)

Virupa pariṇāma means the process of forming unequal aggregation of the Guṇas through their mutual interaction and interdependence. Hence, when the virupa-pariṇāma takes place, the Guṇas begin to manifest their various characteristics and the phenomenal products come into being.

This is the dynamism of Sāṃkhya physics and this aspect is as real and as obvious as the aspect of permanence. All sorts of movements and changes are so very real and forceful that they can be denied by no means. This fact of becoming should be accepted in every system of philosophy to avoid one-sideness and narrow perspective. Guṇas in the state of equilibrium and the Puruṣa are the minimum nonmental realities which form the dynamic and the static presuppositional principles of the Sāṃkhya view. The entire universe of diversity and change is produced out of these Guṇas in association with Puruṣa or pure consciousness. The world we live in, is not a static, it is out and out dynamic. Perpetual changes vibrating currents of life and constant movements, are the key notes of this phenomenal show. The world that we see, feel and work upon, does not remain steady and unchanging. On the contrary, it changes, and changes every moment because of its inner push and inner mobility.

\(^{13}\) SPB\(_s\) under Sā.Ś.1/61.
which are due to the palpitating nature of the three Guṇas. These Guṇas explain clearly both its sameness and diversity, affinity and difference which are so obvious and unignorable in this physical world. Sameness of objects is due to the sameness of the ultimate-stuff; i.e. the three reals, but diversity is due to the different types of relatedness of these elements. Cause and effect, substance and attribute are identical from the point of view of the stuff, but from the point of view of forms and names they are different.

These Guṇas also form the realistic setting of the Sāṁkhya school. Knowledge and its objects belong to the realm of Guṇas which are totally independent of the Puruṣa. An idealistic system holds that in the equisation of knowledge, Consciousness contributes every item and that the object of knowledge is convertible into consciousness. But the Sāṁkhya philosophers (classical) held that the stuff of which the object is composed is radically distinct from consciousness and is also independent of it. The whole world, therefore, rests on a principle which is entirely unrelated to the spiritual entity.

It would, therefore, appear from the above discussion that the Sāṁkhya realism and its bed-rock is constituted of three Guṇas, and that these Guṇas form the central principles of the Sāṁkhya-view of the world. This interpretation
of the Guṇas as subtle substances or reals has, first of all, been given to us by Bhikṣu in his Śāṅkhya-Pravacana- Bhāṣya; Vācaspati Miśra and Gauḍapāda do not provide us with any explanation of the nature of the Guṇas from this point of view. Viśnunabhiṣkulśu's interpretation of the Guṇas has been accepted by all eminent Indian modern scholars like Rādhākrṣṇa, S.N. Dasgupta and D.M. Dutta and others.

As rightly observed by Swami Nikhilānanda in his introduction to the Ātmeśvara of Śāṅkara, Māyā or Prakṛti, is said to consist of the three Guṇas, known as Sattvas, Rajas and Tamas. The word 'Guṇa' is translated into English as 'quality', which does not give the precise meanings of the original words Sattva, Raja and Tama which are not qualities of Māyā in the same sense that hardness is a quality or iron, or softness of butter, or heat of fire. The three Guṇas are the ingredients of Māyā, they may be compared three strands which constitute the rope of Māyā, the rope by which Māyā binds man to the illusory world. Māyā has no existence independent of the Guṇas. The three Guṇas are, present, in varying degrees, in all objects, gross and subtle, including the mind, the Buddhi, and the ego. The food which nourishes our body, the thought which is function of the mind, the duty which elevates a man from the animal level, charity, worship, sacrifices -
in short, everything belonging to the universe of Māyā contains these three Guṇas.

At the end of the world-cycle when names and forms go back to the state of non-manifestation or involution, the Guṇas remain in a state of non-differentiation or equilibrium. This is called the seed state of the universe, it is described as the sleep of the cosmic soul. Māyā, in association with Brahman, or pure consciousness, at the time exists as the cause, alone; without any of its manifestation. Suddenly, this equilibrium is disturbed, by the will of the Lord, and the Guṇas begin to assert their individual characteristics. Different objects, subtle and gross, come into existence. The tangible universe manifests itself step by step.

The three Guṇas, always exist together. There cannot be pure Sattva, without Rajas and Tamas, or pure Raja, without Sattva and Tamas, or pure Tamas, without Sattva and Raja. The difference between one being and another lies in the varying preponderance of the Guṇa.  

14. BG. XIV.5.
15. anyonyamithunāḥ sarve sarve sarvatra gāmināḥ / rajaso mithunam sattvaṃ sattvasya mithunanāh //  
       sattvaraj asi ṛbhe/  
Āgama as quoted in TK under SK.K. 12
Also - ekāṁ sattvaṁ na bhavati rajascaikām tamastathā/ sahāvāśritya varante guṇā mithunadharmināḥ //  
DB as quoted in SB on STK under SK. K.13.
The three Guṇas, it must not be forgotten, belong to Māyā, Prakṛti or ignorance which includes everything in Nature—ignorance, organic or psychic. They are the characteristics of relativity. As long as a man is attached to any of them he is a phenomenal being and not a free soul. Even the Gods, the superhuman being, show a preponderance of Sattva, men of Rajas and subhuman beings of Tamas. Brahman alone untouched by Māyā is beyond the Guṇas. Sattva binds a man with attachment to happiness, Raja with attachment to activity, and Tama with attachment to delusion.

The three Guṇas may be compared to three Robbers who waylay a man in a forest. Tamas, one of the robbers, wants to destroy him; but at the persuasion of Rajas, the second robber, he is bound hand and foot to a tree and relieved of all his treasures. After sometime, Sattva, the third robber, returns, frees the man from his bondage, takes him gently out of the forest, and sets him on the highway leading to his house. The Sattva takes of him because he too, being a robber does not dare accompany the man out of the forest for fear of the police. Tamas wants to destroy a man; Rajas binds him to the world and robs him of his spiritual treasurers; Sattva sets him on the path to freedom. Tamas is to be overcome by Rajas, and Rajas by Sattva. But finally Sattva, too, is to be given
up if the aspirant seek total Freedom. Truth lies beyond the three Guṇas.

The three Guṇas were first of all mentioned in the Chandogya Upaniṣad as three elements of fire, water and earth which exist in all things. After that, these Guṇas were described more definitely as the constituents of Prakṛti in the Ajasruti of the Svetāsvarta Upaniṣad. The Guṇas, here, are not only of all pervading nature, which in different proportions are present in all phenomena; but they are also the fetters that keep the free soul in bondage and pain. The names Sattva, Raja and Tama, however, do not occur until the Maitrāyanī Upaniṣad. The Śvetāsvarta Upaniṣad proclaims that the Absolute, by becoming enshrouded by the Guṇas, appears as individual soul. Mr. Keith observes: 'It is not impossible that the subjective side of the Guṇas (Sattvam, Rajaḥ and Tamaḥ) meaning thereby, Sukha (pleasure), Duhkha (pain) and Moha (indifference) which is clearly marked in these names and which originally prevails in the classical Sāṁkhya was a development from the individual self was the result of the envelopment of the Absolute in the three Guṇas, though originally referring to material products. Still the tendency would be to see in them the psychic states.'

Like the Svetāsvatataropanisad, the Maitrāyani also considers that the Absolute becomes enveloped by Guṇas, but these Guṇas belong to Nature. Being sailed by the Guṇas, the Brahman appears as the individual self, and fail into error of vanity and egoism, through Avidyā or ignorance. Raja 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 three Guṇas as mentioned in the Kapila's Sāṅkhya-Sūtra are also found in the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa. Here they refer to different psychical states and are in Nature the beginningless. Devotion to God, which flows from the human heart, naturally comes, under the influence of the three Guṇas. Consequently devotion is described as Sāttvika, Rājasika and Tāmasika. Those who worship God in order to satisfy personal jealousy, price or enmity are called Tamas, those who become devoted to Him for the attainment of power, fame etc. are called Raja, those who cling to Him for the washing away of all their demerits, are called Sāttvika. The highest devotion is 'Nirguṇa-bhakti' which transcends all these three forms.

18. sattvam rajastama iti guṇa jīvasya naiva me /
cittajā jaistu bhūtānām sajjamāna nibadhyate//XI,25.12

19. sāttvīkādhyātmikī śraddhākarma śraddhā tu rajasī /
tāmasyadharma yā śraddhā matseyām tu nirguṇā //

Ibid, 18.
The *Mahābhārata* seems to have used the terms (sattva, Rajaḥ and Tamah) to stand for psychic states which make up the experience stuff of human beings. They are eternally present in Nature. These three Guṇas act like covering in relation to Puruṣa, and being enshrouded by them, the souls suffer from misery and delusion. Living beings are also divided on the basis of these three Guṇas into Sāttvika, Rājasika and Tāmasika. The Sāttvika jīvas are born in a higher world, the Rājasika jīvas are born as men and those who have a predominant element of Tamas are born as lower animals.

The view of the *Gītā* on the Guṇas differ from the preceding ones, in the sense that here in the *Gītā* the three are described as the products of Prakṛti. It is the Guṇas born of Nature that inspire men to act the Guṇas are the agents that bind the over free soul to this life of samsāra, and being deluded by them, the self mistakenly thinks of itself as the doer and experiencer of the various sorts of pleasures and pains. The Guṇas, however, stand for different psychical-states, a view that seems to be customarily held, since the time of the Upaniṣads.

21. sattvam rajastama iti guṇāḥ prakṛtisambhavāḥ / 
nibandhanti mahābhāho dehināmavyayaṁ // XIV. 5.
The mention of these three Guṇas, as existing in Prakṛti and as referring to three types of mental qualities are also found in the Purāṇas. The Manusmṛti gives us an elaborate description of these Guṇas, which effect the life of a jīva in diverse ways. These three Guṇas are supposed to be present in each and everything. Sattva gives rise to knowledge, Tama to ignorance and Raja creates aversion and attachment. All pious and venerable deeds owe their origin to the Sattva-Guṇa, while the enjoyment of worldly pleasures etc. is due to the predominance of the element of Raja. Tama, on the other hand, encourages greed, sluggishness, irreligious mood etc.

In the Aññarfudhyā-Samhitā, Guṇas are not regarded as equivalent to Prakṛti, Guṇa refers to be unevolved, undifferentiated state pure potentiality which can best be described by the term Avyakta. The unevolved Guṇa, first of all, evolves itself into Sattva, then from Sattva, arises Raja and from Raja, again arises Tama. When the trinity is

22. XII. 24-52

sattvāṁ rajastamacaiva trinvidyādātmanto guṇāṁ /
yāvayāpyemān sthito bhāvān mahān sarbānāsēṣatāh /
Ibid. XII. 24

sattvāṁ jñānaṁ tamo ajñānaṁ rāgadvēṣau rajaḥ smṛtaṁ /
etad vyāptimaḷeśāṁ sarvabuetaṣṭitaṁ vapih //
Ibid, XII, 26.
fully developed, some parts of the Guṇas form an equilibrium which is known as Prakṛti. With the emergence of the three Guṇas, the manus descend into them, and consequently come under the influence of Sattva, Raja and Tama. Tama is regarded as heavy, delusive and statical, Raja is always moving and pulpitating and thereby creating sorrows of life; Sattva is described as light, transparent, without impurities and pleasurable.

In the Carak-Saṃhitā (78 A.D.), the Pre-Kārīka description of the three Guṇas as representing three types of psychical states is adopted. All happiness and misery are due to the accumulation of Raja and Tama in the soul, but an increase in the Sattva-Guṇa unfastens the tie and releases the self from the entanglement of life (Sārīra sthānam - 34). This view of the Sattva-Guṇa was, perhaps, focussed through the classical Śāmkhya when the latter declared that the secret of release remains hidden in the Sattvika-buddhi.

The most important topic in the classical Śāmkhya is the doctrine of these three Guṇas which form the very substance of Prakṛti or Nature. The classical Śāmkhya attributes the evolution of the world wholly to the activity of these Guṇas, which work for the interest of Puruṣa. In the pre-evolutionary stage, the three Guṇas remain in a stage of equilibrium set to move by the inner unconscious texology,
they evolve the mahat, ahamkāra and the rest; and it is their interaction that brings into existence, the diverse phenomena of the universe. The Guṇas are not only viewed as the ultimate-stuff of the objective world, but they are also the ultimate psychical-stuff which lie at the root of all sorts of experience. Sattva-Guṇa consists of goodness, Raja of passion and Tama of darkness or delusion. Goodness is of different varieties, such as calmness, lightness, contentment, patience, happiness etc. Passion manifests itself as grief, distress, separation, excitement, attainment of what is evil, etc.

Darkness is of endless variety, such as covering, ignorance, disgust, misery, heaviness, sloth, drowsiness, intoxication, etc. These Guṇas are repeatedly explained as substances in the classical Sāṁkhya (quality and substance being considered as inseparable).

The conception of the Guṇas is very popular in the systems of Indian philosophy. The world of experience is viewed everywhere to be under the influence and control of these Guṇas.