CHAPTER - 3

SĀMKHYA-KĀRIKĀ :
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS
3: Sāṃkhya-Kārikā: A Comparative Analysis:

To have the more clear understanding of Sāṃkhya-Kārikā a comparative analysis is needed. As it does not belong to much early period of Indian philosophical tradition chronologically, therefore, there is a possibility for it to be influenced by some other thoughts. Even it is necessary to see what is the position as well as similarities, dissimilarities or development of Sāṃkhya-Kārikā in comparison to its predecessors. Keeping this in mind, in this chapter a comparative study of Sāṃkhya-Kārikā is made with the phase of early Sāṃkhya, Buddhism and Brahma-Sūtra respectively.

3.1: Sāṃkhya-Kārikā and Early Sāṃkhya:

The peculiarity of Sāṃkhya philosophy as it is discussed above is that though Ṛṣyakṛṣṇa's Sāṃkhya-Kārikā is accepted as the leading text of Sāṃkhya tradition yet he is not the founder of this system and lots of evidences can be noticed for the existence of Sāṃkhya before Sāṃkhya-Kārikā. Actually Indian philosophy was in making for many centuries before any of the extant authoritative treatises on the various classical systems were composed. It is said, in this formative period all orthodox speculations were dominated by the principles laid down by the early teachers of the Sāṃkhya school, so that it is only by understanding the course of the latter's development that the true history of Indian philosophy in its infancy can be written¹. What that
development was has not yet been determined with accuracy, and ideas on the subject are so generally lacking in clarity that scholars are still apt to say that such and such a conception found in early works is or is not Sāṅkhya when they merely mean that it is or is not in accord with the doctrines laid down by Īśvarakṛṣṇa in the Sāṅkhya-Kārikā. Most scholars would have no hesitation in admitting the pre-Kārikā Sāṅkhya; but to the question what was the original teaching which is modernized in the Sāṅkhya-Kārikā, no generally accepted answer can be given; the sources are so confused and lacking in authority that a reply in clear terms is not possible.

Garbe said, the whole of Indian literature, so far as it touches philosophical thought, beginning with Mahābhārata and the Law book of Manu, specially the literature of mythological and legendary Purāṇas, has been saturated with the doctrine of Sāṅkhya. Even Śaṅkara perhaps the greatest opponent of the Sāṅkhya, had repeatedly to admit that the Sāṅkhya system was supported by many weighty arguments and had the partial sanction of some eminently wise men. Some interpreters are of opinion that it is surprising that in spite of all these, the genuinely authentic materials on original Sāṅkhya are scanty and even those that are available are often highly deceptive.

So, it can be understood that no systematic and recognized document of early Sāṅkhya is available. References of early Sāṅkhya can only be found in the Vedic, Purāṇas, Mahābhārata, Gītā etc. in different shapes. In these texts basically the theistic account of Sāṅkhya can be found. That is why a strong
dominance of theistic account also can be noticed in early Sāṃkhya though it is not easy to say whether the early Sāṃkhya was basically theistic or atheistic.

Johnston has made a good effort in the discussions of these general problems related to the texts and questions of origins of the early Sāṃkhya. In this regards he changes his method. Instead of considering the many formulations of Sāṃkhya as they appear in separate texts, he chooses the method of studying key terms as they appear individually in texts. Thus, he discusses the uses and modifications of such terms as avyakta, guna, jiva, bhūtāman, puruṣa, kṣetrajña, svabhāva, and aksara. At the end of his study he summarizes his conclusions and points essentially to five phases through which the Sāṃkhya speculation developed. These are as follows:

1) An incomplete form of Sāṃkhya can be found for the first time in the Katḥa Upaniṣad where only twenty principles were enumerated and no doctrine of great elements seems to be available here. Avyakta functions only as a kind of moral force or what Johnston calls, “the law of act”. This “law of act” can be said to be very close to the interpretation of the “laws of nature” (svabhāva) in Classical Sāṃkhya. No theory of prakṛti or guṇas is found in the classical sense. No ahaṁkāra principle appears as in Sāṃkhya-Kārikā; rather in the place of it mahān ātman is found. Buddhi functions in Katḥa like vijñāna. The essence of the person is puruṣa, and the goal of the system is a kind of self-realisation to be attained by means of Yogic practices. In this early form, Sāṃkhya does not include such later
doctrines as *satkāryavāda*, *guṇaparināmavāda* and *tattvavikāra*. Here, the early Sāṁkhya can be differentiated from the *Sāṁkhya-Kārikā*. Philosophical concerns are not separated from religious concerns in this early system. The main pre-occupation is with the religious destiny of man and strong concern for stages of consciousness i.e. Yoga.⁵

2) A more systematic form of Sāṁkhya can be noticed in the interval between the *Kathā* and the *Śvetāśvata*, probably in the school of Vārsagāṇya. Here, it can be noticed that twenty-four principles are divided into eight *prakṛtis* and sixteen *vikāras*. The first of the *prakṛtis* is *avyakta* in a triple form of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. These *guṇas* are sometimes called *bhāvas* (force of becoming), and in this phase of development, they are not understood cosmically. Here again the *avyakta* and *guṇas* or *bhāvas* are connected with the “law of act”, i.e. moral forces which determine rebirth. The eight *prakṛtis* act independently, but are soon brought together into a whole and characterize a *svabhāva*. In this section of early Sāṁkhya, the word *ahaṅkāra* is being used, but its meaning is not clear. Lots of speculations can be noticed regarding *jīva*, *puruṣa* and *ātman*. Here a tendency can be noticed to turn away from *puruṣa* and to focus more on traditional *ātman*. Salvation in this system involves getting rid of *rajas* and *tamas* and remaining in *sattva* - i.e. *sattastha*.⁶
3) The above mentioned development which may be of atheistic tendencies reworked in a third theistic phase of Sāmkhya as may be seen in texts like Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad and the Bhagavad-Gītā. The divine principle is Īśvara, the creator and destroyer of all. In this phase it is accepted that the cause of everything is God. Avyakta which is the first of the eight prakṛtis now is identified with power of Īśvara, it is the powerful creative force and ultimately all physical principles are derived from it by means of emanation. Thus, in this phase, the classical doctrine of tattvavikāra develops. Salvation now is interpreted in terms of getting away from all physical principles. In other words, one seeks the Īśvara who transcends rajas, tamas and sattva. It is in this theistic phase of Sāmkhya development, says Johnston, that guṇas become much more than moral forces.7

4) In the fourth stage of development of early Sāmkhya, probably the atheistic schools worked out or reconciled the changes coming from previous theistic stage. This can be said as the final step before the appearance of Classical Sāmkhya as set forth by Īśvarakṛṣṇa. In this phase, most of the later doctrines begin to appear. These are:

a) The notion of avyakta is given the name prakṛti.

b) Doctrine of mutual interaction of guṇas is developed, guṇaparīṇāma.
c) Notion of *puruṣa* is accepted and older notions of *ātman, jīva, bhūtāman* are all rejected. The doctrine of subtle body takes the place of *jīva*.

d) Belief in a plurality of *puruṣas* appears.

e) Relationship of *puruṣa* and *buddhi* is worked out probably in the Pañcaśikha School. Moral forces or “the law of the act” which originally were associated with the *avyakta* and the *guṇas* are now transformed to the *buddhi* and its *bhāvas*.

f) The great elements and objects of the senses are replaced in these later speculations by the subtle elements (*tanmātras*) and the gross elements (*mahābhūtas)*.

g) In this phase the full theory of *satkāryavāda* is developed.

5) The fifth phase is the phase of Classical Sāńkhya which can be found in Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Śāṅkhya-Kārikā*. From the evidence in *Yoga-Sūtra* Johnston asserts that Īśvarakṛṣṇa possibly did contribute the new notion of *puruṣārtha*, with respect to the problem of the coming together of *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* - i.e. *prakṛti* undergoes change for the sake of the *puruṣa*.

From the above account of Johnston it can be said that the phase of early Sāńkhya can be divided into two basic sanctions, i.e. theistic Sāńkhya and atheistic Sāńkhya. Except the third phase of development of early Sāńkhya, in all remaining phases, the dominance of the atheistic tendency can be noticed.
Another observation on the first phase of development is that there was a domination of religious sentiment rather than philosophical one. May be it was because of the dominance of orthodox class in that time. But if we see Sāṁkhya-Kārikā very carefully it can be understood that it is more philosophical and scientific than religious. The very first and second kārikā itself have given the evidence of Īśvarakṛṣṇa’s preference to the problems of this practical world and rejection of the authenticity of religious scriptures.

G.J. Larson says, the text relating to the development of the Sāṁkhya may be arranged conveniently into four periods as we have mentioned in the first chapter. Out of these four it can be said first two belong to early Sāṁkhya or pre-Kārikā Sāṁkhya.¹ These two phases are (1) Ancient speculations, including the speculative Vedic hymns and oldest prose Upaniṣads. This period extends from eighth or ninth century B.C. through the period of Jainism and the rise of Early Buddhism. (2) Proto-Sāṁkhya speculations, including the “middle” Upaniṣads, such texts as the Carakasamhitā and the Buddhacarita, the Bhagavad-Gītā, and speculative passages from the Mokṣadharma portion of Mahābhārata. This period extends from about the fourth century B.C. through the first century A.D. After these two periods we can have the period of Classical Sāṁkhya, which is the phase of Sāṁkhya-Kārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa. We have mentioned above that there are remarkable differences between the phases of early Sāṁkhya and Īśvarakṛṣṇa’s Classical Sāṁkhya. But in spite of such types of differences still there seems to be uniformity between these two
as Śāṅkhya-Kārikā is said as the modernization or modification of early Śāṅkhya.

Again regarding the above mentioned two phases of early Śāṅkhya, G.J. Larson says, in this first period of development, Śāṅkhya as such either in its classical or proto-classical forms – is nowhere to be found. It is in this ancient period, however, that many motifs, ideas and structures of thought begin to appear which are later assimilated into Śāṅkhya contexts.\textsuperscript{11} It is, of course possible to point to certain trends of thought which might have later been assimilated into Śāṅkhya. To point to such trends is not to make the claim that these trends can be precisely traced into later Śāṅkhya. It is only a claim that certain trends provide a context from which later Śāṅkhya may have arisen. Here it is important to remember that Śāṅkhya probably owes its origins to a variety of traditions and cannot convincingly be attributed to one. But it cannot be imagined that one of the more obvious sources for later Śāṅkhya is to be found in the ancient chronological speculations of the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas and oldest Upaniṣads.\textsuperscript{12}

In the second phase of development i.e. in the proto-Śāṅkhya speculation, as G.J. Larson says, one is able to discern the appearance of a definite Śāṅkhya-Yoga tradition. In this phase, many of the earlier diverse speculations are brought together and placed into a recognized framework. From this period a technical terminology begins to appear, although there continues to be various lines or traditions of interpretation. It seems likely that there were a large number of centers or schools of Śāṅkhya-Yoga speculation,
none of which could yet claim to possess an authoritative interpretation.\textsuperscript{13} It is said, towards the end of this period, however, it is possible to detect a movement in the direction of dogmatic or normative systems. Sāṅkhya almost reaches its classical form, some late texts reveal attempts to differentiate clearly between Sāṅkhya and Yoga.\textsuperscript{14}

The peculiarity of the second phase of development is that in this period the religious quest is given a more rational and systematic foundation. And probably this rational foundation has got a full fledged form in the hand of Īśvarakṛṣṇa in the later period. It can be thought that Īśvarakṛṣṇa’s Sāṅkhya-Kārikā is a developed form of rational thinking in Sāṅkhya tradition.

In Katha Upaniṣad one finds the clear references to Sāṅkhya ideas and terminology. This is probably the oldest of the so-called middle Upaniṣads and was composed possibly as early as early as the fourth century B.C.\textsuperscript{15}

The doctrines of this Upaniṣad resemble many of the doctrines of the oldest Upaniṣads with the exception that many of the passages seem to have a theistic tinge. Here, puruṣa is conceived as the individual soul or self in which the ātman dwells by choice or selection. In Katha II, 18-19 one finds puruṣa or the self described in a way which resembles later Sāṅkhya notion:

Puruṣa is not born, nor does he die, the wise; he is not derived from any, nor does he become any more. Unborn, eternal, everlasting, this ancient one is not slain when the body is slain.

Thus, one finds in the Katha both the old Upaniṣadic notion of the self together with the beginning of the Sāṅkhya notion of puruṣa. Johnston says,
many of the *tattvas* of Sāṅkhya are present in *Kathā* although they are not yet clearly workout like *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā*.\(^{16}\)

The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* is also part of the so-called “middle” *Upaniṣads*, and represents a later stage of thought than that found in the *Kathā*. It is difficult to date even approximately, although Johnston and others have placed it around the third century B.C.\(^{17}\) The *Śvetāśvatara* along with the *Kathā Upaniṣad* belongs to the Taittiriya School of the *Yajur Veda*. Unlike the *Kathā* which has only some theistic tendencies the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* is clearly and predominantly theistic.\(^{18}\)

In the opening verses of the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* an interesting series of enumerations are given which interpreters have viewed as Sāṅkhya *tattvas*. Moreover in this *Upaniṣad* (VI. 13) the term Sāṅkhya is mentioned for the first time.\(^{19}\)

He (i.e., *eko devas* of vs. 12) is the eternal among the eternals, the intelligent (*cetana*) among the intelligences, the one among many, who grants desires. That cause which is to be apprehended by discrimination and discipline (*sāṁkhya-yogadhiṣṭham*) - by knowing God, one is freed from fetters.

Again, in this *Upaniṣad* one may find references of the other principles too of the Sāṅkhya. *Avyakta, pradhāna* and *prakṛti* are mentioned in 1.8: 1.10; and 1.9 respectively. The doctrine of *guṇas* is referred to in V.7, although it is not clear just how the term is used. *Ahaṅkāra* is mentioned in V.8, etc. At every point, however, these notions are interpreted from theistic point of view.
The later *Upaniṣads* including *Maitri* are primarily important for tracing the development of Yoga practice.

In the second period of early Sāňkhya, some interesting Sāňkhya-Yoga passages are also found in *Caraka-Saṁhitā*, the *Pañcaśikha* of the *Mahābhārata* (Cr. Ed., XII. 211-212), and the *Buddhacarita* of Asvaghosa. Actually the relevant passages were first noticed by Dasgupta and Johnston. Dasgupta claims that the Sāňkhya of Caraka and Pañcaśikha represents the earliest form of the doctrine. This claim however is based on meager evidence. That the Sāňkhya-Yoga in these texts represents an early form of the doctrine appears justified. That they are the earliest form or that they can be ascribed to a particular teacher is open to question. Regarding dates, Johnston in his introduction to the *Buddhacarita* has convincingly placed Asvaghosa in the first century A.D. Winternitz has shown that the *Caraka-Saṁhitā* is a composite text, the earliest portions of which may go back to the second century A.D. The “*Pañcaśikha*” is difficult to date, although it probably belongs to the earlier strata of the speculative portions of the epic.

In the work of Caraka and Pañcaśikha lots of Sāňkhya elements can be noticed. As it is mentioned in the second chapter both Caraka and Pañcaśikha seem to have interpreted the Kapila’s Sāňkhya in an atheistic manner. Dasgupta says, “Both Caraka and Pañcaśikha accept twenty-four rather than twenty-five principles i.e. they combine *puruṣa* and *avyakta* into one *tattva*. They argue for the doctrine of the self because of the need for a basis of moral responsibility; both assert that experience arises because of the conglomeration
of the physical body, mind and \textit{cetana}; both assert that suffering occurs because of the mistaken identity of the conglomerations and the self; both characterize \textit{guna}s as good and evil psychic qualities; both use the terms \textit{kṣetra} and \textit{kṣetrajña} for the Saṅkhya notions of \textit{prakṛti} and \textit{puruṣa}; and both refer to the final state of salvation as \textit{aliriga} – almost a kind of annihilation, which is beyond consciousness.\textsuperscript{24} However, it should be said that Dasgupta perhaps overemphasizes the similarities of the two.

Again it is said the most valuable passages concerning the development of proto-Saṅkhya speculation in this second period are those found in the epic \textit{Mahābhārata}. Here the \textit{Moksadharma} portion and the \textit{Bhagavad-Gītā} are very important to be taken care of for the development of early Saṅkhya. It is not very easy to establish even an approximate date for these materials, although most scholars place the texts somewhere in the period that extends from about the fourth century B.C. through the first century A.D.\textsuperscript{25} As it is mentioned in the previous chapter, a strong theistic tendency can be noticed in the epic like \textit{Mahābhārata}, so also in the \textit{Bhagavad-Gītā} and here, the word ‘Saṅkhya’ has been used in the sense of ‘true knowledge’.

It can be noticed that throughout this second period of early Saṅkhya a variety of traditions are available, many of which stand side by side in texts. Monistic trends frequently parallel or subsume dualistic-tendencies, and in many passages a theistic emphasis is prominent. Here in this period the development of self-doctrines can be noticed which vary from \textit{jiva} to \textit{bhūtānam} or to the Upaniṣadic \textit{ātman} and the beginnings of the \textit{puruṣa} doctrine of the
Sāṁkhya. Critic says, often these varieties of speculations are hopelessly intermixed, and it is quite impossible to describe the stages of development with precision. E.H. Johnston tries to convince that the various stages of development of the Sāṁkhya in this early Sāṁkhya periods started from an original atheistic Sāṁkhya followed by a middle theistic stage and culminating in a final atheistic stage.26

In the second period, G. Larson says, the concept of *ahaṁkāra* appears and it is closely related to the eightfold *prakṛti*. He again says, in the later passages of *Gītā* a tendency can be noticed to combine *gunaḥ* with the notion of *prakṛti*. The *gunaḥ* begin to appear in these later passages as aspects or qualities of *prakṛti*. The exact conception of *gunaḥ* is not clear in the texts, and, one might add, it is not much clearer even in the Sāṁkhya-Kārikā.27

Critic says the notion of *prakṛti* as a technical term for “material nature” is late in appearing. In Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad we can notice random use of this particular term, but it is not used regularly until much later. (Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad- 1.10) In the older texts the term used which seem somewhat equivalent to *prakṛti* are *sattva, avyakta, pradhāna* and the eightfold *prakṛti*.28 Johnston has pointed out that *sattva* and *avyakta* are terms which seem associated with what he calls the “power of act” - i.e. with the moral state of the individual which controls or determines his next birth.29 The eightfold *prakṛti* refers to those principles which are determinative for the emergence of the world, i.e., is creative factors in creation. Here, a synthesis of Sāṁkhya-Kārikā’s view with eightfold *prakṛti* of early Sāṁkhya can be noticed. For in
kaṇḍikā-III, we learn that only the first of the eightfold prakṛtis i.e. avyakta is called prakṛti (or mūlapraṃkṛti) while the other seven are evolutes of mūlapraṃkṛti. In Śāmkhya-Kārikā, it can be noticed, the mūlapraṃkṛti is referred to as pradhāna and avyakta. It can no longer be called sattva in the Śāmkhya-Kārikā, for in the Kārikā sattva is used only as one of three attributes of prakṛti.

The remarkable differences between the second phase of development of early Śāmkhya and the Śāmkhya-Kārikā (Classical Śāmkhya period) is that the texts of second period fail to distinguish clearly between Śāmkhya and Yoga. The first appearance of the terminology like Śāmkhya in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad seems to refer a yogic context, whereas in Śāmkhya-Kārikā of Classical Śāmkhya period (the third phase of the development of Śāmkhya) a systematic Śāmkhya doctrine fully separated from Yoga can be noticed.

Critics are of the opinion that the second period developed slowly over a long period and finally received its classical and normative articulation in the Śāmkhya-Kārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa. It seems Śāmkhya as a distinct system did not really begin to emerge till the end of the second period. Moreover, it can be mentioned that many of the later classical notions are still missing in early Śāmkhya periods. G.J. Larson says, "We have no tanmātras as yet in early Śāmkhya. We still do not have the doctrine of evolution (tattvavikāra) as found in the Śāmkhya-Kārikā. We find no clear doctrine of the plurality of puruṣa in early Śāmkhya period which is to be found in Śāmkhya-Kārikā. We have yet no doctrine of bhāvas or conditions which impel the buddhi as in Classical
Sāṅkhya. We find no doctrine of a transmigrating *lingasarīra*. The doctrines of *guṇaparināma* and *satkāryavāda* are yet not clearly spelled out, and there is no doctrine of *puruṣārtha*. In other words, all the texts in the second period, even those which offer a description of an emerging Sāṅkhya system, can only be characterized as proto-Sāṅkhya speculations.31

Finally it can be imagined that it is not really very easy to find out by whom Īśvarakṛṣṇa was influenced to propagate such a leading text in the period of Classical Sāṅkhya; but sometimes it seems his *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā* was the result of the atheistic tendencies inherent in the early Sāṅkhya period. Again from the inclusion of the spiritual principle like *puruṣa* in this Classical Sāṅkhya text compels us to think of the idealistic influence on it. Sometimes, it can be thought that *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā* is the result of the synthesis or overlapping influence of the doctrines of materialistic and idealistic traditions of early Sāṅkhya. But again critics do not hesitate in saying that a purely scientific or materialistic philosophy like Sāṅkhya has been reduced to an orthodox spiritualistic philosophy by the introduction of *puruṣa*. Whatever may be the case, from the above discussions it can be said that the doctrines of *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā* are to some extent developed form of early Sāṅkhya with some new additions or modifications.

3.2: *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā* and Buddhism:

In Indian philosophical tradition both Sāṅkhya and Buddhism are two very ancient philosophical schools. Critics say, both of them are contemporary
to each other though no fixed date is ascribed to both these schools regarding their origination. Their antiquity may be the cause. As it is mentioned in the previous chapter, according to Garbe, there is a relationship between Sāṅkhya and Buddhism regarding its antiquity and there are several striking similarities between them which seem to argue for the influence of one upon the other. Some thinkers are of the opinion that the extant literature of Sāṅkhya is not as early as that of Buddhism, as Radhakrishnan says, “the Sāṅkhya-Sūtra presuppose a knowledge of the schools of Buddhism and are later than the schools themselves”\(^{32}\); but there are strong reasons to believe that, like Cārvāka; Sāṅkhya flourished contemporaneously with Buddhism, perhaps as early as the fifth century B.C.\(^{33}\) On the other hand some thinkers say that Sāṅkhya philosophy is pre-Buddhistic one is beyond any controversy.\(^{34}\) Whichever may be the earlier, the well-known fact is that Sāṅkhya belongs to āstika tradition and Buddhism belongs to the nāstika tradition in Indian philosophy.

Now the question is “Is Īśvarakṛṣṇa’s Sāṅkhya influenced by Buddhism?” Similarities between these two are both Classical Sāṅkhya and Buddhism are very much silent about the existence of God. It is may be because of their similarities in the aim of philosophy. Both of them seemed to have started their philosophy from the problems of our practical life not from some speculations of transcendental realities. The prime concerned issue in these two schools lies inside the universe. If we see the four noble truths of Buddhism, then it will be found that the first noble truth says, in this life there
is suffering. Likewise the very first karika of Sāṁkhya-Kārikā is talking about the three fold sufferings of human life. Again both Buddha and Īśvarakṛṣṇa have accepted that there is cessation of these sufferings without considering the favour of Almighty. According to Buddha, the ways for cessation of suffering are eightfold (astāṅgika mārg) which is deeply related to the real knowledge about the life as a whole. As a nāstika system, Buddha was not talking about the knowledge of scriptures (Vedas) for the attainment of liberation. Interestingly, in spite of being an āstika school, Īśvarakṛṣṇa in his Sāṁkhya-Kārikā has neglected the importance of scriptural (Vedic) means in the attainment of liberation which is very similar to Buddhism. (kārikā no-II, Sāṁkhya-Kārikā) Rather Īśvarakṛṣṇa too has given importance on the (discriminative) knowledge of the manifest (vyakta), the unmanifest (avyakta) and the knowing one (or the knower- i.e. puruṣa). Thinkers say, “the four noble truth” of Buddhism correspond to the four truths of Sāṁkhya as put in the Sāṁkhya-pravacanabhāṣya : “1) that from which we deliver ourselves is pain 2) deliverance is the cessation of pain 3) the cause of pain is non-discrimination between prakṛti and puruṣa, which produces the continued union 4) the means of deliverance is discerning knowledge”. It seems Kapila rejects sacrifices, prayers and ceremonies as much as Buddha.35

Interpreters are of the opinion that the Buddhists admit Kapila, the sage to whom the followers of Sāṁkhya ascribed the origin of their philosophy, lived several generations before Buddha and that Sāṁkhya ideas prevailed at the time of Buddha. It is again said, Buddha must have known the beginnings
of the system, though not the system itself. That the world was evil and salvation was isolable from *prakṛti* may have been very suggestive to Buddha. The Sāṁkhya conception of psychic process may even have been at the bottom of the Buddhist theory of *skandhas*. But there is no doubt that the Sāṁkhya system is a much later growth upon the summing up of the works of centuries by different interpreters.\(^{36}\)

If the development of Sāṁkhya is observed very carefully, then it may be found that in the *Buddhacarita* of Āśvaghoṣa which belongs to proto-Sāṁkhya speculation as it is mentioned above has lots of Sāṁkhya elements. E.H. Johnston in his research work has shown that Āśvaghoṣa’s descriptions and judgments on Sāṁkhya are frequently quite accurate.\(^{37}\) He says, any attempt to comprehend the development of Sāṁkhya must take Āśvaghoṣa’s treatment seriously. In *Buddhacarita* XII.15-44 one finds a quite systematic account of Sāṁkhya followed by an account of Yoga. Āśvaghoṣa ascribes these teaching to the sage, Ārada, and although the terms Sāṁkhya and Yoga do not appear in the text, it is obvious that Sāṁkhya -Yoga is being described. In XII.17-18 one finds a preliminary description of the *tattvas*. In XII. 19 the sixteen *vikāras* are described: the five senses, the five objects of the senses, the five organs of action and the *manas*. Over against all of these, according to XII.20, there is the “knower of the field” or the self. It is really interesting to note that the explanation of *avidyā* in XII.33 of *Buddhacarita* includes the sequence of *tamas, moha, mohāmoha, tāmisra* and *andhatāmisra*, which eventually become the five *viparyayas* in *Sāṁkhya-Kārikā*-XLVIII.\(^{38}\)
Salvation from suffering and the cycle of existence according to the account in *Buddhacarita* XII.40 is by means of right knowledge. The state of salvation, according to *Buddhacarita* XII.42, is the condition of the “Supreme Absolute”\(^3^9\).

It can be noticed, though Ārada in Asvaghoṣa’s treatment discusses Sāṁkhya and Yoga separately, nevertheless, it is quite clear that they both belong to the same tradition. No attempt is made to differentiate them. They are simply set side by side as two separate methods within the same school: one being theoretical and emphasizing right knowledge, the other practical, emphasizing right practice.\(^4^0\)

It may be found that the theoretical account in the *Buddhacarita* has some interesting variants from the Classical Sāṁkhya. In Classical Sāṁkhya *prakṛti* is a notion including within it *avyakta, buddhi, ahamkāra* and the five gross elements. This classical notion of *prakṛti*, on the other hand, is here called *sattva*. Another interesting variant is that the *Buddhacarita* includes no account of the doctrine of the *guṇas* found in the *Sāṁkhya-Kārikā* of Classical Sāṁkhya. Again, it is said, although *Buddhacarita* is basically said to be dualistic, yet it has a cosmic self or principle called *ātman* quite similar in nature to the old Upaniṣadic notions. There is no doctrine of the plurality of *puruṣas* here. Thus, although it is obviously more dualistic than the doctrines of Caraka and Pañcaśikha, it is yet not the full-blown dualism of Classical Sāṁkhya found in “*Sāṁkhya-Kārikā*”.\(^4^1\) Caraka and Pañcaśikha both accept twenty-four rather than twenty-five principles. They combine *puruṣa* and
prakṛti (avyakta) into one tattvas. But Asvaghosa has accepted puruṣa (self) and prakṛti as two different principles though their meanings are not exactly same with Classical Sāṃkhya.

Differences of opinion can be found between early Buddhist and Sāṃkhya-Kārikā regarding the doctrine of causality also. The difference between the Sāṃkhya theory of causality and that of the early Buddhist is instructive. The Buddhists believe that every change brings about something entirely new and at the next moment this new thing is replaced by another new one. The only thing remaining constant in change is the inherited karma passing from one moment to the next. Essentially Theravāda Buddhist’s doctrine of causality applies only to the flux-life of moral agents. Sāṃkhya, on the other hand, is concerned with the totality of events. For Sāṃkhya, all the events in the universe have substantial background, whereas for the Buddhist phenomenalistic analysis there are only passing forms and qualities. The Sāṃkhya phenomena are substantive like the Jaina, and the changing of states does not indicate a change in the ultimate reals, but only a change in their concomitant conditions such as place, time and form under the dominance of one of the three guṇas. The Sāṃkhyan standpoint refute the Buddhist tenet of the momentary duration of external objects, which succeed each other in a perpetual flux, and the doctrine that things exist only in perception, and have no objective reality, and that there is nothing but sunya.42

Actually, the nexus between Buddhism and Sāṃkhya has been a subject of a good deal of discussion. Some scholars hesitate to accept Sāṃkhya as a
development of Buddhist ideas. But, an objective examination of the relation between the two may lead us to the following conclusions: the existing literature on Sāṁkhya is post-Buddhistic. That is why; Buddhistic influence on this philosophical system cannot be ignored. Somehow it can be noticed, Sāṁkhya as developed by Īśvarakṛṣṇa is close to Buddhism in essential metaphysical tenets. The total passivity of puruṣa (self) in Classical Sāṁkhya may be result of influence of the ‘no-soul’ theory of Buddhism. From the above discussions it can be said that a non-Vedic Sāṁkhya of Īśvarakṛṣṇa should rather find a place by the side of Buddhism in the nāstika group of Indian philosophy.

But it must be remembered that the elements of Sāṁkhya were known in pre-Buddhistic times. In the above discussions it has already been tried to trace the main conceptions of Sāṁkhya to the Upaniṣads and even to the Samhitā literature. Taking this fact into consideration one cannot assert that Sāṁkhya philosophy reflects only Buddhist ideas. Again, it is significant that Buddhistic legends mentioned Kapila as a predecessor of the Buddha. In this connection, the following observations of R.L. Mitra are relevant:

There is abundance evidence, both in Hindu and Buddhist works, of unquestionable antiquity of the Sāṁkhya and Yoga systems having been current before the time of Buddha.43
3.3: Sāṁkhyā-Kārikā and Brahma-Sūtra:

Both Sāṁkhyā-Kārikā and Brahma-Sūtra are the leading texts of two respective ancient āstika schools of Indian philosophy. Tradition accepts first one as the dualistic school and the second as monistic one. General understandings of both these schools compel the followers to think that they are opposed to each other in their fundamental principles though they belong to orthodox tradition of India. To have a proper understanding about the relationship between these two a detailed study is required.

The Brahma-Sūtra represents the first effort at systematization of the philosophy of Upaniṣads. It consists of 555 sūtras or aphoristic sentences. Brahma-Sūtra is also called Vedānta-Sūtra also. Tradition accepts Bādarāyana as the author of Brahma-Sūtra. Regarding the time of Brahma-Sūtra different opinions can be found. Frazer assigns it to 400 B.C. Max-Muller says, “Whatever the date of the Bhagavad-Gītā as a part of Mahābhārata, the age of the Vedānta-Sūtra and of Bādarāyana must have been earlier.” Generally, Indian philosophers are of the opinion that the Brahma-Sūtra was composed in the period from 500 B.C. to 200 B.C. According to Dasgupta also, these sūtras in their present form, were possibly ‘written in the second century B.C’.

Thibaut claimed that these were ‘preceded by long series of preparatory literary efforts of which they represent highly condensed outcome’. If the scholars are correct, this effort at a systematic formulation of the Upaniṣadīc philosophy must have been very ancient. So, it may be a commonly accepted fact that Brahma-Sūtra was composed about second century B.C.
been several attempts to represent the teaching of the *Upaniṣads* in a consistent way and Bādarāyana in his *sūtras* has given us the result of these attempts.

Whatever may be the exact time of *Brahma-Sūtra*, at least the basic contentions of the major commentators of the text cannot be doubted. If it is doubted, the *Sūtra* may become merely a meaningless mass of words for the people. It is here, as Thibaut has shown, that the *Brahma-Sūtra* differed from the other *sūtra* works as the grammatical *sūtras*. It is possible to understand at least a considerable part of the other *sūtra* works without depending on a commentary. But not so with the *Brahma-Sūtra*; as it is said:

There scarcely one single *sūtra* is intelligible without a commentary. The most essential words are habitually dispensed with; nothing is, for instance, more common than the simple omission of the subject or predicate of a sentence. And when here and there a *sūtra* occurs whose words construe without anything having to be supplied, the phraseology is so eminently vague and obscure that without the help derived from a commentary we should be unable to make out to what subject a *sūtra* refers.48

This point regarding *Brahma-Sūtra* is very important. The philosophical position of the *Brahma-Sūtra* can be understood only by depending on the major commentators on it. Tradition accepts that the earliest commentator was Śaṅkara, though the time gap between the *Brahma-Sūtra* and Śaṅkara was considerable. According to Telang, Śaṅkara flourished about the middle or the end of the sixth century A.D. Sir R.G. Bhandarkar proposes A.D. 680 as the date of Śaṅkara’s birth and is even inclined to go few years earlier. Max
Muller and Prof. Macdonell hold that he was born in A.D. 788 and died in A.D. 820. That he flourished in the first quarter of the ninth century is also the opinion of Prof. Keith. It is said there are reasons to believe that Vedāntin views come down to him by an unbroken series of teachers intervening between him and the author of the *Brahma-Sūtra*.

The other major commentator on the text is Rāmānuja. He belongs to the eleventh century A.D. His differences with Śaṅkara were considerable. Nevertheless, we can depend upon both Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja for understanding the basic philosophical position of the *Brahma-Sūtra*. Some critics are of the opinion that it is not valid argument to claim that certain philosophical position cannot be attributed to the *Brahma-Sūtra* because it is to be found only in the writings of the commentators and not explicitly stated in the *sūtras* themselves. They say, in spite of the time gap between the *sūtras* and the commentators and in spite of the differences between major commentaries it is indeed possible for us to know a good deal about the real philosophical standpoint of *Brahma-Sūtra* from them, particularly from Śaṅkara.

When there is a question of joint discussion on *Śaṅkhya-Kārikā* and *Brahma-Sūtra*, first of all the chronological gap between both of them can be noticed. Though *Brahma-Sūtra* is found to be earlier to *Śaṅkhya-Kārikā*, yet the commentaries including that of Śaṅkara are much later than the *Kārikā*. On the other hand Kapila’s early *Śaṅkhya* is said to be earlier than *Brahma-Sūtra*. It is said, though as a full-fledged idealistic school, Vedāntins are critical of the
Sāṁkhya philosophy yet they have adopted many elements of this philosophy to their own.

But, as it is mentioned above at the very outset, it seems the Sāṁkhya (specially the Classical Sāṁkhya) is the prime opponent of the Vedānta philosophy. Again, it may be realized, after the discussions of Sāṁkhya and Vedānta traditions that the author of the *Brahma-Sūtra* took the greatest care to refute the Sāṁkhya philosophy and in fact looked upon it as the most important challenge to the Vedānta system. Thus the view refuted in the *Brahma-Sūtra* as the Sāṁkhya system may give us real indications as to the nature of original Sāṁkhya. Critics say, “It may be objected that the Sāṁkhya as refuted in the *Brahma-Sūtra* is to a great extent the same as expounded in the *Sāṁkhya-Kārikā*. If it is so, how can then, we doubt the latter and depend upon the former for an idea of original Sāṁkhya? This argument has some significance, at least as far as Śaṅkara’s commentary on the *Brahma-Sūtra* is concerned. For, the version of the Sāṁkhya as refuted here was to a great extent drawn from the *Sāṁkhya-Kārikā*. Still there is a distinct advantage in depending on Śaṅkara. It seems, the author of the *Kārikā* wanted to graft upon the Sāṁkhya system certain elements of idealistic thought, evidently borrowed from Vedāntic circle, and Śaṅkara’s writings are particularly helpful in exposing the internal inconsistencies thus created. That is, being a highly conscious idealist philosopher himself, Śaṅkara could clearly see that the Vedāntic elements specially, the concept of *puruṣa* as self or consciousness could be introduced into the Sāṁkhya system only at the cost of internal consistency”.

It can be imagined, Vedānta is mainly based on faith while Sāṁkhya seems to adopt pure rationalism. In other words, Sāṁkhya is more rational than Vedānta. The arguments of the Vedāntins are mainly srūti-based. On the other hand Īśvarakṛṣṇa accept the knowledge of scripture (or srūti) as defective, (kārikā no-II) rather it seems the Sāṁkhyaists are perception based. Although Sāṁkhya has accepted the Vedas as authority yet it has its own arguments and judgments. It formulates its own premises and draws conclusions from them. Probably it has tried to show that its arguments only have affinity to those of the Vedas and Upaniṣads. On the other hand the Vedānta takes its primary premises from the Vedas and Upaniṣads, and draws conclusion from them. Tarka for the Vedāntins is dependent on the srūti, while for Sāṁkhyaist it is independent. It refers to srūti only as one of the pramāṇas. The remaining pramāṇas are independent as a source of knowledge. But in the Vedānta, it seems other pramāṇas are not independent sources of knowledge rather they are entirely dependent on srūti as Vedāntins are mainly concerned with the metaphysical realities.

Some thinkers are of the opinion that as philosophy of Sāṁkhya is prior to Vedānta, so it is very probable for the Sāṁkhya elements to be adopted by the Vedāntins. Yet there are some other interpreters who want to identify Sāṁkhya with Vedānta and also to show that the Vedānta is superior to Sāṁkhya. For example, Suryanarayana Sastri quotes a Sāṁkhya commentator who declares: "ato vedāntārthasya niśkarṣakam kapilamataṁ na tu kincid api virodhi." It means that the opinions of Kapila are in no way goes against the
Vedānta. Thus, it can be said that there is a tendency to take up or absorb Saṅkhya philosophy within Vedānta and thereby deprive it of its independent status as a philosophical system.

This tendency can be noticed not only in the old commentators; even the modern interpreters try to show that there is no difference between Saṅkhya and Vedānta. Here, the example of the prominent contemporary thinker R.N. Phukan from Assam can be considered. He says, “there is no important difference between the Saṅkhya and the Vedānta philosophy; what difference there is, is in the angle of vision. In Vedānta, the world is seen from outside with a subtle philosophical mind; hence in order to understand the reasoning of Vedānta, it requires a minimum intellectual capacity. In Saṅkhya, on the other hand, the world is seen broadly from the worldly point of view, it takes one gradually to matters more and more subtle and ultimately leads him to a stage from where he may easily realize all the fundamentals.” According to him the Saṅkhya is nothing but a lower view or a common man’s view as to how we look to the world. But the Vedānta belongs to a different kind of knowledge which is attainable only by the people of high intellectual standard. It is not easy to understand for the common people the Vedānta philosophy specially Śaṅkara’s Vedānta in which the world is seen from the outside with a subtle philosophical mind. On the other hand if we see Saṅkhya-Kārikā we may find that Īśvarakṛṣṇa has started its philosophy from very common and practical problems of life like Buddha.
Śaṅkara criticizes Śaṅkhya when it says; the cause of the universe is the unintelligent prakṛti. According to Śaṅkara the Intelligent Brāhmaṇ only can be such a cause; because the immanent teleology in nature cannot be explained by unintelligent prakṛti. In Śaṅkhya-Kārikā Īśvarakṛṣṇa says, just as pots require clay as their causes, since they are made of clay, so the world, which is made up of pleasure, frustration and delusion, requires something made up of these qualities as its cause. According to Śaṅkhya-Kārikā, this is pradhāna. Since it is unconscious it evolves into various modifications to effect for the purpose of conscious principle namely ‘puruṣa’. On the other hand Śaṅkara’s standpoint says, we never see unconscious things modifying themselves to suit the purposes of conscious beings, but rather we see the transformations of unconscious things into effects such as pots etc., always require the activity of a conscious agent, for example, a potter. So, Śaṅkara says, there is every possibility for a conscious agency to play a part in the production of the world.

Again in Śaṅkhya-Kārikā it is said, pradhāna transform spontaneously just as grass spontaneously becomes milk. In response to this Śaṅkara’s standpoint will say, grass does not become milk when it is not eaten at all or is eaten by a bull. The charge of Śaṅkara against Śaṅkhya here is - if the transformation is always for the benefit of a conscious being, how can it be spontaneous? Śaṅkara clarifies here that although activity on the part of unconscious stuff occur spontaneously, that is without any co-operating conscious agent, it must as it is agreed in Śaṅkhya-Kārikā, occur for the
benefit of something conscious. Now the probable question here is what types of benefit is spoken about? Is it pleasure for the self or for its liberation? Śaṅkara’s response will be that it cannot be pleasure, because Sāṃkhya-Kārikā says, the self as an indifferent principle can’t gain or lose pleasure. So it must be liberation. But it is again said in Sāṃkhya-Kārikā that puruṣa is already liberated before pradhāna acts. So, liberation is also not necessary for puruṣa.

Śaṅkara ask, how precisely does pradhāna act? The three guṇas are in equilibrium initially, what is responsible for disturbing that equilibrium? If guṇas are said to be like that, that is, unsteady, the result will be that we will be unable to explain the order in the world, since these guṇas are unconscious. It can be imagined that Sarvākrita philosophy does not agree with the Vedāntin view that ‘Brāhmaṇ is both the nature of the suffering in the world and cause of that same suffering.’ The standpoint of Classical Śaṅkhyā is that if these attributes belong to the same Brāhmaṇ, release will be impossible, for the cessation of suffering would involve Brāhmaṇ’s losing an essential property.

Vedāntins are of the opinion that even if we grant activity to pradhāna, it cannot explain the teleology which Śaṅkhyā takes to be immanent in nature. Unconscious pradhāna can have no purpose; indifferent neutral puruṣa too can have no purpose. If Śaṅkhyā tries to solve the difficulty by pointing out that prakṛti and puruṣa come into contact like the blind and the lame and then puruṣa, like the magnet moving the iron, may move prakṛti to accomplish his goal, it is mistaken; because the blind and the lame persons are both intelligent and active beings, while prakṛti in Classical Śaṅkhyā is unconscious and
purusa is indifferent. Vedantins say, the simile of the magnet and the iron is also wrong. If the mere presence of the purusa is sufficient to move the pradhāna, then purusa being always co-present, there should be perpetual movement. Thus creation should have no beginning and no end. The liberation of purusa will become impossible. Again the standpoint of Advaita-Vedāta says, the Śāṅkhyan prakṛti and purusa can never be related. Because, Prakṛti is unconscious, purusa is indifferent; and Īśvarakṛṣṇa has not mentioned anything about the third principle to relate them. It must therefore recognize a higher conscious principle which transcends and yet gives meaning to and preserves at a lower level, the subject-object dualism.54 Another significant question raised by Vedāntins on the inner inconsistencies of Śāṅkhya-Kārikā is - why should the purusa suffer for the actions of pradhāna?

It seems, by the help of these criticisms of Śāṅkhya-Kārikā's view, Śaṅkara has tried to establish that Brāhmaṇ alone is the cause and it is universally declared to be so by all the Vedānta texts. The words like mahat, avyakta etc. used in certain Upaniṣads, e.g. in the Kaṭha, do not denote the mahat and avyakta of Śāṅkhya. They simply mean the potentiality of names and forms in their cause Brāhmaṇ. They are not independent of it. Śāṅkhya and Yoga are generally accepted by the wise as conducive to the highest good. But these systems, specially Śāṅkhya advocate dualism and cannot be supported by sruti. Here it can be thought, Śaṅkara accepts Śāṅkhya as the 'principal opponent' of the Vedānta.
Finally, it can be imagined, the Vedāntin standpoint towards Sāṅkhya is that it should let its *prakṛti* glide into *māyā*, its *prakṛti-parināmavāda* into *Brahma-vivarta-vāda*, its *satkāryavāda* into *satkāranavāda*, its *puruṣa* into *jiva*, its negative *kaivalya* into positively blissful *mokṣa*, and should, instead of maintaining the plurality of *puruṣas* representing ‘a vast array of sad personalities’ and creating an unbridgeable chasm between the subject and the object, recognize the non-dual *puruṣa*, the Brāhmaṇ transcending the subject-object dualism.55

Actually, if Śaṅkara’s Advaita-Vedānta is studied properly, it can be noticed that Śaṅkara has made a great effort to reject maximum views of *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā*, specially to establish the supremacy of Brāhmaṇ. Of course, it is true that some inner inconsistencies of *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā* have helped Śaṅkara to proceed in his motive. The standpoint of Śaṅkara’s Advaita-Vedānta says, we do proceed from the finite to the infinite, from the limited to the unlimited, from the effect to the cause, from plurality to unity. But only the conscious Brāhmaṇ associated with its *māyā-shakti* can be the creator, preserver and destroyer of this world. Unintelligent *prakṛti* is too poor and too powerless to be its cause.56

Again, it can be said that Śaṅkara’s philosophy mainly based on the criticism of *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā*. Here, indirectly it seems his philosophy depends on the *Kārikā* or he has borrowed lots of ideas from *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā* itself. It is well known fact that Śaṅkara is the first systematic interpreter of *Brahma-Sūtra*. But the vast chronological gap between *Brahma-Sūtra* and Śaṅkara may put some questions regarding the direct influence of *Brahma-Sūtra* on Śaṅkara’s philosophy. Critics say there may be some mediators between *Brahma-Sūtra* and Śaṅkara who may have influenced Śaṅkara positively or negatively. Here the role of *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā* cannot be ignored.
References:


3) *Brahma-Sūtra*, ii, 1.12.ii.2.17.


5) Ibid., pp.81-82.

6) Ibid., pp.82-84.

7) Ibid., pp.84-86.

8) Ibid., pp.86-88.

9) Ibid., p.88.


11) Ibid., p.76.

12) Ibid., pp.78-79.


17) Ibid., p. 82.


20) Ibid., p. 103.


25) Larson, G.J., *Classical Sāṅkhya - An Interpretation of its History and Meaning*, p. 75

26) Ibid., p. 125.

27) Ibid., p. 131.

28) Ibid., p. 131.


31) Ibid., p.134.


36) Ibid., p. 473.


41) Ibid., p.106.
43) Banarji, S.C., *A Companion to Indian Philosophy*, p.34.
47) F. Max Muller, *Sacred Books of East*, xxxiv, intro.xii.
48) Ibid., xxxiv, intro. Xiii-xiv.
51) Ibid., p. 371.
55) Ibid., p. 256.
56) *Shariraka-Bhāṣya*, II, 2, 1. Also *Chāndogya-Bhāṣya*, VI, 2, 3-4.