Chapter IX

THE GĪTĀ AND THE SĀMKHYA-YOGA : A COMPARATIVE STUDY

The Sāmkhya philosophy as well as the Bhāgavad-gītā seems to derive its materials from the Upaniṣads. But in case of the Bhāgavad-gītā, the Upaniṣads are not the only sources of it.

The Gītā tries to incorporate into its fold many conflicting views prevalent at the time. The author of the sacred poem carefully tries to reconcile such conflicting views in the poem. Prem Nath Bazaz in this context observes, "The Bhāgavad-gītā, as we have seen, is not an integrated philosophy of life. It attempts to synthesise almost all currents of thought from early times in Indian history to the day when the poem was composed."¹ The Bhāgavad-gītā may be said to be a unification of different conflicting doctrines and religious views. In Radhakrishnan's opinion, "It represents not any sect of Hinduism but religion as such, in its universality, without limit of time or space, embracing within its synthesis the whole gamut of the human spirit, from the crude fetishism of the savage to the creative affirmation of the saint."²

1. Prem Nath Bazaz, The Role of Bhagavad-gītā in Indian History, p. 267
Noticing contradictions and inconsistencies in the Gītā D.D. Kosambi says, "The divine but rather scrambled message with its command of expository Sanskrit is characteristically Indian in attempting to reconcile the irreconcilable in its power of gulping down sharp contradictions painlessly." ³

The Gītā on the one hand preaches the doctrine of non-injury, but on the other, it preaches people to engage themselves in bloody and devastating war though of course on the plea of immutability and indestructibility of the soul. Śrīkrishṇa in persuading Arjuna to fight the battle says, "Know thou that one who is pervading all this is indestructible; none can bring about destruction of this immutable being." ⁴ Śrīkrishṇa again by way of advising Arjuna to fight the battle says, "Therefore, arise thou and gain glory. Conquering thy foes enjoy a prosperous kingdom." ⁵

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4. B.G. ii.17

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\text{āvinaśi tu tād viddhi} \\
\text{yena sarvam idām tatam} \\
\text{vināśam avyayasyā'syā} \\
\text{na kaścit kartum arhati.}
\]

5. B.G. xi.33

\[
\text{tasmāt tvam uttiṣṭha yaśolabhasva} \\
\text{jītvā satrūn bhuṅkṣva rājyaṁ samṛḍdham.}
\]
But subsequently when Krishṇa advises Arjuna to perform disinterested duties, he could not remain consistent with his former views. Hill observes, "For the most part, the theory of a recast document is founded on the fact that the poem attempts to reconcile so many differing points of view, and appears in many passages to be inconsistent with itself."  

It is difficult to understand how and in what sense his advice to fight the battle for gaining glory and enjoying a prosperous kingdom can be a disinterested duty? Thus contradictions and inconsistencies appear to be there in the Gītā.

Śrīkrishṇa further says -

"Either, slain thou shalt go to heaven; or victorious thou shalt enjoy the earth; Therefore arise, O son of Kunti (Arjuna) resolved on battle."  

6. B.G. III.19  
7. W.D.P. Hill, The Bhagavad Gītā, p. 19  
8. B.G. II.37  

hato va prāpsyasi svargam  
jitvā va bhokṣyase mahīm  
tasmād uttiṣṭha kaunteya  
yuddhāya krtaṁśca yaḥ.
Instructions of this type cannot but be allurements to certain ends.

We can point out another instance of inconsistency in the Gītā. The author has all along been teaching us that we are to perform duties with total disregard to their consequences; but in the verse 25 of the Chapter XVIII, he says that the action undertaken through ignorance, without regard to consequences or to loss and injury and without regard to one's capacity is one of "dullness". While on previous occasions, he stressed on disinterested duties, but in the said verse he lays emphasis on the consequence of actions as well as on human capability.

Mackenzie infers Gītā's inconsistency from its composite nature. He says, "The glaring inconsistencies which it contains seem to be best explained on the hypothesis that it is composite, but if the truth be otherwise we should still have to say that the author had a definite and intelligible doctrine, in his exposition of which he was hampered by the fact that he had failed to free his mind from the influence of the teaching of another and contradictory philosophy."

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9. B.G. III.19

asaktāṁ satataṁ kāryaṁ
karma samācara.

literary merit on the one hand, expresses its inconsistencies on the other in the following words - "The Gita with its brilliant Sanskrit and superb inconsistency is a book that allows the reader to justify almost any action while shrugging off the consequences."\(^{11}\) Hence, it seems that the author of the Gita was not consistent in his teaching.

The so-called contradictions in the Gita will be resolved if we do not look at the surface but go deeper. Radhakrishnan aptly observes, "Arjuna typifies the struggling individual who feels the burden and the mystery of the world .... The mood of despair in which Arjuna is found in the first chapter of the Gita is what the mystics call the dark night of the soul, an essential step in the upward path .... Krsna stands for the voice of God, delivering his message in thrilling notes, warning Arjuna against dejection of spirit .... As the dialogue proceeds the dramatic element disappears. The echoes of the battlefield die away, and we have only an interview between God and man."\(^ {12}\) The teachings of the Gita are divine, synthetic and universal. It harmonizes all the contradictory views and doctrines of different religious sects and practices. It enjoins different Yogas for the attainment

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12. S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, vol. I, pp. 520-21
of God-consciousness.

Speaking about the popularity of the Bhagavad-gītā among the Hindus M. Winternitz says, "The work owned this great popularity to the very circumstances that the most conflicting doctrines and religious views are united in it, so that adherents of all schools and sects could make use of it, and even today the strictest Brāhmin is just as much edified by it as the adherent of the Brahma-Samāj and the believing theosophist under the leadership of Annie Besant." 13

The Bhagavad-gītā takes its materials not only from the Vedas and the Upaniṣads but also from the Sāṃkhya-yoga philosophy. In this context we may notice Hill's observation - "The poet is determined to appease the orthodox, the Veda and its devas, the Upaniṣads with the Vedāntic theory of Brahman-Ātman, the conception of purusha and Īśwara, Sāṃkhya knowledge and yoga practice - none of these are neglected." 14

Thus we may notice that the Bhagavad-gītā is an attempt at synthesising different elements of thought current at the time of composition of the sacred poem. Accordingly the author derives its materials from diverse sources as the

14. W. Dougals P. Hill, The Bhagavad-gītā, p. 21
Vedas, the Upaniṣads, the Bhāgavatas and the Sāṃkhya-yoga philosophy. Radhakrishnan remarks, "The teacher refines and reconciles the different currents of thought, the Vedic cult of sacrifice, the Upaniṣadic teaching of the transcendent Brahman, the Bhāgavata theism and tender piety, the Sāṃkhya dualism and the yoga meditation. He draws all these living elements of Hindu life and thought into an organic unity."

But the Bhāgavad-gītā is much more indebted to the Upaniṣads. Scholars like Bal Gangadhar Tilak have proved beyond doubt that the author of the Gītā has incorporated into it many verses from the Upaniṣads. Prem Nath Bazaz in this context remarks, "Indeed a number of verses have been bodily lifted from the former (Upaniṣads) and incorporated in the latter (the Bhāgavad-gītā) as fittingly as to seem to be more original in their new setting than in the Upaniṣads themselves."

The doctrine of loving devotion to God was more conspicuously taught in the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣads. In its concluding verses it says that to any one having supreme devotion to God and to his preceptor, everything becomes manifest. It says, "Whoever has supreme devotion to God and to his

15. S. Radhakrishnan, The Bhagavad-gītā, pp. 13-14
16. Prem Nath Bazaz, op.cit., p. 170
spiritual preceptor (guru) as to God, to him these matters which have been proclaimed become manifest, if he be a great soul, yea become manifest if he be a great soul." This doctrine of loving devotion to God is also incorporated in the Bhāgavad-gītā and the author of the Gītā further says that it is also one of the means for attaining salvation. Describing the continuity of this doctrine in the texts that follow the Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad, W. Norman Brown observes, "From now on, however, and above all in the Bhāgavad-gītā and texts following it dedicated to the worship of god Viṣṇu and his incarnations (avatāra), bhakti is of first importance. Through bhakti as through knowledge, one can if he wins the god's grace, attain salvation, release from rebirth and enjoy eternal bliss."18

Like the Bhāgavad-gītā, the Śāmkhya philosophy also has its basis in the Upaniṣads. Both the Śāmkhya philosophy and the Upaniṣads agree in many points. There are certain suggestions in the Upaniṣads which could well be developed into the Śāmkhya system. But they would also differ at least in one fundamental point. Their difference chiefly lies in the fact that while Śāmkhya philosophy stands for dualistic

17. Śvet. Up. VI.23
18. W. Norman Brown, Man in the Universe Some Continuities in Indian Thought, p. 39
realism, the Upaniṣads stand for monism.

Now let us examine the points of agreement between the Upaniṣads and the Śāṁkhya system. The Śāṁkhya philosophy lays greater emphasis on the realistic elements of the Upaniṣads in its conception of the Universe. The former also agrees with the latter in respect of the notions of rebirth and unsatisfactoriness of the world. The Śāṁkhya notions that knowledge is the means to release and puruṣa is the pure subject are the same as those found in the Upaniṣads. Hence the Śāṁkhya philosophy seems to have derived these notions from the Upaniṣads. The account of cosmic evolution as given in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad is also utilised by the Śāṁkhya philosophers in their explanation of the origin of the universe. The Kaṭha Upaniṣad explains the evolutorial process thus - At the top of the evolutorial series, at the material plane, there stands the unmanifested (avyakta). From it emerges the great self (mahat-ātmā), intellect, mind, objects and senses in succession. It also admits the supreme spirit. But we do not find any mention of Ahaṁkāra in this description.

20. Brh. Up. ii.4.14; iii.4.2; iv.3.15; Mund. Up. iii.1.1.
21. Kaṭha Up. iii.10-11; vi.7-11; Chāṇḍ. Up. vi.8, 6
In the Sāmkhya system the first evolute is called Mahat or the great one. The source of this concept is the Upaniṣadic view that the Supreme spirit reappears as first-born after producing primitive matter. Of course we find in the Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad a more developed account of the Sāmkhya principles of cosmos and the guṇas; but the Upaniṣad being a theistic one, these principles do not gain prominence here.

Though we notice certain points of agreement between the two systems, yet we cannot say that their teachings are the same. We have already pointed out that Sāmkhya philosophy recognises two realities namely puruṣa and prakṛti. It also admits the plurality of selves. Thus Sāmkhya philosophy stands for dualistic realism while Upaniṣadic philosophy represents monistic idealism.

Now leaving aside this discussion, we proceed to examine how far and to what extent the Sāmkhya philosophy forms the basis of the Gītā philosophy. The Sāmkhya philosophy more or less may be said to be a basis of the Bhāgavad-gītā. The word 'Sāmkhya' as used in the Gītā does not

22. Rg Veda, X.12.1
necessarily refer to the traditional Sāmkhya philosophy. Yet certain doctrines of the Sāmkhya philosophy form the basis of the Gītā. S.N. Dasgupta in this context says, "It has been said before that there is no proof that the word 'Sāmkhya' in the Gītā means the traditional Sāmkhya philosophy, yet the old philosophy of prakṛti and puruṣa forms the basis of the Gītā." Radhakrishnan also confirms its influence over the Gītā. He says, "The influence of the scholastic Sāmkhya which was in the making at the time of the Gītā is here evident." The fact that the Bhāgavad-gītā had its basis in the Sāmkhya-yoga philosophy can also be noticed from the following remark made by Richard Garbe:

"In short, in the old poem Krīṣhṇaism philosophically based on the Sāmkhya-yoga is proclaimed, in the additions made in the recession, the Vedānta philosophy is taught." The Gītā doctrines of prakṛti, guṇas, and puruṣa have striking similarities with the corresponding doctrines of the Sāmkhya philosophy and on the basis of such similarities we assert that the Gītā philosophy was influenced by

23. Sāmkhya is knowledge as distinguished from Yoga or practice.
25. S. Radhakrishnan, The Bhāgavad-gītā, p. 115
26. Quoted in Prem Nath Bazaz, op.cit., p. 166
the Sāmkhya philosophy. Like the Sāmkhya, the Gītā also speaks of the three guṇas of sattva, rajas and tamas. Of course in the Sāmkhya philosophy these three guṇas are the constituents of Prakṛti. In the Gītā, they are not said to be its constituents, but they are the products of prakṛti.²⁷ In the Sāmkhya philosophy, prakṛti is recognised as an independent reality, while in the Gītā, prakṛti is not recognised as an independent reality.²⁸ Prakṛti here is conceived as a female part of God. God Himself casts the seeds into her womb and therefrom is produced all beings.²⁹ God infuses into her His energy and thereby enables her to produce the universe. Like the Sāmkhya, the Gītā also recognises categories like āvyakta or the unmanifested prakṛti, Buddhi (intellect), Ahamkāra (egohood), manas (mind-organ) and the ten senses. These senses are known as five organs of knowledge and five organs of actions. The senses are said to be great. Manas is higher than the senses and it guides and controls them. The manas enjoys the sense

²⁷ B.G. XIV.5
sattvaṁ rajas tama iti
guṇāḥ prakṛti sāṁbhāvaḥ.

²⁸ B.G. VII.12

²⁹ B.G. XIV.3
mama yonir mahad brahma
tasmin garvam dadhāmyaham
sāṁbhavaḥ sarva bhūtanām
tato bhavati bharata.
objects in and through them. Buddhi is said to be higher than manas. The self stands higher than Buddhi and it transcends them all. These categories are nowhere shown as the products of prakṛti. But in case of the Sāmkhya, barring the self or puruṣa everything comes out of prakṛti.

In the Sāmkhya philosophy, the self or puruṣa is inactive and it is neither in bondage nor it has a state from which it is to be liberated. The self is here eternally free. In other words, bondage and liberation do not belong to it. When the self wrongly identifies itself with any of the evolutes of prakṛti, the self suffers bondage. With its knowledge of discrimination between puruṣa and prakṛti, the self attains liberation. Radhakrishnan says that this view of the Sāmkhya system has been adapted to the Gītā theism. Thus we notice Sāmkhya's influence over the Gītā philosophy.

Unlike in the Sāmkhya philosophy, prakṛti in the Gītā is not an independent entity. It is only a form of God and thereby it paves the way for monism. Prakṛti in the

30. B.G. iii.42
indriyāṇi paraṁyāhur
indriyabhyaḥ param manah
manasas tu para buddhir
yо buddheś paratas tu saḥ.

31. S.K. XV

32. S. Radhakrishnan, The Bhagavad-gītā, p. 115
Gītā is identified with Sakti or Māyā. Srikṛṣṇa the Lord Himself declares that earth, water, fire, air, ether, the mind, the intellect and the ego constitute His eight-fold nature. The unmanifested prakṛti, when it becomes manifested takes the abovementioned eight forms. The senses, the mind and understanding constitute God's lower (aparā) nature while the soul or puruṣa is His higher (parā) nature. Īśvara the personal Lord of the universe contains within Himself the conscious souls (kṣetrajña) and the unconscious nature (kṣetra). The former is His higher nature and the latter is His lower nature. Though the Gītā here speaks of the eightfold classification of God's nature, subsequently it again speaks of twenty four principles as is stated in the Śāmkhya philosophy. It is in and through verse no. 5 and 6 of the 13th chapter of the Gītā, the author defines kṣetra and its viñāra. "The (five gross) primordial elements (such as the earth etc.), individuality (ahāmkāra), Reason (Mahan), and the imperceptible (prakṛti), as also the ten (subtle) senses and one (Mind); and the five (subtle) objects (such as, sound, touch, colour, taste and smell) of

33. B.G. VII.4
bhūmirā po'nalo vāyuḥ
kham mano buddhir eva ca
ahāmkāra itī'yam me
bhinnā prakṛtir āṣṭādha.

34. B.G. VII.5
the five senses, Desire, Hate, Happiness, Unhappiness, 'Samghāta' (that is the group - Trans), 'Cetanā' (that is, the visible activity of the vital airs etc.) and 'dhṛti' (that is, courage); this collection (of 31 elements) is known as the organised (savikāra) Body." 

Śridhara and other commentators and following them some modern Indian philosophers like S.N. Dasgupta, S. Radhakrishnan, Bal Gangadhar Tilak etc. have interpreted 'Mahad-brahma' as prakṛti. The prakṛti here is like the female part of God. It is said in the Gītā that prakṛti is God's womb into which He casts the seeds and from it is born all beings. It becomes fertile for creating the diverse species of beings from God. Wherever there is any creation prakṛti may be regarded as the procreatrix or mother who becomes impregnated by God. Thus prakṛti is the mother while God is the father of all living beings. As prakṛti is only one form of God, He may be said to be both mother and father of the Universe. Prakṛti is supposed to produce three

35. B.G. XIII.526 (Bal Gangadhar Tilak's translation.)
36. B.G. XIV.3

mama yonir mahad brahma
tasmin garbham dādhāmyaham
sambhavaḥ sarvabhūtānām
tato bhavati bhārata.

37. B.G. XIV.4
kinds of guṇas, viz., Sattva (goodness), Rajas (passion), and Tamas (dullness). But prakṛti becomes capable of producing these guṇas through God's infusion of His energy into prakṛti. Hence instead of saying that prakṛti produces these guṇas, we may rather say that God produces the guṇas. They are the primary constituents of nature and are the bases of all substances. They cannot therefore be said to be qualities inhering in these substances. The emergence of the guṇas is ever-dependent upon the puruṣa in case of the Sāmkhya system and upon the Kṣetrajña in case of the Gītā. Hence these modes are called guṇas.

Sattva by its very nature being pure is illuminating and untroubling. Sattva with these two qualities binds the self with attachment for knowledge (jñāna-saṅgena) and the attachment for pleasure (sukha-saṅgena). Passion which springs from craving, and attachment is of the nature of attraction. It binds fast the self with attachment for action. Tamas (dullness) is born of ignorance and it deludes all embodied beings. It binds by developing the qualities of negligence, indolence and sleep. Tamas is the root of all errors. It overcomes the illumination of knowledge.

38. B.G. XIV.6
39. B.G. XIV.7
40. B.G. XIV.8
and thereby leads to many errors. It is for tāmas that a man becomes idle, careless and drowsy.

The relation among these three guṇas is one of conflict and co-operation. These three constituents never exist individually and independently of one another. Each of them again tries to preponderate over the other two. With the predominance of sattva over the other two qualities, the mind becomes capable of acquiring knowledge through different sense-gates. With the predominance of rajas over the other two qualities, a man's mind is filled with greed. He makes all sorts of efforts for different kinds of action and there arise in the mind passions, desires and emotions. When tāmas increases, it gives rise to non-illumination, inactivity, negligence and mere delusions. In the Gītā prakṛti is a part of God and not an independent entity. But according to the Sāmkhya philosophy prakṛti is independent and sattva, rajas and tāmas are not its qualities, but its constituents.

The Gītā also recognises exactly the same categories which are recognised in the Sāmkhya philosophy. While in the Sāmkhya system, all other categories beginning from Buddhi to the five gross elements are said to be the products

41. B.G. XIV.13
of prakṛti, but in the Gītā they are not said to be the products of prakṛti. Manas is said to be higher and subtler than the senses, the intellect is higher than the manas and higher than the intellect is the knower, the self conscious Ātman. ⁴² The Gītā nowhere definitely states the relation between Buddhi and Ahamkāra.

Prakṛti is recognised in the Śāmkhya system as an ultimate reality which stands alongside the other reality called puruṣa. Both these realities are independent of each other for their existence. Prakṛti has such potentialities as can give rise to the world of objects. It, in other words is a vast magazine of energy which does not get exhausted in creating this world of objects. ⁴³ Prakṛti in her manifested form is active, but non-intelligent. Hence it requires help or guidance from an intelligent being. ⁴⁴ That intelligent being in the system is none other than puruṣa. Prakṛti by herself is not capable of producing the world. Hence it requires puruṣa’s presence in bringing out this world of objects. None of these two realities by itself can produce the world of objects without the other’s help or co-operation. The evolution of the world takes place when there is connection

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⁴² B.G. III.42
⁴³ S.K. XV
⁴⁴ S.K. LVI
between puruṣa and prakṛti.

It is only with a view to serving their respective purposes that the two opposed principles combine and co-operate with each other. Prakṛti requires puruṣa's presence in order to be known or appreciated (darśanārtham) by someone while puruṣa requires prakṛti's help in order that it can discriminate itself from prakṛti and thereby can achieve liberation.45

Prakṛti or avyakta is the ultimate cause of creation of the world.46 According to the Sāmkhya system the material cause has real transformation into the effect. Hence the world of objects is taken to be a series of effects and accordingly there must also be a cause of this world.

For the Sāmkhya system, puruṣa is neither the cause nor the effect of anything.47 So it cannot be the cause of the world. So the cause of the world must be the not-self, i.e., some principle which is other than and different from self or spirit or consciousness.

45. S.K. XXI
   puruṣasya darśanārtham
   kaivalyārtham tathā pradhanasya.

46. S.K. XV & XVI.

47. S.P.S. i.140; S.K. III
   na prakṛtir-na vikṛtiḥ puruṣaḥ.
Unlike the Carvākas, the Bauddhas, the Jainas or the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas, the Sāṁkhya system does not recognise the atoms of earth, water, light and air as the cause of this world. According to it, the atoms cannot explain the origin of the subtle products of nature like intellect, mind or ego. Hence the cause of the world must be such as can explain not only the gross objects of the world like trees, earth, water etc. but also the subtle products of nature. Again this is generally seen that in the evolution of things, the cause is subtler than the effect and it pervades the effect. Hence the ultimate cause of the world must be some unconscious and unintelligent principle which by itself is not caused by any other thing. In other words it is uncaused and all pervading and subtle. It has always a tendency to produce the world of objects. At the same time it must also be eternal, because something which is limited or finite cannot be the root cause of the world. According to the system the ultimate cause of this world is the prakṛti.

And what is worth noting in the system is that prakṛti has an unconscious teleology behind it. It is always ready to serve the purpose of puruṣa and hence it manifests the world of objects for the enjoyment of puruṣas.

The Gītā and the Sāṁkhya differ in their concepts of prakṛti. That the Sāṁkhya concept of prakṛti differs from
that of the Gītā is evident from the following considerations: First, the three guṇas of sattva, rajas, and tamas, according to the Gītā are not the constituents of prakṛti; rather they are the products of prakṛti. But according to the Sāṁkhya philosophy they are the very constituents of prakṛti. Hence the prakṛti of Sāṁkhya is not the same as the prakṛti of the Gītā.

Secondly, the prakṛti of Sāṁkhya is independent while the prakṛti of the Gītā is not independent. It is a part of God. The Lord declares that prakṛti (mahād-brahma) is His womb into which He casts His seeds.

Thirdly we notice another difference in the two concepts. Prakṛti of the Sāṁkhya system has rajas as one of its constituents. Being active in nature, prakṛti can produce its evolutes independently whereas the prakṛti of the Gītā can produce evolutes only with the guidance of the Lord. The Gītā says, "Under my superintendence, nature (prakṛti) gives birth to all things moving and unmoving and by this means the world revolves." The Gītā further says that whatever is born is born through the union of the field (prakṛti) and the knower of the field (Kṣetrajña). In other words it means

48. B.G. IX.10
everything of the world comes into being in and through the union of the Kṣetra and the Kṣetrajña. But here we are to remember one thing. The prakṛti of Sāmkhya too before it starts producing anything requires the contact or presence of Puruṣa. Then only prakṛti can produce its evolutes, otherwise not. It may also be noted that Vijñānabhikṣu holds that in the Sāmkhya system the evolution of prakṛti is guided by an omniscient spirit. "He, the supreme, i.e., the generic universal, collective puruṣa, possesses the power of knowing all and doing all, being like the lodestone, the mover to activity by means of mere proximity."49 Vācaspati also holds that God removes all barriers and directs the development of prakṛti.50

In order to have a clear understanding of the nature of the self as conceived in the Gītā, we must know the distinction the Gītā has made between what is real and what is unreal. The real is one which has being while unreal is one which has no being. Negatively speaking the real cannot be non-being and the unreal cannot be being. The verse no. 16 of chapter two of the Gītā says, "Of the unreal there is no

49. S.P.B., iii.57; See also S.P.B., V.12
50. Vācaspati, Tattvavaiśaradī, IV.3
being, and of the real there is no non-being." 51 That which becomes or is in motion is not being. Only the non-being can be in motion. Thus the Gitā distinguishes between what is permanent and what is perishable. In the world we find two kinds of beings: one is permanent and the other is perishable. The perishable aspect of the world is called Kṣara while the imperishable aspect is called akṣara. According to Rāmānuja Kṣara stands for the principle of prakṛti and akṣara stands for the individual soul. Rāmānuja regards puruṣottama or the Supreme Self as superior to both Kṣara and akṣara, i.e., prakṛti and soul. 52 According to the Gitā what is limited or transitory cannot be real. Hence, the Gitā endeavours to find out the element of permanence in the self. Imperishableness is the mark of the self. It is always the subject and never an object. The object known is not the property of the subject or knower.

We can know the nature of the self of the Gitā from its distinction between the Kṣetra and the Kṣetrajña. 53 The Kṣetra is the field or object while Kṣetrajña is the knower of the field or the subject. In the self of man there is an element which remains constant in the midst of changes. It

51. B.G. II.16
52. See S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, vol. I, r. 533
53. B.G. XIII.1,5 & 6
is the eternal, immutable, timeless self-existence. By splitting up the individual self into body, mind, and soul, the Gita has tried to find out some such elements in it which persist for ever. The body, the sense-life and the empirical self are all transitory and fleeting. The body cannot be permanent because one day or other it comes to an end. Similarly the sense-life is very short-lived and changeable. The empirical mind is also fleeting. All these only constitute objects of some subjects. They may all be taken as instruments in and through which the soul works. They cannot exist by themselves. Behind all these changes, there is an inner principle which may be said to be the source of all knowledge and this inner principle according to the Gita is greater than the senses, the mind and the understanding.

The Upaniṣadic teaching may be characterised as monistic. It teaches identity between the self and the Brahman and hence it asserts - "I am Brahman". It equates Ātman with Brahman. Its essential teaching, therefore, may be said to be monistic. The Gita's teaching should also be called monistic as it recognises puruṣa as part of God. But Franklin Edgerton opines that its characteristic position is dualistic as it recognises two eternally distinct principles called the 'soul' and the 'not-soul' or the body. 54

Edgerton's view cannot be accepted. It is true that the Gītā marks a sharp contrast between the soul and the not-soul or prakṛti, yet we must not characterize Gītā's teaching as dualistic, because prakṛti in the Gītā is not independent. It is only the part of God. The soul is usually called puruṣa or it may be termed as 'man', 'person' or 'spirit'. Again the usual word used for body in the Gītā is prakṛti as is the case with other Hindu philosophies. But it is better to use the term not-soul in lieu of 'body' as it includes mental faculties like buddhi, manas, ahāmkāra etc.

The Upaniṣadic teaching that the Ātman is identical with Brahman is not prominent in the Gītā though its author asserts God's pervasiveness in all beings and he hopes for ultimate union with Him. Yet it can be said that the concept of soul in the Gītā comes very close to that of the Upaniṣad.

\[
\text{avaināśi tu tad vidhi} \\
yena sarvam idam tatam \\
vināśāṁ avyayasyā'sya \\
na kaścit kartum arhati.
\]

"Know thou That to be indestructible by which all this is pervaded. None is capable of bringing about destruction of this immutable being."\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{55. B.G. II.17}
Thus the Gītā speaks of the soul as pervasive, indestructible, imperishable. None can destroy it. Sharply distinguishing the embodied soul from the body, the Gītā says that these bodies will come to an end, but the soul is eternal or everlasting, indestructible and at the same time it is incomprehensible too.56 Explaining its indestructibleness the Gītā further says -

ya evam vetti hantarām
yasca'nam manyate hatam
ubhau tau na vijānīto
nā'yaṁ hanti na hanyate.

"He who thinks that this kills and he who thinks that this is killed; both of them know not the nature of the Soul. This one neither kills nor is killed."57

The Gītā further says that the soul is never born nor does he die at any time, nor once having come into existence, he will again cease to be. The soul is unborn, eternal, permanent and changeless.58 The soul is not slain even though the body is slain. Further the Gītā says that the self cannot be cut into pieces by weapons. It is neither burnt by fire

56. B.G. II.18
57. B.G. II.19
58. B.G. II.20
nor moistened by water, nor dried by wind. 59 The Gītā further describes it as unmanifested eternal, omnipresent, fixed, immovable, everlasting and beyond the power of thought. 60 Again it says, "He who sees the Supreme Lord abiding equally in all beings, never perishing when they perish, he verily sees." 61 The soul abides equally in all beings. He does not perish even though all beings perish. Another verse of the Gītā runs thus -

\[
\text{avyākto'yaṁ acintyo'yaṁ avikāryo'yaṁ ucyate}
\]
\[
tasmād evaṁ viditvaṁ naṁ nānuśocitam arhasi. 62
\]

"It is said that this (soul) is unmanifest, unthinkable and unchangeable, therefore having come to know him as such (or of this type), thou shouldst not grieve."

This view of the Gītā on the soul is similar to the description as given in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad. 63

59. B.G. II.23
60. B.G. II.24
61. B.G. XIII.27
62. B.G. II.25
63. Kaṭha Up. II.7
Elsewhere the Gita says that the soul is part of God. The Upaniṣadic notion of the human soul is retained even in the Gita in so far as its individual nature is concerned. "It is still the essential part of man, that which does not perish at death."  

Actually the soul is looked upon, spoken of, or heard of as something marvellous, yet we are not capable of knowing him. The soul dwelling as it does in all bodies is eternal and it can never be slain. The soul is 'absolutely unitary', 'undifferentiated' and devoid of qualities. It suffers no change or alteration and does not participate in any action whatsoever.  

We have already pointed out that the Gita makes a sharp contrast between the 'soul' and the 'not-soul' or body. And by this contrast the Gita clearly brings out the dignity and importance of the soul. The soul is said to be immortal and eternal while the body is said to be perishable.

64. B.G. XV.7
65. Franklin Edgerton, op.cit., p. 38
66. B.G. II.29
67. B.G. II.30
68. Franklin Edgerton, op.cit., p. 38
Most of the Upaniṣads were primarily concerned with the soul, and these were not very much interested with the 'non-soul'. Virtually the Upaniṣadic thinkers ignored the existence of the non-soul or brushed it aside by saying that whatever is other than the soul is evil. 69

According to the Gītā as also according to the Sāmkhya philosophy all acts are performed by the material nature or the non-soul. But when the soul is deluded by the self-sense or ahamkāra which is the product of the strands (guṇaś) of material nature, he (the soul) imagines himself to be the doer. The self-sense or ahamkāra creates confusion in the soul and as such the soul considers himself to be the agent. But when the soul knows its distinctions both from the modes of nature and its actions and if it knows that it is only the modes which act upon the modes the question of the soul being attached to actions does not arise. 70 But if a man be misled by the modes of nature, he will no doubt get attached to the works produced by them.

"And who sees that acts are exclusively performed by material nature alone, and likewise that his soul does nothing, he (truly) sees." 71

69. Franklin Edgerton, op.cit., p. 38
70. B.G. III.28
71. B.G. III. 29 (Franklin Edgerton's translation.)
And a man who is united with the Divine and knows the truth thinks that he does nothing because he is of opinion that the senses act upon the objects of senses in all sorts of our activities.\textsuperscript{72} Thus when one is aware of the fact that there is no agent other than the strands and also knows that which is beyond the modes, he attains to God's being.\textsuperscript{73} The soul that rises above the three modes that spring from the body is freed from birth, death, old age and pain. Such embodied soul also attains life eternal.\textsuperscript{74}

The soul, according to the G\ıta, is a mere witness. It passively perceives the activities of matter and abstains himself from any active participation. It is a passive observer in the sense that it has no relation whatsoever with these activities nor it is affected by them. It is said, "the Lord (the soul) does not receive (i.e., reap the fruit of) any one's sin, nor yet of his good deeds."\textsuperscript{75} The G\ıta view of puru\ṣa does not differ much from that of the Sāmkhya. In this context Radhakrishnan says, "Right through it is the puru\ṣa of the Sāmkhya that is discussed here not the Brahman

\textsuperscript{72} B.G. V.8,9
\textsuperscript{73} B.G. XIV.19
\textsuperscript{74} B.G. XIV.20
\textsuperscript{75} B.G. V.15
Kapila the founder of the Sāmkhya philosophy recognises in everyman a soul which he calls by the name of puruṣa. Of course its literal meaning is 'man' or 'spirit' or subject. The 'soul' or 'puruṣa' in the Sāmkhya is neither the cause nor the effect of anything. Yet without it, the evolution of prakṛti or the original matter would not have taken place. Kapila holds that without such a power, without such endless puruṣas, prakṛti or primordial matter with its infinite potentialities would for ever have remained 'dead', 'motionless' and 'thoughtless'. It is only because of the contact of puruṣa with pradhāna that the evolution of Prakṛti takes place and the world of objects with all its variety comes into existence.

Every change or movement in prakṛti can be accounted for only through the presence of this puruṣa, and his temporary interest in prakṛti. But we should at the same time remember that all this movement of prakṛti is temporary, because the chief objects of Kapila's philosophy is to make puruṣa withdraw

76. S. Radhakrishnan, The Bhagavad-gītā, p. 109
77. F. Maxmuller, The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy, p. xi
78. S.P.S. i.61; S.K. III
na prakṛtir-na vikṛtih purusah.
79. F. Maxmuller, op.cit., p. xii
his interest from prakṛti so that he can thereby stop prakṛti's activity and regain for himself his oneness, his aloofness and his independence.

Now if we raise the question what is puruṣa according to the Sāmkhya philosophy, the answer should be given thus - "Puruṣa is without beginning, it is subtle, omnipresent, perceptive, without qualities, eternal, seer, experiencer, not an agent, knower of objects, spotless, not producing."

There are different reasons adduced by the Sāmkhya for calling it so. It is beginningless because it has neither beginning, nor middle, nor end. It is partless and supersensuous. So it is called subtle. It is omnipresent because it reaches everything as the sky does and because of its limitless extent. It is without quality. It is eternal because it was not made nor can it be made. As it perceives the modifications of prakṛti, it is called the seer. It is enjoyer because it perceives for a while pleasure and pain. It is because of its indifference that the soul is not called an agent. It is knower of objects because it knows the qualities of objective bodies. It is spotless because it is beyond good and evil acts. The soul is non-producing because it has

80. S.K. LX
no seed and as a result it can produce nothing.

We find many words used as synonyms for puruṣa. These are ātman, self, pumān, male, puṁguṇajantu jīvah, a male living creature, Kṣetrajña, knower of objects or the body, nara, man, Kavi, poet, Brahman, Akṣara, indestructible, prāṇa, spirit, Yahkah, anybody, sat, He. Certain fanciful etymological meanings are attached to the word puruṣa. It is called puruṣa, because of its being old (purānāt) because it rests in the body (Puri sayate) and because it serves as purobita (Director). 81

Though the Sāmkhya philosophy believes in the multiplicity of puruṣas, yet according to the system these souls are fundamentally identical in nature. Their differences are only due to the physical organisations which 'obscure' and 'thwart' the life of the soul. The physical organisations spring from the primordial matter, but the souls have independent origin. Hence the souls are freed from all the accidents of finite life and are lifted above time and change. 82 The arguments put forward by the Sāmkhya philosophy for the existence of the soul are as follows: 83 (a) composite things

81. F. Maxmuller, op.cit., p. 253
82. S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, vol. II, pp. 279-80
83. S.K. XVII
like table, chair, bed etc. must exist for the sake of another. They are the means to ends of other beings. They serve useful purpose of those beings who are distinct and different from the things of the world. Unlike physical objects which are made up of parts, these beings cannot be unconscious. If that be the case these beings should also be regarded as means to the ends of others and would not be ends in themselves. They are the conscious beings called by the name puruṣas or selves.

(b) All objects of the world are composed of the three guṇas of sattva, rajas and tamas and hence they are of the nature of pleasure, pain and indifference. These words will carry meanings only as they are experienced by some conscious experiencers. In other words, they pre-suppose a conscious experiencer of pleasure, pain and indifference or a seer.

(c) Inanimate objects can be of any help or they can work or serve a useful purpose only when they are controlled and guided by an intelligent being. This intelligent being is none other than the self which guides and controls the operations of the prakṛti and all her products.

(d) Prakṛti being non-intelligent, there must be someone to experience the products of prakṛti. This experiencer is the self or puruṣa.
(e) Certain persons of this world at least make sincere effort for doing away with the three kinds of pain. But it is not possible for anything of the physical world, for the physical world itself is of the nature of pain. It causes suffering rather than relieving it. Hence there should be some substances or souls with qualities opposed to those of the physical world.

This self is of the nature of consciousness. It is not a substance that possesses the attribute of consciousness. Rather we may say that the self is pure consciousness as such. Consciousness is its very essence. It is knower of the objects. It always forms the subject of knowledge and never becomes the object of knowledge. The self must not also be regarded as a blissful consciousness (anandasvarūpa). For the Śāmkhyists, bliss and consciousness are different things and as such they cannot be the essence of the same reality. The self is also not subject to change. It cannot be equated either with the mind, life or body. It is the informing and sustaining soul, silent, peaceful, and eternal. It is not the body, because consciousness is not the product of the elements that constitute the body. Consciousness is not present in them separately, hence it cannot be present in them when taken collectively.

84. S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, vol. II, p. 280
It is also different from the senses because the senses are merely the instruments of seeing and not by themselves the seers. It is the senses that bring about modifications in buddhi. Puruṣa is not buddhi; while puruṣa is conscious the other is non-conscious. Thus in the Sāṃkhya system the self is defined as pure spirit different from the body, or prakṛti.

We have already pointed out that the self is not subject to any change at all. If it were changeable, knowledge would be impossible. It is also inactive. Change, activity etc. belong only to matter and its products like the body, mind and intellect. The self is something like never-failing light and it illuminates the whole sphere of thought and feeling. The self's nature as never-failing light undergoes no change. It is present in all the three states of dreamless sleep, waking and dreaming, which are said to be the modification of buddhi. It is the self's light that helps

85. S.P.S. v.129; iii.20-21
86. S.P.S. ii.29
87. S.P.S. vi.1-2
88. S.K. XIX
89. S.P.B. i.75; Y.S. iv.18; S.P.S. i.146
90. S.P.S. i.148
91. S.P.B. i.148
us to see that there is such a thing as prakṛti.

The self by itself can illuminate the objects without requiring any help from any other source. Prakṛti and its products get manifested by the light of the self or puruṣa.

As has been said already, puruṣa in the Sāmkhya system is only conscious and not of the nature of bliss. Happiness is due to Sattva guṇa and the self is devoid of any such guṇa or quality. Pleasure and pain belong to Buddhi and these are not the constituents of the self. If pain be taken to constitute its nature, liberation will not be possible, puruṣa is motionless and on the attainment of liberation, it goes nowhere.92

Things made up of parts are limited in size and hence destructible. But the self is not made up of parts and as such it is not limited in size nor destructible. It is also not of atomic size. If it be atomic, its cognition of all bodily states will remain unexplained. The self is devoid of any qualities. No liberation is possible, if we accept the view that self possesses any quality.

The Sāmkhya also puts forward arguments to prove the plurality of selves. Experience shows that men differ widely

92. S.P.S. 1.49; S.K. III
in their physique, moral aptitude and intellectual capacity. Some are found to be very strong while others are found to be very weak. Some are tall while others are very short. Moreover births and deaths are not the same for all men. When one is born, the other dies. Blindness or deafness or dumbness in one man does not necessarily mean the same for all men. But if the soul were one, the birth and death of one would have meant the birth and death of all. The blindness of one would have meant the blindness in all other persons. But this is not the case. Hence, we may say that there is not one self but many selves. We also differ intellectually. We understand the world in our own way. Thus the world is viewed differently by different persons; and such differences of outlook can be explained only on the assumption of many conscious selves. These persons thus differ in their sensory and motor endowments and they undergo separate birth and death.

If there were but one self in all bodies, then our actions would have been simultaneous. But the case is altogether different. While some are seriously engaged in activity, some remain quite inactive. When some remain in deep sleep,

93. S.K. XVIII
94. S.P.S. vi.45; i.149 & 150
others are busy doing certain physical or mental labour. Our actions also differ widely. While some are engaged in virtuous activity others are found engaged in vicious activity. Some like to lead a very comfortable life while others do not like to while away their time in idleness. Some cultivate detachment while others are engaged in selfish activity. Thus different persons are engaged in different activities. If there were but one self for all living beings, then the activity of one would have meant the activity for all or our actions also would not differ.

Thirdly we notice a distinction even among men and women as regards their moral endowments. Moreover, men and women differ from the gods as well as from the birds and the beasts. We could not have noticed such distinctions had there been only one soul in all these bodies. Hence we must say that there is not one soul but many souls. The Sāmkhya philosophy interprets the monism of the scripture as referring to the non-difference of essential properties.95

It has already been shown that the old philosophy of puruṣa and prakṛti of the Sāmkhya system forms the basis of the philosophy of the Gītā. Hence the Gītā view of puruṣa also will not differ very much from that of the Sāmkhya philosophy.

95. S.P.S. v.61; S.P.B. i.154
We find that both the Gītā and the Sāmkhya-yoga philosophy describe puruṣa almost in an identical way. For both puruṣa is eternal, imperishable, indestructible, immortal etc.

According to the Sāmkhya-yoga philosophy consciousness is its very essence, consciousness is not its attribute. Soul or puruṣa here is constituted with consciousness. But according to the Gītā the soul or puruṣa is conscious as well as blissful. When looked at from another point of view, we will notice difference in the concept of puruṣa in the three systems. "The Sāmkhya philosophy admits plurality of selves. It stands for pluralistic atheism. "There is no theos in Sāmkhya."96 But we want to point out one more thing as regards the concept of puruṣa in the Sāmkhya philosophy. The very first Sāmkhya Kārikā speaks of a single puruṣa also. Hence the author in its subconscious mind may have the idea of a single puruṣa. Ranade in this context remarks, "... hence there is a subconscious monism lurking in the mind of the Sāmkhya philosopher."97 The Yoga philosophy, while admitting like Sāmkhya philosophy a plurality of selves, also speaks of a single puruṣa. Hence it stands for pluralistic theism. The Gītā on the other hand represents monistic theism as it admits a

96. R.D. Ranade, The Bhagavad-gītā as a Philosophy of God-Realisation, p. 30

97. Ibid.
supreme Self called puruṣottama or God. In the Gītā the question of the plurality of souls does not arise because puruṣa here is regarded as a part of God. 98

In the Gītā we find two other concepts of puruṣa, viz., concepts of kṣara puruṣa and aksara puruṣa. Kṣara puruṣa is composed of the world and the beings, which are fleeting and perishable. Aksara puruṣa refers to the self. But the uttama puruṣa is raised above these two kinds of puruṣas. The kṣara puruṣa and the aksara puruṣa are only puruṣas by sufferance. The real puruṣa in the Gītā is the Absolute principle called by different names—such as uttama puruṣa, Paramātman or God. 99 God as Puruṣottama transcends both kṣara and aksara puruṣa and yet is not an abstract universal, but the concrete determinate Spirit, the embodiment of eternal being, consciousness and bliss. Here the immutability of the Absolute and the activity of Isvara are both taken over in the conception of Puruṣottama. Radhakrishnan says, "When Kṛṣṇa calls upon us to become his devotees, when he shows the Viśvarūpa, or the world-form, whenever he uses the first person, we have references to the manifested aspect of the Supreme. This side of divine nature is involved in the work of creation, where it

98. B.G. XV.7; See also Chandradhar Sharma, A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy, p. 38
99. R.D. Ranade, op.cit., p. 30
loses itself in the succession of time and the waves of becoming. Beyond it all is another status, the silent and the immutable, than which there is nothing higher. The two together form the Puruṣottama. Kapila's Sāṁkhya system rejects the existence of God. Devotion to God is, according to Patañjali, one of the aids to Yoga. But, as Radhakrishnan observes, "The personal God of Yoga philosophy is very loosely connected with the rest of the system. The goal of human aspiration is not union with God, but the absolute separation of puruṣa from prakṛti." \[101\]

The Gita view of the final state of release seems to be different from the final state of it as explained by the Sāṁkhya-yoga philosophy. The Gita variously describes this state. In other words it is not very much consistent in its explanation of this state. Sometimes it describes this state as 'coming to Brahman' or as 'coming to Krishṇa'. It also describes this state as the union of the soul with the supreme Lord. It is a state of merger of the individual soul with Brahman. Here the individual loses its identity. Hence it is also a state of inactivity. But against this view we also find some such descriptions as - this state is not a

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100. S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, vol. I, p. 543
101. Ibid., vol. II, p. 371
state of merger of the individual with the Absolute. It is not a case of losing its individuality. It is not a state of disappearance or laya of the individual in the absolute Brahman. It is only a state of attaining to the status of Brahman. Here the individual acquires God-like qualities and accordingly it is not a state of inactivity. The freed soul also can continue to act without being entangled in it as the God Himself is always found engaged in doing work though there is no work left to be done by Him.

If we accept the first view held by the Gītā that the final state of release means union of the soul with the Brahman, then this view will certainly differ from the view held of it by the Sāmkhya-yoga philosophy. The Sāmkhya-yoga philosophy has never described this state as a state of merger or union of the individual soul with Brahman nor is it described as Coming to Brahman or as Coming to Krishṇa. Probably the word 'Brahman' or the name of Krishṇa is nowhere to be found in the literature of the Sāmkhya philosophy. In fact, according to the Sāmkhya-yoga philosophy the soul is said to be eternally free. It is only realization of its true nature. As soon as the self realizes that the self is distinct and different from prakṛti, it becomes liberated. The soul's state of aloofness is called here the state of release. State of aloofness or aloneness is stressed in the Sāmkhya system.
Secondly the state of release in the Gîtâ is described as a state of restful peace and bliss but for the Sāmkhya-yoga philosophy it is not such a state of bliss. According to the Sāmkhya-yoga philosophy it is a state of complete cessation of sorrows and sufferings but not one of positive bliss. For the two schools (Sāmkhya-yoga) consciousness and bliss are two opposite qualities which cannot co-exist in the same subject or in other words they cannot be predicated of one and the same subject.

The Gîtâ and the Sāmkhya-yoga also differ in respect of the paths suggested for its realization. The Gîtâ prescribes different paths for realization of the ideal of mokṣa. Knowledge, Karma, devotion, meditation, renunciation etc. are different paths prescribed by the Gîtâ for realising the ideal. The path that suits one best can be followed. There is no bar in it. The Gîtâ is not consistent in its evolution of the different paths, the point which we have already discussed. Even the commentators are also at variance in estimating the values of these paths. Some lay stress on the path of devotion, some on Karma and again some others on knowledge. Śāmkara lays emphasis on the path of knowledge while Rāmānuja lays stress on the path of Karma and devotion. Among the modern interpreters Bal Gangadhar Tilak gives prominence to the path of Karma.
When the Gītā speaks of so many paths, the Sāmkhya-yoga speaks only of one path - that is the path of knowledge. It is the knowledge of separateness or aloofness of puruṣa from prakṛti that enables one to realize his eternally freed condition. Knowledge here means knowledge of distinction between puruṣa and prakṛti. The Gītā teaches a harmony of all Yogas, but it specially emphasises the path of Karma or work. The gospel of selfless work surely is a unique contribution of Krishṇa to Indian religious thought and it wonderfully supplements the contemplation-oriented influence of the Upaniṣads. The Gītā recognises that activity is indispensable in the embodied existence, and that it is also the cause of man’s involvement in further worldly bondage and misery. It shows the way through work, out of work-born bondage and misery, i.e., the selfless performance of one's duties or dedicating their fruits to God. As the Gītā says, "By worshipping Him from whom all beings proceed and by whom the whole universe is pervaded - by worshipping Him through the performance of duty does a man attain perfection."102 This is the gospel of work as worship.

102. B.G. XVIII.46