CHAPTER – 2

EXPOSITION OF SĀṂKHYA-KĀRIKĀ
WITH ITS BASIC CONCEPTS
2. Exposition of *Sāmkhya-Kārikā* with its Basic Concepts:

*Sāmkhya-Kārikā* as we have mentioned above is the only available and the most popular, acceptable leading text of Sāmkhya tradition, the exponent of which is Īṣvarakṛṣṇa though he is not the founder of the system. It is already discussed about the approximate time of Īṣvarakṛṣṇa and has suggested that Īṣvarakṛṣṇa’s *Sāmkhya-Kārikā*, which is said as the final summary formulation of the “system of sixty topics” (*Ṣaṣṭītantra*) represents this Sāmkhya tradition as a whole in Indian philosophy.

2.1: Īṣvarakṛṣṇa:

Īṣvarakṛṣṇa seems to be more famous than the founder Kapila in Sāmkhya tradition at present time, may be because of the availability of his *Sāmkhya-Kārikā*. Actually, about Īṣvarakṛṣṇa himself, nothing is known beyond the testimony of the Chinese translation that he was a Brāhmaṇ of the *Kauśika goṭra*, or family, and the testimony of Jaymaṅgala that he was a *parivarājaka*. Probably he was a contemporary of Vāṣubandhu, Vindhyavāsa and the followers of Vāraṇaṇya. It is not easy to determine the precise date for any of these thinkers, although the above discussion concerning Sāmkhya teachers would tend to support the general claim that Īṣvarakṛṣṇa and the others carried on their activities under the Gupta dynasty (ca A.D. 320-540).\(^1\) This was a period of great literary and cultural activity in India, and it seems quite
natural that Classical Sāṅkhya would achieve its normative articulation in this era.²

From the evidence of the *Yuktidīpikā* also, it is fair to say that he was in the tradition of the followers of Vārṣagaṇya, and in view of the fact that he does not follow the innovations of Vindhyavāsin it is also fair to suggest that his final summary formulation harkens back to some of the older views of that tradition. Again, if the testimony of *Yuktidīpikā* is to be believed, Īśvarakṛṣṇa considered his role to be one of mediator among the many opposing views within the developing Sāṅkhya tradition. Whatever it may be, Īśvarakṛṣṇa’s summary formulation of the Sāṅkhya position proved to be definitive, for all later texts within the tradition, including not only the commentarial tradition up through Vācaspati Miśra but also the tradition of the *Sāṅkhya-Sūtra* and its commentaries, consider Īśvarakṛṣṇa’s formulation to be normative.³

2.2: Sāṅkhya-Kārikā:

It is said, “The *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā* is hardly a philosophical text as that designation is understood in an Indian intellectual environment. There is very little of the polemical give and take so typical of *darśana* or philosophical literature. Instead, the *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā* is a philosophical poem, laying out the contours of the Sāṅkhya system in a relaxed and artful manner, presenting its content in serious and elegant ārya verses that flow easily and make use of striking similes and metaphors throughout.”⁴ As the works of Kapila is not available in the tradition, *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā* has got the prime importance among
the followers of this particular tradition. Whatever may be the reason, 
Sāṃkhya-Kārikā is established as the leading text of this system. It consists of 
seventy-three kārikās by the help of which Īśvarakṛṣṇa has tried to establish 
Sāṃkhya as atheistic-dualistic system in Indian tradition. Though it is found, 
Sāṃkhya-Kārikā is consist of seventy-three kārikās still there is a controversy 
among its interpreters regarding the total numbers of it. For example, the 
Sāṃkhya-Kārikā, according to Gauḍapāda and Vācaspati Miśra contains 
seventy-two verses. Of these Gauḍapāda comments on sixty-nine verses only, 
he does not comment on the remaining verses that are usually included in the 
Sāṃkhya-Kārikā, i.e. verses LXX, LXXI, LXXII and LXXIII. The 
Māṭharavṛtti, finally, reads an extra verse beyond the seventy-two of 
Vācaspati, thus making a total of seventy-three verses. In the kārikā no - 
LXXII, however, we are told that the original text included only seventy 
verses. Of course, sometimes, it is said that the evidence regarding the 
authenticity of these verses is conflicting and confounding to establish a proper 
judgement about it. Scholars have in this matter expressed widely differing 
opinions. In any case, majority of thinkers agree with the fact that Sāṃkhya-
Kārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa has been remarkably influential both as a summary of the 
Sāṃkhya position and as a symptom of Sāṃkhya’s contribution to India’s 
philosophical and cultural heritage.
2.2.1: Commentaries on the *Kārikā*:

The basic commentaries on the *Kārikā* may be the following: Paramārtha's Chinese version, the *Gauḍapādabhāṣya*, the *Māṭharavṛtta*, the *Sāṁkhyatattva-kumudī*, the *Jayamaṅgala*, and the *Yuktidipikā*. Most of them are extremely difficult to date, although it is possible to offer a few comments regarding the approximate time of compositions.

2.2.2: Paramārtha’s Chinese Version:

This commentary accompanies the Chinese version of the *Kārikā*, translated during the last period of the literary activity of Paramārtha, (ca. A.D. 557-569). One Chinese tradition wrongly attributes the authorship of the commentary to Vaṣubandhu. Again the most of the traditional thinkers confused the commentary on the *Kārikā* with the ‘*Paramārthasaptati*’ of Vaṣubandhu which was in reality to refute the Sāṁkhya system.

2.2.3: *Gauḍapādabhāṣya*:

The approximate time of this commentary is the eleventh century A.D. Alberuni in his account of Sāṁkhya clearly uses the *Kārikā* and refers to an “anchorite” by the name of “Gauḍa” who is an authority on the Sāṁkhya. This commentary is perhaps the most useful, however, since it discusses the *kārikās* in a simple and direct manner.
2.2.4: *Māṭharavṛtti*:

This commentary on the *Kārikā* is not much older which has been the centre of much controversy. Belvalkar claimed that it is the original Sanskrit version of the Chinese translation of Paramārtha. He asserted this identity on the basis of certain common subject-matter in the two texts. According to this view, *Bhāṣya* of Gauḍāpāda is simply a kind of plagiarized version of *Māṭharavṛtti*. Keith, S.S. Suryanarayanan, Umesha Misra and others have shown convincingly, however, that there are a number of differences between *Māṭharavṛtti* and Paramārtha’s Chinese version and the *Bhāṣya* of Gauḍāpāda. The only reasonable conclusion may be that all three commentaries go back to a common origin which is now lost. Moreover, Keith and S.S. Suryanarayanan have suggested that the *Māṭharavṛtti* shows a number of signs which would indicate a very late date.

2.2.5: *Sāṅkhyaatattvakaumudī*:

Vācaspati Miśra, the great scholar, wrote a commentary on *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā*, known as *Sāṅkhyaatattvakaumudī* which is regarded as one of the most authoritative works on the Sāṅkhya system. This well-known and important commentary is dated by the author himself in the ninth century A.D.

The other commentaries on *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā* can be named as *Sāṅkhyaśāstra-vṛtti* of Aniruddha (1500A.D.), *Jayamahāgala* of Saṁkara (not the vedantin Saṁkara), *Yuktidīpikā* of Chakravarti(Ed) etc.

Now let us have a very brief exposition of the *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā*:
The very first *kārikā* of *Sāṁkhya-Kārikā* is --

*Duhkhhatrayābhīghātāt-*

*Jijnāsātadabhīghātātakehetau* |

*Drṣṭe saṁpaṛthā cet-*

*Naikāntātyantatabhāvāt ||* (kārikā no- I)

*(Duhkhhatrayābhīghātāt – from the torment by the three-fold pain; Jijnāsātadabhīghātātakehetau – a desire for inquiry into the means of terminating it; Drṣṭe – the existing visible means; sa – it (i.e. the inquiry); āpaṁthā – superfluous; cet – if it is said; na – not so; aikāntātyantatabhāvāt – (since in them) there is the absence of certainty and permanency)*

In this *kārikā*, *Īśvarakṛṣṇa* says: since one is struck by the threefold misery i.e. (i) the natural and intrinsic, both bodily and mental (*ādhyātmika*), (ii) the natural and extrinsic (*ādhibhautika*), (iii) the divine or supernatural (*ādīdaivika*); an inquiry into the means of terminating it is to be made. If it is said that such an inquiry is superfluous since visible means exist, it is to be replied that no; for these means do not secure absolute and final relief. It implies that, for final relief from these three types of dukha, a systematic inquiry is necessary.

The *kārikā* no-II is giving importance on the ‘knowledge’ to have the sustainable freedom from these types of sufferings. It says that the scriptural means to end misery is not effective, because it is linked with impurity and its effect is neither lasting nor always the same for all. So, the superior means of terminating the misery is the knowledge of the manifest (*vyakta*), the
unmanifest (*avyakta*) and the knower (*jñā*). Ignorance of all these is the root cause of suffering.

The *kārikā* no-III has started to give some hints about the evolutes of ‘Sāṁkhya-Evolution’. In Sāṁkhya evolution, according to this *kārikā*, *prakṛti* is alone a producer, not a product; the seven principles beginning with *mahat*, *ahaṅkāra* and the five *tanmātras* are both productions (*vikṛtih*) and productive (*prakṛti*); the sixteenth *tattvas* viz., the five *mahābhūtas* which are the products of *tanmātras*, the ten Sense-organs together with the Mind which form the eleven products of *ahaṅkāra tattvas* are final products which suffer no further change of state and for the reason of that, are not the producers of anything else. The *puruṣa* is neither the cause nor the result of any change.

Here in this *kārikā*, twenty-five *tattvas* can be noticed including *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* which are treated in *Sāṁkhya-Kārikā* in four different ways. Some objects are merely evolvents; some objects are merely evolutes; some are both evolvents and evolutes and some others are neither the evolvents nor evolutes. The last role is for *puruṣa* which does not get much importance logically in the Sāṁkhya context.

*Kārikā* no-VIII says, the original principle is not seen on account of its subtlety; not on account of its non-existence. That means, non-perception of *prakṛti* is due to its subtlety and not because of its non-existence, since its existence can be inferred as being a cause of *mahatattva* and the others, some of which are like it and the others unlike. May be Īśvarakrishṇa put forward this argument relying on its theory of causation. Here it seems the only means to
know prakṛti is inference. In the kārikā no-IV Īśvarakṛṣṇa is talking about three types of means of knowledge i.e. perception, inference and testimony. Gradually, Īśvarakṛṣṇa has discussed the key concepts of Sāṁkhya in the successive kārikās.

2.3: Basic Concepts of Sāṁkhya:

The Sāṁkhya system is admitted in all hands as one of the oldest systems of Indian thought, because the seeds from which the Classical Sāṁkhya sprung up were strewn over a vast field of philosophic writings of ancient India. The earliest available systematic exposition of the Classical Sāṁkhya can be found in the Sāṁkhya-Kārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa, Gauḍapāda’s commentary on Sāṁkhya-Kārikā, Vācāpati Miśra’s Tattvakaumudi, Anirudha’s Vṛtti and Sāṁkhyaapravachananabhāṣya of Vijnānabhaṅkṣu which are some of the well-known texts on the Sāṁkhya philosophy. Almost all these texts have done a great effort to give the exposition of the basic concepts of Sāṁkhya i.e. the doctrine of causation (satkāryavāda), prakṛti including its guṇas, puruṣa (self), evolution etc. Here, we shall have a glimpse of the expositions of these concepts with some comments.

2.3.1: Satkāryavāda:

The theory of causation has a great importance in the scope of philosophy both Indian and Western. A systematic treatment of causation in early western philosophy is found in Aristotle’s philosophy. Other western
philosophers like John Locke, Berkeley, J. S. Mill, David Hume etc. have widely discussed causality. In Western treatment of causation it is mainly the efficient cause that has figured though Aristotle is talking about the material cause also. It seems, in the Western tradition most of the accounts had neglected material cause, or the material cause had come into consideration there only secondarily. On the other hand, Indian thinkers though mostly accept the efficient cause as one of the causes; have not bothered much about it. Their main subject of treatment is the material cause, i.e. the matter which, due to the activity of the efficient cause, takes a new shape. This material cause has of course appeared in different shades in different systems of Indian philosophy.

Main Problems of Causation in Indian Tradition:

While the western thinkers are troubled and occupied by the considerations of the relation of the efficient cause with its effect, the main problem discussed by Indian thinkers is that of the relation of the material cause with its effect: wherefrom the essence of effect is derived? Does the material cause impart any essence to its effect or is it completely external to the cause so far the essence is concerned? Is the essence then derived from void, i.e. is the effect created out of nothing? What happens to the cause when the effect comes into existence – is it annihilated or continues to exist side by side? Does the material cause actually turn into its effect or present only an illusory appearance?
The problem of the essence of effect is the basic problem of Indian thinkers and in fact, the whole of the division of Indian theories of causation is based on this consideration. There are only two possibilities with regard to the essence of effect: either an effect derives its essence from its cause or it does not. This is the basis of the two broad divisions of the Indian theories of causation: satkāryavāda i.e. the theory of the pre-existence of the effect in the cause and asatkāryavāda i.e. the theory of the non-existence of the effect in the cause before its production. The main exponents of satkāryavāda in Indian philosophy are Sāmkhya-Yoga and Vedānta and of asatkāryavāda are Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Buddhism. The Jaina theory, which is a middle course of the two, is the third and it can be called sad-asatkāryavāda, though this name is not much used. Satkāryavāda is further divided into parināmavāda or vikāravāda advocated by Sāmkhya and Yoga and vivartavāda advocated by Śaṅkara Vedānta. The asatkāryavāda is divided into ārambhavāda advocated by Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and followed by Mīmāṁsā and patityasamutpāda, advocated by Buddhism. There is, however, another theory of causation, called svabhāvavāda or yadṛccchāvāda, advocated by Cārvākas which denies the philosophical theory of causality.
The whole classification can now be depicted by the following chart:

![DIagram of Indian Theory of Causation]

**Satkāryavāda** as a theory of Causality in Sāṁkhya:

*Satkāryavāda*, as we have seen above, maintains that effect exists in a potential or latent form in the cause before the causal process starts. Again this theory can be split up into two forms according to the two different concepts of reality. If we believe that through a causal process change actually occurs and cause actually takes the shape of effect, it will be one kind of *satkāryavāda*. The special name for this version is *parināmavāda* or *vikārvāda* and is advocated by Sāṁkhya and Yoga. On the other hand if we believe that the ultimate reality is unchanging and all kinds of changes are only apparent and illusory, it will be another kind of *satkāryavāda*, specially known as *vivartavāda* i.e. the theory of unreal change. The Advaita-Vedāntist Śaṅkara is an advocate of this theory.
The main point of Sāṅkhya theory of parināmavāda is that Sāṅkhya believes in a real change (parināma): a cause really changes into its effect through a causal process. Sāṅkhya accept the identity of cause and effect. A cloth, e.g., is not different from its cause, the threads. Sāṅkhya-Kārikā gives many arguments to prove the above contentions of Sāṅkhya which are elaborated in its commentaries.

Arguments to Establish Satkāryavāda in Sāṅkhya-Kārikā:

In the kārikā no-IX of Sāṅkhya-Kārikā, the author Īśvarakṛṣṇa tried to establish satkāryavāda in the Sāṅkhya tradition. Here he says:

\[
\text{Asadakaranādūpādānagrahaṇāt} \\
\text{Sarvasaṃbhavabhāvāt} \\
\text{ Saúdeya śakyakaraṇāt kāraṇabhāvācca} \\
\text{Satkāryam //} \\
\]  (kārikā no-IX)

There are five arguments given in this verse to prove satkāryavāda:

1) **Asad-akaranāt**: (from the non-effectuation of the non-existent): In this argument Īśvarakṛṣṇa tries to say -- which is non-existent cannot be produced. If the effects were non-existent before the operation of the cause, it could never be brought into existence by anybody. Vācaspati Miśra, in his commentary on Sāṅkhya-Kārikā, boldly asserts in support
that even a thousand artists cannot turn blue into yellow. (*sāmkhya-
tattva-kaumudi*-IX)

2) **Upādāna-grahaṇāt:** (*from the selection of material for the effect*): Here Īśvarakṛṣṇa says – only a particular material is taken to bring about certain effect. A jar can be produced out of clay only, not from the threads. This means that there is a definite relation of cause with effect.

3) **Sarvasam-bhavābhāvāt:** (*from the absence of the production of everything by every means*): Īśvarakṛṣṇa says - if we do not accept the relation between cause and effect, then every effect would arise from every cause, without any restriction, which is impossible and contrary to experience. Everything is not possible everywhere and always. According to the Sāṁkhya teachers, we shall have, therefore, to admit a relation between cause and effect and hence also the existence of effect before the causal operation, without which the relation is not possible.

4) **Śaktasya-sakyakaranāt:** (*from the effectuation of the producible*):

This argument says – it is common knowledge that the effect must be such as is within the power of the cause to create. There must therefore be a relation between the cause and the effect as regards potency also.

5) **Kāraṇa-bhāva cca satkāryam :** (*from the effect being of the same essence as cause*): Here Īśvarakṛṣṇa says – because effect is of the essence as cause, it is not essentially different from cause. If a cause is existent, then how can its effect, which is inseparable from the cause, be
non-existent? That is why it can be said, effect exists even before the operation of cause.

In this way Īśvarakṛṣṇa has done great effort to establish the identical nature of cause and effect. Vācaspati Mīśra puts forth some arguments to prove this identity of cause and effect. These are –

1) He says – an object differing in its essence from another object can not be its attribute. For example, a cow is not the attribute of a horse. But the cloth is an attribute of the threads; hence the cloth is not a different object from thread.

2) Threads and cloths are not different objects because threads are material cause of cloth and there is a relation of constituent and constituted between them.

3) Threads and cloths are not different also because a cloth does not contain in itself any product which makes its weight different from the weight of threads constituting it. An object different in essence from another always has a weight different from that of the latter. We find no such difference between the effect of the weight of the cloth and that of the weight of the threads constituting it. This proves that the effect, cloth is not different from its cause, the threads.13

Īśvarakṛṣṇa’s doctrine of satkāryavāda plays a significant role in the establishment of the subtle principle like prakṛti in the Sāṁkhya tradition. He says, the mūla-prakṛti has three constituents i.e. sattva, rajas and tamas and the
evolutes of it too are consist of these three *guṇas*. As the nature of the cause (*mūla-prakṛti*) and its effects (the evolutes) are found to be same here, so the *mūla-prakṛti* can be accepted as the cause of these evolutes. In his discussion about evolution Īśvarakṛṣṇa has described how the twenty three principles occur from the root cause *prakṛti* through a causal chain.

2.3.2: *Prakṛti*:

In Indian tradition Śāṅkhyā philosophy is mainly known as a dualistic system though there are two trends in Śāṅkhyā i.e. theistic Śāṅkhyā and atheistic Śāṅkhyā. The theistic Śāṅkhyā is mainly advocated by *Bhagavad-Gītā* where the supreme authority of God over *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* is accepted. So *Gītā’s* Śāṅkhyā cannot be said to be dualistic in strict sense. But in the Indian philosophical tradition Śāṅkhyā is popularly accepted as a dualistic school. Īśvarakṛṣṇa in his *Śāṅkhya-Kārikā* is talking about atheistic-dualistic Śāṅkhyā. Here, one thing should be remembered that in Indian philosophy Śāṅkhyā system belongs to āstika (orthodox) tradition as it believes on the authority of *Veda*. Again Īśvarakṛṣṇa establishes Kapila’s Śāṅkhyā as atheistic system as he is only talking about two ultimate principles i.e. *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*. Regarding the existence of one supreme authority of God, Īśvarakṛṣṇa said nothing.

The Śāṅkhyā metaphysics, especially its doctrine of *prakṛti*, rests mainly on its theory of causation. To establish the two ultimate principles i.e., *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, Īśvarakṛṣṇa has first established the doctrine of causation in
the कृतिका no-IX as we have discussed above. Afterwards on the basis of the doctrine of causation he put forward some arguments in the कृतिका no-XV and XVII for the existence of प्रकृति and पुरुषा respectively.

In the कृतिका no-XV इश्वरकृष्ण says:

\[ \text{Bhedanām parimāṇāt,} \]
\[ \text{Samanvayāt sāktitaḥ pravṛttes-cā} / \]
\[ \text{Kāranakāryavibhāgād} \]
\[ \text{Avibhāgādvaitavarūpasya //} \] (कृतिका no - XV)

This कृतिका consists of five arguments for the existence of प्रकृति which is said to be अव्यक्त in the कृतिका no - X. These arguments are –

1) **Bhedanām parimāṇāt**: (because of the finite nature of specific objects of the evolutes): Here इश्वरकृष्ण says - all the various objects beginning from महातत्त्व are finite and limited and must therefore be caused. That cause again must have its own cause, that again a third cause and so on. Ultimately we arrive at an uncaused cause and that is the अव्यक्त of कृतिका no-X, the root cause of the whole creation.

2) **Samanvayāt**: (because of homogeneity or sameness in diversity): This argument says – all worldly things possess certain common characteristics by which they are capable of producing pleasure, pain and indifference. Hence there must be a common source composed of three गुणas, from which all worldly things arise.
3) **Saktitah pravṛttesa** : (because of evolution being due to the efficiency of the cause i.e. the effect depending on the potentiality of the cause): Īśvarakṛṣṇa says, when we consider about the magnitude of the activity of the universe, we cannot but be convinced that there must be an immense immeasurable force at work. This force being observable and for the reason of that a *vyakta* element, it cannot exist without depending on a support (*āsrita of kārikā - X*). If we go on thinking, we find that the last support must be itself support less i.e. the *avyakta* of the *kārikā no-X*.

4) **Kāraṇakāryavibhāgāt**: (from the differentiation of cause and effect):

Here Īśvarakṛṣṇa says – the effect differs from the cause and hence the limited effect cannot be regarded as its own cause. The effect is the explicit and the cause is the implicit state of the same process. The effects, therefore, points to a world cause where they are potentially contained and which is different from the finite world. This potential infinite cause is *prakṛti*, according to *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā*.

5) **Vaiśvarūpasya-avibhāgāt**: (continuity of the diversity of the universe): This argument says - the diverse objects in this universe beginning from *mahatattva* downwards are the results of a continuous change of causes into effects. At dissolution, the reverse processes, i.e. merger of effects into their causes, must happen. Thus, the *mahābhūtas* will merge into their cause, i.e. the *tanmātras*, the *tanmātras* into the *ahāmkāra tattva* and the latter into *mahatattva* and into the *avyakta*
(prakṣa). In one sentence, here Īśvarakṛṣṇa says that the unity of the universe points to a single cause. And this cause is prakṣa.

These are the arguments put forward by Īśvarakṛṣṇa in the kārikā no-XV, to establish the avyakta i.e. prakṣa in Sāmkhya-Kārikā. The doctrine of satkāryavāda which means a real transformation of the material cause leads to the concept of prakṣa as the root-cause of the worldly evolutes. All worldly effects are latent in this uncaused cause, because infinite regress has to be avoided. As the uncaused root-cause, it is called prakṣa; as the first principle of this universe, it is called pradhāna; as the unmanifested state of all effects, it is known as avyakta; as the unintelligent and unconscious principle, it is called jaḍa; and as the ever-active unlimited power, it is called shakti.

2.3.3: Guṇas:

In the above mentioned arguments, prakṣa is accepted as the unity of the three guṇas held in equilibrium. In the kārikā no-XII, XIII and XIV respectively, Īśvarakṛṣṇa is talking about the three guṇas; these are sattva, rajas and tamas. They are the constituents of prakṣa. Īśvarakṛṣṇa says:

Prityapritiṣādaṭātmakaḥ
Prakāśapraavṛttiyanamārthāḥ |
Anyonyābhbihvāśraya-
Jananamithunavṛttayaśca guṇāḥ || (Kārikā no-XII)
(Priti-apriți-visādā-atmakāh, are of the nature of pleasure, pain, and delusion; prakāśa-pravṛtti-niya-mārthāḥ, they serve the purpose of illumination, endeavor and restraint; anyonyā-abhibhavā-asrava-janana-mithuna vr̥t̥tayah ca, and are mutually dominating, supporting, productive and cooperative)

Here he is trying to say about the nature of those three guṇas and their mutual relations. The attributes (guṇas) are of the nature of pleasure (sattva), pain (rajas) and delusion (tamas); they serve the purpose of illumination, action and restraint respectively and they are mutually dominating and supporting, productive and cooperative.

In the kārikā no-XIII, Ṣvāmīkṛṣṇa says:

Sattvam laghu prakāśakamiṣṭamupastambhakaṁ
Calam ca rajah |
Guru Varanakameva tamah,
Pradīpavaccāarthato vr̥t̥tih || (kārikā no- XIII)

(Sattvam - the sattva attribute; laghu- buoyant, active; prakāśakam – illuminating, enlightening; iṣṭam – desired; upaṣṭambhakaṁ – exciting; calam – mobile, restless; ca- and; rajah – the rajas attribute; guru – heavy; varanakam – enveloping’ obscuring; eva – to be sure; tamaḥ – tamas attribute; pradīpavat – like a lamp; arthaṭḥ – for a purpose; vr̥t̥tih – operation, function)

It means: sattva guṇa is said to be light and illuminating; rajas, stimulating and accelerating; tamaḥ, heavy and restraining. They function (by union of contraries) for a purpose like that of a lamp and co-operate. Actually, this kārikā is talking about the implications of these three guṇas.
In the *kārikā* no-XIV, Īśvarakṛṣṇa says: it is due to three guṇas in the evolutes (*vyakta*), the *avyakta* can be inferred. *Vyakta* is composed entirely of the three guṇas and that it could not exist if it were not so composed, as the effect being of the same nature as its cause. It implies that the unmanifest, the *avyakta* also is proved to be so, since the effect always possesses the properties of the cause.

From these arguments, it becomes clear that *sattva* literally means real or existent and is responsible for the manifestation of objects in consciousness. It is called goodness and produces pleasures. Luminosity of light, power of reflection, upward movement, pleasure, happiness, contentment, and bliss is all due to it. Its colour is white. *Rajas*, which literally means foulness, is the principle of motion. Restlessness, wild stimulation is its result. It produces pain. Its colour is red. *Tamas*, which literally means darkness, is the principle of inertia. It produces apathy and indifference. Ignorance, sloth, confusion, passivity and negativity are its result. Its colour is dark. *Sattva* is characterized by pleasure (*prīti*) and illumination (*prakāśa*); it is buoyant (*laghū*) and shining (*prakāśaka*). *Rajas* is characterized by pain (*aprīti*) and actuation (*pravṛti*), it is stimulating (*upāstambham*) and moving (*cala*). *Tamas* is characterized by indifference (*viṣāda*) and restraint (*niyama*); it is heavy (*guru*) and enveloping (*varanaka*).

These three guṇas which constitute *prakṛti* are never separated. They conflict and yet co-operate with one another and always found intermingled. No one of them can produce anything without the help and support of the other
two. Another important characteristic of gunas as Ḥṣvarakṛṣṇa mentioned in the kārikā no-XII is that they are constantly changing. Change or transformation belongs to the very essence of the gunas.

2.3.4: Puruṣa:

Puruṣa is a very ancient concept in Indian tradition; going back even to the Rg Veda and Atharva Veda. It is most often used in the ancient texts as a term for mortal man e.g. RV.x.97, 4-5. There are also some other interesting speculative uses of the term in the Atharva Veda, especially in such hymns as AV.x.2 and x.7. In the Upaniṣads the term is often used synonymously with ātman. In most of the texts of the proto-Sāṅkhya period puruṣa is used as a term for the self or self along with a number of other terms including ātman, jīva, bhūtāman, kṣetajña etc... In that period it seems no one term had emerged as technical designation for the self. In the Classical Sāṅkhya only a much more sophisticated and refined notion of self appears. J. Larson says - in the time of Classical Sāṅkhya all the older terms have been dropped and puruṣa has become the technical term.¹⁴

Before attempting to examine the significance of puruṣa in Classical Sāṅkhya, it is first necessary to pull together the key passages in the Kārikā which refer to the term. Ḥṣvarakṛṣṇa has mentioned puruṣa for the first time in the kārikā no-III. Here puruṣa is said to be neither prakṛti (creative) nor vikṛti (created). (Na prakṛti na vikṛti puruṣaḥ). That is, puruṣa is not to be thought of as being organically connected with the other twenty four principles. This idea
is given further elucidation in kārikā no-XI at which point puruṣa is said to be opposite from both vyakta and avyakta i.e., puruṣa is not characterized as being made up of the three guṇas; it is, discriminating, subjective, specific, conscious and non-productive. In other words, it can be said, puruṣa exists distinct from the manifested and unmanifested world. It is a reality of a completely different order.

In the kārikā no-XIX, Īśvarakṛṣṇa says - because the puruṣa is apart from that which is made up of the three guṇas i.e., it is apart from the entire manifest and unmanifest world – it is characterized as being 1) a witness (sākṣitvam) 2) possessed of isolation or freedom (kaivalyam) 3) indifferent (madhyastham) 4) a spectator or one who sees (drṣṭam) 5) and inactive (akartābhāva). This view of Īśvarakṛṣṇa indicates that the puruṣa does or add nothing to the mūlāprakṛti and its manifestations. It is simply present in the world-evolution and sees or witnesses the modifications of the nature. Moreover, it is not determined by the worldly evolutes as it does not possess the three qualities i.e. sattva, rajas and tamas. It is isolated or completely free (kaivalya).

In the kārikā no-XVII, Īśvarakṛṣṇa has put forward five arguments for the existence of puruṣa. Here he says -

Sanghataparārthatvāt
Triguṇādiviparyāyādadhiṣṭhānāt //
Puroṣosti bhokṛṭbhāvāt
Kaivalyārtham pravrīttes- ca // (kārikā no – XVII)
The arguments are -

1) **Samghätaparāthatvāt**: (all composite products are for the sake of another’s use) This argument says – there can be no order, law, symmetry or co-operation in an assemblage of inanimate objects unless some intelligent being has skillfully arranged them to work for a certain object and under fixed laws. According to Īśvarakṛśṇa this intelligent being is puruṣa.

2) **Triguṇādīviparyāyād**: (because of the absence of the three guṇas and other properties) The other being for whom the samghāta is cannot be another samghāta, for this will lead to the fault of anāvasthā (instability). It therefore must be the reverse (viparyāyā) of the composition of the three guṇas - sattva, rajas and tamas (triguṇādi); it cannot be of the three guṇas; it cannot be the object of experience. This is the spirit or puruṣa. In brief, Īśvarakṛśṇa tries to say that all objects are composed of the three guṇas, therefore, it is logically presupposed the existence of puruṣa who is the witness of these guṇas and he himself beyond them.

3) **Adhiṣṭhānāt**: (because there must be an experiencer or some controlling agency) In this argument Īśvarakṛśṇa says - inanimate things cannot work or serve a useful purpose unless they are directed into a proper channel by an intelligent being, just as a
motor car cannot run without a driver. And this intelligent being is *puruṣa* according to Īśvarakṛṣṇa.

4) **Puroṣotti bhokṭābhāvāt:** (because there must be an experiencer) This argument says – there is surely someone to enjoy otherwise the whole creation will be meaningless. And that principle according to Īśvarakṛṣṇa is none but *puruṣa*, the intelligent principle which is beyond the three *guṇas*.

5) **Kaivalyārtham pravṛtteś-ca:** (because of the tendency of activities towards final beatitude) In Indian tradition maximum number of scriptures promise relief and ultimate release from the worldly bondage and Īśvarakṛṣṇa’s *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā* is not an exception from that. This pre-supposes a subject isolable from matter. The release promised must refer to an entity other than matter, and this entity is nothing but *puruṣa* according to Īśvarakṛṣṇa. He says, *puruṣa* is originally free from three *guṇas*. Due to the reflection of *buddhi* in the process of evolution, *puruṣa* forgets its own nature and that is why it suffers. But when it realises its own nature by discriminative knowledge then it gets liberation.

In addition to these characterizations and arguments for the existence of *puruṣa*, Īśvarakṛṣṇa has given some arguments for the plurality of *puruṣa* in the
kārikā no-XVIII. In Classical Sāṅkhya, the puruṣa is said to be plural in number. In this kārikā, Īśvarakṛṣṇa says:

Janamamarāṇakaranānām

Pratiniyamādayugapatpravṛttteśca //

Puruṣabahutvaṁ siddham

Trigūṇyaviparyayāccaiva // (kārikā no – XVIII)

(Janamamarāṇakaranānām - of birth, death and instruments of action and cognition; pratiniyamāt - because of individual allotment; pravṛttteḥ ayugapat - because of non-simultaneity of activities; puruṣabahutvaṁ siddham - multiplicity of spirits is established; trigūṇyaviparyayāccaiva - because of the diverse modifications due to the three guṇas)

These arguments say, the multiplicity of the spirit is verily established (1) from the individual allotment of birth, death and the instruments. Had there been only one puruṣa, the birth or death of one should have meant the birth or death of all and any particular experience of pleasure, pain or indifference by one should have been equally shared by all. Hence the souls must be many. (2) From the non-simultaneity of activities. If the self were one, bondage of one should have meant bondage of all and liberation of one should have meant liberation of all. The activity of one should have made all persons active and the sleep of one should have lulled into sleep all other persons. (3) From the diverse modifications due to the three guṇas. Though the emancipated souls are all alike and differ only in number as they are all beyond the three guṇas, yet the bound souls relatively differ in qualities also, since in some sattva
predominates while in others *rajas* and in still others *tamas*. The incidence of birth and death and the actions of the *indriyas* are being different from individual to individuals; all men not having the same inclinations at the same time; the thoughts arising out of the action of the three *gunas* being different from individual to individuals – from all these it follows that souls (*puruṣa*) are many. So, here it can be imagined that Ṛṣvāraṇṇa has done big effort to establish *puruṣa* in Sāṁkhya tradition in a very particular way.

2.3.5: Evolution:

In *Sāṁkhya-Kārikā* after the discussions of the nature of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* Ṛṣvāraṇṇa has proceeded to explain how this universe evolved. At the very outset of his discussion he makes responsible *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* for the evolution of this universe, specially from the *kārikā* no-XXI he is talking about the connection (*saṁyoga*) of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* and trying to make responsible this *saṁyoga* for the evolution of this universe. In the *kārikā* no-XXI, Ṛṣvāraṇṇa says:

\[ \text{Puruṣasya darsanārtham} \\
\text{Kaivalyārtham tathā pradhānasya} / \\
\text{Paṅgvandhavadubhayorapi} \\
\text{Saṁyogastatkṛtaḥ sargāḥ // } \quad (\text{kārikā no-XXI}) \]

(*Puruṣasya darsanārtham kaivalyārtham tathā pradhānasya* – for the sake of exhibition of nature (*prakṛti*) to the spirit (*puruṣa*) and for the emancipation of the spirit (*puruṣa*); *paṅgvandhavat* - like the lame and the blind; *ubhayorapi* -
of both also; samyogaḥtākṣrtaḥ sarvaḥ - there is union and from this union proceeds the creation.

It means, the connection (saṃyogas) of the pradhāna (prakṛti) with the puruṣa is like the association of a blind man with a lame one and it serves a dual purpose of the pradhāna being contemplated upon by the puruṣa and the consequent attainment of kaivalya by the latter. Thus they have made the creation what it is.

Īśvarakṛṣṇa says – in Sāṁkhya evolution prakṛti plays a major role. Prakṛti has three constituents i.e. sattva, rajas and tamas and it is the state of equilibrium of these three guṇas which originally remain in a form of disintegration and disunion bringing no categories into existence. This equilibrium stage exists before the evolution of this world starts. This is the state of dissolution and the consequent suspension of all creative activities. It means, when these three guṇas stay in an equilibrium stage, there is no evolution. But when this stage of equilibrium is disturbed the evolution of this universe starts. Generally it is believed and Īśvarakṛṣṇa also says in his Kārikā – due to the relationship of nature with spirit brought about by the transcendental influence of puruṣa (the spirit), a commotion of prakṛti from this state of equipoise takes place, with the result, that the evolution of different categories in their own graduated series, immediately starts in the collocation of the guṇas. In this act of evolution, however, the guṇas retain their specific characters. In every evolute, the three guṇas remain present, although the
character of the evolutes is always determined by the nature of the predominant one.

Afterwards, in the karika no-XXII, the author is talking about the evolutes. Here he says:

Prakṛtermahāṁstantoḥanāṁkārastasmādgaṇḍaṁca

Soddāsakāḥ |

Tasmādapi soddāsakātpaṇcaḥbhyaḥ

Paṅca bhūtāni || (kārika-XXII)

(Prakṛtermahāṁstantoḥanāṁkārastasmādgaṇḍaṁca Soddāsakāḥ - from the primordial matter evolves the mahatattva, from this evolves the ahaṁkāra tattva, from this evolves the set of sixteen i.e. eleven sense organs, including the mind and the five tanmātras; Tasmādapi soddāsakātpaṇcaḥbhyaḥ - from the five of this set of sixteen; Paṅca bhūtāni – proceed the five elements)

It means, in the process of evolution first of all prakṛti is transformed into mahat or cosmic intellect (buddhi). Secondly, mahat is transformed into ahaṁkāra or cosmic egoism. Ahaṁkāra is transformed into mind, five sense organs, five organs of action, and five subtle elements (tanmātras). From the five subtle (tanmātras) elements evolve five gross elements (mahābhūtas). The above mentioned five sense organs are eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin; the five organs of action are mouth, hand, feet, anu, sex organs; the five subtle elements (tanmātras) are sound, touch, colour, taste and smell and the five gross elements (mahābhūtas) are ether, air, fire, water, earth. These are the twenty-
four principles of Sāṃkhya evolution. Isvarakṛṣṇa says, in addition to these there is another ultimate principle i.e. the puruṣa. So, there are twenty-five principles of evolution in the Classical Sāṃkhya of Isvarakṛṣṇa.

Vācaspati Miśra holds that ahaṁkāra in its sāttvika aspect evolves into manas, the five organs of knowledge and the five organs of action. Ahaṁkāra in its tāmasika aspect evolves into the five subtle essences. Ahaṁkāra in its rājasika aspect plays its part in both. The five subtle essences evolve into five gross elements of earth, water, light, air and ether by a preponderance of tāmas.

Vijñānabhikṣu gives a slightly different account of the evolution of the cosmos. He says, Ahaṁkāra is modified into the eleven sense organs on the one hand and the five subtle essences on the other. The five subtle essences are modified into the five gross elements. Ahaṁkāra in its sāttvika aspect evolves into manas. Ahaṁkāra in its rajas aspect evolves into the ten sense-organs, the five organs of knowledge and the five organs of action. Ahaṁkāra in its tāmasa aspect evolves into the fives tanmātras.15

From the general understanding of Sāṃkhya-Kārikā it can be understood that the universe is consist of the above mentioned twenty-five elements. These may be shown thus in a tabular form:
Here it is seen, by the help of the karika no - XXI and XXII Īśvaraṅkṛṣṇa has tried to discuss the zest Sāṅkhya philosophy i.e. the doctrine of evolution. Afterwards till the karika no-XL, the author basically has discussed about the evolutes, their nature and activities. The karika no-XXXI says, the eleven organs of evolutes accomplish their own particular function in co-ordination with one another. Here, the only motive is for the sake of the puruṣa. It seems, in the karika no-XXXVI, XLII, LVI, LVII and LVIII Īśvaraṅkṛṣṇa says: the
evolutes are motivated and act accordingly for the sake of puruṣa. Kārikā no-LVII says, as the unknowing (or unconscious) milk functions for the sake of the nourishment of calf; so does the prakṛti functions for the sake of the release of the puruṣa. In the kārikā no-LIX Īśvarakṛṣṇa says:

Rāṅgasya darśayitvā
Nivartate nartakī yathā nṛtyāt |
Puruṣasya tathātmānam

Prakāśya vinivartate prakṛtiḥ || (kārikā no – LIX)

(Rāṅgasya darśayitvā – having exhibited herself to the spectators; Nivartate nartakī yathā nṛtyāt – ceases to dance as a dancing girl; Puruṣasya tathātmānam prakāśya – similarly exhibiting herself to puruṣa; Vinivartate prakṛtiḥ – the prakṛti ceases to operate)

It means - Just as a dancing girl desists from dancing having exhibited herself to the audience, so does prakṛti ceases to operate after having exhibited herself to the puruṣa.

In the kārikā no-LXII and LXIII respectively, the author has given some views from different angles which can be considered as very important. Here he says: it is only the prakṛti, in her manifold forms, that suffers bondage, migrates and finally liberated; the puruṣa is never under bondage, nor he is liberated, nor does he migrates. Thus, verily, puruṣa is never bound, nor released nor does he migrate. It is the prakṛti, being the support of manifold creation that migrates, is bound and is released. Prakṛti by herself binds herself
by means of seven forms, and it is she again, who by means of one form, releases herself for the benefit of the spirit.

Again, in the *kārikā* no-LXVIII, the author says: when the separation from the body has taken place, and there is the cessation of activity of the *pradhāna* due to its purpose having been accomplished, (the *puruṣa*) attains isolation (*kaivalya*) which is both certain and final. In the *kārikā* no-LXIX, the author says: this "abstruse knowledge" for the sake of the *puruṣa* - wherein is analysed the production, duration and dissolution of all beings – has been expounded or enumerated by the great sage. In the *kārikā* no-LXX Īśvarakṛṣṇa says, this excellent and pure knowledge was given with compassion by the sage (Kapila) to Āsuri; Āsuri likewise to Pañcaśikha; and by him the doctrine was elaborated in various ways.

2.4: Theism vs Atheism:

Theism and atheism are two very important views regarding the existence of God. In the scope of philosophy all over the world, these two types of sects can be found. Theism is the belief in the existence of one or more divinities or deities. Theism is a philosophically or theologically reasoned understanding of reality that affirms that the source and continuing ground of all things is in God; that the meaning and fulfillment of all things lie in their relation to God; and that God intends to realize that meaning and fulfillment.

Atheism on the other hand, as a philosophical view, is the position that either affirms the non-existence of gods or rejects theism. When defined more
broadly, atheism is the absence of the belief in deities, alternatively called non-theism. Traditionally, atheism is a system of views rejecting faith in the spirits, gods, life beyond death, etc.... Atheism criticizes religious dogmas from the standpoint of scientific study of the universe. The philosophical basis of atheism is materialism and to a certain extent material spirituality. We also have annihilationist and naturalists who do not believe in the existence of God.

These two traditions i.e. ‘theism and atheism’ can be found in the Indian philosophical tradition. The theistic account can be clearly found in the Yoga, Nyāya and Vedānta philosophy. There is a controversy among the thinkers whether Sāṅkhya philosophy is theistic or atheistic one. From the understanding of the Kārikā Sāṅkhya can be said as atheistic as it is talking only about two ultimate principles, i.e. pruṣa and prakṛti. Question arises how can a Vedic system be atheistic? So, there are lots of debates regarding the theism and atheism of Sāṅkhya. Let us have a brief evaluative-exposition of these issues related to Sāṅkhya.

2.4.1: Theistic Sāṅkhya in Mahābhārata:

Like the Upaniṣads, the Mahābhārata also include within itself lots of Sāṅkhya elements as it is mentioned in the chapter no - I. It seems the relationship between the Mahābhārata and Sāṅkhya deserves close attention. The epic particularly it’s Anugītā portion (Āśvamedha, 16-51), undoubtedly reveals a movement of thought akin to that of Sāṅkhya. Its valuable suggestions, expositions and lucid analysis of Sāṅkhya concepts may suitably
be knitted together for the development of a Sāṅkhya stand. In several chapters of the ‘Sānti-Parva’ of the Mahābhārata a theistic and monistic account of Sāṅkhya can be found. Here, in Mahābhārata the existence of a ‘Puruṣottama’ (the highest spiritual being) as the ultimate reality is too apparent and puruṣa (individual self) and ākṛti (matter) are two phases of this highest lord. Here, it is said, ākṛti is endowed with the dynamic power of evolving and dissolving this universe; but she does not, of her own accord perform this wonderful function. She is fully under the influence of one spiritual principle, who is her lord or master; and it is this lord who makes her play with her own creative power and energy. This spiritual principle is, therefore, the highest reality that transcends and includes both ākṛti and individual puruṣa. This is the principle of consciousness that illumines and supports everything.17

It can be said that a study of the theistic Sāṅkhya through the pages of the Mahābhārata reveals a close inter-alliance of this system of philosophy with the religion of the Vaiṣṇavas. In the Mahābhārata this religion manifests itself through the Pañcarātra sect. The religion of the Pañcarātra has been described as being identical with that of the Sāṅkhya-Yoga. (Sāṅkhya-yogena tulya hi dharma ekāntasevitaḥ, Mbh.XII. 348.73 - 4). According to Farquhar, “the transformation of the epic into an encyclopedia of religion, law and politics was carried out in the interests of the Vaiṣṇava sects. Hence it is natural to surmise that the association of the Sāṅkhya-Yoga school with the God of the Vaiṣṇavas is nothing but a Vaiṣṇava transformation of the philosophical school. It is pointed out by the critics that the Sāṅkhya and the yoga system (in
the Mahābhārata) are represented as being essentially the same as the philosophy of Brāhmaṇa, and all three are taught as philosophical foundation of the Vaiṣṇava religion”.

2.4.2: Theistic Sāṁkhya in Bhagavatapurāṇa:

Like Mahābhārata, Bhagavatapurāṇa also says, the ultimate reality is one beginningless self-shining being, which is beyond the sphere of the guṇas. It shines forth in all individual souls and is superior to prakṛti. In the beginning, the ultimate reality was all alone in himself and His powers also remained submerged in Him. Being bored by such awful loneliness, He began to feel uneasy and uncertain about himself. So, he disturbed the equilibrium of His own māyā-śakti through the instrumentality of time, which was his own transcendental capacity, and also through His own self, he placed the seed of consciousness in māyā and thence started the process of creation. Here, the transcendental self seems to have been seemingly dislodged from its supreme state of transcendence, a new category of fictitious self seems to have emerged there from. Due to ignorance, this fictitious self fails to distinguish itself from prakṛti and it therefore, thinks of itself as the doer of all natural actions. The self in fact, does not initiate any activity, the responsibility of which lies wholly with prakṛti. Thus in Bhagavatapurāṇa two principal categories are recognized viz. prakṛti and puruṣa or the power and possessor of power. But prakṛti has no independent existence of its own, being the power of the supreme puruṣa. Nature is here described as consisting of the three guṇas - unmanifest, eternal
and homogeneous. The peculiarity of the *Bhagavata-Sāṁkhya* lies in the fact that here the supreme self on its own initiative, has reflected itself in *māyā* and has thus fallen under the influence of its own power. The position is otherwise in the Classical Sāṁkhya, where the urge for creation lies inherent in the nature of *prakṛti*.

2.4.3: Theistic Sāṁkhya in the *Ahirbudhnya-Saṁhitā*:

*Ahirbudhnya-Saṁhitā* also has given a theistic account of Sāṁkhya. Here too, it is found, the account of Sāṁkhya is a development of the theistic branch and consequently here too we find that *Parama Brahma* or *Nārāyana* is regarded as the supreme reality ruling over life and the universe. He is described as the beginningless, endless eternal being, devoid of all names and forms, indescribable, unthinkable and absolutely changeless. *Puruṣa* and *kāla* are two forms of God’s power, besides *prakṛti*; and all of them are led to their respective functions in the process of creation by the thought power of Viṣṇu or Nārāyana.¹⁹

2.4.4: Theistic Sāṁkhya in *Gītā*:

In the *Gītā*, the word ‘Sāṁkhya’ has been used in the sense of ‘true knowledge’ as it is mentioned in the chapter no-I. Sāṁkhya here means the path of philosophic wisdom, leading the realization of the essential nature of the ātman. The *prakṛti* in the *Gītā* means the lower nature of God and is never an independent principle, as in the Classical Sāṁkhya. It is called *apara prakṛti*.
and is differentiated into eight parts viz, the five elements, the buddhi, ahaṃkāra and manas; probably showing, thus, that the physical and the psychical have evolved together to form the mind-body system. The highest reality is the all-inclusive God and He includes within Himself both puruṣa and prakṛti. They simply stand for His higher and lower natures, and are, therefore, totally dependent on God. Gītā says that puruṣottama is the ultimate cause of this universe.

It can be said that the Gītā or the philosophical portion contained in Mahābhārata VI, 25-42 furnishes an important specimen of the theistic Śāṅkhya. The philosophy of Gītā is narrated by Vasudeva Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna in the battle field of Kurukṣetra. The fundamental background of the philosophy of the Gītā is supplied by the philosophy of the Śāṅkhya-Yoga. It differs to a great extent from the traditional schools of the Śāṅkhya philosophy, but, as pointed out by S.N. Dasgupta, “it is easy to notice here the beginnings of a system of thought which in the hands of other thinkers might well be developed into the traditional school of Śāṅkhya philosophy.”

It can be imagined, these theistic interpretations of Śāṅkhya aim at bringing Śāṅkhya closer to the Vedic tradition so that it can be well accommodated in the orthodox system of Indian Philosophy.

2.4.5: Atheistic Accounts of Śāṅkhya:

The very controversial question among the philosophers is: “Does the Śāṅkhya system admit the existence of God or is it an atheistic system?” In Śāṅkhya-Kārikā, Īśvarakṛṣṇa recognizes the existence of two principles, i.e. puruṣa and prakṛti, the static and dynamic respectively, which build up a
comprehensive doctrine for explaining the being and becoming of the whole universe. Here, puruṣa cannot be the ultimate supreme God as Īśvarakṛṣṇa accept puruṣa as many. The Kārikā say, the inherent teleology in prakṛti demands that the creation should proceed in a manner that will be beneficial and helpful to puruṣa either in the direction of enjoyment or in the direction of salvation. Of course those arguments related to the establishment of puruṣa in Sāṅkhya tradition have lots of defects. Īśvarakṛṣṇa says, the purpose of the puruṣa passively guides and controls all the activities of the gunās and so, it may imply that the introduction of another conscious being or Īśvara, as the creator, preserver and destroyer of the world is apparently not needed in this system of philosophy.

D.P. Chattopadhyaya quotes, a considerable number of aphorisms of the Sāṅkhya-Sūtra were designed to refute the theistic claim of Sāṅkhya. In the first chapter it is said, God does not exist, for if he exists, he must be either bound or liberated. A bound spirit cannot be accepted as God because of his attachment with merit and demerit, nor can a freed soul be regarded as the creator God, as he would have no desire to act and create this manifold world. Hence, God cannot be admitted as the agent in the process of creation because of his liberated and non-attached nature. Nor can we say that God has undertaken the task of creating this universe, disinterestedly, for the good of his own creatures only. The world is so full of sins and sufferings that it cannot be said to be the creation of a good God who works only for the benefit of his own off-springs.
Chattopadhyaya again says, in the 5th chapter of *Śāṅkhya-Sūtra*, it can be noticed; arguments are put forward to disprove the existence of an eternal God. God is supposed to create the world of pleasures and pains for all living beings in accordance with the ‘law of *karma*’. According to this ‘law of *karma*’ everything happens. If this is so, then let *karma* alone become the agent of the products of action; what need is there of a creator God? The actions produce their own consequences naturally. Again God cannot be supposed to work for his own benefit, which is meaningless on the face of his perfect and pure nature; and even if he is supposed to act for his own good, he will be no better than an ordinary human being. If it is admitted that God acts like a magnet through mere proximity, then, it can be said, the proximity of *puruṣa* would be sufficient for causing the disturbance of *prakṛti*.

Most often it is questioned, was these aphorisms really intended to be a declaration of absolute atheism of Śāṅkhya? It seems, Vijnānabhikṣu, a commentator with a personal theistic bias, raised some doubt about it. Vijnānabhikṣu argued the denial of God was not to be confused with the denial of the possibility of the theoretical proof for His existence, for God can exist in spite of the failure of our theoretical equipment to prove that He does. With this assumption in mind, Vijnānabhikṣu argued that a careful understanding of the actual wordings of the *Sūtra* showed that it was designed simply to deny the possibility of proving God and not of proving His existence. It is said in the *Sūtra*, “because God is not proved” (*īśvarasiddheḥ*) and not “because God does not exist.” (*īśvarabhāvat*).
Íśvarakṛṣṇa’s Sāṅkhya-Kārikā is very much silent regarding the existence of God. It is talking only about two ultimate realities, i.e. puruṣa and prakṛti. Pañcaśikha, the well-known Sāṅkhya teacher also seems to have interpreted the Kapila’s Sāṅkhya in an atheistic manner. This was, perhaps, due to the fact that during the period of Pañcaśikha, the Buddhistic thought was very much in prominence. To allow free thinking and rational consideration of each problem which was the characteristic of Buddhist school, Pañcaśikha remained silent on the problem of God, since His existence could not be proved by pure reasoning.

The atheistic line of thinking which has already been traced out in the teachings of Pañcaśikha finds a fuller and more systematic development in the Saṁhitā of Caraka. The first chapter of Sarira Sthānam in the Caraka-Saṁhitā opens with an interpretation of different kinds of puruṣa. Consciousness, as such, is no doubt regarded as puruṣa in some ‘sāstras’ but such a puruṣa finds no place in medical science. Saṁhitā says - pleasure, pain, disease, death, old age, etc. can happen to a mind-body complex and not to pure transcendental puruṣa. So, by puruṣa, Caraka refers to conglomerations of ingredients, either of six or of twenty-four. Further, for serving the purpose of Caraka-Saṁhitā, human organisms alone are accepted in the sense of puruṣa.²⁴

Actually, the atheistic heritage of India is extremely rich. Compared to the western atheism India is the oldest country in atheistic thought and ideas. From the time of the Vedas till the time of contemporary philosophy there is an unbroken chain of atheistic tradition in the Indian soil. It is an astonishing fact
that the *Rg* Vedic sages at times were skeptic and agnostic. Max-Muller asserted *Rg Veda* to be the oldest record in the library of the world and even in this oldest record of mankind atheistic idea was present in the form of skeptic and agnosticism.\textsuperscript{25}

It can be said; out of six orthodox philosophies of India four are atheistic in nature. Even Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophies also give prime importance to the categories and their epistemological discussions. Critics are of the opinion that the proofs for the existence of God are a later addition to Nyāya. The philosophy of Kapila explains the evolution of matter into twenty-four categories. In Classical Sāṅkhya two principles of the universe are explained as *prakṛti* or nature which includes matter to mind and *puruṣa* means the pure consciousness. It is said in *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā*, without the help of the nature, pure consciousness is helpless and vice-versa. God has nothing to do with the system. Again nothing was said about God in the *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā*. Nevertheless, both Gaudapāda and Vācaspati Miśra evidently felt that an exposition of the Sāṅkhya philosophy without its atheism was necessarily incomplete. That is why both of them tried to select some suitable passages of the *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā*, the explanation of which could be used as an appropriate occasion for including the anti-theistic arguments of the Sāṅkhya. For this purpose, verse no - LXI of the text was chosen by Gaudapāda and verse no - LVII by Vācaspati Miśra, where the principle like *prakṛti* is given importance and the God like spiritual principle seems to be ignored.
A writer like Anima Sen Gupta seems to have no hesitation in describing a particular stage of Śāṅkhyan thought as theistic and monistic. It does not seem to occur to her that a monistic Śāṅkhya is a contradiction in terms. Daya Krishna says, “If a thinker gives up the position of the ultimate ontological reality of self and nature or puruṣa and prakṛti, then his thought cannot be characterized as Śāṅkhyan in character. Even theistic Śāṅkhya can be accepted only in the sense in which Īśvara is accepted, say, in the Yoga-Sūtras, that is, as a pre-eminent, ever-liberated soul and not as a creator God who is the source of both selves and nature, puruṣas and prakṛti”.

Daya Krishna asks, if early Śāṅkhya was monistic, as is alleged by some, then how was it different from Vedānta at that time? Equally, if it was theistic, how was it different from the devotional schools of those times? This point is important, as it is seen; Śāṅkhya in the Indian tradition has never been associated with the devotional way of religious seeking. To link it then with theism, except in the accidental and adventitious way of the Yoga-Sūtra, seems counter to the spirit of the school itself.

Daya Krishna raises a crucial point, how is the Kārikā and the Sūtra to be interpreted; would not certain interpretations be un-Śāṅkhyan in character? These are the crucial questions which have to be faced and answered, specially in view of the fact that some interpreters have tried to read into them both theism and Vedāntism. The case of Vijnānabhikṣu is too well known to be repeated again. But even with respect to the Kārikā, it is told about a very recent commentary entitled Śāṅkhya-taruvasanta by Mudumba.
Narasimhsvamin. The author has done with the *Kārikā* what Bhikṣu did in respect of the *Sūtra*. He believes that there is no radical divergence between the Sāṁkhya and the Vedānta. The question, then, obviously is whether these interpretations are Sāṁkhyan in character or not. Is this a repeated tendency to assimilate Sāṁkhya to something else, whether theistic or monistic; is it not a violation of the spirit of Sāṁkhya as a distinctive philosophical position?  

Daya Krishna again says, theism and monism may appear to be such forced interpretations on the *Kārikā* and the *Sūtra* as not deserve any serious consideration on the part of any dedicated student of the subject. Classical Sāṁkhya is supposed by all to be atheistic and dualistic in character. A philosophical position which rejects the ultimate dualism of self and nature or subject and object does not deserve the name of Sāṁkhya at all.  

In the Sāṁkhya philosophy, the *gunas* meant a constituent of matter. So, the worldly objects are constituted of three *gunas* means, the world is material. ‘Being made of the three *gunas* simply meant being material.’ Thus the main point of the anti-theistic argument attributed by Gauḍapāda to the Sāṁkhya is that God cannot be the first cause of the world, inasmuch as the world is material while God is non-material, and the causal law demands that there must be basic similarity between the cause and the effect. Instead of God, therefore, *prakṛti* - which is itself material, can alone be the cause of the material world.  

There may be a question regarding this view – how the material cause alone be the cause of the world, just as a lump of clay; the material cause of a jar, cannot by itself account for the production of the jar. Over and above the
material cause, therefore it is necessary to admit an efficient cause or a nimittaka-
karaṇa. Here, Vācaspati Miśra, the renowned independent thinker from Indian
philosophical tradition rightly realized that the real atheistic implication of
Sāṁkhya-Kārikā was to be sought in that passage of the text which was
specially designed to prove the self-sufficiency of the material cause, i.e. to
deny, by implication, the need of assuming any efficient cause for the origin of
the world. In the kārika no- (LVII) of the text, Īśvarakṛṣṇa says:

\[
\begin{align*}
Vatsavivṛddhinimittam \\
Kṣirasya yathā pravṛttirajñasya | \\
Puruṣavimokṣanimittaṁ \\
Tathā pravṛttih pradhānasya || (kārika no- LVII)
\end{align*}
\]

(Vatsavivṛddhinimittam – is for the growth of the calf; Kṣirasya yathā
pravṛttirajñasya – like the flow of milk which is insentient;
Puruṣavimokṣanimittaṁ – for the sake of the emancipation of the spirit; Tathā
pravṛttih pradhānasya – similar is the action of the pradhāna)

According to this kārika, the evolution of the world takes place without
the guidance of any conscious principle, just as milk moves within the cow for
the nourishment of the calf without being guided by any conscious principle.
This view is based on the tacit assumption of the doctrine of svabhāva.

Here, we can mention two points about Sāṁkhya atheism on which
Mādhva fully agreed with Vācaspati Miśra. Firstly, the assumption of God was
ontologically irrelevant. Secondly, it was also logically repulsive.
The Sāṅkhya as a rational philosophy developed certain positive principles which made the admission of God absolutely unnecessary. Vācaspati Miśra and Mādhva showed that Sāṅkhya atheism directly followed from the view that primeval matter, moved by the 'laws of motion' inherent in it (svabhāva), adequately accounted for the origin and development of the world. Hence it was redundant to admit the existence of God. This redundancy, in other words, was only a corollary of the self-sufficiency of the principle of prakṛti to account for the origin of the world, and this self-sufficiency of the principle of prakṛti followed from implicit acceptance of the doctrine of svabhāva. The Sāṅkhya philosophers seemed to go further and asked how far the idea of God accepted by others could have an inherent logical legitimacy. Probably most of them come to the reasoned conclusion that it had none, inasmuch as the concept was infested with an internal inconsistency.
References:

1) Keith, *The Sāṁkhya System*, p.84.


6) Ibid., p.147.

7) Ibid., p.148.


16) Banerji, S.C., *A Companion to Indian Philosophy*, p.34.

17) Gupta, A.S., *The Evolution of the Sāṁkhyā School of Thought*, p.70.


21) Chattopadhyaya, D.P., *Indian Atheism, a Marxist analysis*, p.84.

22) *Sāṁkhyā-Sūtra* v. 2 – 12; 46; 126 – 7 and Chattopadhyaya, D.P., *Indian Atheism, a Marxist analysis*, p.85.

23) Vijñānabhiṣkṣu on *Sāṁkhyā-Sūtra* i.p.92 and Chattopadhyaya, D.P., *Indian Atheism, a Marxist analysis*, p.87.


27) Ibid., p.198.

28) Ibid., p.198.

29) Ibid., p.199.


31) Ibid., p.81.