Classical Sāṃkhya Represented by Īśvarakṛṣṇa in

the Sāṃkhyakārikā and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa

by

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Abstract

Drawing comparisons between the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, this thesis explores the relationship between the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa's* theism and the dualistic metaphysics of the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*. Employing a textual and philosophical approach, this thesis compares how the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* draws upon the metaphysics of Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṃkhyakārikā* while still maintaining its theistic framework.

A dualistic treatise, Īśvarakṛṣṇa proposes that reality consists of two primordial principles, consciousness (*puruṣa*) and matter (*prakṛti*). In the metaphysics of the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, the universe arises from a dynamic interchange between these principles. It is knowledge of this interchange that becomes the path to liberation from suffering.

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is also concerned with liberating knowledge. This poetic text, however, postulates the source of this knowledge is a god (*Īśvara*) who, rather than the relationship of two eternal principles, is the creator of the universe. As such, *Īśvara* is worthy of devotion. This devotion, which is an aesthetic experience (*rasa*) is a path to salvation and spiritual realization.

While both texts are concerned with liberating knowledge, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa's* theistic postulate of a creator god as the source of this knowledge and the object of devotion is where the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṃkhyakārikā* bear striking differences.

The problem put forward within this discussion is a puzzling inconsistency in Īśvarakṛṣṇa's metaphysics. Īśvarakṛṣṇa says that ultimate reality is composed of two impersonal, self-contained principles. He further proposes that one of these principles, unconscious *prakṛti*, somehow works for the deliverance of the consciousness, or spirit (*puruṣa*). In the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, however, he argues that *puruṣa* has never been bound and, therefore, is never set free. Moreover, *prakṛti* in itself is unconscious and thus cannot exercise volition. The commentarial tradition suggests that the existence of *Īśvara* (god) solves the problem of how the unconscious *prakṛti* can provide for the salvation of *puruṣa*. The authors of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* go a step further and posit a Supreme deity worthy of worship. This deity is responsible for the saving knowledge necessary for liberation. Hence, within its aesthetic framework, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* reconciles Īśvarakṛṣṇa's inconsistency.

Despite these differences, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and Īśvarakṛṣṇa share a similar soteriological position. Each agree that both *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* metaphysically undergird the whole of reality and must be accurately discriminated. Liberation from suffering is possible only when the ontological reality of the Knower (*puruṣa*) is seen as separate from matter (*prakṛti)*. Īśvarakṛṣṇa says that knowledge of the two impersonal principles is the means of liberation (*Jñāna –yoga*). The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* by contrast, puts forward a path of aesthetic devotion (*bhakti-yoga*) as the means of liberation. Īśvarakṛṣṇa's non-theist dualism of necessity makes no recognition of a path of devotion; nevertheless, the philosophical perspectives found within his ancient treatise profoundly frames the devotionalism found within the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.

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Introduction

Introduction

In this thesis, I explore an important relationship between the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, and the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, the central text of the Sāṃkhyan philosophy.

Celebrated as a primary exemplar of loving devotion to a personal deity (*bhakti*), the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is one of India's most cherished Sanskrit works.[1] As Ravi Gupta and Kenneth Valpey point out, it is intimately known, taught to children from early infancy, and repeatedly performed through dramatic arts in India.[2] A source of inspiration, this text is widely propagated.[3] The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, one of eighteen Purāṇas in the *Mahāpurāṇa's*, has, as Ludo Rocher points out, been translated into many languages, and has received an exceptional amount of Sanskrit commentarial attention.[4] With an abundant use of Sanskrit poetry (*kāvya*), this Purāṇa is a collection of epic lore, wisdom teaching, religious discourse, and devotional material. Its cosmology and theology, and its devotion to Kṛṣṇa, reflect one of Hinduism's major traditions, Vaiṣṇavism.

The *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, written by the philosopher Īśvarakṛṣṇa, is one of the earliest extant texts of Sāṃkhya, one of the oldest systems of Indian philosophy. A dualistic treatise, it proposes that reality consists of two primordial principles, those of consciousness (*puruṣa*) and matter (*prakṛti*). Unlike the theistic *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, it does not posit a supreme being or personal creator of material reality.

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[1] Ravi M. Gupta and Kenneth R. Valpey, *The Bhāgavata Purāṇa: Sacred Text and Living Tradition.* (New York: Columbia University Press), 2013, xi.
[2] Ibid., 2.
[3] Ibid., 11.
[4] Ludo Rocher, *The Purāṇas.* Fac. 3 of *Epics and Sanskrit Religious Literature.* Vol. 2 of *A History of Indian Literature*, edited by Jan Gonda (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1986), 149-150.

Methodology

Employing a textual and philosophical approach, this discussion attempts, in the words of Jan Ritchie, to "understand the 'constructs,' concepts or ideas people use in everyday life to make sense of their world."5 Although drawing from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as a whole to explain its metaphysics, and to compare its theistic framework with the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, I focus primarily on the eleventh book, The *Uddhava Gita*. The message of the *Uddhava Gita* emphasizes devotion to a personal deity.

Even though the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* draws upon the philosophy of the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, it is clearly a work of religious devotion. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*'s soteriology is rooted in *bhaktiyoga*, the path of devotion. In contrast, Īśvarakṛṣṇa is focused on *Jñānayoga*, the path of knowledge. The nature of this comparison is primarily concerned with the place of *Īśvara* (god) in these two Sanskrit works. My thesis addresses a tension between *nirīśvara* ("without god") and *sésvara* ("with god"). It is in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*'s theistic postulate of a creator God, the source of liberating knowledge and, therefore, rightly the object of devotion, that the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* contrasts starkly with Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṃkhyakārikā*. I investigate how the philosophical perspective put forward by Īśvarakṛṣṇa frames the devotionalism found within the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. Or more broadly, comparing these texts I explore how the asceticism reflected in the more ritualized traditions may be reconciled with aesthetic perspectives that are expressed in *bhakti*. Do these *bhakti* traditions retain fundamental consistency with the ancient philosophical perspectives of Classical Sāṃkhya?

Outline

In this thesis, I compare the metaphysical philosophy of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*

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5 Ritchie, Jane et al., *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers* (London: SAGE, 2014), 18.

with that of Classical Sāṃkhya. I explore the relationship of Sāṃkhyan theories of matter, and of the consciousness that enlivens matter, and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa's* theological framework and aestheticism. Īśvarakṛṣṇa does not posit a supreme being or personal creator in order to explain the nature of material reality and consciousness. In doing so, the metaphysics he puts forward in the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* creates a puzzling inconsistency. While the metaphysics of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* reflect key aspects of Sāṃkhyan concepts of *prakṛti* (matter) and *puruṣa* (consciousness)*,* the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa's* theistic framework attempts to resolve Īśvarakṛṣṇa's inconsistency. The authors of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* frame Īśvarakṛṣṇa's concepts within their assumption of a Supreme Lord who is the creator of matter and who is personally accessible to his worshippers. Such a god is beyond *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* and the appropriate response is one of devotion, or *bhakti.*

In the first chapter of this thesis, I summarize the scholarly debates about the dating of these two works. I compare the ideas put forward within the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* within its larger Vedic worldview. The second chapter explores the epistemological and ontological perspectives of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and Sāṃkhya. The metaphysics of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* that are grounded in those epistemologies is the subject of the third chapter. Included in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* epistemological framework that of *rasa*, an aesthetic way of devotion. Finally, the fourth chapter questions the consistency of Īśvarakṛṣṇa's metaphysics and compares it with the theism of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa.*

Chapter 1

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and Sāṃkhya: Dating and Composition

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is rooted in ancient oral traditions, which makes it difficult to date. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* take their definitive written forms between the third and tenth centuries CE and are part of a rich diversity of Sanskrit culture and literature. The relationship between the ideas of the two texts illustrates a period of significant evolution in Vedic and Sāṃkhyan thought.

As Ithamar Theodor points out, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* was originally intended for dramatic performance. As a category of sacred literature, it is still recited by poets at religious gatherings.[6] Consisting of twelve books, 335 chapters and roughly 14,100 verses, the Purāṇas[7] are a genre of Indian literature that includes myths, legends, and traditional lore. According to Rocher, they represent the largest class of Sanskrit literature comprising up to two million extant verses.[8] Because they are collections of orally transmitted stories, dating them is difficult. Thus, argues Rocher, "even for the better established and more coherent Purāṇas—the *Bhāgavata*, Viṣṇu etc.—opinions, inevitably, continue to vary widely and endlessly."[9] Moreover, portions of a given Purāṇa may have been composed at different dates.

To complicate matters further, there are no known authors of the Purāṇas, and it is difficult to situate the text historically. Like many Indian religious texts, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* itself attributes its authorship to legendary figures or divine beings. Christopher Minkowski argues that this was purposely done to attribute the text to a mythic time that

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[6] Ithamar Theodor, *The "Fifth Veda" of Hinduism: Poetry, Philosophy and Devotion in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (New York: J. B. Tauris, 2016), 58. For a detailed study of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and audience reception, see McComas Taylor, *Seven Days of Nectar: Contemporary Oral Performance of the Bhagavatapurana* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[7] The Sanskrit word means "ancient" or "old."

[8] Rocher, *The Purāṇas,* 2.

[9] Ibid., 103.

"transcends the vicissitudes of history."[10] Dividing time into epic periods, it places humankind five thousand years after the start of the age of Kali. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* says that it was written in response to this era, which it describes as a period of the greatest decline of righteousness.[11]

Friedhelm Hardy's dating reflects a general consensus among scholars. He suggests the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* was written in South India, and that the ninth or early tenth centuries CE is the most reasonable date.[12] Hardy supports this argument by pointing out that there are similar devotional themes in the poetry of the South Indian Āḻvārs. Jonathan Edelmann dates this poetry to between 600 and 950 CE.[13] Edwin Bryant posits a much earlier date, suggesting that the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* influenced the Āḻvārs rather than the other way around.[14] Similarly, because a Jain text, the *Nandi Sutra,* mentions the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, Ganesh Tagare dates it to the fifth or early eleventh centuries.[15]

According to Gerald Larson, Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṃkhyakārikā* gained uniformity at around the fourth century CE, and is the first surviving Sāṃkhya text proper.[16] It is a brief summary of the complex system of Sāṃkhyan thought then flourishing in South Asia. Īśvarakṛṣṇa references a much broader philosophical system that can be found in an earlier and lost text, the *Ṣaṣṭitantra* (a system of sixty topics).[17] The Sanskrit word, *sāṃkhya* is extant in much earlier works. Trimbak Mainkar contends that the word

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10 Christopher Minkowski, "The Pundit as Public Intellectual: The Controversy Over Virodha or Inconsistency in the Astronomical Scienec," in *The Pundits Traditional Sanskrit Scholarship in India,* ed. Axel Michaels, (Heidelberg: South Asia Institute, 2001), 80.

11 *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 12.2.1-18.

12 Friedhelm Hardy, *Viraha Bhakti: The Early History of Kṛṣṇa Devotion in South India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 492.

13 Edelmann, *Hindu Theology and Biology: The Bhāgavata Purāṇa and Contemporary Theory*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 32.

14 Edwin F. Bryant, "The Data and Provenance of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and the Vaikuntha Perumal Temple," *Journal of Vaisnava Studies* 11.1 (2002), 64.

15 Ganesh Tagare, trans. *The Bhāgavata Purāṇa.* Vols. 7-11 of *Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology.* Ed. J. L. Shjastri and G. P. Bhatt, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1976), xxxvii.

16 Gerald J. Larson, *Classical Sāṃkhya*, (Delhi: Sundar Lal Motilal Banarsidass, 1969), 5. Īśvarakṛṣṇa's first translation and commentary became available in Chinese in the 6th century CE, and was later translated into Latin and English.

17 Ibid., 146.

saṃkhya indicates a metaphysical "inquiry about the cause of the universe, an inquiry that leads to the knowledge of this cause."[18] N. C Panda, however, argues it may simply mean "wisdom."[19]

Some of the earliest recognitions of Sāṃkhya philosophy occur in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (ca. 4th to 2nd centuries BCE). Because this *Upaniṣad* clearly references Sāṃkhya, it is known as the "*locus classicus*" of Sāṃkhya philosophy.[20] It alludes to Sāṃkhyan concepts of *puruṣa* (consciousness), *prakṛti* (matter), and the three *guṇas* (elements of primordial matter).[21] Discernable elements of Sāṃkhya philosophy can also be found in the *Kaṭha* and *Chāndogya Upaniṣads* although the word *saṃkhya* is absent.[22] Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* (ca. 2nd century BCE – 3rd century CE) also references *sāṃkhya*, along with *yoga* and *lokayata* as a distinct philosophical thought.[23]

As Andrew Nicholson points out, the *Mahābhārata,* which may have taken shape as early as 400 BCE although not reaching uniformity until the Gupta period (4th – 6th centuries CE), also contains Sāṃkhyan ideas.[24] The *Bhagavad Gītā* (ca. 5th – 2nd century BCE), also part of the *Mahābhārata,* explicitly states that it is teaching Sāṃkhya. Other Purāṇas such as the *Viṣṇu*, *Nāradīya*, *Kūrma*, *Vāyu,* and the *Mārkaṇḍeya* also reflect Sāṃkhya philosophy.[25]

The concepts of Sāṃkhya are also elaborated in the commentary literature of the period. The most influential of these commentaries on the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* was written by Gauḍapāda between the fourth and tenth centuries CE. The *Sāṃkhyavṛtti,*

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[18] Trimbak G. Mainkar, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa With the Commentary of Gauḍapāda*, (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Vidyabhawan, 2014), 2.

[19] N. C. Panda, trans. and ed. *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa: Text, Translation and Commentary-Yuktidīpikā,* (Delhi: C. P. Gautam, 2009), 3.

[20] Mainkar, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa,* 23.

[21] Andrew J. Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism: Philosophy and Identity in Indian Intellectual History,* (New York: Columbia University Press), 69.

[22] Mainkar, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa*, 22.

[23] Richard Garbe, *Die Sāṃkhya Philosophie,* 2nd ed. (Leipzig: H. Haeussel, 1917), 4. The dating of the *Arthaśāstra* is disputed, but Garbe puts it at 300 BCE.

[24] Nicholson *Unifying Hinduism*, 69.

[25] K. B. Ramakrishna Rao, *Theism of Pre-Classical Sāṃkhya*, (Prasaranga: University of Mysore, 1966), 391.

Sāṃkhyasaptativṛtti, Māṭharavṛtti are also commentaries on the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* from about the same time. Later ones include the *Yuktidīpikā, Jayamaṅgalā,* and the *Sāṃkhyatattvakaumudi* of Vācaspatimiśra. Paramārtha is the translator of the Chinese commentary the *Suvarṇasaptati,* a treatise on Sāṃkhya philosophy translated in the sixth century CE).[26]

Many within the Hindu traditions view the Vedānta as the highest expression of religion and philosophy and treasure it as the "end of knowledge," or the means to attain the loftiest goal.[27] There is no clear consensus among scholars about whether or not the writers of the Purāṇas deemed their texts to be consistent with the philosophy of the Vedas. Indologist Max Müller claims there are very few philosophical similarities between the Purāṇas and older Vedic texts.[28] Rocher argues that the Purāṇas bear striking philosophical similarities and therefore "cannot be divorced from the Vedas."[29] For many followers of Vedānta, the Purāṇas are just as important as is the *Bhagavad Gītā.*[30]

J. A. B Van Buitenen, however, argues that the devotional traditions expressed in *bhaktiyoga* stemmed from dubious orthodoxy. He theorizes that Vedic language was deliberately employed to legitimize the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa's* themes.[31] In his defense of its Vedic orthodoxy, Danielle Sheridan makes a different point. He suggests that the text itself relies heavily on the *Mahābhārata* and on other texts such as the *Harivaṃśa, Vedānta Sūtras, Viṣṇu Purāṇa,* and the poetry of the *Āḷvārs.*[32] Surendranath Dasgupta

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[26] Esther A. Solomon, *Sāṃkhya-Vṛtti* (Ahmedabad: Gujurat University Press 1973), 5.

[27] Rao, *Theism of Pre-Classical Sāṃkhya*, viii, ix.

[28] Max F. Müller, *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature So Far as it Illustrates the Primitive Religion of the Brahmans* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1859), 61.

[29] Rocher, *The Purāṇas,* 14.

[30] Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism*, 75.

[31] J. A. B. Van Buitenen, "On the Archaism of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*," in *Krishna: Myths, Rites and Attitutdes*, ed. Milton Singer (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1966), 24-39.

[32] Daniel P. Sheridan, *The Advaitic Theism of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), 10.

also states that the Purāṇas reflect the teachings of the *Upaniṣads* and the *Brahmasūtras*.[33]

As a tapestry of cultural influences, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* intentionally grafts Vaiṣṇavism into the metaphysical and philosophical infrastructure of its time.[34] Hardy says that the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* uses Vedic symbolism and serves as an "opus universal" that attempts to encompass everything.[35] Even though the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* emerged at a time when religiosity was flexible, it places the worship of Kṛṣṇa above other deities.[36] As Jonathan Edelmann writes,

> The Purāṇas appear at a time when the worship of Vishnu**,** Krishna**,** Śiva and various forms of the Goddess were prominent deities, although the worship of classic Vedic gods such as Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa and others were a part of the landscape. The flowering of Purāṇic literature surely precipitated the increase in popularity of the deities mentioned in the Vedas and Upaniṣads, and they probably helped to solidify them as permanent aspects of India's religious, cultural, and political life.[37]

Transmitted through the simplicity of story, poetry and drama, and grafting together both the devotionalism (*bhakti*) of Vaiṣṇavism and elements of Sāṃkhya philosophy, Gupta and Valpey deem the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as the "ripe fruit of Vedic revelation" and claim that it became as authoritative as the Vedas.[38] Indeed, it refers to itself as the "fifth Veda."[39]

Continuing the Vedic tradition, Sāṃkhya is one of the six major schools in Indian philosophy. The word Sāṃkhya is defined as "enumeration" or "calculation." According to K. B. Ramakrishna Rao, not only is Sāṃkhya "orthodox" but it has been "absorbed by every branch of Indian philosophy, and it is difficult to find an Indian thought free from

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[33] Surendranath Dasgupta, *Indian Pluralism,* vol. 4 of *History of Indian Philosophy*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 496.

[34] Edwin F. Bryant, trans. and ed. *Kṛṣṇa: The Beautiful Legend of God: Śrīmad Bhāgavata Purāṇa: Book X,* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), xi.

[35] Hardy, *Viraha Bhakti*, 483.

[36] Edelmann, *Hindu Theology and Biology*, 37.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Gupta and Valpey, *The Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, 2.

[39] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 1.4.20, in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, First Canto, Part One: Creation*, trans. and ed. A.C. Bhaktivedanta (New York: The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1972), 415-416.

the elements of Sāṃkhya be it philosophical, religious or mythological."[40] Because much of Sāṃkhyan literature is lost, it is difficult to discern the continuity between its classical expression and its beginning in ancient Indian history.[41] Nonetheless, says Nicholson, codifiers of Indian traditions "shared a fundamental commitment to the authority of the Vedas."[42] The contrast between Sāṃkhya and Vedānta philosophy is evident in the *Brahmāsūtras* (ca. 200 BCE – 200 CE) and its criticism of Sāṃkhya.[43] Vedic authorities regarded Sāṃkhya as unorthodox because of its critical rationalism and its apparent non-theism. Consequently, as Nicholson points out, many Vedāntic commentators disputed Sāṃkhya claims, arguing that the core of the Vedic Upaniṣads could not be divorced from theism.[44] Because of its perceived atheism, Sāṃkhya came under attack. Rao argues that, in the *Advaita Vedāntin*, Śaṅkara rejected the general Sāṃkhya position.[45] Śaṅkara's commentary on the second chapter of the *Brahmasūtras*, he further points out, contains the most explicit critique of Sāṃkhyan thought, upholding that Vedānta proper is theistic.[46]

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[40] Rao, *Theism of Pre-Classical Sāṃkhya*, 3.
[41] Ibid., xvi.
[42] Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism*, 3.
[43] Ibid., 69.
[44] Ibid., 69-70.
[45] Rao, *Theism of Pre-Classical Sāṃkhya*, x. Further, *Brahmāsutra* 2.1.4-6 explicitly denounces Sāṃkhya.
[46] Ibid., 7.

Chapter 2

Vedic and Sāṃkhya Epistemology

Both the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* attribute the beginnings of Sāṃkhyan philosophy to the legendary figure of Kapila. In the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, he is said to embody the Supreme Self and, therefore, is an incarnation of the divine. Although the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* does not refer to him by name, Sāṃkhyan commentators describe his as an ascetic sage. These differing perspectives of Kapila point to a critical difference in the epistemologies of the two texts, and of the nature of the knowledge that enables liberation from suffering. This discussion involves the nature of the dualistic relationship between consciousness and matter, forms of knowledge, the nature of evidence, and the validity of experience.

Kapila

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and Classical Sāṃkhya both attribute the beginnings of Sāṃkhya to Kapila. Scholars debate the influence of Kapila as a historical or perhaps legendary figure, his association with Sāṃkhya, and his prominence in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. Is the Kapila that Classical Sāṃkhya claims as its founder the same Kapila in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*? Answers to this question differ in the primary texts, and vary widely among the classical commentators and contemporary scholars.

Chapters twenty-four to twenty-seven in the third book of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* contain the most explicit and elaborate teachings on Sāṃkhya.[47] The stage is set when a figure known as Kardama decides to leave home and retire to the forest to practice yoga. His wife Devahūti asks him to grant her fearlessness and knowledge of the Supreme Self. Kardama assures her that the son in her womb, who is Kapila the supreme Bhagavān, will grant her requisition, remove her attachments, and teach her Sāṃkhya and Yoga. Thus, in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* it is Kapila who instructs his mother Devahūti and, therefore, is the traditional founder of Sāṃkhyan philosophy.

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[47] Chapters five and six of Book Three also narrate Sāṃkhyan philosophy.

Along with one of the earliest references to the word *sāṃkhya*, the name *Kapila* occurs in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad.* It connects the word *kapila* to a "seer."[48] This Kapila is said to be the ruler over both knowledge and ignorance.[49] Although the commentarial tradition agrees Kapila was the founder of the system, the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* does not mention Kapila by name, but alludes to him as a "great sage." According to Kārikā 69, "This abstruse knowledge leading to the attainment of the goal of the Spirit, i.e. liberation, and in which are contemplated the origin, duration and termination of beings has been fully expounded by the Great Sage."[50] The Sanskrit word *kapila* signifies the color reddish brown, and the *Rig Veda* describes Kapila as "one tawny one among the ten."[51] Both the *Mokṣadharma* and *Bhagavad Gītā* identify him as a central precursor of the Sāṃkhya tradition.[52] The *Bhagavad Gītā* also describes Kapila as an incarnation of *Viṣṇu*, an *avatār* whose purpose was to help restore cosmic balance through his teachings.

By the sixth century CE, all commentators agreed that Kapila had founded Sāṃkhya, Āsuri inherited the teaching, Pañcaśikha further formulated and disseminated the system and that finally, after many centuries, Īśvarakṛṣṇa summarized and simplified the principles.[53] The commentarial tradition identifies Kapila as a Hindu Vedic Sage who possessed divine knowledge, authority, and virtue. Paramārtha's commentary marks Kapila as a "wise ascetic," "born of heaven" and "innately endowed with the four fundamental predispositions of virtue, knowledge, renunciation, and supernatural

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[48] Patrick Olivelle, trans. and ed. *The Early Upaniṣads: Annotated Text and Translation*, South Asia Research, ed. Richard Lariviere (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 36, 426. The Sanskrit word *kapila* is found in *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 5.1-2.

[49] *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 5.1-2, in Olivelle, *The Early Upaniṣads*, 426.

[50] Kārikā 59. This, and subsequent citations from the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, except where otherwise indicated, are from Mainkar, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa*.

[51] *Rig Veda* 10.27.16, in *The Rig Veda*, Jaroslav Pelikan, ed. and Ralph T. H. Griffith, trans. (New York: Quality Paperback Book Club, 1992).

[52] Gerald J. Larson and Ram Shankar Bhattacharya, eds, *Sāṃkhya: A Dualist Tradition in Indian Philosophy*, vol. 4 of *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*, ed, by Karl H. Potter, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987), 109-111.

[53] Ibid., 107-108.

power."[54] The commentator Mādhava identifies Kapila as an incarnation of *Viṣṇu*.[55] James Kimball states that the "term *ṛṣi* is applied to an individual with intuitive access to eternal, revealed knowledge, whose role is to manifest or disseminate this knowledge usually in the form of the Veda." In support of Vedic authority, the *Yuktidīpikā* says that Kapila declared the "essence of the Vedas and Sāṃkhya." It legitimizes Kapila's role, affirming that Kapila was born with "innate knowledge, merit, dispassion, and lordliness." Further, he says that Kapila is "supreme," the "founder of Sāṃkhya" and the "initiator of the tradition of Sāṃkhya teachers."[56]

Because Kapila is said to be "self-existent," Kapila was thought to be Īśvara (god). Andrew Nicholson argues that the Sāṃkhya found within the Purāṇas, "takes Kapila to be an incarnation of Nārāyana." He also points out that, before the tenth century, commentaries on the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* regarded Kapila as an embodiment of Īśvara.[57] Nicholson postulates that, because Vaiṣṇavism—with its attention to Viṣṇu— was overwhelmingly popular, Kapila was accordingly viewed as an incarnation of that god also. "Kapila himself," Nicholson argues, "is depicted as an incarnation of Nārāyana and teaches a form of Sāṃkhya that is integrated both with the practice of *bhakti* and with a Vedāntic conception of *Brahman*."[58] This is also reflected in the *Viṣṇu Sahasranāma* in which Kapila is the Supreme Deity.[59] Bronkhorst argues that Kapila should be viewed as a divine figure.[60] According to Bronkhorst's interpretation of the *Māṭharavṛtti*, "God is the light of Kapila . . . the self which resides, shines in Kapila."[61] In Vedic theology, then,

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[54] Larson and Bhattacharya, *Sāṃkhya: A Dualist Tradition,* 107-108. Although traditionally Kapila has been credited as the founder of Sāṃkhya, his name appears in the Vedas, which significantly predates Sāṃkhya as a uniform system. Larson and Bhattacharya state that it is uncertain if the older Vedic citations of Kapila can be linked with later Sāṃkhya references.

[55] Rao, *Theism of Pre-Classical Sāṃkhya*, 163.

[56] James Kimball, *The Soteriological Role of the Ṛṣi Kapila* According to the *Yuktidīpikā*," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 41.6 (2013)*,* 604 -605.

[57] Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism*, 95-96.

[58] Ibid., 75.

[59] Panda, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa,* 6.

[60] Johannes Bronkhorst, *Greater Magadha: Studies in the Culture of Early India* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007)*,* 61-63.

[61] Johannes Bronkhorst, "God in Sāṃkhya," *Wiener Zietschrift fur die Kunde Sudasians* 27 (1983), 157.

Kapila is a divine incarnation of the way of knowing (*pramāna*), or coming to consciousness.

Īśvarakṛṣṇa's Twenty-Five Principles

Īśvarakṛṣṇa determined that twenty-five *tattvas* (principles) must be realized. He identified the first as *puruṣa*, or pure consciousness. The next twenty-four principles involve *prakṛti* (matter). These twenty-four principles are distinct from *puruṣa* and are unconscious. Of the twenty-five principles, twenty-three arise from unmanifest, causal *prakṛti. Prakṛti's* first evolute is *mahat* (the intellect), which in turn produces *ahamkāra* (ego). The ego then produces five subtle elements: sound, touch, form, taste and smell. These first seven are all evolutes, or emanations, of causal *prakṛti*. They are also, themselves, the cause of the next sixteen evolutes.

From the five subtle elements come eleven subtle organs of action and sense. The mouth, hands, legs, generative and eliminative organs are the organs of action. The ears, skin, eyes, tongue, and nose are the cognitive senses. The *manas* (mind) is the last organ of sense.

The eleven sense organs are all evolutes of the *ahamkāra*. From the subtle elements come the gross elements: ether, air, fire, water, and earth.[62] In summary, the twenty-five principles that Īśvarakṛṣṇa enumerates are as follows: *puruṣa* and unmanifest *prakṛti; mahat* and *ahamkāra*; five subtle elements of sound, touch, form, taste, and smell; the five active senses of speech, hand, leg, generative and eliminative organs; the six cognitive senses of ears, skin, eyes, tongue, nose and mind; and finally, the gross

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[62] Ether corresponds to sound, air corresponds to touch, fire corresponds to form, water corresponds to taste, and earth corresponds to smell.

elements, space, air, fire, water and earth.[63] Īśvarakṛṣṇa further qualifies the twenty-five principles as "Unmanifest *prakṛti*," "Manifest *prakṛti*" and "Knower—*puruṣa*."[64]

In Īśvarakṛṣṇa's system, Sāṃkhya posits three forms of knowledge. In Sanskrit, *pramā* denotes knowledge, while *pramāna* denotes a method of knowing. As the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* states, "The means of valid knowledge are recognized to be three-fold: Perception, Inference and Valid Testimony, since all other means of correct knowledge are comprehended in these three. Correct knowledge of the matter to be known depends on the means of valid knowledge."[65]

D. M. Datta proposes that "nearly all schools of philosophy believe that human suffering is rooted in ignorance, the removal of which is the chief object of philosophy," and "that without a critical discussion of the theory of knowledge, truth cannot be attained."[66] Poola Raju makes a similar point when he argues that the question of what is real "cannot be separated from the question, how is it known to be real? If a person says that X is real, we naturally ask, 'How do you know it is real?' The problem of reality cannot be detached from the problem of knowledge."[67]

Sāṃkhya epistemology endeavors to establish evidence pertaining to knowledge. Like Western epistemology, Īśvarakṛṣṇa recognizes sense perception (*pratyakṣa*) as the first and fundamental source of knowledge. Grasping the world with our senses provides the building blocks for inductive reasoning and philosophical discourse. In addition to perception and inference, Īśvarakṛṣṇa posits a third *pramāna* that he names *āptavacana* (valid testimony). In his commentary on Kārikā 4 Gauḍapāda says, *"āptavacana* has been said to be valid teachers and valid scriptures. Valid teachers are like Brahmā and others.

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[63] Larson and Bhattacharya, *Sāṃkhya: A Dualist Tradition*, 23-25.
[64] Kārikā 2.
[65] Kārikā 4.
[66] Datta, Dhirendra Mohan. "Epistemological Methods in Indian Philosophy," in *The Six Ways of Knowing: A Critical Study of the Advaita Theory of Knowledge.* Rev. ed. (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1972), 118.
[67] P. T. Raju, "Metaphysical Theories in Indian Philosophy," in *The Indian Mind: Essentials of Indian Philosophy and Culture*, ed, Charles A. Moore and Aldyth V. Morris (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1967), 41.

Valid scriptures are the Vedas. Thus the holy teachers and the Veda are called *āptaśruti* and these are the valid testimony."[68]

One distinctive feature of Sāṃkhyan epistemology with regards to perception, is its understanding of the senses. In Sāṃkhya, the sixth sense organ is the mind.[69] It collects and processes information, and is a manifestation of *prakṛti*, not *puruṣa*. The mind is itself unconscious (*acetana*), and is numerically different from consciousness. This dualism in Sāṃkhya differs from Cartesian substance dualism in that *puruṣa* manifests consciousness. Hence, the physical and mental are not separate as in a body/mind dualism; rather both are distinct from consciousness. Yet, the mind plays a critical role in Sāṃkhya epistemology such that it acts as mediator between the five senses, the *ahamkāra* and the *mahat*. The mind is a perceptive sense (an evolute of *prakṛti*) and a mechanism to obtain knowledge.[70]

A principle *pramāna* within Indian philosophical discourse is *anumāna* (inference). The gross world is known through perception. Inference is governed by logic based on previous observations. This second *pramāṇa* in particular, asserts Ferenc Ruzsa, is central within Sāṃkhya epistemology, but is not emphasized in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.[71]

Like Sāṃkhyan epistemology, the authors of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* claim that liberation is dependent on knowledge. Sāṃkhyan concepts of valid ways of knowing, like perception, inference and valid testimony are also part of the epistemology of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa;* they are valid ways of knowing. What differentiates the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* from Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṃkhyakārikā,* however, is its emphasis on valid testimony over and above all other *pramānas*. As a devotional treatise, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* held

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[68] Mainkar, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa*, 53.

[69] The *buddhi* and the *ahamkāra* are functions of the mind.

[70] K. B. Ramakrishna Rao and Anand C. Paranjpe, *Psychology in the Indian Tradition*, (New Delhi: Springer, 2016), 96-98.

[71] Ferenc Ruzsa, "Inference, Reasoning and Causality in the Sāṃkhya-Kārikā," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 31.1 (2003), 285-286.

a great influence for the later Bengali school of Vaiṣṇavism of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Bengali school held that everything is revealed by the grace of a personal god, and rejected all other *pramāṇas* except *śabda* (revealed word). Like the sixteenth-century commentator, Jiva Gosvāmin, the Bengali philosophers were unwilling to grant perception and inference independent authority. In addition to his claim that valid testimony be given precedence over all other *pramāṇas,* Gosvāmin privileges the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as the means by which all other Hindu texts should be interpreted.[72] Viewing the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as uncreated and unauthored by humans, Gosvāmin argues that only through the testimony of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* will one realize ultimate reality.[73] Indeed, the text itself states that it is the voice of God. "O Nārada, this science of God, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, was spoken to me in a nutshell by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and it was spoken in a nutshell as the accumulation of His diverse potencies. Please expand this science yourself."[74]

In addition to valid testimony, *bhakti* is an important feature of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and a primary means of knowledge.[75] In Thomas Hopkins's view, it is *bhakti* that definitively characterizes the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa.* Devotion to Viṣṇu and his incarnations drives this Purāṇas narrative.[76] Theodor argues that *bhakti* "held a major place in the *Bhagavad Gītā* and other earlier works, and it was accepted as one of the ways to salvation along with *karma* and *jñāna.*[77] Unlike Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, the epistemology of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is characterized by the priority of valid testimony

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[72] Edelmann, *Hindu Theology and Biology*, 94-103.

[73] Ibid., 96.

[74] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 2.7.51, in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, Second Canto, Part Two: The Cosmic Manifestation*, trans. and ed. A.C. Bhaktivedanta (New York: The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1972), 415-416.

[75] Theodor, *The "Fifth Veda" of Hinduism*, 3.

[76] T. J. Hopkins, "The Social Teaching of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*," in *Krishna: Myths, Rites and Attitudes*, ed. M. Singer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 6-7. Cited in Theodor, *The Fifth Veda*, 3.

[77] Theodor, *The "Fifth Veda" of Hinduism*, 3.

and the experiential recognition of ultimate reality. Through *bhakti*, "human beings are able to gain an actual sighting" and "experiential knowledge" of truth.[78]

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[78] Ibid., 32.

Chapter 3

Rasa (Aesthetics) and Metaphysics

Although drawing on philosophical concepts from Sāṃkhyan and other sources, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is a work of religious devotion. Interestingly, it suggests that the way of devotion is an aesthetic experience, *rasa*. Commentators in the Brahmanical traditions, however, debated whether *rasa* is an experience of becoming part of the one consciousness, or an experience of awareness of one's own consciousness. Two streams of thought are identified in Hindu philosophy, that of *bhakti*yoga, or the path of devotion, and that of *jñānayoga,* or the path of knowledge. Īśvarakṛṣṇa *Sāṃkhyakārikā* precedes *bhakti*yoga and advocates the latter.

Even though the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* incorporates a number of ideas from its religious and philosophical milieu, it is foremost a treatise of unparalleled *Vaiṣṇava* devotion. This is emphasized by Graham Schweig when he says, "The *Bhāgavata* presents a rich tapestry of diverse forms of ancient Indian theological discourse, social thought, and literature, all of which support its evolved doctrine of devotion."[79]

Like the *Sāṃkhyakārikā,* the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* fashions a worldview with which to present a particular vision undergirding belief and practice.[80] The text itself says that its author is the legendary Hindu sage, Vyāsa. In book one, Vyāsa's teacher Nārada scolds him for neglecting the utmost discourse, namely, the glorification of the Supreme Lord. As a result of Nārada's reproach, Vyāsa falls into a trance. He sees the illusory power of *māyā* (illusion) manifesting the temporal world of suffering. Deep compassion for humanity suffering in the snare of *avidyā* (ignorance) inspires Vyāsa to compose the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa.* Subsequently, he teaches his son Śuka, who recites it to Parīksit. Cursed, Parikṣit is placed between life and death, a situation that intensifies this *Purāṇa's* narrative frame. This theistic philosophical framework in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa's*

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[79] Graham M. Schweig, *Dance of Divine Love: The Rāsā Līlā of Krishna from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa: India's Classic Sacred Love Story Introduced, Translated and Illuminated* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 11-12.

[80] Gavin Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)*,* 111.

narrative is its most important difference from the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, which posits neither a creator god nor *bhakti* as a means of liberation.

In addition, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* draws on aesthetic theories of *rasa*. Theodor suggests that the term *rasa* can mean "sap, juice, or liquid and, by extension, flavor, pleasure and essence."[81] He claims that experiential "sighting" of ultimate truth and the "tasting" of emotions are ubiquitous within the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.[82]

Edwin Gerow argues that "Literature is a work of sensibility; . . . it takes as a principle some notion of 'taste' [and] ties it to a certain time and place more radically and meaningfully than any of the forms of expression that have a more theoretical grounding."[83] The concluding verse of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* reflects Gerow's idea: "Śrīmad- Bhāgavatam is declared to be the essence of all Vedānta philosophy. One who has felt satisfaction from its necterean mellow will never be attracted to any other literature."[84] As Sheldon Pollock writes, "Indian aesthetic theory was founded upon representation of human emotion in the literary artwork and our capacity not just to find the representation 'beautiful' but to get *inside* it."[85] In Gosvamin's perspective, aesthetics is also theology; the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* teaches that the aesthetic experience is achieved through devotion to a personal deity.

The aesthetic tradition developed into two opposite views. The personal concept of *Brahman* became juxtaposed with an impersonal one. The terms *saguṇa Brahman* and *nirguṇa Brahman* refer to absolute being, conceptualized either as possessing personal qualities or, as impersonal and without qualities respectively. In most cases, *saguṇa*

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[81] Theodor, *The "Fifth Veda" of Hinduism,* 61.

[82] Ibid., 32.

[83] E. Gerow, "Rasa as a Category of Literary Criticism." In *Sanskrit Drama in Performance*, edited by Rachel Van M. Baumer and James R. Brandon, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1981), 226. Cited in Theodor, *"The Fifth Veda,"* 39.

[84] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 12.13.15, in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, Twelfth Canto, Part Two: The Age of Deterioration*, trans. and ed. A.C. Bhaktivedanta, trans. Hridayananda dasa Goswami Acaryadeva, and ed. Gopiparanadhana das Adhikri(New York: The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1984), 203.

[85] Sheldon Pollock, *A Rasa Reader: Classical Indian Aesthetics*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 2.

Brahman is synonymous with *iśvara,* a deity with personal attributes, while *nirguṇa Brahman* denotes an impersonal principle, devoid of attributes.

Many early Brahmanical philosophers emphasized the philosophical path of *jñānayoga* as the primary means for liberation. Knowledge of the ultimate is insight into *Brahman* as an impersonal reality.[86] Understanding *Brahman* as an ontological principle is consistent with Classical Sāṃkhya in that ultimate reality is impersonal. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* on the other hand, presents a competing ideology in which ultimate reality is reflected in Kṛṣṇa or Nārāyaṇa.[87]

The eleventh-century monistic philosopher, Abhinavagupta, was a proponent of a non-dualistic school of thought and an impersonal view of *Brahman.* He expounded and articulated the Rasa School contending that it is *rasa* that enables a person to transcend the confining limits of one's own personality and allow one to merge with *Brahman.* Thus, argues Pollock, "the experience of *rasa* has now become the experience of one's own pure consciousness."[88] Theodor emphasizes the importance of this theistic aesthetic. It became, he suggests, "the central or classical tradition of Sanskrit aesthetics throughout India and formed a creative intellectual force."[89]

According to Abhinavagupta, experiencing the bliss of "one's own awareness" is the essence of *rasa.*[90] Pollock suggests that the essence of this aesthetic is that the experience of pure consciousness is a "kind of secondary, or reflexive awareness, or knowledge of a knowledge." Such knowledge is synonymous with "tasting, savoring, rapture [and] relishing . . . ."[91] Abhinavagupta proposed that the full manifestation of *rasa* can only be experienced when illusion is dispelled; just as *jñānayoga* aims at oneness with *Brahman,* this aesthetic school functions to achieve that same goal.[92]

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[86] Theodor, *The "Fifth Veda" of Hinduism*, 4.
[87] Sheridan, *The Advaitic Theism of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, 57.
[88] Pollock, *A Rasa Reader*, 190.
[89] Theodor, *The "Fifth Veda" of Hinduism*, 61, 62.
[90] Pollock, *A Rasa Reader*, 190.
[91] Ibid., 190.
[92] Theodor, *The "Fifth Veda" of Hinduism*, 75.

Poet-philosophers advocated a different view of *rasa*. The tenth-century poet, Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka, said that drama had the power to dispel illusion.[93] Because Nāyaka considered drama to be so enlightening, he viewed it as capable of producing an experience of *rasa*. The works of eleventh-century poet, Bhoja of Dhārā, convey a personal vision of *Brahman*. "That is *rasa,"* he says in which, rising beyond the path of contemplation is only "tasted in the identifying heart."[94] Bhoja expounds a philosophical position where "tasting" does not only constitute an empirical reality but is elevated to the highest reality.[95] Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka likewise agreed that drama had the power to dispel illusion.[96] This position is similar with the Caitanya school of Bengali Vaiṣṇavism in which emotions were afforded ontological status.[97] The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* also suggests that the way of devotion is an aesthetic experience and likewise elevates emotion, expressed in *bhakti,* as a way of knowing.

Brahman as personal and impersonal reflects competing trends of thought in the religious history of India. Exponents of Vedānta such as Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja have articulated varying positions of Vedāntic teaching. Śaṅkara is the primary exponent of *Advaita*, or non-dualism, while Rāmānuja advocates personal theism within a qualified non-dualism. Śaṅkara systemized the *Advaita Vedāntic* perspective in which the world is a dependent reality and, therefore, not absolutely real, while Rāmānuja placed more emphasis on devotion to a personal deity.[98] This juxtaposition highlights the two streams of thought, *jñānayoga*, the path of knowledge and *bhaktiyoga,* the path of devotion. Sharma describes them when he says:

> *Jñānayoga* is directed towards the realization of *nirguṇa Brahman* wherein the sole spiritual reality of *Brahman* leaves no room for any kind of distinction…

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[93] Ibid., 70.
[94] Ibid., 77.
[95] Ibid., 81.
[96] Ibid., 70.
[97] Ibid., 43.
[98] Ibid., 69.

Bhaktiyoga is directed towards the realization of *saguṇa Brahman,* and this yoga functions within the framework of a somewhat different set of prepositions.[99]

Even though the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* reflects these varying schools of thought, it tends to adopt a particular philosophical position, one that conveys both the *Advaita Vedāntic* perspective as well as personal theism. The first book, according to Arvind Sharma, establishes its philosophical stance as non-dual.[100] Non-duality is, however, qualified as *Brahman* (the impersonal feature), *Paramātman* (the divine Person within the heart), and *Bhagavān* (the Supreme Person).[101] Sheridan writes:

> The non-duality of Truth or the reality (*tattva*) is such that no ultimate distinction between knower and knowledge can be made, though by giving the absolute reality different names, the *Bhāgavata* affirms that the richness of absolute reality cannot be exhausted by considering it from one angle only. Without admitting any distinction within the absolute reality, the *Bhāgavata* draws on various traditions to aid the understanding. The terms "*Brahman*" and "Highest Self" are drawn from the Vedānta, while "*Bhagavān*" is dear to the *Vaiṣṇavas*. The final position given to *Bhagavān* seems to raise it above the other two in importance, and this is born out by the purāṇa as a whole. Thus non-dual knowledge, which is the essence of the absolute reality, is, according to the *Bhāgavata*, ultimately personal.[102]

Hence, even though the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa's* philosophical positioning tends to be non-dualistic, it paradoxically posits an eternal distinction between subject and object.

This philosophical position reflects the Vedāntic theory of *bhedābheda*, a theory about the relationship of difference and non-difference. Though seemingly presenting a logical impossibility, the theory of *bhedābheda* holds out the "promise of bridging the apparently unbridgeable disagreements between philosophers who subscribe to the theory of difference or, *dvaita* (dualism), and those who favor an complete unqualified non-difference or, *advaita* (non-dualism)."[103] What is problematic about the theory of *bhedābheda* is that the individual self and *Brahman* "exist in a relation of part (*aṃsā*) and

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[99] A. Sharma, *Classical Hindu Thought* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 43.
[100] Sheridan, *The Advaitic Theism of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* 23-24.
[101] Theodor, *The "Fifth Veda" of Hinduism,* 46.
[102] Sheridan, *The Advaitic Theism of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* 23-24.
[103] Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism* 39.

whole (*aṃśin*)."104 The *bhedābheda* theory questions the precise nature of *Brahman*. Either the world is a real transformation (*pariṇāma*), or it is an apparent manifestation (*vivarta)*. According to *bhedābheda*, Brahman's nature is described as being both dual and non-dual.105 This is consistent with the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa's* narrative in which the individual self does not completely dissolve into *Brahman* at the time of liberation. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* echoes the Vedāntic emphasis on knowledge by recognizing *jñānayoga* as a legitimate path to the realization of impersonal *Brahman*. However, within its deeply aesthetic narrative, it paradoxically ushers forth a "personal" realm of divinity.106

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* like *Brahmasūtra* 4.2.16, teaches that while the self in a state of liberation is inseparable from *Brahman* there is, however, individuality.107 The *ātman* (soul) is distinct from *īśvara* (god). The ninth-century philosopher, Bhāskara, put forward another theory. He argued that although the world of duality is real, there are varying grades of reality that emanate from a single ultimate reality.108 Within *Vaiṣṇava bhakti,* Kṛṣṇa does not dissolve into an ultimate formless reality devoid of personal qualities.109 Rather, the personal aspect of *Brahman* is encountered through pure emotion or aesthetic rapture. As Theodore puts it, "personhood is defined through an aesthetic sensitivity and emotional depth and, as such, the deeper one's aesthetic sensitivity and emotional experience of the supreme are, the more one is able to express one's personhood."110 Hence, this Purāṇa advocates a liberation characterized not by the realization of an impersonal principle, but rather by an eternal relationship with the divine marked by blissful devotion. The authors of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* identify *rasa* as a valid path of spiritual realization. R. C. Zaehner offers a compelling description of the ecstatic relationship between the devotee and god, celebrated in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*:

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104 Ibid., 50.
105 *Brahmasūtra* 2.3.43, in Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism*, 50.
106 Sheridan, *The Advaitic Theism of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* 23-24.
107 Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism,* 28
108 Ibid., 29.
109 Edelmann, *Hindu Theology and Biology*, 42.
110 Theodor, *The "Fifth Veda" of Hinduism,* 17.

God is in love with the soul, and the soul with God. In this divine love affair God is necessarily the male, the soul the female: God takes the initiative and the soul must passively wait for the divine embrace. The Kṛṣṇa of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is a very different person from the rather austere Kṛṣṇa of the *Gītā*; he is not a teacher, but a lover, the handsome and wayward shepherd-boy who beguiles the soul with the sweet strains of the flute.[111]

According to the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, not only is the soul distinct from god, but also devotion to a personal deity is emphasized as legitimate path leading to liberation. Even though *rasa* aesthetics and *bhakti* devotion are absent from Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṃkhyakārikā,* the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* includes Sāṃkhyan philosophy while attempting to reconcile and intertwine its metaphysics within the concept of devotion.

Similar to the philosophy put forward in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṃkhyakārikā* also presents a metaphysical system for the attainment of liberation.[112] According to Īśvarakṛṣṇa, liberation does not occur through devotion to a personal deity but through knowledge. It is, says Bryant, a "path striving to understand the ultimate truths of reality through knowledge, typically known as *jñānayoga.*"[113] Defined as "enumeration" or "calculation," one must, argues Panda, "discriminate the self by counting out everything that is not-self."[114] By establishing the dual nature of reality, *puruṣa* (consciousness) and *prakṛti* (matter), the "quest of the Sāṃkhya philosopher is the quest of discriminative knowledge (*vyakta-avyakta-jña-vijñana*)."[115] The Sāṃkhyan commentary, the *Yuktidīpikā*, also affirms that the distinction between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* is saving knowledge (*jñāna*).[116]

Larson points out that, in a way that seems to echo Buddhism's First Noble Truth, the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* affirms, "human existence is characterized by suffering."[117] The first Kārikā states that, "Since one is struck by the threefold misery, an inquiry into

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[111] R. C. Zaehner. *Hinduism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 127.

[112] Panda, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa,* xiii.

[113] Edwin F. Bryant, *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali* (New York: North Point Press, 2009), xxvi.

[114] Panda, Sāṃkhya*kārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa,* 9.

[115] Ibid.*,* 9.

[116] Kimball, *The Soteriological Role of the Ṛṣi Kapila,* 605-606.

[117] Larson, *Classical Sāṃkhya*, 8.

the means of terminating it is to be made. If it is said that such an inquiry is superfluous in as much as the means are seen and known, we reply, no; for those means do not secure absolute and final relief."[118] Kārikā 2 begins to describe the revealed means for ending misery. They are, it states, "like the temporal, perceptible means; they being impure, prone to destruction and having surpassibility. Different from these and, therefore, superior are the means of terminating the misery that arise from the knowledge of the Manifest, the Unmanifest and the Knower."[119] According to the classical tradition, Sāṃkhya is the "revealed means" that finally ends suffering. Through *jñānayoga*, "the purpose of the Sāṃkhya is the elimination of the 'torment of the threefold suffering.'"[120]

In stark contrast to the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, Īśvarakṛṣṇa does not recognize the existence of a creator god. Instead, the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* postulates a central dichotomy between two eternal principles, namely *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. The universe is the result of a dynamic interchange between these principles. Sāṃkhya's metaphysical presupposition is that *puruṣa* and unmanifest *prakṛti* are eternal and uncaused and, therefore, distinct from manifest *prakṛti,* which is caused and finite. According to the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, "The Manifest, the evolved is caused, non-eternal, non-pervasive, mobile, manifold, dependent, mergent, conjunct and governed. The Unmanifest, the unevolved is the reverse."[121] *Puruṣa* is fundamentally conscious and sentient while *prakṛti* both in its unmanifest and manifest form is unconscious and insentient. As opposed to devotion to a personal deity as a means of liberation, Īśvarakṛṣṇa believes it is correct knowledge that results in final liberation. Īśvarakṛṣṇa affirms that the "means for terminating the misery…arise from the knowledge of the Manifest, the Unmanifest and the Knower."[122]

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[118] Kārikā 1
[119] Kārikā 2.
[120] Larson, *Classical Sāṃkhya*, 8.
[121] Kārikā 10.
[122] Kārikā 2.

Chapter 4

Theism in the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*

The *Sāṃkhyakārikā* distinguishes *puruṣa*, or pure consciousness, from two forms of *prakṛti*, or matter—that which is unmanifest, and that which is manifest. At issue is the issue of causality. Īśvarakṛṣṇa's ideas ultimately lead to an inconsistency; that which is neither created nor creative is, nevertheless, the first principle and cause of all that is. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* also understands the xg*puruṣa* as unbound consciousness but, taking a theistic approach, identifies Kṛṣṇa as the embodiment of that consciousness. According to Īśvarakṛṣṇa, manifest *prakṛti* and the nature of the mind are expressed in three constituent processes called the *guṇas*. If the intellect or *mahat* is the first evolute of unmanifest *prakṛti*, then the mind is related to manifest *prakṛti*. The distinction between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* also shows itself in a difference between *liṅga-śarīra*, or "subtle body," which is synonymous with the *jīvātma*, and the transmigrating individual soul. The nature of time, or *kāla*, is framed by each text within their theistic or non-theistic metaphysics. It is in its theistic postulate of a creator-god, the source of liberating knowledge and therefore rightly the object of devotion, that the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* attempts to resolve the philosophical riddle posed by Īśvarakṛṣṇa's inconsistency.

Puruṣa

Īśvarakṛṣṇa identifies *puruṣa* as the first ontological *tattva* (principle). It is conscious and immutable; it is neither created nor creative.

The original Prakṛti, the root of all is not a product; the seven principles beginning with *Mahat*, the Great One, the intellect, are both productions and productive; the sixteen (the five organs of sense, the five organs of action, the five gross elements and the mind) are only products and not productive. The *Puruṣa*, the spirit, is neither a product nor productive.[123]

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[123] Kārikā 3.

As an ontological principle, *puruṣa* is unconnected in any way to the other twenty-four *tattvas* that comprise the two orders of *prakṛti,* the manifest and the unmanifest. *Puruṣa* is "a witness, free from misery, neutral, spectator and passive."[124] *Puruṣa,* say Larson and Bhattacharya, is the ultimate Knower and, therefore, is born nor does it die. It is the "something else" that is "distinct from that which has the three constituents."[125] This dualism is reflected in Panda's commentary: "Reality comprises Puruṣa and Prakṛti, spirit and matter. The former is manifold, pure changeless; the latter is primarily one, but is ever mutable, it evolves the material world out of itself and reabsorbs it."[126]

Because *puruṣa* is pure consciousness, it is never bound and never set free. It is unassailable. Manifest *prakṛti*, however, is bound and then liberated. "Verily, not any Spirit is bound, nor released, nor migrates. It is Prakṛti, the Primal Nature alone, abiding in manifold forms, that is bound, is released, and migrates."[127] *Puruṣa* is passive; it does not act, but witnesses the activity of *prakṛti*. Even though *puruṣa* is eternally free, because consciousness is embodied, *puruṣa* feels the effects of the experiences produced by *prakṛti*. *Puruṣa*, Panda says, "suffers all the miseries that the flesh is heir to."[128] Aware and conscious, it is as though *puruṣa* knows and feels pleasure and pain. It would seem, as Larson points out, that *puruṣa* is in some way bound after all. "The *puruṣa* in itself is pure, translucent consciousness; it cannot be bound or liberated. It only appears as if bound, liberated, etc., from the perspective of man in the manifest world."[129]

How *puruṣa* is conveyed is one of the most fundamental differences between Classical Sāṃkhya and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. Sāṃkhya affirms a plurality of *puruṣas* that appear in the many and ever changing forms of manifest *prakṛti*. Īśvarakṛṣṇa explicitly states that "the souls (*puruṣa*) are many since birth, death and the instruments of cognition and action allotted severally, since occupations are not simultaneous and at

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[124] Kārikā 19.
[125] Larson and Bhattacharya, *Sāṃkhya: A Dualist Tradition in Indian Philosophy*, 156.
[126] Panda, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa,* 10.
[127] Kārikā 62.
[128] Panda, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa,* 10.
[129] Larson, *Classical Sāṃkhya*, 222, 223.

once universe; [and] since the three Attributes affect severally."[130] For Īśvarakṛṣṇa, then, there are as many *puruṣas* as there are individual's. The plurality of *puruṣas* is also reflected in the *Yoga Sūtras* of Patañjali.[131]

In contrast, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* says that there is only one *puruṣa* but it is phenomenologically perceived as a multitude.[132] The one *puruṣa* (*Nārāyana*) enters *prakṛti*, and is present in all phenomenon.[133] The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa's* identification of *puruṣa* is consistent with the perspectives of the *Brhadāranyaka* and *Chāndogya* Upaniṣads.[134]

Given that, in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, individual *puruṣas* are a reflection of one ultimate *puruṣa*, Rao suggests that *puruṣa* designates an essential self within an "empirical self."[135] Animating and sentient, however, the one ultimate *puruṣa* is an unchanging, uncaused universal principle present in everything and everyone. As Edelmann puts it, this *puruṣa* is adopted by and reflected in the individual self. In the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa, "puruṣa* is an animating force in an otherwise lifeless mind and body."[136] This perspective is reminiscent of the earlier Vedic tradition in the *Upaniṣads*, according to which there is no distinction between the individual soul and the Absolute. "As fire is exhibited in different forms of wood, so, under different conditions of the modes of material nature, the pure spirit soul manifests itself in different bodies."[137]

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[130] Mainkar, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa,* 96.

[131] Gerald J. Larson and Ram Shankar Bhattacharya, eds., *Yoga: India's Philosophy of Meditation*, vol. 12 of *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*, edited by Karl H. Potter. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2008), 89.

[132] Dasgupta, *Indian Pluralism*, 24.

[133] Biardeau, "Some Remarks on the Links Between the Epics, the Purāṇas and Their Vedic Sources," *Studies in Hinduism: Vedism and Hinduism: Vedism and Hinduism,* edited by Gerhard Oberhammer. 73-174. (Wien: Verlag, 1997), 127-128.

[134] Rao, *Theism of Pre-Classical Sāṃkhya*, 398,399.

[135] Ibid., 395.

[136] Edelmann, *Hindu Theology and Biology*, 62.

[137] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 3.28.43, in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, Third Canto, Part Four: The Status Quo*, trans. and ed. A.C. Bhaktivedanta (New York: The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1974), 1224.

Manifest and Unmanifest *Prakṛti*

The *Sāṃkhyakārikā* offers a different relationship between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. According to Īśvarakṛṣṇa, pure consciousness is *puruṣa*; everything that appears in consciousness is the result of *prakṛti*. Unmanifest *prakṛti* as primordial matter is without form, color or weight, it is subtle and incomprehensible, beyond sense perception. Like *puruṣa*, unmanifest *prakṛti* is eternal. As Kārikā 8 states, "That original principle is not seen on account of its subtlety, not on account of its non-existence. It is perceived through its effects. *Mahat*, the intellect and others are its effects and are both like *prakṛti*, the cause, as well as unlike it."[138] Unmanifest *prakṛti* is the source of the manifest, the visible and perceptible world of matter. *Prakṛti* in its manifest state is unmanifest *prakṛti's* opposite: "caused, non-eternal, non-pervasive, mobile, manifold, dependent, mergent, conjunct and governed."[139]

Unlike *puruṣa*, *prakṛti* is an unconscious and insentient principle. Unconscious, it does not possess knowledge in and of itself, and because knowledge does not reside in the effects, it does not exist in the cause. "In this world whatever is the essence of the cause is the essence of the effect," Gauḍapāda explains, "just as the cloth produced from black threads is black." Since both unmanifest and manifest *prakṛti* are unconscious, discrimination exists separately from *prakṛti*; knowledge exclusively belongs to another ontological principle, that of the "Knower" (*puruṣa*). He adds, "The Manifest is indiscriminative, that is, it has no discrimination . . . . The Manifest is non-intelligent, for it is not conscious of pleasure, pain and delusion."[140] Jaysankar Shaw also says that causal *prakṛti* always resides in its own qualities even in its manifest form. As nature evolves and diverse forms appear, Sāṃkhya dictates that the cause always exists in the

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[138] Kārikā 8.
[139] Kārikā 10.
[140] Ibid., 71.

effect.[141] What does not exist cannot be brought into existence. All material effects, including individuals, are the modifications of *prakṛti*.

Of the two primary variations of *satkāryavāda*, Sāṃkhya favors the position that there is a real transformation of form (*pariṇāma*).[142] The *Advaita Vedānta*, in contrast, argues that the effect has a dependent ontological reality; it is only an appearance, not fundamentally different from its cause, and therefore a less than real transformation. According to Īśvarakṛṣṇa, the effects come out of unmanifest *prakṛti* during world manifestation, possess independent ontological reality, and then return to unmanifest *prakṛti* at the time of dissolution. Hence, "creation" and "destruction" are ultimately subject to the laws of manifest *prakṛti.* The primordial cause of unmanifest *prakṛti* is theoretically not available for analysis due to its subtlety. Panda explains,

> The ultimate cause of this world must be some unintelligent or unconscious principle, which is uncaused, eternal and all-pervading, very fine and always ready to produce the world of objects. This is the Prakṛti of Sāṃkhya Philosophy. It is really the first cause of all things and, therefore has itself no cause. As the uncaused root-cause of all objects it is eternal and ubiquitous, because nothing that is limited and non-eternal can be the first cause of the world.[143]

Because of the intractable subtlety of unmanifest *prakṛti*, what can be investigated is the effect rather than the primordial cause. Hence, suggests Panda, the difference between *prakṛti* and its evolutes is similarly one between an "indefinite incoherent homogeneity and a definite coherent heterogeneity."[144] Mutability is what differentiates manifest *prakṛti* from unmanifest *prakṛti*. Everything in the perceptible world is in constant flux.

Similar to the Third Noble Truth in the Buddhist tradition, which affirms a principle of impermanence, the law of mutability is crucial within Sāṃkhyan metaphysics. Unlike unmanifest *prakṛti*, manifest *prakṛti* is impermanent. Like

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[141] J. L. Shaw, "Causality, Sāṃkhya, Buddha and Nyāya," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 30.3 (2002), 215.

[142] *Satkāryavāda* is the philosophical position that the effect exists in the cause.

[143] Panda, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa,* xiv.

[144] Ibid., 21.

Buddhism, Sāṃkhya upholds a doctrine of impermanence regarding not unmanifest *prakṛti* or *puruṣa,* but manifest *prakṛti.*[145] Unlike Buddhism, Sāṃkhya affirms a principle by which the world emanates, and affords more intrinsic being and continuity to phenomenon despite its changing nature. The premise that there exists an ontological, unmanifest principle from which everything in the world emanates is what distinguishes Sāṃkhya from Buddhism. Both agree, however, that it is identification with changing form (manifest *prakṛti)* that creates suffering.[146]

The authors of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* also affirm that it is identification with changing form that causes suffering. Differing from Classical Sāṃkhya, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* limits the subtle body to the intellect (*mahat*), ego (*ahamkāra*), and mind (*manas*).[147] Nonetheless, there is a distinction between pure consciousness (*puruṣa)* and all that is essentially unconscious (*prakṛti*) and, like Sāṃkhya, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* claims that the true experience is *puruṣa.*

> In actuality, the living being is spiritual, transcendental to material existence. But because he wants to control material nature for his own enjoyment, his life in the material world seems substantial. Accordingly, he identifies with all that transpires here; just as one who dreams thinks his dream is real.[148]

In accord with Classical Sāṃkhya, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* also holds that consciousness is ultimately free. It is the *ahamkāra* that is ensnared by ignorance (*avidyā*).[149] When *puruṣa* is realized as the true experience, the ego is freed from illusion. "This false ego is characterized as the doer, as an instrument and as an effect."[150] Accordingly, "The dry land gradually became free of mud, and the plants of their unripeness, just like those

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[145] Kārikā 10.

[146] Panda, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa,* 4-5.

[147] Edelmann, *Hindu Theology and Biology*, 62-65.

[148] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 11.22.13, in Rosen, *Krishna's Other Song A New Look at the Uddhava Gītā* (Santa Barbara, Praeger, 210), 260.

[149] Edelmann, *Hindu Theology and Biology*, 65.

[150] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 3.26.26, in Bhaktivedanta, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, Third Canto, Part Four*, 1091.

whose minds are fixed become free of concepts of "I-ness" and "my-ness" with regard to their bodies, which are not their real selves."[151]

Classical Sāṃkhya affirms that manifest *prakṛti* is unconscious. Similarly, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* says, "Indeed, the soul is without end, spiritual, pure, self-luminous and never influenced by matter in any form. It is vibrant, like fire, whereas the essentially dead material body is more like firewood, dull and unconscious." This verse then poses a question, "Given this state of affairs, who is it that actually experiences life in the material world?"[152] The locus of suffering is mistaking the finite self (manifest *prakṛti*) as the true self (*puruṣa*). As Rosen explains, "In the stupor of material identification, he misperceives illusion for reality, thinking his actual home is here, in the dreamlike state of material existence. Temporarily, then, he forgets his real life in the spiritual world and experiences material life here."[153]

The authors of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* convey that identifying the self with the body is a "great delusion."[154] It goes on to state that the "products of the dreamlike existence known as material life . . . they have nothing to do with the actual person, the spirit-soul within: Lamentation, elation, fear, anger, greed confusion, and hankering, as well as birth and death."[155] The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is replete with injunctions against the ego falsely attaching to the mind and body (*prakṛti*) instead of the transcendent self (*puruṣa*).[156] "Most beings of this world," it says for example, "foolishly identify with their body, senses, life air, and mind, with these coverings fully engulfing them. Thus, they find themselves appearing like a product of material energy, and, under the undeviating control of time, they are forced to experience the numerous dimensions of mundane existence."[157]

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[151] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 10.20.39, in Bryant, *Krishna*, 99.
[152] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 11.22.11, in Rosen, *Krishna's Other Song*, 260.
[153] Ibid., 261.
[154] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 3.25.10, in Bhaktivedanta, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam Third Canto, Part Four*, 1010.
[155] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 11.22.15, in Rosen, *Krishna's Other Song*, 261.
[156] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 2.5, 3.26, 11.22 and 11.24.
[157] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 11.22.16, in Rosen, *Krishna's Other Song*, 261.

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* supports the idea that consciousness is distinct from matter and that the mind is the same material substance as the body. The *manas* has no self-awareness, it is a subtle aspect of matter. [158] Similar to Classical Sāṃkhya, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa's* ontology separates consciousness or spirit from all that is unconscious (*prakṛti*). However, in contrast to Classical Sāṃkhya, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* does not regard *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* as self-sufficient, impersonal realities. This *Purāṇa* presents a theistic alternative in which the person of Kṛṣṇa embodies the one ultimate consciousness.

The *Guṇas*

When the creative potential of *prakṛti* is dormant and the *guṇas* are in a state of equilibrium, then *prakṛti* is identified as *pradhāna* (primordial matter)*.* The three constituents that make up *pradhāna* are *sattva* (intelligibility), *rajas* (activity), and *tamas* (inertia).[159] According to the twelfth Kārikā, the *guṇas* "are of the nature of pleasure, pain and infatuation and serve to illumine, to actuate and to restrain; they mutually domineer, rest on each other, produce each other, consort together, and are reciprocally present."[160] They are a "tripartite constituent process."[161] The three *guṇas—sattva, rajas*, and *tamas—*are respectively *pṛiti* (agreeable), *apṛiti* (disagreeable), and *viṣāda* (oppressive). Their determining functions of these attributes are *prakāśa* (illumination), *pravṛtti* (activity), and *niyama* (restriction).[162]

The Sanskrit word *guṇa* may mean "cord," "string" or "thread" suggestive of "quality," "attribute" or "substance." Sāṃkhyan discourse identifies the *guṇas* as "cords" or "strands' of primordial reality.[163] Thus, all phenomenon is comprised of a mixture of

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[158] Edelmann, *Hindu Theology and Biology*, 65-68.
[159] Larson and Bhattacharya, *Sāṃkhya: A Dualist Tradition in Indian Philosophy*, 23.
[160] Kārikā 12.
[161] Larson and Bhattacharya, *Sāṃkhya: A Dualist Tradition in Indian Philosophy*, 65.
[162] Ibid.,154.
[163] Ibid., 65.

the *guṇas*. Because the *guṇas* exist as both mind and body, they also comprise all mental, emotional, and physical states. Nonetheless, the *guṇas* and their functions are separate from *puruṣa* and, therefore, are unconscious.[164] As such, they create and sustain the manifest world. Larson and Bhattachyra explain:

> . . . *guṇa* refers to aesthetic and intellectual matters and is said to pervade the entire sphere of ordinary experience. The term "*guṇa*," in other words, comes to encompass, according to Sāṃkhya, the entire range of subjective and objective reality, whether manifest (*vyakta*) or unmanifest (*avyakta*). It becomes the "thread" that runs through all of ordinary experience and throughout the natural world…[165]

The etymological root of *sattva guṇa*, corresponding to "light," means "being." As Bryant says, it "indicates material reality in its purest state and is characterized by the desirable qualities of discrimination, lucidity, and illumination, since it is *sattva* that can reveal matter for what it is before *rajas* and *tamas* cause it to transform."[166]

The mind dominated by *sattva guṇa* is characterized by dispassion and discrimination. It is *rajas guṇa* and *tamas* that propel the mind towards sense objects.[167] *Sattva guṇa* corresponds to "rational ordering." Larson and Bhattacharya describe it as "discerning and discriminating." *Rajas guṇa* corresponds to movement; it is the "continuing flow of experience that is capable or pre-reflective spontaneous desiring or longing." This *guṇa* is characterized by passion, activity, and restlessness. *Tamas guṇa* corresponds to "stability." This *guṇa* is a "continuing awareness of an opaque and enveloping world." *Tamas guṇa* is characterized by delusion, ignorance, and inertia. Because the three *guṇas* constitute the continuing flow of experience, lived experience is a mixture of this tripartite process and lived experience that is characterized by gratification and satisfaction, frustration and longing and finally confusion and uncertainty. Accordingly, all three *guṇas* are functioning at all times and in every state or stage of existence. In every subtle or gross manifestation, the three *guṇas* are operative

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[164] Ibid., 154-155.
[165] Ibid., 66.
[166] Bryant, *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, 18.
[167] Ibid., 48.

and inseparable. *Sattva guṇa* "discerns," *Rajas guṇa* "desires" and *tamas guṇa* "envelopes.""[168]

Manifest *prakṛti* is the fluctuating degrees of imbalance within the three *guṇas*. S*attva guṇa* is predominant in the causal stage of projected energy. Īśvarakṛṣṇa says that "There is a predominance of Sattva in the worlds above; below the creation is full of Darkness. In the middle Rajas dominates. This is so from Brahmā down to a blade of grass."[169] In an earlier Kārikā, he states that "Sattva is considered to be buoyant and enlightening; Rajas to be stimulating and mobile; Tamas alone is heavy and enveloping. They function (by union of contraries) for a purpose and co-operate like a lamp."[170] As wick, oil, and flame function together for the purpose of illumination, Larson and Bhattacharya elaborate, so all three attributes, though different in their mechanism, function together for a purpose.[171] Similarly, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* locates the activating force of *prakṛti* in the *guṇas*. Like Īśvarakṛṣṇa, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* teaches that the *guṇas* are separate from *puruṣa* (consciousness):

> . . . the three modes of material nature are what the material body and mind are composed of. They enter into your sense of being and remain there for some time, but they are actually an illusion, and you can know this is so because they have only temporary existence as part of you-they are not who you really are. Indeed, the body goes through various transformations, from birth to death, revealing that it has no relation to your eternal self. The phases of bodily existence began at a particular time, and they will end at a particular time as well. Thus, the body exists merely at the present moment but has no substance in terms of ultimate reality.[172]

The *Mahat*

The first evolute of unmanifest *prakṛti*, *mahat* (intellect), reflects the qualities and potential of what is near. Therefore, "the *Liṅga*, the non-intelligent body seems intelligent

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[168] Larson and Bhattacharya, *Sāṃkhya: A Dualist Tradition in Indian Philosophy,* 66-68.
[169] Kārikā 54.
[170] Kārikā 13.
[171] Larson and Bhattacharya, *Sāṃkhya: A Dualist Tradition in Indian Philosophy*, 154.
[172] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 11.13.7, in Rosen, *Krishna's Other Song*, 150-151.

and though the agency really belongs to the *Guṇas* . . . [and] the indifferent one appears as the agent."[173] When describing the *mahat*, Patañjali uses the metaphor of a crystal. Just as a crystal takes on the qualities of what is beside it, the *mahat* accepts the qualities of what is immediate.[174] For example, if a blue object is placed near a crystal, the crystal will adopt the color blue. The crystal itself is not intrinsically blue; it is merely adopting the qualities of what is nearby. At the same time, the object does not lose its blueness. Similarly, *prakṛti* remains pure and clear, and *puruṣa* remains unadulterated and untainted. In this sense, *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* are separate. Even though *prakṛti* itself is unconscious, it adopts the property of consciousness from *puruṣa*. This idea is consistent with the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*. "Just as in life a jar when in contact with coolness is cold, and when in contact with heat is hot," Gauḍapāda elaborates, so also the Liṅga, Mahat and the rest, is as if intelligent when in contact with the Spirit."[175]

As the "innermost core of man's nature,"[176] *prakṛti* transforms into a seemingly conscious principle. *Puruṣa* is present within this first evolute of *prakṛti*. The *mahat* is where *puruṣa* and unmanifest *prakṛti* unite. Described as "the great one" or "cosmic intellect," the *mahat* is the "ground condition of all knowledge."[177] The remaining *tattvas*, arising from *mahat*, exist within this relationship. Discerning the difference between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* is *jñāna* (knowledge). It is *mahat* (the intellect) that discerns this difference.[178] "The other organs present everything to the intellect, since it is the intellect that brings about enjoyment of the Spirit in respect of things to be enjoyed, and again, it is that intellect itself that reveals the subtle difference between the *Pradhāna*, the Primal Nature, and *Puruṣa*, the Spirit.[179]

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[173] Mainkar, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa*, 101.

[174] Bryant, *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, 446.

[175] Mainkar, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa,* 99.

[176] Larson, *Classical Sāṃkhya*, 224.

[177] Rao and Paranjpe, *Psychology in the Indian Tradition*, 98.

[178] Larson, *Classical Sāṃkhya*, 224. *Buddhi* is derived from the Sanskrit verb *budh*; to be aware of, to wake up. The word *mahat* and *buddhi* are used interchangeably.

[179] Kārikā 37. *Pradhāna* is defined as principle, materiality, material nature, synonym for *prakṛti.*

Because *puruṣa* is the ground of knowledge, it is beyond the *ahamkāra* (ego) or *manas* (mind). Even though *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* are separate and unconnected, "*puruṣa* and *prakṛti* mutually interact to bring about the process of creation, self-consciousness and finally, enlightenment."[180] Īśvarakṛṣṇa states that this knowledge is "complete" (*apariśeṣam*), "pure" (*viśuddham*), and "solitary" (*kevalam*).[181] This knowledge is the realization that *puruṣa* (consciousness) is separate from *prakṛti* (matter).

This view that pure consciousness being beyond material nature is consistent with *Bhāgavata Purāṇa.* Like Sāṃkhya, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* likewise acknowledges the subtle aspects of manifest *prakṛti*, namely the *ahamkāra* (ego) and the *manas* (mind). Reminiscent of the Upaniṣadic tradition, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* identifies the self as God in that the *ātman* is *Brahman*.[182] This identification with the immutability of *puruṣa*, rather than the mutability of *prakṛti*, is the means for liberation. For example, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* says that that the "Super soul" and the "individual soul" "are not different in quality."[183] Moreover, one's essential self is indestructible; it is immune to the "agents of death."[184]

Nonetheless, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* affirms that the individual self is separate from god. It makes a distinction between the self (*ātman*) and supreme self (*paramātman*). The individual self depends on the supreme self for its existence. [185] Because the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* considers Nārāyana to be indistinct from the *ātman*, saving knowledge resides solely in identifying with the one, ultimate consciousness. Consequently, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* vacillates between dualistic and non-dualistic perspectives. It is non-dual in that an individual must realize that one's own consciousness is numerically identical to Kṛṣṇa. Soteriological knowledge resides in the

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[180] Larson, *Classical Sāṃkhya*, 14.

[181] Kārikā 64, in Larson, *Classical Sāṃkhya*, 279.

[182] Edelmann, *Hindu Theology and Biology*, 68. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 11.13.7, in Rosen, *Krishna's Other Song*, 150-151.

[183] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 4.28.62, in Bhaktivedanta, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam Third Canto, Part Four*, 1360.

[184] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 12.5.11, in Bhaktivedanta, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam Twelfth Canto, Part One,* 145.

[185] Edelmann, *Hindu Theology and Biology*, 68.

realization that individual consciousness is pure and ultimate. "What is realized as the Absolute Brahman [is] full of unlimited bliss without grief. That is certainly the ultimate phase of the supreme enjoyer."[186]

Classical Sāṃkhya and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* both agree that one consciousness must be realized. However, contrary to the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa's* theistic framework, divine consciousness is embodied in Kṛṣṇa. As the *Bhāgavata* says, "real knowledge must reveal my presence in all things . . . ." Framing the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa's* theism, this verse adds that, "For religious principles to be legitimate, they must lead to *bhakti* or devotional service." [187] The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* also states, "there comes a time when one can see the essence of all existence—the ultimate truth that lay beyond these elements. Such a person sees the ultimate cause itself, which is the Supreme Godhead."[188] According to the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* by realizing that one's personal, conscious identity is the ultimate "I am" (*puruṣa*), one also realizes that manifest and unmanifest *prakṛti* includes "I am not." Therefore, by realizing that the *ātman* and *Brahman* are of the same spiritual substance, unmanifest *prakṛti*, manifest *prakṛti*, and the Knower (*puruṣa*) are likewise discerned. Nevertheless, unlike Classical Sāṃkhya, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* supports a particular form of *bhakti*, one that is represented in the relationship between the individual soul and God. Indeed, contrary to the philosophy put forward by Īśvarakṛṣṇa, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* states, "knowledge" leads to "detachment, self-realization, and devotional love."[189]

Liṅga-śarīra

According to the classical tradition of Sāṃkhya, when unmanifest *prakṛti* projects its first evolute, the *liṅga-śarīra* (subtle body) comes into being. This *liṅga-śarīra* is

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[186] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 2.7.47, in Bhaktivedanta, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam Second Canto, Part Two,* 408.

[187] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 11.13.27, in Rosen, *Krishna's Other Song,* 155.

[188] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 11.13.15, in Rosen, 153-154.

[189] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 11.13.13, in Rosen, 153.

comprised of the intellect, the ego, and the eleven sensory organs. It appears when *prakṛti* adopts the qualities of *puruṣa*. The *liṅga* is the subtle body, but as a transmigrating entity, it becomes the *jīvātma* (individual soul)." The fortieth Kārikā says, "The subtle body is primeval, unimpeded, constant, composed of intellect and the rest down to the subtle elements, and migrates."[190] According to Gaudapāda, the subtle body is "unconfined" and unimpeded."[191] As Kārikā 39 posits, "those born of parents perish" while the *liṅga-sarira* is "lasting and constant."[192] Gaudapāda states that the subtle body is "not attached to the states of beasts, gods and men and on account of its subtlety it is wholly unrestrained, passing into mountains and the rest without obstruction and thus it moves, it goes." It is, he adds, also eternal; "it moves till the discriminative knowledge is attained."[193] Therefore, even though it can transmigrate for eternal time, it has a potential end through knowledge. The *jīvātma* has varied characteristics that make up a particular personality. "The subtle body for the sake of the goal of the Spirit performs its parts like a dramatic actor through the relation of means and their consequences and due to the connection with the might of the Prakṛti, the Primal Nature."[194] It is the unique and individual features of this medium, governed by the *guṇas* and combined with the intelligence of *puruṣa,* that produces an awareness of "I-amness."

According to the classical tradition, the phenomenon of "I-amness" (*ahamkāra*) is the result of insentient, unconscious *prakṛti* and sentient, conscious *puruṣa.* Larson explains that the functions of the *buddhi* and *ahamkāra* along with the *manas* are "determination" and "self-awareness."[195] Because the *mahat* has adopted the qualities of *puruṣa* (consciousness), it causes the next projection, the *ahamkāra* (ego). Adopting the qualities of *puruṣa*, the intellect produces an awareness of intelligent, conscious and animated existence—an "I-amness." The non-intelligent components of *prakṛti* become as if intelligent. Matter appears as if it is conscious. As the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* states that ". .

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[190] Kārikā 40.

[191] Mainkar, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa*, 146.

[192] Kārikā 39.

[193] Mainkar, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa*, 146.

[194] Kārikā 42.

[195] Kārikā 20.

.it is from their association that the Liṅga, the non-intelligent body, seems intelligent and though the agency really belongs to the *Guṇas*, the constituents, [and] the indifferent one appears as the agent."[196] This "I-amness" appears to be an agent and is responsible for action related to an individual body.

Van Buitenen presents an eloquent notion of the primordial phenomenon of *prakṛti* assuming intelligence. The philosophical implication of his idea is that consciousness, due to its union with *prakṛti*, has capacity to cry out, "I am." The sense of "I am" is precisely an awareness of one's own existence.[197] Even though the "I am" emanates from one source, *puruṣa*, it is *prakṛti* that provides the infrastructure to become aware of this source. Pure, eternal, unlimited consciousness appears in a finite, limited medium.[198] This individual I-amness is endowed with self- consciousness and intelligence, and it contains the qualities of the three *guṇas*. Larson explains that *prakṛti*, "which is inherently non-intelligent or non-conscious is illuminated by the pure presence of *puruṣa*." [199] Experience is not restricted because of any limitation of consciousness, but because it indwells a medium. As walls seem to limit space, so the *ahamkāra* appears to create boundaries within consciousness: "individuation is egotism, conceit in the ego"[200] Erroneous conception presupposes identification with an illusory "I" rather than the *puruṣa* or true "Knower" or "I am."[201]

In contrast to the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, unmanifest *prakṛti* in the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* is not set in motion by a creator god. The dynamism that *jīva* (the soul) undergoes in its trajectory towards liberation does not happen by a personal will. The non-intelligent components of *prakṛti* become as if intelligent. Matter appears as if it is conscious. "Here

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[196] Mainkar, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa*, 101.
[197] Van Buitenen, "Studies in Sāṃkhya," 17.
[198] Larson, *Classical Sāṃkhya*, 201. Etymologically, *aham* signifies the first person pronoun "I." *Kara* may mean "making," "doing" or "working." *Ahamkāra* has been translated as "ego," "individuation," or "conception of one's individuality."
[199] Ibid., 12.
[200] Kārikā 24.
[201] Kārikā 24 introduces the notion of *abhimāna. Abhimāna* implies ideas of "conceit," "pride" or "erroneous conception."

it is the Spirit that is intelligent," Gauḍapāda affirms, "and the *Liṅga* i.e. *Mahat* and the rest, appears as if intelligent through its relation with the Spirit."[202]

Thus, in the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, a conscious and sentient *puruṣa* seems not to exercise personal will, but the insentient and unconscious *prakṛti* has agency. Although unconscious mechanisms within *prakṛti*, by their workings and influence, the *guṇas* appear to generate choice. However, because the *guṇas* are animated by consciousness, it appears that *puruṣa* is the agent. Said to be active, the *guṇas* are empowered by *puruṣa*, or consciousness, although *puruṣa* in essence does not choose. *Puruṣa*, however, provides capacity for knowledge. This knowledge, coupled with the *guṇas*, appears to profoundly influence choice.

Thus, in Īśvarakṛṣṇa's codified Classical Sāṃkhya, free will is mediated by both principles, and the process of evolution is guided by the purpose of the liberation of spirit. "This creation, from intellect down to the gross elements," Īśvarakṛṣṇa writes "is brought about by Prakṛti, the Primal Nature, for the deliverance of each Spirit. This is done for another's sake as for itself."[203] That *prakṛti* is guided for the purpose of liberating *puruṣa*, then, is a profound inconsistency that presents an unsolvable problem. Panda identifies this problem:

> [*prakṛti*] being non-intelligent, there is no meaning in ascribing a purpose to it. To say that it is guided by the goal of the spirit is again unmeaning since the purpose of one being cannot guide another, except in so for as the former controls and uses the latter or the latter intelligently enters into and assimilates the purpose of the former. Neither is granted since *Prakṛti* is neither intelligent nor controlled by intelligence.[204]

Śaṅkara, in his commentary on *Brahmasūtra* 2.2.1-10, attacked Sāṃkhya because of this inconsistency. He criticized what seemed to him to be the illogical supposition that an insentient *prakṛti* can be the cause of the universe. An indifferent *puruṣa* could have no desire to be satisfied and, therefore, Īśvarakṛṣṇa's metaphors are fundamentally

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[202] Mainkar, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa,* 99.
[203] Kārikā 56.
[204] Panda, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa,*11.

problematic. Also pointing to this inconsistency, with regards to *puruṣa*, Mainkar says that because liberation is the natural state, it cannot be the aim of this activity;' "the non-sentient Prakṛti and the indifferent Puruṣa cannot have any desire or curiosity to be satisfied."[205] The Vedāntins also argued that the first cause must be conscious. If the instigator of matter is not conscious, then creation cannot be sufficiently explained.[206] One possible resolution of this problem is by asserting a divine creator as the primary cause. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* follows this trajectory with its theistic metaphysics.

Kāla

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa's* concept of *kāla* (time) bears a striking difference from that in Classical Sāṃkhya. It is an important window to highlight their differences and to understand the *Bhāgavata's* theistic cosmology. According to the authors of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa, kāla* is an additional *tattva*, or principle, that exists independently above and beyond the twenty-five *tattvas* that Iśvarakṛṣṇa enumerates.[207] Time is the supreme soul, or *Brahman*. Time is the "Supreme Personality of the Godhead, from whom the creation begins as a result of the agitation of the neutral, unmanifested nature." As time, it is God who "adjusts all these different elements, keeping Himself within as the Supersoul and without as time."[208]

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* says that *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* owe their origin to *kāla*, the activating force that disturbs the *guṇas.* As Rick Jarow points out, like many Vedic works, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* attributes time to a creator, the divine cause of the transformation of forms.[209] The *Artharva Veda* contains the earliest reference of *Kāla* as

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[205] Ibid., 30.

[206] Ibid., 30.

[207] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 3.26.15, in Bhaktivedanta, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam Third Canto, Part Four,* 88.

[208] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 3.26.15-18, in Bhaktivedanta, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam Third Canto, Part Four,* 88-91.

[209] Jarow, "Time and Narrative," in *The Bhāgavata Purāṇa: Sacred Text and Living Tradition,* ed. Ravi M. Gupta and Kenneth R. Valpey, 36-47.

a creator deity.[210] The *Mahābhārata* likewise identifies time as Nārāyana, a Vedic deity sometimes identified as Viṣṇu. "And time (*kāla*), [which is computed by] the course of the stars, is the supreme Nārāyana."[211] In the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, *kāla* is the principle which brings about creation's equilibrium and dissolution. Time sets creation in motion.

In contrast to the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa's* identification of *kāla* with a creator deity, commentators on Classical Sāṃkhya regards *kāla* in a non-theistic framework. Gauḍapāda argues that one must discern *puruṣa* (eternal consciousness) beyond the vicissitudes of time. For him, *kāla* is an evolute of manifest *prakṛti* and subject to the laws of *prakṛti*. In his commentary on Kārikā 61, he states:

> According to some Time is the cause: it is said, "Time rears the beings, Time withdraws the world; Time watches when all sleep, Time is not to be surpassed." To this the Sāṃkhyas would say: There are only three categories: the Manifest, the Unmanifest and the Knower. Time is also included under one of these. Time is manifest. Since the Nature is the cause of everything, producer, maker of everything, it must be the cause of Time also.[212]

Vācaspatimiśra' influential commentary of the ninth or tenth centuries, the *Yuktidīpikā,* echos the same idea—that time has no independent existence; it is merely an emanation of *prakṛti*.[213]

In Classical Sāṃkhya, time is an evolute of *prakṛti* that is constantly changing. In the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* although *kāla* is a distinct *tattva*, *Brahman*, the one consciousness, is its instigator. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* warns that identification with delusions associated with time is the cause of suffering. Because time is associated with creation and destruction, Jarow says that it is a "source of terror" for those who have not accurately perceived the one eternal consciousness, or *puruṣa*. [214] One must be "rid of delusions" he says, and begin to revel in the glory of the Self beyond time and illusion.[215]

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[210] *Artharva Veda* 19.53, 19.54.

[211] *Mahābhārata* 12.335.80, in Randy Kloetzli and Alf Hiltebeitel, "Kala" in *The Hindu World*, ed. Sushil Mittal and Gene Thursby, 553-586 (New York: Routledge, 2004), 556.

[212] Mainkar, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa*, 192.

[213] Panda, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa,* 213.

[214] Jarow, "Time and Narrative," 42.

[215] Ibid., 43.

Living beings who realize the reality of the *ātman* (self) are said to transcend time; in the divine abode, there is no passage of time. Free from such illusion, one can discriminate between *puruṣa* and manifest *prakṛti*. Even though *kāla* is a separate *tattva*, argues Panda, liberation occurs when there is clear recognition that the self is free, eternal, and above the mind and the vicissitudes of time.216

In the *Sāṃkhyakārikā,* Īśvarakṛṣṇa says that manifest *prakṛti*, unmanifest *prakṛti*, and *puruṣa* must be accurately discriminated. Because *kāla* is an evolute of *prakṛti*, it must be discerned as separate from eternal consciousness. It is not a divine creator. In the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, *kāla* becomes a personified figure, *Kāla*, who impels matter:

> O my lord, Your Lordship is eternally awake, seeing everything that happens. As eternal time, you reduce the duration of life for all living entities through your different parts, such as moments, seconds, minutes and hours. Nonetheless, you are unchanged, resting in one place as the Supersoul, witness and Supreme Lord, the birthless, all pervading controller who is the cause of life for all living entities.217

The Existence of God

Many elements of Sāṃkhya in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* differ from those put forward by Iśvarakṛṣṇa's philosophy in the *Sāṃkhyakārikā.* The most important is that the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* clearly postulates a creator god, Nārāyana, as a third ontological entity, distinct from the principles of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. Kṛṣṇa is identified as the supreme incarnation of Nārāyana. According to Sheridan, Kṛṣṇa is "the primary bearer of the title 'Bhagavān,'" signifying his role as the Supreme Being. In its many identifications of Kṛṣṇa with Viṣṇu Nārāyana, Sheridan continues, the intent of the

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216 Panda, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa,* xv.
217 *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 7.3.31, in Bhaktivedanta, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam Seventh Canto, Part One: The Science of God*, trans. and ed. A.C. Bhaktivedanta (New York: The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1972), 160.

Bhāgavata Purāṇa is "to show that Kṛṣṇa is Viṣṇu's equal or his superior, thereby replacing him as the highest identity of God."[218]

The Sanskrit word *sāṃkhya* was extant long before Īśvarakṛṣṇa codified Sāṃkhyan philosophy. Identifiable early Sāṃkhyan thought is known as proto-Sāṃkhya. Similar to the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, much of proto-Sāṃkhya is theistic and may be found in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* and the *Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā*.[219] These Sanskrit works include a transcendental god who controls and impels *prakṛti* for the purpose of *puruṣa*. Rao writes that a theistic account of Sāṃkhya would explain "a transcendental God, who though existing outside, is capable of directing and controlling the *Prakṛti* so as to serve the purposes of *Puruṣa* or *Puruṣas*." To serve the purposes of *puruṣa*, he adds, "there is an immanent spiritual principle, prompting the evolution of the insentient *prakṛti* in such a way as is conducive to the liberation of *Puruṣa*.[220] In Īśvarakṛṣṇa's codified Sāṃkhya, on the other hand, there is no divine principle beyond the twenty-five *tattvas* he enumerates; *puruṣa* is an impersonal principle. The authors of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* however, postulate a theistic alternative; they affirm a personal creator of material reality. The eleventh book states:

> Nothing exists except the Lord Himself, who is the ultimate controller and creator of this world. He indwells all and is thus both creator and created, maintainer and the maintained, withdrawer and the withdrawn. Everything is contained within Him, and yet He is distinct from everything and everyone else, inconceivably. Of all the illusions that appear within Him, the three modes of material nature are among the most mysterious. But, in the end, they are simply products of His illusory potency. [221]

Hence the theism put forward in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* seems to be closer in its theology to proto-Sāṃkhya than that of Classical Sāṃkhya.

According to the authors of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* Viṣṇu Nārāyaṇa is both the material and efficient cause of the cosmos. He both creates the cosmos and is the cosmos;

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[218] Sheridan, *The Advaitic Theism of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* 57.
[219] Rao, *Theism of Pre-Classical Sāṃkhya*, 398.
[220] Ibid., 398.
[221] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 11.22.6-7, in Rosen, *Krishna's Other Song,* 257.

he is both *puruṣa* and *prakṛti.* Similarly, *Brahman* is the totality of the evolutionary progression of *prakṛti*. This means that *Brahman* paradoxically comprises the world and is simultaneously transcendent to it. Cyclically creating, sustaining, and destroying the world, this deity stands apart from *puruṣas* and is not subject to the laws of *prakṛti*. A creator of the world, above and beyond *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* is consistent with the *Viṣṇu* and *Kūrma Purāṇas* but inconsistent with Classical Sāṃkhya.[222]

Positing a personal deity, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* can, unlike Sāmkhya, give utmost importance to the worship of this deity. Its theistic framework is exemplified in *bhakti* (devotion) as the greatest and highest element of religion. As Theodor writes, "The Bhakta's worshipful deity is equated with the supreme principle of the *Upaniṣads*; the adoring contemplation of the deity in his heaven by the worshipper is equivalent to *mokṣa*."[223] Positing a creator deity, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* offers a solution to Sāṃkhya's struggle to philosophically maintain a *prakṛti* that is acted upon and set in motion, but which also possesses agency. Rao points out that "a *prakṛti*, in which the *puruṣa* is not somehow implied either as an immanent controller or as the transcendent director, cannot explain the world order."[224]

Nonetheless, even though Īśvarakṛṣṇa does not propose a creator god, there is much to be said in regards to the existence of *Īśvara* within the classical tradition. Sāṃkhya presents a metaphysic in which there is neither a transcendent nor an immanent creator. Creation happens solely by spontaneity due to the relationship between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, occurring exclusively by impersonal principles. The difference between the classical tradition and proto-Sāṃkhya is relevant because much of proto-Sāṃkhyan thought is theistic. Proto-Sāṃkhya's theism may help to explain how *prakṛti* is set in motion. Nonetheless, even though Īśvarakṛṣṇa does not deny the existence of *Īśvara*, theism is not paramount.

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[222] *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 1.2.29, in Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism*. 82.

[223] Theodor, *The "Fifth Veda" of Hinduism,* 5.

[224] Rao, *Theism of Pre-Classical Sāṃkhya*, 398.

The theism of proto-Sāṃkhya, and perhaps in an understated way in Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṃkhyakārikā* is debated among scholars. Edward Johnston, for example argues that proto-Sāṃkhya was atheistic, and that somehow the theism portrayed in extant texts does not accurately represent Sāṃkhya doctrine proper. As he states, "the older teaching was a self-contained whole, with no room for a Creator, and the addition of the new principle inevitably brought about in due course the remodeling of the system."[225] Nicholson, however, argues that because Sāṃkhya existed as part of a larger theistic worldview, its theism was implicitly accepted. He claims that, from a historical standpoint, there is no evidence that proto-Sāṃkhya was atheistic.[226] Rao agrees. According to him, the widespread claim that proto-Sāṃkhyan views were thoroughly atheistic is inaccurate, and counters extant historical evidence.[227] Johannes Bronkhorst also says that the existence of god was implicitly accepted among all pre-second millennium Sāṃkhya commentators, contending that the *Māṭharavṛtti*, *Yuktidīpikā*, and the *Gauḍapāda's Bhāsya* all allow for such an existence.[228] Later commentators such as Vijñānabhikṣu (16th century) have similarly attempted to reconcile the philosophical differences between Yoga, Sāṃkhya and Vedānta by claiming that proto-Sāṃkhya was theistic.[229]

Claims for the existence of god are supported by the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad.* As the expression of proto-Sāṃkhya, the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* makes regular references to a personal deity.[230] In it, the "Lord" is said to be the one who, "brings to maturity the Nature, presides over the process of development and utilizes the *Guṇas.*"[231] Sāṃkhyan concepts found within this *Upaniṣad* are clearly intertwined with that of a god. The same claim can be made about the *Mokṣadharma* and the *Bhagavad Gītā* found within the *Mahābhārata*. These theistic texts also contain Sāṃkhya philosophy. Franklin Edgerton argues that in the *Mokṣadharma* there is no evidence that Sāṃkhya philosophy did not

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[225] Johnston*, Early Sāṃkhya* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1974), 85.
[226] Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism*, 70-71.
[227] Rao, *Theism of Pre-Classical Sāṃkhya*, 19.
[228] Bronkhorst, "God in Sāṃkhya," 149-164.
[229] Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism*, 65
[230] *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 4.1-7, in Olivelle, *The Early Upaniṣads*, 422-24.
[231] Mainkar, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa*, 23

support belief in *Brahman* or God.[232] Vācaspatimiśra implicitly accepts god's existence in his *Tattvakaumudī.* In accordance with *Gauḍapāda's Bhāsya* and the *Māṭharavṛtti,* Vācaspatimiśra accepts Patañjali's eight-limbed yoga, which includes a divine being.[233]

Hence, proto-Sāmkhya assumed or postulated the existence of a deity and Īśvarakṛṣṇa does not explicitly reject such existence. Nonetheless, Gaudapāda states that god does not create the world. In his commentary on Kārikā 27, he denies the existence of *Īśvara* as creator and argues instead that *prakṛti's* modifications arise from spontaneity.

> Now, these various organs, apprehending various objects, are so created by Īśvara or are they self-generated? Since, the Nature, intellect and ego are non-intelligent and the Spirit is devoid of action. To this the reply is: Herein the Sāṃkhya's admit a certain spontaneity as the cause (of this variety).[234]

Furthermore, on Kārikā 61 Gauḍapāda comments,

> Some declare God to be the cause . . . [while] others advocate Spontaneity as the cause . . . .[I]in this connection the teachers of the Sāṃkhya say: How can beings endowed with qualities proceed from *Īśvara,* who is devoid of qualities? Or how from the Spirit even, who also is devoid of qualities? Therefore, the causality of the Nature stands to reason.[235]

The *Yuktidīpikā* while admitting the existence of a god, also argues that "there is no being who is different from *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* and who is the instigator of these two"[236] The *Suvarṇasptati* also states that *Īśvara,* like *puruṣa* is a non-agent in regards to the creation of the world.[237] In the *Tattvakaumudī,* Vācaspatimiśra does not deny the existence of *Īśvara* but does reject *Īśvara* as the cause of the universe.[238] Clearly, according to

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[232] Edgerton, "The Meaning of Sāṃkhya and Yoga," in *American Journal of Philology* 45 (1924), 8-14: 1-46.

[233] Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism,* 78, 79.

[234] Mainkar, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa,* 117.

[235] Ibid., 191.

[236] Albrecht Wezler and Shujum Motegi, eds., *Yuktidīpikā: The Most Significant Commentary on the Sāṃkhyakārikā,* vol. 1, no. 44 of Alt-und Neu-Indische Studien. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1998), 159.

[237] M. Takakusu, *The Sāṃkhya Kārikā Studied in Light of its Chinese Version,* trans. S. S. Suryanarayana Sastri. (Madras: Diocesan Press, 1933), 40-41.

[238] Larson and Bhattacharya, *Sāṃkhya: A Dualist Tradition in Indian Philosophy,* 311.

Īśvarakṛṣṇa and the commentarial tradition, there is no principle above the twenty-five *tattvas* of Sāṃkhya. Hence, it is more accurate to posit that Īśvarakṛṣṇa believed in god, but not a creator god. Moreover, in his thinking, the gods would be implicitly finite and likewise subject to the eternal transformations of *prakṛti*.[239]

Sāṃkhya and Yoga

Because Sāṃkhya and Classical Yoga are so intricately linked, and because Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras* definitively admits the existence of *Īśvara*, the relationship of both philosophies is relevant to this discussion. Consistent with the commentarial tradition, Bryant affirms that Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras* are fundamentally based in Sāṃkhyan metaphysics.[240] One distinguishing feature is Yoga's emphasis on practice as opposed to Sāṃkhya's stress on knowledge. Therefore, one delineates "a way of practice" and the other a "way of knowledge."[241] Panda says that it is "Sāṃkhya which distinguishes spirit from matter. This intellectual discrimination found its natural complement in the practical discipline of yoga whereby the isolation of spirit from matter was accomplished."[242]

Like Sāṃkhya, Patañjali allows for the existence of god but does not posit an eternally existing creator beyond *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. Patañjali says that *Īśvara* is a special *puruṣa,* distinct from all other *puruṣas*. *Yoga Sūtra* I:24 states that "The Lord is a special soul. He is untouched by the obstacles [to the practice of yoga], *karma*, the fructification [of *karma*], and subconscious predispositions."[243] This means that *Īśvara* is never in bondage to *prakṛti*, but eternally liberated.

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[239] Knut A. Jacobsen*, Kapila: Founder of Sāṃkhya and Avatāra of Viṣṇu*, 52-53. (New Delhi: Munshiram Manocharlal Publishers, 2008), 52-53.

[240] Bryant, *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, xxv.

[241] Johannes Bronkhorst, "Yoga and Sésvara Sāṃkhya," in *Journal of Indian Philosophy,* 9 (1981), 309.

[242] Panda, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa,* 1.

[243] Bryant, *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, 87.

Bronkhorst says that the *Yuktidīpikā* affirms that *Īśvara* is capable of embodiment. As a "majestic body" *Īśvara* may be embodied in sages such as Kapila and should be viewed as divine. Bronkhorst refers to *Īśvara* taking a "body of dignity."[244] Even though Classical Sāṃkhya does not admit a creator god, the concept of god does appear to be included in its metaphysics.[245] Nicholson agrees that the commentarial tradition supports the idea of god as embodied and active in the world. He argues that commentaries prior to the tenth century view Kapila as an embodiment of *Īśvara*.[246] Specifically, the commentator Mādhava identifies Kapila as an incarnation of *Viṣṇu*.[247] Kapila being an embodiment of *Īśvara* is consistent with the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa's* narrative that designates Kapila as an incarnation of *Viṣṇu*. Hence the idea that *prakṛti* producing a "majestic body" in sages like Kapila may be consistent with the classical tradition and point to some continuities.

Nonetheless, it seems that Classical Yoga is closer in its philosophy to the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* than is Sāṃkhya. The commentarial literature regards Yoga as theistic (*sésvara,* or with god) but Classical Sāṃkhya as non-theistic *nirīśvara* (without god).[248] However, Bronkhorst argues that Īśvarakṛṣṇa's Sāṃkhya as an advocate of atheism and Patañjali *Yoga Sūtras* as teaching the existence of god is a gross misinterpretation. He says that the Sanskrit terms *sāṃkhya* and *yoga* are not incongruent systems of philosophy.[249] In agreement, Larson and Bhattacharya say that the *Yoga Sūtras* further reiterate Sāṃkhya philosophy (*sāṃkhyapravacana*).[250] The terms *sāṃkhya* and *yoga*, and the compound *sāṃkhyayoga* are present in ancient texts. *Sāṃkhyayoga* is found, for example, in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 6:13 and the *Bhagavad Gītā* 5.4. At the time of the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad's* composition, Sāṃkhya and Yoga were not yet viewed as

244 Bronkhorst, "God in Sāṃkhya," 153.
245 Bronkhorst, "Yoga and Sésvara Sāṃkhya," 315.
246 Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism*, 95-96.
247 Rao, *Theism of Pre-Classical Sāṃkhya*, 163.
248 Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism*, 79.
249 Bronkhorst, "Yoga and Sésvara Sāṃkhya," 316.
250 Larson and Bhattacharya, *Yoga: India's Philosophy of Meditation*, 23.

separate systems of philosophy.251 Bronkhorst says that the first usage of the word *yoga* referring to Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras* postdates Śaṅkara's eighth-century commentary, the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*. Like Classical Yoga, it is likely that both proto-Sāṃkhya and Classical Sāṃkhya included a deity in its metaphysical system.

According to the classical tradition, it may be said that *Īśvara* is not a creator; rather, he is a conscious agent in the world. As Kimball says, "Kapila is produced as an embodiment of the creative potential behind the world as a whole, for the purpose of drawing attention to the structure of that world." Consistent with Classical Yoga, Vācaspatimiśra's commentary on the *Yoga Sūtras,* the *Tattvavaiśāradī* (*Learned Treatise on the Principles*), states that god is not only an object of meditation but active in helping yogins achieve emancipation through *anugraha* (favor)*. Anugraha*, says Kimball, "seems to imply that unmanifest *prakṛti* exercises a kind of direct influence on the configurations of the manifest *tattvas*. That is, *pradhāna* acts for the benefit of *puruṣa* not just by manifesting the *tattvas* in the first place, but also, by manipulating their phenomenal configuration." Hence, Kapila was born out of *anugraha* in order to lead embodied beings to liberation through knowledge.252 Bronkhorst says that the *Yuktidīpikā* agrees that *Īśvara* incarnates in particular bodily forms.253 It establishes that *Īśvara* does not create the world; however, in order to teach Sāṃkhya, *Īśvara* takes on a body. According to the *Yuktidīpikā*, the use of *anugraha* "seems to suggest that unmanifest *prakṛti* has a certain instrumental power in combining the manifest elements that have evolved out of it, in order to initiate the creation of physical beings."254 Kimball summarizes this argument:

> How is there superintendence (*adhiṣṭhātṛtva*) on the part of *puruṣa*? Just as when someone is standing by as a witness of activity, the agent brings about the effect in conformance with the desires of that (witness), so also does *pradhāna*. Accordingly as the *puruṣa's* goal is fulfilled in activity and cessation, so does (*pradhāna*) arrange itself through the situation of intellect, ego, subtle elements,

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251 Mainkar, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa*, 23.
252 Kimball, *The Soteriological Role of the Ṛṣi Kapila*, 612.
253 Bronkhorst, "God in Sāṃkhya," 152.
254 Kimball, *The Soteriological Role of the Ṛṣi Kapila*, 609.

faculties, and elements into devas, human beings, animals, and inanimate objects, not out of happenstance.255

Gaudapāda says that "nature proceeds to action in order to fulfill the purpose of Spirit."256 Īśvarakṛṣṇa is concerned with the world insofar as it is instrumental for the aim of *puruṣa*.257 Nonetheless the doctrine that *prakṛti* works for *puruṣa* is philosophically problematic. Panda aptly asks:

> Even if evolution could somehow start and maintain itself, it would serve no purpose. If it serves to release the bound spirit, one wonders how the spirit came to be bound at all. Spirit and matter would seem to have nothing in common except in respect of being unoriginated. How then is it possible for the one to identify itself with the other?258

Yet, Īśvarakṛṣṇa posits that *prakṛti* is the infinite embodiment of *puruṣa* and the producer of the material world where liberation occurs. The purpose of *prakṛti's* work is so that ego identity learns that it is free. Thus, although *puruṣa* never needs to be liberated, liberation is its goal.259 Kārikā 56 adds that the "deliverance of each Spirit" is brought about by *prakṛti*.260 Yet, displaying an inconsistency, Kārikā 62 says that *puruṣa* is not bound; it is "Prakṛti, the Primal Nature, alone, abiding in manifold forms, that is bound, is released, and migrates."261 Still, in itself, *prakṛti* is unconscious and *puruṣa* has no agency. As Panda observes, "we should, indeed, expect a chaos and not a cosmos. What order there is should be accidental and it is not reasonable that such evolution will subserve any purpose, least of all, the release of spirit."262 Nonetheless, Īśvarakṛṣṇa clearly articulates that *prakṛti* is motivated for the sake of *puruṣa*. Various analogies in the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* establish the orderly evolution of unconscious non-intelligent *prakṛti*. *Prakṛti* is said, for example, to be both "like milk for the nourishment of the calf," and

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255 Ibid.
256 Mainkar, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa*, 151.
257 Larson, *Classical Sāṃkhya*, 222.
258 Panda, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa,* 12.
259 Mainkar, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa,* 93.
260 Kārikā 56.
261 Kārikā 62.
262 Panda, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa,*12.

"like a dancer that performs on a stage and then leaves the stage once the dance is complete."[263]

Gaudapāda's analogy of two men, one lame and the other blind, sheds further light on the relationship between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti.* According to Īśvarakṛṣṇa, this relationship involves contemplation and liberation. *Puruṣa* has the power to contemplate but does not have the power to act. Accordingly, Gaudapāda says that *puruṣa* is like a "lame man." *Prakṛti* has the power to act but does not have the power to contemplate; it is like a "blind man."[264] *Puruṣa* contemplates *prakṛti* for the purpose of liberation. This analogy has obvious problems in that each is endowed with purpose and each controls the other. The idea of *prakṛti* functioning for *puruṣa* implies achievement and personal intention. Yet, if *puruṣa* is impersonal and complete in its own essence, it wants nothing. Similarly, *prakṛti* being unconscious is incapable of intention. As Panda observes, "The initiation and direction of evolution by a purely non-intelligent material principle would thus seem to be unacceptable in theory and without any legitimate analogues in practice."[265]

Īśvarakṛṣṇa articulates an inherent quality within *prakṛti* that wants the aim of *puruṣa* to be accomplished. The notion of *Īśvara* taking on a body may help explain how *prakṛti* can exercise volition. Kapila came at the beginning of creation, "not in response to any *dharma* or *adharma*, but in order to make possible for the various *puruṣas* the experience of *prakṛti* and then liberation from *prakṛti*."[266] Moreover, Kimball suggests, "it thus seems logical to assume that, according to the author of *Yuktidīpikā*, Kapila was born 'out of the *anugraha* of *pradhāna*' in order to lead embodied beings to liberation through knowledge."[267] Additionally, the *Yuktidīpikā* relates that there is a soteriological connotation of *anugraha*. The term, points out Kimball, is "notably used in connection

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[263] Kārikā 57 and 59.
[264] Kārikā 21.
[265] Panda, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa,* 12.
[266] Kimball, *The Soteriological Role of the Ṛṣi Kapila*, 608.
[267] Ibid., 612.

with the production of Sāṃkhyan knowledge, which serves as the bridge between the two purposes of *prakṛti's* activity-embodied experience and cessation of experience."[268]

In contrast to the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, Classical Sāṃkhya does not allow for a creator god yet, like the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, Sāṃkhyan commentarial tradition allows for the embodiment of the divine. The *Sāṃkhyakārikā's* inconsistency, it would seem, remains. There is no conscious agent to set *prakṛti* into motion; there is no *tattva* controlling either *puruṣa* or *prakṛti*. Even though Sāṃkhya may include god as an active being in the world, it does not postulate a creator god. The philosophical predicament remains. How can *puruṣa* which is conscious yet inactive, while *prakṛti* is active yet unconscious, produce a seemingly intelligent universe?[269] Panda sums up this philosophical puzzle:

> What is it that causes the initial disturbance of equilibrium? It cannot be matter, for there is no matter outside the unevolved, and the unevolved is itself in the state of equipoise. Nor can *Puruṣa* account for the disturbance, for he is pure spirit with no point of contact with matter; he cannot actively influence matter . . . . [T]he inception of the process seems unintelligible on the Sāṃkhya hypothesis of two substances eternally diverse in nature, each having no point of active contact with the other.[270]

Although laden with its own philosophical problems, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* puts forward a theistic alternative that may help solve this dilemma. Echoing many Hindu traditions, the authors of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* convey god as the creator and sustainer of the universe. Ultimately, there is a personal deity who creates the world and who, therefore, is worthy of *bhakti* (worship). The philosophical significance of these ideas is captured by Erazim Kohak when he asks, "Is the Person or is matter in motion the root metaphor of thought and practice? That answered, all else follows."[271] This is a clear rebuttal of Īśvarakṛṣṇa who unequivocally affirms that an impersonal principle underlies the whole of reality.

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[268] Ibid., 610.

[269] Panda, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa,* 11.

[270] Ibid.

[271] Erazim V. Kohak, *The Embers and the Stars: A Philosophical Inquiry into the Moral Sense of Nature.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 125.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have compared portions of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and the philosophical system of Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṃkhyakārikā*. In doing so, I have demarcated some distinguishing features between proto-Sāṃkhya and Classical Sāṃkhya. Because the Sanskrit word *sāṃkhya* existed under the umbrella of an array of philosophical traditions, it is difficult to pinpoint what proto-Sāṃkhya precisely stood for. Nevertheless, I have articulated apparent differences between proto-Sāṃkhya and Classical Sāṃkhya, and how these schools of thought compare with the philosophy presented by the authors of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.

Attempting to reconcile proto-Sāṃkhya and the Classical tradition, I have argued that Īśvarakṛṣṇa and the commentarial tradition did not deny the existence of god and that, therefore, it is possible that Classical Sāṃkhya reflected the theism presented in extant texts before Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṃkhyakārikā*. The key difference I raise is that the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* affirms a creator god while Īśvarakṛṣṇa does not postulate a deity beyond the twenty-five *tattvas* he enumerates. In contrast to Īśvarakṛṣṇa, the authors of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* present an alternative in which a creator god is the source of all things including the knowledge of liberation from suffering, and whose worship, therefore, transcends human knowledge.

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* also establishes *kāla*, or time, as its own separate *tattva* beyond the twenty-five that Īśvarakṛṣṇa names. Not only is *kāla* incarnated as *Kāla*, a distinct ontological entity, but he is also identified as the "Supreme Lord." In Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṃkhyakārikā,* however, *kāla* is ultimately a product of manifest *prakṛti*.[272]

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[272] Mainkar, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa With the Commentary of Gauḍapāda*, 192.

Thus Sāṃkhyan theories of matter (*prakṛti*), and of a consciousness (*puruṣa*) that enlivens matter, is significant for the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa's* aestheticism and philosophical framework. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* consistently warns against identification with, and attachment to, eternally moving forms (manifest *prakṛti*).[273] Consequently, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* shares a soteriological position with Sāṃkhya. Liberation from suffering is possible only when the ontological reality of the Knower is seen as separate from both unmanifest and manifest *prakṛti*. Mainkar summarizes this metaphysical presupposition shared by both Classical Sāṃkhya and the *Bhāgavata* Purāṇa: "it is this identification that is the root cause of all misery and it is the knowledge of the separateness of the Spirit and nothing belongs to it, that wins salvation. It is therefore, essential for the Spirit to know its nature."[274]

I have shown that the Classical Sāṃkhyan commentators attempted to reconcile the apparent inconsistency in Īśvarakṛṣṇa's suggestion that *prakṛti* provides for the needs of a self-sufficient *puruṣa*. Although the reality of Kapila as a historical or legendary figure is debatable, both Sāṃkhya and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* make room for a divine embodiment in the sage. Naming him specifically, Classical Sāṃkhya postulates this sage was born with the knowledge of the difference between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* in order to lead others to liberation through knowledge.[275] Although the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* links Kapila with its own particular brand of Sāṃkhyan philosophy, it identifies Kapila as a divine figure.

Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṃkhyakārikā* is satisfied with spontaneity as a sufficient, primordial cause. The philosophical riddle this poses, however, is that, as eternal witness, *puruṣa* has no desire to exercise volition. Thus, an intelligent universe is born as the result of the agency of an unconscious principle (*prakṛti*). The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa's* theism is a textual/traditional attempt to resolve the philosophical dilemma as to how and why there exists an intelligent universe. Further, in a distinct contrast with the

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[273] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 3.26.6-8.
[274] Mainkar, *Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa With the Commentary of Gauḍapāda*, 29.
[275] Kimball, *The Soteriological Role of the Ṛṣi Kapila*, 612.

Sāṃkhyakārikā, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* draws on an aesthetic theory of *rasa* to build its philosophical framework. *Rasa* leads to *bhakti.* Devotion to the one who is the source of knowledge, rather than to the quest for that knowledge, becomes the means to liberation.

Both the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṃkhyakārikā* present a metaphysical system for the attainment of liberation. On the one hand, the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* identifies three *pramāṇas,* or forms of knowledge—those of perception, inference and valid testimony. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* on the other hand, elevates valid testimony above the other two. For Īśvarakṛṣṇa, the knowledge of manifest *prakṛti,* unmanifest *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* is the path to liberation, but for the authors of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* that path is the way of *bhakti.*

How *puruṣa* is conveyed is another fundamental difference between Classical Sāṃkhya and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa.* Īśvarakṛṣṇa says that there is a plurality of *puruṣas* while the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* admits to only one. Like *Advaita Vedānta,* the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* teaches that the phenomenal world—anything separated from pure consciousness—must be discriminated. Sāṃkhya also accepts that there is an eternal distinction between the subject and object. In the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* the ultimate conception of liberation is that the *ātman* (soul) is distinct from *Brahman* (god), and one never collapses into the other.[276] Yet, the theme throughout the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is that the plurality of existence exists within god and nothing exists outside of god: "What is, is the Lord."[277] As Rao puts it, there is, "no transcendental plurality of souls, though there may be an empirical plurality."[278]

Nonetheless, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* says that Kṛṣṇa is *Brahman* and both the self and *Brahman* are, at some level distinct. "It is never stated that Kṛṣṇa's form and personality ultimately merge or dissolve into some supreme formless truth devoid of personality and qualities."[279] Here, then, is the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa's* theory of difference

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[276] Bryant, *Krishna: The Beautiful Legend of God*, xxxvii.
[277] Sheridan, *The Advaitic Thieism of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* 20.
[278] Rao, *Theism of Pre-Classical Sāṃkhya,* 395.
[279] Bryant, *Krishna: The Beautiful Legend of God*, xxxvii.

and non-difference, *bhedābheda*. Brahman's nature is both dual and non-dual. The individual self does not completely dissolve into *Brahman* at the time of liberation. Kṛṣṇa as a person is separate from matter and worthy of devotion. "It is clear that you are *Bhagavān,* God himself, the supreme being beyond the material world. You are the knower of the minds of everyone. Your form is pure bliss and majesty."[280] The *Uddhava Gita* adds, "By constantly worshipping Me through loving service, a wise soul becomes firmly ensconced in My essential nature, loving Me with heart and soul."[281]Yet, suggestive of the *Upaniṣadic* tradition, the *ātman* and *Brahman* are of the same spiritual substance.

Although Classical Sāṃkhya postulates that ultimate reality is impersonal, its dualism creates a puzzling inconsistency. Īśvarakṛṣṇa is clear, in order for liberation to occur, *prakṛti* must be afforded existence and discerned as separate from *puruṣa*. Perhaps he, too, finds a solution through an aesthetic experience. In the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, he offers two poetic images. "As a dancer having exhibited herself to the spectators, desists from the dance," he writes, "so does Prakṛti, the Primal Nature, desist, having exhibited herself to the Spirit."[282] He adds, "Nothing, in my opinion, is more bashful than Prakṛti the Primal Nature; who once aware of 'I have been seen' does not expose herself to the gaze of the Spirit."[283]

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[280] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 10.3.13, in Bryant, 20.
[281] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* 11.14.29, in Rosen, *Krishna's Other Song*, 169.
[282] Kārikā 59.
[283] Kārikā 61.

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