

Chapter One

A Debate on the *Bhagavad Gītā*

This study analyzes the objectivity of the *Bhagavad Gītā* in terms of its origin, its views and the usefulness of the text, which invite a debate at the modern context. The *Gītā*, though it is a single text, has raised the divergent criticisms on these issues. It is regarded as a philosophic treatise on Hindu thought and the followers of Hinduism consider the text as being the divine creation. The modern critics raise the question on the validity of this claim. The Hindus worship the *Gītā* and follow the paths of spiritual salvation outlined in the text. The *Gītā* discusses about three paths (*mārgas*) of spiritual salvation: the path of knowledge (*jñāna mārga*), the path of action (*karma mārga*) and the path of devotion (*bhakti mārga*). The *Gītā's* exposition of these three contradictory paths of spiritual salvation invites the different critics giving their sectarian interpretations. The *Gītā* possesses the self-contradictory claims on different philosophical issues and this raises the question about the basic validity of the moral philosophy of the text. The *Gītā's* divergent views on its philosophical questions invite the self-contradictory different interpretations. The divine text gives an unequal treatment to the ruling and working class people. The text downgrades women and the large number of working class people, the *Vaiśyas*, *Sūdras* and outcastes. The *Gītā's* such a treatment to women and the working class people impel the modern readers to raise questions about the usefulness of the text in the present context. The study deals with these several controversial issues of the *Gītā* while revealing the objectivity of the text.

The *Bhagavad Gītā* is a Sanskrit text and consists of seven hundred verses. It is not a separate book but it is part of the epic *Mahābhārata*. It is a philosophic

teaching of Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna in the *Bhīsmaparva* of the *Mahābhārata*. The scene of the delivery of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, also known briefly as the *Gītā*, by Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna is laid on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra where the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas, two rival parties, had assembled their armies of war. The Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas belong to the same family and they fight each other for the kingdom of which Hastināpur is the capital. At the beginning of the war, Arjuna, a Pāṇḍava warrior, refuses to fight as he sees all his relatives and teachers in his enemy lines in the battlefield. It is considered that the whole *Gītā* aims at encouraging Arjuna to make him ready to fight in the war of the *Mahābhārata*. However, a small portion of the *Gītā* discusses about the issues of the war and the major portion of the text does not have the natural connection with the war issues. Kṛṣṇa gives a long lecture to Arjuna on the moral philosophy in the critical moment of the war and this makes the text unnatural to be part of the *Mahābhārata*. This encourages the critics to assume that the major portion of the *Gītā* is the later interpolation into the *Mahābhārata*. The question of interpolation of the *Gītā* is one of the major debates of the text. The setting, content and message of the *Gītā* have raised the multifaceted debates and invited the self-contradictory countless criticisms for centuries.

The commentary of Ādi Sankarācārya (788 A.D.-820 A.D.) is regarded as the most ancient of the existing ones. Although there had been numerous other commentaries or criticisms on the *Gītā* in the interval between the date of the *Mahābhārata* and the birth of Sankarācārya, these commentaries, however, are not now available and therefore, there are now no means for determining in what way the *Gītā* was interpreted in those days (Tilak "Introductory" 15). Sankarācārya, commenting on the *Gītā*, takes the text as an extended proof of *Vedas*: "This scripture called the *Gītā*, which is such, is the collection of the quintessence of all the teachings

of the *Vedas* . . .” (5). According to Sankara, main teachings of *Vedas* are repeated in the *Gītā* in a new form. Sankara takes the hereditary based *Cāturvarṇāh* of the *Gītā* as the borrowing of the *Ṛgveda* in which the society is divided into *Brāhmiṇ*, *Kṣatriya*, *Vaiśyas*, and *Sūdras* on a functional basis and finds no difference between the *Gītā*'s *Brāhmiṇ dharma* and *Vedic dharma*:

Vishnu, called Narayan, the Prime Mover, took birth—as a part of Himself—as Kṛṣṇa, the son of Devaki by Vasudeva, for the protection of *Brāhmiṇhood* which is *Brahman* manifest on earth, and for ensuring the stability of the world. Because, when *Brāhmiṇhood* is preserved the *Vedic dharma* becomes well guarded, for the distinctions among castes and stages of life depend on it. (4)

Ṛgvedic Varṇa division is the division of labor and not class division but Sankara finds *Ṛgvedic Varṇa* division as no different from the *Cāturvarṇāh* of the *Gītā*, which is class division, and it only came into existence at a later stage of social development. He keeps *Vedic dharma* on an equal footing with the *Gītā*'s *Brāhmiṇ dharma* that arose at a later stage of social development and unlike *Vedic dharma*, *Brāhmiṇ dharma* is based on exploitation of one *Varṇa* or class by another. Sankara, though he misinterprets the essence of *Vedic dharma*, is right that Kṛṣṇa, in the *Gītā*, speaks for the protection of *Brāhmiṇhood dharma* which keeps the majority of toiling masses *Vaiśyas* and *Sūdras* especially *Sūdras* in a disrespectful and disadvantageous position.

Sankara has given emphasis on the path of knowledge i.e., *jñāna mārga* among the three main paths of the *Gītā*: *jñāna mārga*, *karma mārga*, and *bhakti mārga*. Dilip Bose states: “Sankara holds that while *karma* is essential as a means for the purifications of the mind, when *jñāna* is attained, *karma* ceases. He rejects the

view of *jñāna-karma-samuccaya*, that is, a synthesis of the two” (46). Sankara regards *karma* only as a means for the purifications of the mind “. . . to acquire the capacity of realizing the identity of the *Brahman* and *Ātmā*” (Tilak "Introductory" 19) but he does not take the *karma* as the ultimate goal of human beings. Sankara was the first systematizer of *Advaita Vedānta*, which is also known as the philosophy of Non-Dualism, and, in his interpretation of the *Gītā*, he has found the philosophy of non-dualism in the text itself. Sankara’s theological vision of non-dualism is contained in the translated verse "*Brahman* is real; the world is a false projection; the individual self is exactly *Brahman*, nothing less" (qtd. in Nelson 310). Sankara holds the view that “. . . the knowledge of the *Brahman* does not become perfect unless a man has entirely conquered all root tendencies and given up all actions” (Tilak "Introductory" 19). Sankara insists that a person renounces all his rites and duties and becomes *sanyāsin*, “. . . which makes one fit for steadfastness in that knowledge; removal of ignorance and self-revelation of the supreme *Brahman*, which is the same as Liberation” (qtd. in Gambhirananda "Introduction" xx-xxi). One can achieve his ultimate goal of liberation after he is able to get the knowledge of the supreme *Brahman* and becomes *sanyāsin*. Sankara’s *sanyāsa* or renunciation of action is a complete escape from life because, for him, life itself is pure illusion. If Sankara, and not Kṛṣṇa, was the instructor of Arjuna, he would have advised Arjuna simply to run away from the battle, not because it would have been wrong to kill one’s kith and kin, but because the battle itself was totally unreal (Sardesai "Riddle" 30). Sankara’s interpretation of the *jñāna mārga* of the *Gītā* leads a person to run away from his duty of life as opposed to the suggestion of the *karma mārga* of the *Gītā*.

Srimad Ramanujācārya (1017 A.D.-1137 A.D.) also defends the notion that *Brahman* is the highest and uncompromised unitary reality but in his view, “. . . this

Brahman is in fact Lord Narayan, to whom all beings must surrender in devotion if they are to reach liberation" (Clooney 329). Unlike Sankara's impersonal world soul (Divine), which makes the illusory universe as a sort of sport (*Lilā*), Ramanuja develops the notion of compassionate personal God and his God needs the human being as much as the human being needs God (Chandulal 88, 92). Ramanuja establishes the new tradition, which later came to be known as the qualified non-dualist/monist (*Visistadvaita*) school of *Vedānta* theology. S. Rajamani informs: "His philosophy of *Visistadvaita*, qualified non-dualism, was specially designed by him to suit the trend towards Bhakti which was noticeable in his Tamil country" (107). Unlike Sankara's *jñāna mārga* of his *Advaita* philosophy, the essential contribution of Ramanuja to Indian thought was to have developed a coherent philosophical basis for the doctrine of *bhakti* to God (Chandulal 87). Ramanuja has interpreted the *Gītā* highlighting its *bhakti mārga* to suit the notion of *bhakti* of his sectarian philosophy of qualified non-dualism. In this regard, Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak asserts: "Ramanujācārya drew the further conclusions that although *karma*, *jñāna* and *bhakti* [Devotion] are all three referred to in the *Gītā*, yet the doctrine enunciated in the *Gītā* is in essence Qualified-Monistic from the point of view of philosophy, and of Devotion to the *Vasudeva* from the point of view of mode of life" ("Introductory" 22). In Ramanuja's interpretation, ". . . the *Gītā* (7.13-14) emphatically rejects any idea of illusion (*māyā*), because, for him, Nature is real, and '*māyā*' is the immense and wonderful productivity of Nature in God's hands as God's body as it were" (Chandulal 89). As Devotion is looked upon as the highest duty of man, the lifelong performance of the worldly duties becomes an inferior and on that account the interpretation put on the *Gītā* by Ramanujācārya must also be looked upon as in a way in favor of Renunciation of action (Tilak "Introductory" 22). For Ramanuja, the *Gītā*

neither gives emphasis to *jñāna mārga*, nor it teaches the *karma mārga*, instead the whole discourse of Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā* is for the resurrection of the spirit of Arjuna to generate *bhakti* to God (Chandulal 92). Thus, it is Ramanuja's claim that the *Gītā* forms the essential source of his own teachings.

Sri Madhvācārya (1238-1317 C.E.) develops a third school after there appeared a contradiction in looking upon the *parabrahman* and the conscious ego (*jīvā*) as one in one-way and different in other ways. This third school led by Madhva, came into existence after the date of Ramanuja, is of the opinion that the *parabrahman* and *jīvā* must be looked upon as eternally different from each other and that there never can be any unity between them, and, therefore, this school is known as the Dualist school (23). Madhva, in his commentaries of the sacred books including the *Gītā*, shows that these books are in favor of the theory of Duality. In his commentary on the *Gītā*, he argues that the desireless action mentioned in the *Gītā* is only a means and devotion is the true and ultimate cult and when once one has become perfect through the path of devotion, whether one thereafter performs or does not perform action is just the same (Tilak "Introductory" 23). Although Madhva is a dualist, he is similar with Ramanuja in giving preference to the *bhakti mārga* for attaining salvation (*mokṣa*). The knowledge of Vishnu, to whom Madhva considers the Supreme God, alone is not sufficient for attaining *mokṣa*, the devotees must also obtain the grace of Vishnu as he acknowledges: "Direct realization of the highest Lord [comes] only from grace and not [from] the efforts of the *Jīvā*" (qtd. in Sarma 359). This indicates that, in Madhva's school, the efforts of the *jīvā* or the performances of an individual do not have any role for attaining the *mokṣa*. It is needed Vishnu-*prasāda* (grace) for everybody if they want to attain *mokṣa* and this comes only through the *bhakti mārga* i.e., the path to *mokṣa* through

devotion (Sarma 359). As the Madhvabhasya takes such sentences that give emphasis on the desireless action in the *Gītā* as mere expletives and unimportant (Tilak "Introductory" 23), in his interpretation of the *Gītā*, Madhva has found the proof of his philosophy of dualism and the *bhakti* cult in the text.

Sri Vallabhācārya (1478 A.D.-1530 A.D.) establishes the fourth school of *Vedānta* known as the pure Non-Dualistic school. This school holds the view that the conscious ego (*jīvā*) when pure and unblinded by illusion (*māyā*) and the *parabrahman* are one and are not two distinct things. But, it differs from the Sankara's school in the sense that it looks the various souls as the particles of the *Isvara* like sparks of fire. In addition, it differs from the Sankara's school in that instead of knowledge of the *Brahman* that cannot be acquired easily by the conscious ego (*jīvā*) which has become dependent on illusion; it takes devotion to the Blessed Lord as the most important means of obtaining release or *mokṣa* (Tilak "Introductory" 24). For Vallabha, the purpose of *bhakti* is the reorientation of the *bhagavadiya* away from the ego and toward Kṛṣṇa and this enables the devotees to receive Kṛṣṇa's *anugraha*. Vallabha considers that the *jīvā* earns well-being through Kṛṣṇa's *anugraha* and as a result, he suggests people to practice *bhakti* to Kṛṣṇa or the *Pushtimārga*, 'way of well-being' (Barz 481). This cult of Vallabha is similar with Ramanuja and Madhva school of *Vedānta* in its suggestion to the *bhakti mārga* as an ultimate path for attaining *mokṣa*. The commentators of this school on the *Gītā*, thus, focus on the *bhakti mārga* of the *Gītā*. They argued that after first preaching to Arjuna about the *Sāṅkhya* philosophy and the *karma-yoga*, the Blessed Lord ultimately made him perfect by treating him with the nectar of the philosophy of Devotion that entails the abandonment of home and domestic ties – is the most concentrated moral of the

Gītā (Tilak "Introductory" 24). In their interpretations, the *Gītā* authorizes not other than the philosophy of their own cult.

Besides these different cults, another *Vaisnava* cult was founded by Nimbarkācārya who lived after the date of Ramanuja and before the date of Madhva; that is to say about saka 1084 (1162 A.D.). This school holds the view that “. . . the existence and activity of the Conscious Ego (Jīvā) and of the Cosmos are not independent but depend upon the desire of the Isvara; and that the subtle elements of the Conscious Ego (Jīvā) and of the Cosmos are contained in the fundamental Isvara” (25). In order to differentiate this school from the Qualified-Monism school of Ramanuja, Tilak refers to it as “. . . the Daal-Non-Dual (*dixutadvaita*) school” (25). This school gives emphasis to *bhakti* or Devotion and worships Radhakrishna and the commentaries on the *Gītā* belonging to this school have shown in them that the moral laid down by the *Gītā* is consistent with the doctrines of this school ("Introductory" 25). This school of *Vedānta* also uses the *Gītā* as an authority to make its cult superior than other existing schools of *Vedānta*.

Among the various schools of *Vedānta* that use the *Gītā* to gain authority in their sectarian philosophy, the school of *Gaudiya Vaishnavism* is the most recently established by saint-reformer Shri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1486-1533 C.E.) who was born in Navadvipa, Bengal. ‘Gaudiya’ refers to the Gaudiya region of Bengal and it is also known as *Bengali Vaishnavism*. Based on the *bhakti yoga* of the *Gītā*, “. . . he [Chaitanya] initiated one of India’s most vigorous *bhakti* movements. Thus he was a major contributor to the flood of *bhakti* that swept across the plains of northern India, in the period that has sometimes been compared to the Renaissance period in Europe” (Dasa 373). *Gaudiya Vaishnavism* regards Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme

God, not merely an *avatār* of Vishnu and chanting name of Kṛṣṇa as a way of *bhakti* to get God's grace for the *mokṣa* of an individual. Neal Delmonico points out:

The Chaitanya tradition took quite seriously the idea, drawn from various passages of the *Purāṇas*, that *Kirtana* or more specifically, *Sankirtana* is the proper form of religious practice for the current age . . . *Sankirtana* often takes the form of congregational singing of Kṛṣṇa's names with the accompaniment of various kinds of musical instruments . . . (549)

Kṛṣṇa's call to Arjuna surrendering on Him in the *Gītā* provides the basis for Chaitanya's notion of *bhakti* to Kṛṣṇa by chanting His name emotionally and going into rapturous states, losing all external consciousness. Chaitanya's *Sankirtana* movement influenced the millions of people in India and they began to regard Chaitanya as the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa Himself.

A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupada (1896-1977) made Chaitanya's *Gaudiya Vaishnavism* popular in India and more specifically to the Western world in the twentieth century. Inspired by his spiritual master Bhaktisidhanta Saraswati, founder of the Gaudiya Math, Swami Prabhupada founded The International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness (ISKCON) also known as the *Hare Kṛṣṇa movement*, in 1966, to transplant Chaitanya's *Gaudiya Vaishnavism* to the Western world. Among the many followers of Chaitanya's *Vaishnavism*, Prabhupada is the first major commentator of the *Gītā* who gives its commentary in the light of the philosophy of Chaitanya's *Vaishnavism*. In *Bhagavad-Gītā As It Is*, his English translation of the *Gītā*, Prabhupada has interpreted the text as their chief philosophical treatise that serves their *Hare Kṛṣṇa movement* to gain its height:

In this present day, people are very much eager to have one scripture, one God, one religion, and one occupation. Therefore, *ekam sastram devaki-putra-Gītām*: let there be one scripture only, one common scripture for the whole world – *Bhagavad-Gītā*. *Eko devo devaki-putra eva*: let there be one God for the whole world – Sri Kṛṣṇa. *Eko mantras tasya namani*: and one hymn, one mantra, one prayer – the chanting of His name: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. *Karmapy ekam tasya devasya seva*: and let there be one work only – the service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. (38-39)

Prabhupada has suggested the humanity to adopt one scripture-*Bhagavad Gītā*, one God- Sri Kṛṣṇa, one prayer-Hare Kṛṣṇa, one work-the service of the Supreme God, Sri Kṛṣṇa and this implies the one religion-Chaitanya's *Vaiṣṇavism*. Prabhupada's interpretation of the *Gītā* has no place to the *jñāna mārga* as suggested by Sankara and it is totally indifferent to the *karma mārga* because he does not give any value to worldly performances that people do except one work i.e. the service of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Prabhupada, the follower of Chaitanya's *Vaiṣṇavism*, has no doubt on being the Divine words of Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā*: "*Bhagavad-Gītā* should be taken or accepted as it is directed by the speaker Himself. The speaker of *Bhagavad-Gītā* is Lord Sri Kṛṣṇa. He is mentioned on every page of *Bhagavad-Gītā* as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, *Bhagavan*." Prabhupada confirms Kṛṣṇa of the *Gītā* as being the Supreme God, *Bhagavan* himself. According to him, the *Gītā* is the most important scripture in comparison to other many *Vedic* literature because the *Gītā* only contains the words of the *Bhagavan* Himself: "Because *Bhagavad-Gītā* is spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one need not read any other *Vedic* literature. One

needs only attentively and regularly hear and read *Bhagavad-Gītā*” (3, 37). The theory of *Hare Kṛṣṇa movement* emphasizes to hear and read the words of the *Gītā* repeatedly rather than internalizing the knowledge of the text. Prabhupada suggests people to make the verses of the *Gītā* as the *stotras* or hymns that should be recited every morning as a pious act.

Prabhupada defines the *Gītā* as being the best scripture, but he has connected the text with the tradition of *Vedic* literature: “*Bhagavad-Gītā* is also known as *Gitopanisad*. It is the essence of *Vedic* knowledge and one of the most important *Upanisads* in *Vedic* literature.” Prabhupada has accepted that *Gītā* contains no separate knowledge than of the other *Vedic* literature and acknowledges it as one of the many *Upanisads* that conveys the gist of all the *Vedic* literature. Prabhupada takes *Vedic* literature as the creation of the great sages and are historical: “The great sages, therefore, have written so many *Vedic* literatures, such as the *Purāṇas*. The *Purāṇas* are not imaginative; they are historical records.” Prabhupada argues that all *Vedic* knowledge is infallible: “All *Vedic* knowledge is infallible, and Hindus accept *Vedic* knowledge to be complete and infallible” (2, 31, 17). Prabhupada even suggests that the *Vedic* knowledge is beyond the subject of research: “*Vedic* knowledge is not a question of research.” Prabhupada advises people to accept the message of the *Gītā* unconditionally, claiming that the text contains the essence of the *Vedic* knowledge: “We must accept *Bhagavad-Gītā* without interpretation, without deletion and without our own whimsical participation in the matter. The *Gītā* should be taken as the most perfect presentation of *Vedic* knowledge” (18). There is nothing in the world that contains absolute truth that everybody can accept without question but Prabhupada recommends people to keep a blind faith on the *Gītā*.

Interpreting the text from the perspective of *Hare Kṛṣṇa movement*, Prabhupada finds that the *Gītā* teaches nothing more than the art of *bhakti* or service to Supreme God, Kṛṣṇa: “If the mind is engaged in Kṛṣṇa’s service, then the senses are automatically engaged in His service. This is the art, and this is also the secret of *Bhagavad-Gītā*: total absorption in the thought of Sri Kṛṣṇa” (35). Prabhupada has elaborated the concept of service that is applied not only to the Lord Kṛṣṇa alone but it is also applied to the other sections of living beings in a border term which he takes it as the secret of the *Gītā*:

When Sanatana Gosvami asked Sri Caitanya Mahabrabhu about the *svarupa* of every living being, the Lord replied that the *svarupa*, or constitutional position, of the living being is the rendering of service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If we analyze this statement of Lord Caitanya’s, we can easily see that every living being is constantly engaged in rendering service to another living being. A living being serves other living beings in various capacities. By doing so, the living entity enjoys life. The lower animals serve human beings as servants serve their master. (22)

Prabhupada defines that the constitutional position of any living being is to render service to another living being. This rendering of service generally goes to the powerful living beings by the powerless ones. This implies that the powerless living beings are ever happy in providing service to the powerful ones and there is no necessary to fight for the establishment of the egalitarian society. Prabhupada’s interpretation of the *Gītā*, therefore, speaks against the egalitarian society. Prabhupada suggests people to remain ever happy in doing service to the God and to those persons and living beings who are more powerful. The feelings of suppression, exploitation

and injustice for anybody are unjustified. This concept goes against the action oriented (*karmayogīc*) interpretation of the text, according to which, Kṛṣṇa, in the *Gītā*, suggests Arjuna not to tolerate the suppression, exploitation and injustice done to them by the Kauravas and encourages him to fight against them.

There were *karmayogīc* interpretations of the *Gītā* at the time when India was ruled by British colonialism. Indian people were displaced in their own country and they wanted to be liberated as soon as possible from their alien master. At this juncture of Indian history, the *Gītā* worked as an effective weapon to fight against the British ruler. The critics gave the *karmayogīc* commentary on the *Gītā* in the nineteenth century. The freedom fighters used *karmic* (action oriented) message of the text in the independence struggle against the foreign rule. Christopher Bayly notes: “The *Gītā* was at the centre of Indian Renaissance” (275). The *Gītā* inspires the activists of *Anushilan Samiti*. Kṛṣṇa’s call to Arjuna for fighting against Kauravas in the *Gītā* has inspired those activists to fight against the foreigners. Bhiku Parekh justifies it: “The terrorists and their sympathizers . . . derived not only a theory of violence but also a wider, quasi-Machiavellian theory of political morality from the *Gītā* in particular and the *Mahābhārata* in general” (171). Parekh calls the activists of *Anushilan Samiti* as terrorists and according to him, they have learnt a lot including the political morality from the *Gītā*. The *Gītā* works as a political teacher for the freedom fighters, and it inspires them. The *Gītā* averts the fear of the freedom fighters and they die happily without flinching a bit for the independence of the country. Meghnad Desai verifies: “Khudiram Bose who was hanged for the killing of two English ladies (by mistake as he was aiming for Kingford, a magistrate) died with the *Gītā* slung across his neck on the gallows” (“Nationalist” 18). The *Gītā* was the

political teacher, the guide, the inspiration, the friend and everything for the freedom fighters of nineteenth century.

The word *Anushilan* of ‘*Anushilan Samiti*’ came from the concept of *Anushilan*, i.e., cultivation of body and mind, developed in two booklets *Dharma-tawtya* and *Srimat-BhagawavadGītā* written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya (1838-1894). Bankim was a staunch freedom fighter against British Colonialism. He wrote *Ananda Math* which was regarded as “the first great patriotic novel” (Meghnad Desai "Nationalist" 16) of India. With the great inspiration of his *Ananda Math*, the young people of India had formed the society called *Anushilan Samiti*, which had a great contribution in the liberation struggle of India against British colonialism. On the other hand, Bankim himself was mainly inspired by the *Gītā* to oppose British colonialism and fight against them. He developed the concept of *Anushilan* from the concept of *sva-dharma* of the *Gītā*, which he defines as the main ideal of the text. Bankim, in his *Srimat-BhagawavadGītā*, explains:

The aim of this part of *Gītā* is to prove the essential need for cultivating *swadharma*. If we say *swadharma*, the educated community (in B. Chattopadhyaya’s time it was no doubt the English-knowing section of the population only – DB) may find it difficult to grasp its meaning. Hence, if we use the word (that is, *swadharma* – DB) in its English equivalent as ‘Duty’ . . . , there should be no further problem. (qtd. in Bose 50)

Bankim equals the concept of *sva-dharma* of the *Gītā* with the English word 'duty' which, he thinks, is the prime importance for everyone to be successful in his/her life. He defines “. . . this *swadharma* is *anushilan* (or cultivation) of the faculty or vocation (that is, ‘*brittwi*’), determined to a person both by this birth and station in

life” (Bose 50). The *sva-dharma*, according to Bankim, is defined as vocation of a person determined by his/her birth or station in life. There is not the same kind of *sva-dharma* for everybody. The *sva-dharma* varies individual to individual. Bankim further explains: “Everyman does not have the same kind of *swadharmā* – to some it is punishing others, to others *swadharmā* is to pardon (others). It is the duty of the soldier to wound the enemy, the *swadharmā* of the doctor is to treat the wounded. Man has manifold jobs to do, and his *swadharmā* correspond to that” (qtd. in Bose 50). There are the contradictory roles the people should perform as their *sva-dharma*, which is essential and mandatory for everybody. There is nothing good or bad performance for him, every performance is defined by the *sva-dharma* of the people allocated to them by their birth and station in life. Bankim is right in explaining the manifold jobs of people but he prescribes people to perform the *sva-dharma* allocated to them by their birth i.e., the hereditary caste-duties outlined in the *Gītā*.

It was the urgent need for the people of India to fight against the British occupiers to liberate the country in Bankim’s time. Bankim had taken the situation of Indian people as similar to the situation of Pāṇḍavas in the *Mahābhārata*. This feeling had led him to believe that, in *Gītā*, Kṛṣṇa was urging not only Arjuna to fight against Kauravas but he was also urging the Indian people to fight against British colonialism. This is the reason why the Indian nationalists including Bankim regard the *Gītā* as their chief inspirer, teacher, guide and companion in their independence struggle. Bankim describes the *sva-dharma* of the *Gītā* in terms of his nationalist feeling:

But of all the *swadharmas*, to wage war is the most heinous of all. If one can avoid war, it is not the task (*kartavya*) of anyone to do it. But a situation arises

when his heinous act becomes inevitable and essential. A Timur Lang or a Nadir Shah is coming to burn and loot your country. Under such circumstances anyone who knows how to fight, to him waging war becomes inevitable and essential *swadharmā*. (qtd. in Bose 50)

Bankim regards to wage war is the most heinous *sva-dharma* of all but the situation compels everybody to perform this *sva-dharma* as inevitable and essential. The fighting against British rulers was the inevitable and essential *sva-dharma* of the Indian people as the British rulers were like the cruel Muslim Emperors Timur Lang and Nadir Shah for them. Through his interpretation of the *Gītā*, Bankim urged the Indian people “. . . to wage what may be called a *dharma-yuddha* or a just war” (Bose 50) against the British colonialism. To participate in *dharma-yuddha* or a just war is the real *sva-dharma* for the Indian people as Bankim urged them: “Do not forget that on top of all *dharma* is love of one’s country” (qtd. in Bose 51). Bankim regards to love one’s own country is the top *dharma* for all and to participate even in the bloody war to save the country is the *sva-dharma* for all the patriot Indian people. It needs the courage and bravery for people to participate in the war, that is why, he idealizes Kṛṣṇa of the *Gītā* as a hero and an ideal God in his every writing. Chaitanya Singhania asserts: “An active leader, he enforces morality: ‘the killing of Jarasandha etc. is the bounden duty of the ideal statesman and justice’. This Kṛṣṇa, says Bankim, is ‘the ideal of each and, all in all, the ideal of consummate manhood’” (13). Bankim regards the activeness, bravery and courage of Kṛṣṇa as an ideal one, which he suggests the Indian people to follow. Through the teachings of the *Gītā* and idealizing Kṛṣṇa, he aimed to empower the Indian people in the struggle against British colonialism.

Bankim's interpretation of the *Gītā's sva-dharma* or duty appears as logical and this might have helped a lot in the question of the independence struggle of India, but if the *sva-dharma* is linked with the people's birth and their station of life, it produces social inequality and hierarchy among people. This justifies the *Gītā's* hereditary caste-system. Bose argues: "We have already said that this conception of *swadharma* is the very root of social conservatism" (51). With the conception of *sva-dharma*, the four *varṇas*; *Brāhmiṇs*, *Kṣatriyas*, *Vaiśyas* and *Sūdras* are prescribed their certain duties and they are not allowed to interchange them. If the *sva-dharma* is linked with the people's birth and station of life, *Vaiśyas* and *Sūdras* could not uplift their social status even if they possess equal or the better qualities than *Brāhmiṇs* and *Kṣatriyas*. Bankim's interpretation of *sva-dharma* increases the social inequality and hierarchy created by the hereditary caste-system enshrined in the *Gītā*, though his interpretation of *sva-dharma* of the *Gītā* might have convinced and attracted many Indian people to join the independence struggle of India against the British colonialism.

Narendranath Datta (1863-1902), later known as Swami Vivekananda, has a quite different interpretation of the text. Vivekananda, in his article "Thoughts on the *Gītā*", has questioned the validity of the authorship and the historicity of the *Gītā*:

First, whether it formed a part of the *Mahābhārata*, i.e. whether the authorship attributed to Veda-Vyasa was true, or if it was merely interpolated within the great epic; secondly, whether there was any historical personality of the name of Kṛṣṇa; thirdly, whether the great war of Kurukṣetra as mentioned in the *Gītā* actually took place; and fourthly, whether Arjuna and others were real historical persons. (255)

Vivekananda has a doubt about the authorship of *Veda*-Vyasa, and the historicity of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna. He has the doubt about the historicity of the Mahābhārata war itself and if the war was real, he has another doubt whether the *Gītā* was written with the writing of *Mahābhārata* or it was interpolated later in the great epic.

Vivekananda does not consider the philosophy of the *Gītā* as an original one; it is the collection of the borrowed ideas from the earlier scriptures, especially from *Upanisads* as he describes: “The *Gītā* is a bouquet composed of the beautiful flowers of spiritual truths collected from the *Upanishads*” (qtd. in Tilak "Opinions" xi).

Vivekananda has elaborated this idea further in his “Thoughts on the *Gītā*”:

Wherein lies the originality of the *Gītā* which distinguishes it from all preceding scriptures? It is this: Though before its advent, Yoga, Jñāna, Bhakti, etc. had each its strong adherents, they all quarreled among themselves, each claiming superiority for his own chosen path; no one ever tried to seek for reconciliation among these different paths. It was the author of the *Gītā* who for the first time tried to harmonize these. He took the best from what all the sects then existing had to offer and threaded them in the *Gītā*. (259)

The originality of the *Gītā*, according to him, lies only in combining the three different paths *Karma*, *Jñāna* and *Bhakti yoga* for which the preceding scriptures quarreled to each other. The *Gītā* has borrowed the best from each sect and combined them into one as new. Vivekananda appreciates the *Gītā*'s beautiful combination of *Karma*, *Jñāna* and *Bhakti yoga*.

Vivekananda was a saint philosopher, but he preached for *Raj Yoga*, that is, to cultivate the strength of body without which one cannot acquire strength of mind. As

it was the demand of time, Vivekananda sought courage and bravery in his society filled with fear because of the foreign rule. He defines ‘fears’ or ‘weaknesses’ as the human disease, grief, sorrow and sin. If there are no fears or weaknesses, there are no human disease, grief, sorrow and sin. The *Gītā* teaches the humanity to avert their fears, which Vivekananda considers as the major teaching of the *Gītā*. Vivekananda argues in his speech given at San Francisco on May 29, 1900:

There is only one sin. That is weakness. When I was a boy I read Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. The only good man I had any respect for was Satan. The only saint is that soul that never weakens, that faces everything, and determines to die game . . . Stand up and die game . . . All weakness, all bondage is imagination. Speak one word to it, it must vanish. Do not weaken: There is no other way out . . . Stand up and be strong: No fear. No superstition. Face the truth as it is. If death comes – that is the worst of our miseries – let it come: We are determined to die game. That is all the religion I know. . . . (qtd. in Bose 47-48)

Vivekananda respects those who are fearless. He respects the villain of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Satan, because Satan is fearless. He respects Kṛṣṇa of the *Gītā* because Kṛṣṇa is fearless and makes Arjuna fearless too. Empowering the Indian people, by averting fear, is the main objective of Vivekananda, so he finds the *Gītā* and all the religions as effective tools of averting fear and empowering people. Singhania argues: “Vivekananda uses religion as his means for empowerment, not because of a romantic attachment to it but because of his conception of religion as the sole – and most effective – medium for disseminating ideas, specifically his notion of empowerment through physical strength, among the masses in India” (12). Vivekananda, like

Bankim, wanted to rescue the Indian people from the dungeon of fear to make them involve in the struggle against the British occupiers. He knew that they could not liberate their country from the clutches of the foreigners until and unless the Indian people woke up with vigor and courage to fight against them. That is why he gives emphasis on the *Karma-yoga* of the *Gītā* and “. . . he embraces the masculine Virāta rupa of Kṛṣṇa as the object of worship. Virāta is the embodiment of Kṛṣṇa in all his might, as the hyper-masculine, all-powerful, cunning statesman- philosopher – God of the *Mahābhārata*” (Singhania 16). Vivekananda idealizes the *Virāta rupa* of Kṛṣṇa because this only symbolizes the power and strength, which can bring solution of the major problem of the country i.e., to liberate the country from the British colonialism.

Vivekananda disapproves of the caste system of the *Gītā*. He also expresses his disapproval with all the existing religions of the world like Hindus, Muslims and Christians and he purposes to make a single religion based on the teachings of his Guru Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsas. Vivekananda argues in his discussion of books about Ramakrishna:

From the very date that he was born, has sprung the Satya-Yuga (Golden Age). Henceforth there is an end to all sorts of distinctions, and everyone down to the *Chandala* will be a sharer in the Divine Love. The distinction between man and woman, between the rich and the poor, the literate and illiterate, Brāhmiṇs and Chandalas – he lived to root out all. And he was the harbinger of peace – the separation between Hindus and Mohammedans, between Hindus and Christians, all are now things of the past. That fight about distinctions that there was, belonged to another era. In this Satya-Yuga the tidal wave of Shri Ramakrishna’s Love has unified all. (qtd. in Singhania 21)

Vivekananda regards his Guru Ramakrishna as the incarnation of God of the modern time. Teachings of the new God Sri Ramakrishna, as Vivekananda calls, do not make any distinctions between *Brāhmiṇ* and *Chandala*, man and woman, the rich and the poor and the people belonging to the different religions. Sri Ramakrishna has brought *Satya-Yuga* with him and has given a new vision, which no religion had given in the past. The vision of Sri Ramakrishna, according to Vivekananda, can only fulfill the loopholes of the *Gītā* and other religions and it helps to establish the egalitarian society, which is the demand of the modern time.

Vivekananda holds the fundamental opposition with the *Gītā's* concept of caste hierarchy. He does not accept the superiority of the *Brāhmiṇs* and he finds capacity only with *Shūdras*, the downtrodden, for the future rule of the world. Bose acknowledges:

Swami Vivekananda never accepted this caste division. Throughout in his teachings and utterances, he not only castigated against the caste system but also said in a startling statement that after the rule by the *Brāhmiṇs*, that is, the elite – the kind of philosopher – kings of Plato – came the rule of the *Kṣatriyas*, the rule of the powerful, and that while the present ruling class are the *Vaiśyas* that is, the merchants (or one could say the capitalists), the future belongs to the rule of the *Sūdras*, the rule by the downtrodden. (53)

Vivekananda agrees with the Marxist concept of the progression of history that develops from slavery to feudalism, feudalism to capitalism and goes up to communism. There was the rule of *Brāhmiṇs* somewhat like in the age of slavery and the powerful *Kṣatriyas* ruled in the feudalism. The *Vaiśyas*, the merchant class or the capitalists, are ruling the present world and the *Shūdras* or the proletarians will rule

the future world. Singhanian states: “. . . Vivekananda has a plan for propounding his ideas through the Indian mind. In addition to using religion as his means, doctoring an image of Ramakrishna, and controlling knowledge about him, he will spread his ideas through a grassroots movement led by a vanguard – like group.” Unlike the *Gītā's* emphasis on the *Brāhmins*, Vivekananda's emphasis is on *Shūdras* because he sees the power capable of overthrowing the existing inequalities of society only rests on the majority of Indian People who are *Shūdras* or the downtrodden. Singhanian concludes: “Vivekananda is a political innovator because he is the first Bengali nationalist to use four characteristically political tools: i) knowledge control (through his construction of Ramakrishna), ii) religion to political ends, iii) a grassroots movement, and iv) addressing the masses” (22, 18). Vivekananda's interpretation of the *Gītā* and the religion and his construction of Ramakrishna as a new God, served his political ends that he wanted to create the grassroots movement involving the *Shūdras* or the downtrodden Indian masses to empower them and liberate the country from the clutches of the British colonialism.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920), co-founder of the All Indian Home Rule League, in his book *Srimad Bhagavad Gītā Rahasya* written in Mandalay prison, interprets the *Gītā* as a *karma yoga śāstra*. Tilak expresses his disapproval with all the previous commentaries made on the text by different *ācāryas* because he blamed them as they had approached the text with pre-possessed mind of their religious beliefs:

. . . different commentators, who have propounded different doctrines, usually accept as important only such of these statements as are consistent with their own particular cult, and either say that the others are unimportant, or skillfully twist the meanings of such statements as might be totally inconsistent with

their cults, or wherever possible, they draw hidden meanings or inferences favourable to themselves from easy and plain statements, and say that the particular work is an authority for their particular cult. ("Introductory" 29)

Tilak has indicated to those earlier commentators like Sankarācārya, Madhvācārya, Ramanujācārya, Vallabha, Nimbarka, Sridhara Swamy, Jnanesvari and few Modern Marati saints who belonged to the various cults like the Monistic (*advaita*), the Qualified-Monistic (*visistadvaita*), the Dualistic (*dvaita*) and the Purely Monistic (*suddhadvaita*) cults with their superadded principles of Devotion (*bhakti*) or Renunciation (*sannyāsa*). The commentators belonging to these all the different sects, as Tilak argues, have interpreted the *Gītā* as an authorial text that only supports to their respective cults.

Tilak has his main claim for blaming the previous commentators as they have interpreted the *Gītā* with their pre-possessed ideas, so they could not dig out the real meaning of the text. According to him, he did not hold any sectarian religious ideas in his mind, read the *Gītā* verse by verse, and found out the gist of the text as a call for action that it mainly focuses to the *karma mārga*, not to the *jñāna* or *bhakti mārga*. He asserts: "The conclusion I have come to is that the *Gītā* advocates the performance of action in this world even after the actor has achieved the highest union with the Supreme Deity by Jñāna (knowledge) or Bhakti (Devotion)" ("Tilak on *Gītā* - *Rahasya*" xxv). Tilak gives importance to the *jñāna* and *bhakti yoga* mentioned in the *Gītā* for the attainment of the supreme *Brahman*, but unlike the previous commentators, he does not admit that *jñāna* and *bhakti yoga* lead us to *sannyāsa* (the renunciation of action), instead for him, they lead us to action or call us to fulfill our duty. This infers us about the superiority of the *karma yoga* among the three. We

are the inhabitants of this world and, for him, the *Gītā* never suggests us to discard this world. He argues: “If man seeks unity with the Deity, he must necessarily seek unity with the interests of the world also, and work for it. If he does not, then the unity is not perfect, because there is union between two elements out of the three (man and Deity) and the third (the world) is left out” (qtd. in Sharma 70). The *Gītā*, according to him, suggests people to have a perfect unity between the three: man, Deity and the world. If we live in this world, nobody can turn away from his/her assigned duty. He further argues: “The Karma-Yoga is superior to the Path of Renunciation . . . it will be impossible for us to abandon Karma, so long as the world in which we live, as also our very existence in it for even a single moment, is itself Karma; and if one has to live in this world, that is to say, in this land of Action, how can one escape Action?” (“Renunciation” 440-41). He defines the world as the land of action and, for him, there is no existence of us if we run away from our duty and become a *sannyāsin*. He emphasizes: “That man is the truly learned man who is the doer” (qtd. In Wolpert 260). Tilak does not accept a *sannyāsin* as a *jñāni* (wise) but he advocates him/her as a *jñāni* person who is the doer and fulfills his/her duty assigned to him/her in this world.

Tilak does not have his pre-possessed sectarian religious ideas in his mind while reading the *Gītā*, but he is in search of a dynamic doctrine that will provide him a new social theory, which helps the Indian people to transform their society. He was a political leader and a pioneer nationalist and he managed to discover his sought out political ideals in the *Gītā*. In this connection, Manali Londhe writes:

The revolutionary interpretation of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* was primarily the work of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the father of Indian-Nationalism. It fulfilled the

urgent need to endow the people as a whole with a new ethic and a message for social action to discover a dynamic doctrine while providing people with modern social ideals, could enable them to transform their society. Thus the philosophy was interpreted by Tilak as a dynamic doctrine for action for the welfare of the world – the *Gītā Rahasya* gave to modern India a scripture which at once orthodox and universality accepted, a handbook of revolution. (272)

Tilak is not concerned too much about the transcendental world; instead, his main concern is on the burning problems of his society, of his country where he lives. Therefore, he finds out a solution in the *Gītā* that he is seeking for the chronic problems of his country. Tilak does not make the *Gītā* as an authorial text of the different sectarian religions, nor does he make it as the book of hymns or *stotras* that gives an individual a solace and peace but he makes it as a handbook of revolution. The freedom and upliftment of the Indian people are more important than just the individual liberation for Tilak. Londhe illustrates: "To awake the Indian people from their stagnancy to convince them the importance of action and encourage and activate them to strive for the freedom was the urgent need of that time. Tilak tried to meet this need by interpreting the Bhagavad-Gītā as the theory of Niskāma-Karmayoga" (275). As a pioneer nationalist, Tilak has to think about the liberation of his motherland trampled by the British colonialism. As Kṛṣṇa arouses Arjuna to fight against Kauravas in the *Gītā*, Tilak, quoting the *Gītā*, arouses the Indian people to fight against the British occupiers. For him there is nothing more important than the freedom of the country. He wants to liberate the country from the clutches of British colonialism and that is why he pleads for *Swarāj*:

We want equality. We cannot remain slaves under foreign rule. We will not carry for an instant longer, the yoke of slavery that we have carded all these years. *Swarāj* is our birth-right. We must have it at any cost. When the Japanese, who are Asians like us, are free, why should we be slaves? Why should our Mother's hands be handcuffed. (qtd. in M. Singh 43)

Tilak wants to make his country independent like Japan and others because he has the full conviction that *Swarāj* (i.e. self rule) is the citizen's birth right. He feels that the condition of his country India, when it was ruled by British colonialism, was no different from the condition of the Pāṇḍavas in the *Mahābhārata*.

Tilak does not interpret the *Gītā's* concept of *ahimsā* (non-violence) as an absolute one. According to him, the *Gītā* defines the term *ahimsā* as a relative one. To quote him: "The *Gītā* neither advises nor intends that when one becomes non-inimical, one should also become non-retaliatory" (qtd. in Chelysheva 78). The *Gītā* suggests us to be non-retaliatory or retaliatory according to the particular situation. Tilak defines retaliatory or violence as an essential virtue in cases which involve self-defense and just war. Although, in these cases, there will be conscious *himsā* or violence, he suggests, it should be regarded as *ahimsā* or non-violence in the ethical world of non-violence. Tilak clarifies it with an example:

But, assuming for the sake of argument that some villain has come, with a weapon in his hands to kill you, or to commit rape on your wife or daughter, or to set fire to your house, or to steal all your wealth, or to deprive you of your immoveable property, and, there is nobody there who can protect you, then should you close your eyes and treat with unconcern such a villain (*ātātāyin*) saying: '*ahimsā paramo dharmah?*' or should you, as much as

possible, punish him if he does not listen to reason? . . . On these occasions, self-protection is considered to be of higher importance than Harmlessness. ("Desire" 43)

If a person does not use *himsā* or violence against such a villain saying “*ahimsā paramo dharma*”, according to Tilak, Kṛṣṇa suggests Arjuna in the *Gītā* that person incurs sin. So Tilak concludes: “Forgiveness in all cases or warlikeness in all cases is not the proper thing” (“Desire” 45). Tilak, in this sense, preaches the *Gītā*'s concept of non-violence and arouses the Indian people to involve in the struggle against the British colonialism. Unlike Gandhi, he never advocates the absolute non-violence for attaining *Swarāj*, instead, he supports the violent actions against the British occupiers and he always appreciates the patriotic fervor of the revolutionaries. However, while interpreting the *Gītā* as a handbook of revolution or as a *Karma-Yoga Śāstra* for attaining *Swarāj*, Tilak, for attaining the Supreme *Brahman* or the ultimate salvation, has not forsaken the spirituality of the *Gītā*, belittling the *Jñāna* and *Bhakti Yoga* of the text.

Mohan Das Karmachanda Gandhi (1869-1948), the apostle of non-violence and the leader of the independence movement of India, makes the *Gītā* as a guide to the ethics of daily life. He makes the text an item of daily reading as the *stotras* or hymns for mental peace and this way of daily reading of the *Gītā* attracts many people in his *āshram*. He finds the *Gītā* as not only a religious or a philosophical treatise, but he takes it as a daily companion for solace and advice:

I find a solace in the *BhagavadGītā* that I miss even in the Sermon on the Mount. When disappointment stares me in the face and all alone, I see not a ray of light, I go back to the *BhagavadGītā*. I find a verse here and a verse

there and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming tragedies– and my life has been full of external tragedies– and if they have left no visible, no indelible scar on me, I owe it to the teachings of the *BhagavadGītā*. (qtd. in Meghnad Desai "Nationalist" 20)

The *Gītā* works as a companion for Gandhi in his moments of disappointments and tragedies. He finds the way out in his difficulties even by glancing a verse here and a verse there in the text.

For the apostle of non-violence, there arises the problem for Gandhi “. . . to interpret *Gītā* which is patently a call to armed action, an exhortation to Arjuna who like a true votary of non-violence had initially given up his *gandiva* bow and refused to fight. Mahatma Gandhi resolves this dilemma at the very outset by interpreting the battlefield of Kurukhestra as ‘our body’” (Bose 60). Gandhi becomes skeptical about the *Gītā's* historical base. He is even skeptic on the reality of the Mahābhārata war. He says that the author has written the *Mahābhārata* based on the semi-historical events merely to convey his religious theme. As the *Gītā* is part of the *Mahābhārata*, for him, the *Gītā* is nothing more than a creative poem created by the poet to express his philosophy of life. Gandhi in his article “The Message of the *Gītā*” writes: “. . . it was not a historical work, but that, under the guise of physical warfare, it described the duel that perpetually went on in the hearts of mankind, and that physical warfare was brought in merely to make the description of the internal duel more alluring” (127). Gandhi has taken the *Gītā* as a creative poem that contains the philosophy of life, which deals about the internal conflict between the good and the bad inside the human heart. The war between the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas in the *Mahābhārata* is, in reality, the war between the virtues and vices of a person inside him/her. Gandhi claims that

Kṛṣṇa does not provoke Arjuna to participate in bloody war, instead, he only talks about the psychic conflict of an individual. Matthew Remski argues: “Mohandas K. Gandhi pushed back against writers like Tilak, presenting the *Gītā* as an uncompromising hymn to non-violence, based upon a debatable argument that one cannot be unattached to the results of a violent action, and therefore Kṛṣṇa must only be speaking about the internal strife of psychic conflict” (3). This indicates Gandhi has tried to make the *Gītā* as a philosophical book that favors the philosophy of non-violence of Gandhi himself.

Gandhi has a different concept of God. Kṛṣṇa is considered God in the *Gītā*. He says Kṛṣṇa is not the incarnation of God having the supernatural power. Instead, Kṛṣṇa, in the *Gītā*, is the symbol of perfection and knowledge. Gandhi examines: "Kṛṣṇa of the *Gītā* is perfection and right knowledge personified; but the picture is imaginary. That does not mean that Kṛṣṇa, the adored of his people, never lived. But perfection is imagined" (128). Gandhi concludes Kṛṣṇa, who symbolizes the human perfection and knowledge, is the product of the imagination of the poet than a real historical figure.

Gandhi admits that the *Gītā* is a philosophical book that is mainly concerned about the philosophy of action. The *Gītā*, according to Gandhi, teaches the humanity to involve in action to achieve the goal of their life. But, the *Gītā* focuses on selfless action. Gandhi believes: "He who gives up action falls. He who gives up only the reward rises." This, according to Gandhi, does not mean to be indifferent to the result. One can concern about the result but they should not be wholly engrossed on the result. Instead, they should be fully concentrated in the due fulfillment of the task, which brings the good result automatically. Gandhi claims if the people are fully

engaged only in getting the good result and they are less concerned about the action, the action would not get the expected result. He argues: "He who is ever brooding over result often loses nerve in the performance of his duty. He becomes impatient and then gives vent to anger and begins to do unworthy things; he jumps from action to action never remaining faithful to any" (131, 131-32). According to Gandhi, the *Gītā* teaches the way to be successful in one's own duty when they perform. Gandhi's interpretation of the *Gītā* gives emphasis to the action/*karma* of human beings that should be fulfilled as their duty without inflicting violence to others.

Mahadev Desai (1892-1942), an Indian independence activist and writer best remembered as Mahatma Gandhi's personal secretary or Gandhi's Boswell, in his *The Gospel of Selfless Action*, gives the *Gītā* a historical as well as a non-historical interpretations. As a historical interpretation, he regards the Mahābhārata war as a historical war and all the participants of the war are the real human beings. He does not take Kṛṣṇa, the teacher of the *Gītā*, as a God having the supernatural power. Instead, Kṛṣṇa possesses the extraordinary characteristics and power that makes people in believing him as an *avatār* or the incarnation of God. Desai Writes:

There can be no doubt, however, that an extraordinary personality combining in himself the qualities of a hero and a statesman, a warrior and a philosopher, did exist at a time of which we have no record, that he grew to enormous proportions in the race-memory of the Aryans, so much so that he came to be revered as an *avatāra* and later on as the Incarnation and countless traditions and legends grew up about "the ideal man" according to the varying psychological and spiritual levels of the ages that followed. (9)

Desai has taken Kṛṣṇa not as a God but as a historical figure. Kṛṣṇa, who belongs to the Aryan race, was a hero, a statesman, a warrior and a philosopher. Kṛṣṇa's extraordinary personality made people believe that he was an incarnation of God and as the time passed, the countless traditions and legends grew up about Kṛṣṇa gave him the varying status.

Desai interprets the dialogue in the *Gītā* as a non-historical dialogue and he explains it as a profoundly meaningful poem. He compares the text with the dramas written by William Shakespeare. He finds the situation of Arjuna in the first discourse of the *Gītā* similar to the situations of the characters of the dramas of Shakespeare. He defines the *Gītā* as a creation by the genius of a poet based upon the historical or semi-historical incidents. As he regards the *Gītā* as a creation of a poet, he gives it an allegorical meaning: ". . . the *Gītā* conveys an allegorical meaning: some likening the Pāṇḍavas to the forces of light and the Kauravas to the forces of darkness, and making the human body the field of *dharma* . . ." (11). The *Gītā* reveals us about the eternal fighting between the forces of light and darkness inside the human body.

Desai does not consider the ideas of the *Gītā* as an original one, instead, he regards they are the borrowed ideas from the *Upanisads*: ". . . the meadows of the *Upanishads* provided for the author of the *Gītā* a rich verdure which was converted into the nectar-like milk of the *Gītā*." The *Upanisads* are compared with the meadows that provide the green grass to feed the cow that gives the nectar like milk, the message of the *Gītā*. Linking with the *Upanisads*, he further interprets the *Gītā* allegorically: ". . . I would say that the very idea of Kṛṣṇa as Charioteer and guide, philosopher and friend of Arjuna may be traced to the *Kathopanishad* which makes the *Ātmā* the master of the chariot of the body, the intellect the driver, the mind the

reins, and the senses the horses" (15, 18). Desai gives the concrete example that the idea of Kṛṣṇa as a charioteer in the *Gītā* has been borrowed from the *Kathopanishad*.

Regarding the central teachings of the *Gītā*, Desai argues the text presents the highest form of practical religion to enable each and all to realize his or her purpose in life: "The *Gītā* is, therefore, the science and art of Yoga [performance of action] . . ." (20). This shows that Desai's interpretation of the text also highlights the *karma-yoga* of the *Gītā*.

Aurobindo Ghosh (1872-1950), when he was young, was a militant nationalist. Unlike Gandhi, he was in favor of violence in the struggle against the British occupiers. Aurobindo has interpreted the *Gītā* as a philosophical book that accepts violence if the violence is necessary and justifiable. Kṛṣṇa, according to Aurobindo, persuades Arjuna to involve in the violent war, which was just and necessary to establish the *dharmarājya*. Inspired by the message of the *Gītā*, Aurobindo urged Indian people to involve in the just war against British colonialism:

To shrink from bloodshed and violence under such circumstances (i.e., colonial slavery) is a weakness deserving as severe a rebuke as Sri Kṛṣṇa addressed to Arjuna when he shrank from the colossal civil slaughter on the field of Kurukṣetra. Liberty is the life-breath of a nation; and when the life is attacked, when it is sought to suppress all chance of breathing by violent pressure, any and every means of self-preservation becomes right and justifiable. (qtd. in Minor 65)

Aurobindo regards liberty as 'the life-breath of a nation' and all sorts of activities – violent or non-violent – which are directed towards the liberty of the nation or for the

self-preservation, he finds them necessary, reasonable and justifiable. He philosophizes the necessity of violence with the concept of construction that comes after destruction: “. . . this is certain that there is not only no construction here without destruction, no harmony except by a poise of contending forces won out of many actual and potential discords, but also no continued existence of life except by a constant self-feeding and devouring of other life” (“Kurukṣetra” 40). Aurobindo has accepted the dialectical relationship between the opposite forces that exist in nature. The world, where we live, is full of conflicts, tussles, discords, and these things, which bring destruction and creation, are essential and universal. As a militant nationalist, he justifies the concept of violence found in the *Gītā* and he uses it as an effective weapon arousing and encouraging the Indian people to make them involve in the national independence struggle against British colonialism.

Aurobindo is against the allegorical interpretation of the *Gītā*. He does not agree with those who are inclined to interpret the *Gītā* and the *Mahābhārata* as an inner struggle of an individual:

There is a method of explaining the *Gītā* in which not only this episode but the whole *Mahābhārata* is turned into an allegory of the inner life and has nothing to do with our outward human life and action, but only with the battles of the soul and the powers that strive within us for possession. That is a view which the general character and the actual language of the epic does not justify . . . (20-1)

According to Aurobindo, the general characteristics and the language of the epic do not support to the allegorical meaning of the *Gītā* and the *Mahābhārata*. The language of the text bears no symbolic meaning instead, “. . . the *Gītā* is written in plain terms

and professes to solve the great ethical and spiritual difficulties which the life of man raises . . .” (“Human” 21). Aurobindo has taken the *Gītā* as a text written based on not the inner but outward human activities and the historical event. For him “. . . the historical Kṛṣṇa, no doubt, existed.” He exhibits its proof:

. . . in the Chhandogya Upanisad where all we can gather about him is that he was well known in spiritual tradition as a knower of the Brahman, so well known indeed in his personality and the circumstances of his life that it was sufficient to refer to him by the name of his mother as Kṛṣṇa son of Devaki for all to understand who was meant. (Ghosh "Divine Teacher" 15, 16)

Kṛṣṇa, according to Aurobindo, is the son of Devaki but he is well known for his spiritual knowledge. Kṛṣṇa is not an ordinary human being but he is taken as the incarnation of God. Aurobindo explains: “In the *Mahābhārata* Kṛṣṇa is represented both as the historical character and the *Avatār*; his worship and *Avatār*hood must therefore have been well established by the time – apparently from the fifth to the first centuries B.C. – when the old story and poem or epic tradition of the *Bharatas* took its present form” (“Divine Teacher” 16). He argues Kṛṣṇa was not the God at first but because of his extraordinary divine qualities, moral, intellectual and spiritual knowledge, the time made him as the *Avatār* of God.

Aurobindo has attempted a historical examination of the text and the personage of Kṛṣṇa, but he quite explicitly asserts that such questions are irrelevant to understand the truth. He believes that, in the last analysis, it is the truth, not the historicity, that is important and that the truth cannot be found in and through intellectual-historical debates. He argues:

. . . the life of Rama and Kṛṣṇa belongs to the prehistoric past which has come down only in poetry and legend and may even be regarded as myths; but it is quite immaterial whether we regard them as myths or historical facts, because their permanent truth and value lie in their persistence as a spiritual form, presence, influence in the inner consciousness of the race and the life of the human soul. ("Divine Birth" 171)

Aurobindo suggests people to accept the divine teachings of the *Gītā* instead of bothering about its historical questions. He gives importance mainly to the divine teacher, his chosen disciple and the occasion of teaching of the *Gītā* but not to its historicity.

In his early days, Aurobindo has interpreted the *Gītā* as a text that deals with the practical human problems because he argues “. . . the *Gītā* starts from action and Arjuna is the man of action and not of knowledge, the fighter, never the seer or the thinker” ("Human" 22). The *Gītā*, according to Aurobindo, is a practical book because it deals with the ordinary human being like Arjuna who is the man of action and he is not the seer but the seeker of knowledge. However, in his later days, Aurobindo has defined the words 'action' and 'works' not in ordinary sense but in a divine sense. The *Gītā* urges the human being to be involved always in action and works but he suggests that the people should involve in such action and works that bring not the physical comfort but the spiritual salvation. Aurobindo writes:

Undoubtedly, the *Gītā* is a Gospel of Works, but of works which culminate in knowledge, that is, in spiritual realization and quietude, and of works motivated by devotion, that is, a conscious surrender of one's whole self first into the hands and then into the being of the Supreme, and not at all of works

as they are understood by the modern mind, not at all an action dictated by egoistic and altruistic, by personal, social, humanitarian motives, principles, ideals. Yet this is what present-day interpretations seek to make of the *Gītā*. ("Core" 30-31)

Aurobindo argues that the *Gītā* is a Gospel of works but the text does not deal with such works as understood by the modern mind and not with such actions guided by egoistic, altruistic, personal, social and humanitarian motives. The *Gītā* teaches not a human but a divine action and the *Gītā* does not tell us to perform social duties but it tells us to perform the divine duty i.e. to serve the supreme God in order to get the ultimate salvation of human being.

The militant nationalist Aurobindo changes his views at his later days.

Meghnad Desai evaluates: "He turned from being a revolutionary to a sanyāsi after he sought refuge in Pondicherry (now Puducherry) away from British police. . . .

Maharshi Aurobindo's commentary on the *Gītā* took it back to being a spiritual text for meditation and contemplation" ("Nationalist" 23). In his early days, Aurobindo gives the revolutionary interpretation of the *Gītā* as a call for social action or even the justifiable *himsā* against the British occupiers. However, he, later, interprets the *Gītā* as a call for divine action to achieve God or get ultimate salvation. He insists for responding to the imperative call of God as primary. He makes no distinction between action or abandonment of action, *sannyāsa* or *bhakti* if a person achieves God or salvation using any one of these different paths. Aurobindo's interpretation of the *Gītā* focuses on action that is human and social at first but later he changes his stand and argues that the *Gītā* does not talk about the action in the ordinary sense as a social and human action but it talks of divine action.

Acharya Vinoba Bhave (1895-1983), one of the freedom fighters in the struggle against British colonialism, delivered his commentary on the *Gītā*, in the form of *Prabachan* (speech), in front of his fellow prisoners in Dhulia Jail in *Marāṭi* language in 1932. Later on, it was translated into various vernacular languages of India and was translated into English giving the title “Talks on the *Gītā*” in 1958. Vinoba, according to Jayaprakash Narayan, was impelled to move onward from the beginning basically by two urges: the one came from his identification with his fellow creatures that inspired him to work for the freedom of his country and the other urge pulled him towards the Himalayas, the traditional home of spiritual seekers, for a life of meditation and spiritual fulfillment (3). The first of his urge makes him to participate in the freedom struggle and give action-oriented commentary on the *Gītā* in the battlefield of Jail as he argues:

Bhagavad Gītā was told in the battlefield; and that is why it is something different and no other treatise can match her. . . . My writings and talks on the *Gītā* elsewhere would not have the magic touch that these ‘Talks’ have, as these were delivered in Jail, which, for us, was a battlefield, before the soldiers in the freedom struggle. ("Vinoba on" 9)

Vinoba gives special importance to *Gītā* for its deliverance by Kṛṣṇa in the battlefield and he takes pride on his commentary as he himself had delivered it in the battlefield of Jail. This highlights the action-oriented interpretation of the text.

Vinoba, focusing the *karma mārga* of the *Gītā*, wanted to inspire the Indian people to participate in the struggle against the British colonialism. But, he is against the earlier sectarian interpretations of the text in which *Sāṅkhya* readings supported *jñāna yoga* as its central teachings, *bhakti* readings conceived *bhakti yoga* as its

central teachings and *karmayogīc* readings suggested *karma yoga* as its central teaching. Vinoba, instead of giving emphasis to any one of these sectarian readings, has interpreted the *jñāna yoga* and *bhakti yoga* of the *Gītā* as the components and the integral parts of the *karma yoga*:

I cannot bear to see *karma*, *jñāna* and *bhakti* separated. To some seekers established in *karma*, this is the only thing that appears worthwhile. Others regard *bhakti* as an independent method and place all their emphasis on it. Still others choose *jñāna*. Life does not mean mere *karma* or mere *bhakti* or mere *jñāna*. . . . I wish to experience that that which is *karma* is *bhakti* and *jñāna* too. ("Supplement" 230)

According to Vinoba, *karma* should be assisted by *bhakti*, which he defines it as the loving attachment to and complete faith to one's *karma*. Further, he argues, *bhakti* alone could not complete the cycle of *karma*, it should be amalgamated with *jñāna* that he defines it as the vision and the consciousness of the Doer. One can be the perfect *karmayogī*, according to Vinoba, only after he is able to equip himself with *bhakti* and *jñāna*.

The second of his urge of becoming the traditional spiritual seekers led Vinoba to move towards the traditional home of social conservatism. He does not define the *karma* (action) of the *Gītā* in the sense that we ordinarily perceive, instead, he defines it as the profession or vocation of an individual that he inherits from his birth. He clarifies: "The *Gītā* uses the word '*karma*' (action) in the sense of *swadharma*. We eat, drink, sleep; these are all actions. But these are not the actions that the *Gītā* refers to when it talks of *karma*. *Karma* refers to the performance of *swadharma*" ("Vikarma" 48-49). For him, the *karma* of the *Gītā* is *sva-dharma* that he defines as a

dharma or duty of an individual that is inborn and immutable: “Our *swadharna* thus takes birth along with us. . . I would rather say that *swadharna*, like one’s mother, is not chosen but pre-determined. No matter what sort of person she is, there is no denying her motherhood. This is precisely the case with *swadharna*”

("Teaching" 22). Vinoba’s comparison of *sva-dharma* with the mother suggests that an individual is incapable in changing his *sva-dharma* even if he/she desires to change it and it would be improper if anyone endeavors to change it. It would be perilous if one attempts to change his/her *sva-dharma* i.e. the inborn profession or vocation.

Ramesh Bijlani points out:

Acharya Vinoba Bhave, in his talks on the *Gītā*, explains this through a few striking analogies. The frog who tries to blow himself up in order to grow as big as a bull explodes itself to death because the *swadharna* of a frog is to remain a frog. The *swadharna* of a fish is to live in water. Milk may be better than water, but a fish that insists on living in milk will die. (1)

This clarifies that Vinoba’s interpretation of *sva-dharma* is inherently connected with an individual’s heredity, which is pre-determined, unchangeable and fixed. Vinoba's such an interpretation of the text gives an impetus to the caste-system of Hindu society.

Vinoba, while linking *sva-dharma* with an individual’s heredity, does not think about the exploitation, inequality and dominant-subordinate relations that the caste-system has given rise to in the present society. Far from giving solutions to the problems created by the caste-system in the contemporary society, he conversely argues that the problems of the contemporary society are the result of disregard and inattention paid to this caste-system:

At present, everywhere there is talk of social reform. . . . On the one side wealth is piled up and for the rest there is a bottomless depth of poverty. How can we remove these vast inequalities in society? There is only one natural way for everyone to get the necessaries of life; that is for everyone to shake off laziness and work hard (as per the *varṇa* system).

("Gunas-Building" 198-99)

Vinoba, thus, endeavors to endorse the traditional social structure in India and makes it as the moral basis of the Indian nation, ignoring the large-scale protests against the caste-system. The characteristics of *sva-dharma* and *varṇa-dharma* that Vinoba highlights are no different from the characteristics of the modern day caste-system of India. Although Vinoba gives emphasis to the *karma yoga*, his notion of *sva-dharma* and *varṇa-dharma* of the *Gītā* has attempted to reinforce the traditional oppressive structure of India.

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975), the savant-philosopher and president of India, published a translation of the *Gītā* with a commentary in 1948. With Radhakrishnan, writing after the Independence of India, the *Gītā* earned the position as a central cultural asset of Indian nationalism rather than a combative text to fight the foreign British ruler. Radhakrishnan exposes the spiritual and the philosophical dimensions of the *Gītā* more clearly. Radhakrishnan, in his long introductory essay of his translation *The BhagavadGītā*, asserts: "The *BhagavadGītā* is more a religious classic than a philosophical treatise." Radhakrishnan further elaborates:

It [the *BhagavadGītā*] represents not any sect of Hinduism but Hinduism as a whole, not merely Hinduism but religion as such, in its universality, without limit of time or space, embracing within its synthesis the whole gamut of the

human spirit, from the crude fetishism of the savage to the creative affirmations of the saint. (1, 2-3)

Radhakrishnan considers the religious side of the *Gītā* is weightier than its philosophical side. The *Gītā*, according to him, is a sacred text not only for any sect of Hinduism but it is for the Hinduism as a whole and the text is not limited only for Hinduism but it is for all the human beings as a whole from the savages to the creative saints.

Radhakrishnan highlights the religious side of the *Gītā*, and he also brings back the philosophical importance of the text. Philosophically, Radhakrishnan has interpreted the *Gītā* as a book of action. The *Gītā*, the dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna in the battlefield of *Mahābhārata*, encourages Arjuna to fight in the battle that goes on against the evil forces Kauravas and bring change. Radhakrishnan illustrates: "The *Gītā* opens with a problem. Arjuna refuses to fight and raises difficulties. ... To convert him is the purpose of the *Gītā*. It raises the question whether action or renunciation of action is better and concludes that action is better" ("Introductory" 71). Radhakrishnan has defined the *Gītā* as a philosophical book that takes side with action and duty. According to him, there are discussions on many subjects in the *Gītā* that only prove the importance of action for becoming successful in human life. The discussions of the *Gītā* have to serve only one purpose i.e., to make Arjuna ready for war or action.

Radhakrishnan notices the difference of the philosophy of the *Gītā* from the Buddhist Philosophy. He argues that unlike Buddhist Philosophy, the *Gītā* urges humanity to involve themselves in action so as to achieve something or to get God. He writes: "While the Buddhist ideal exalts a life of contemplation, the *Gītā* attracts

all those souls who have a relish for action and adventure. Action is for self-fulfillment" ("Introductory" 80). As the *Gītā* takes side with action and adventure, he has taken the *Gītā* as a more practical book than the ideal of Buddhist philosophy that gives emphasis to the contemplation and the renunciation of action. Radhakrishnan has taken the *Gītā* as an original book and is not influenced by the Buddhist philosophy. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar points out: “. . . Hindutva scholars like Telang, Radhakrishnan and Tilak are most reluctant to admit that the *Bhagavad Gītā* is anyway influenced by Buddhism and [are] ever ready to deny that the *Gītā* has borrowed anything from Buddhism. . . ” (qtd. in Remski 5). Radhakrishnan does not give any credit to Buddhism for the *Gītā's* composition.

Radhakrishnan takes the *Gītā* as a book of revolutionary science that can be applied in the society to bring change. In *Gītā*, Kṛṣṇa, who is a teacher and a political commissioner, teaches and commands Arjuna to go to the war and fulfill his sacred duty given to him by the great time. It was the time of great upheaval and change when the powerful Kauravas were going to be defeated in the great war of *Mahābhārata*. Radhakrishnan, in this sense, interpretes the *Gītā* as a political manifesto of struggle and change: "The *Gītā* belongs to a period of upheaval through which humanity periodically passes in which intellectual, moral, social and political forms are at strife and when these are not properly adjusted, violent convulsions take place" ("Introductory" 75). Radhakrishnan has taken the *Gītā* as a political document that describes the problems and solutions of great upheavals of a particular time of history. The *Gītā* addresses the intellectual, moral, social and political problems the people faced at the great turning point of history. Radhakrishnan's interpretation of the *Gītā* highlights its importance as a religious text and it also suggests the practicality of the text for social change.

Swami Sivananda (1887-1963), founder of the Divine Life Society, in his book entitled *Bhagavad Gītā*, gives high esteem to the text. He has taken the *Gītā* as a sacred religious text that should be studied with an attitude of reverence and faith to get the spiritual salvation. He considers the text as sacred because he finds the *Gītā* contains “the divine nectar”, “a boundless ocean of nectar” (vii) and “spiritual gems of incalculable value” (viii). He keeps the *Gītā* on top position among all the spiritual literature of the world. Sivananda declares: “In all the spiritual literature of the world there is no book so elevating and inspiring as the *Gītā*.” Sivananda regards the text as the world's inspiring book and it inspires all the people belonging to any cult, sect, creed, age or country. He asserts: “The teachings of the *Gītā* are broad, universal and sublime. They do not belong to any cult, sect, creed, age or country. They are meant for the people of the whole world” (vii, viii). The *Gītā*, according to Sivananda, contains the universal message for all the people of the world.

Sivananda observes the *Gītā* as being the principal scripture of the Hindu religion and Hindu *Dharma*: “It [the *Gītā*] expounds very lucidly the cardinal principles or the fundamentals of the Hindu religion and Hindu *Dharma*.” Sivananda accepts that the *Gītā* is not the original one but it borrows the ideas from the *Vedas* and the *Upanisads*. He regards the *Gītā* as “the cream of the *Vedas*” and “the essence of the soul-elevating *Upanisads*” (vii). Though the *Gītā* repeats the message of the *Vedas* and the *Upanisads*, Sivananda finds the speciality in the text that the supreme God Kṛṣṇa Himself delivers the *Gītā*. Sivananda, though he praises the text for its spiritual content, admits that the *Gītā* gives the duty (i.e. the *karma yoga*) a prime importance. He argues: “The central teaching of the *Gītā* is the attainment of the final beatitude of life—perfection or eternal freedom. This may be achieved by doing one's prescribed duties of life” (x). The ultimate goal of every man, according to Sivananda,

is to achieve perfection or salvation and the *Gītā* prescribes the performance of one's own caste duty is the best path among many. In his interpretation, Sivananda highlights the spirituality and the *sva-dharma* of the *Gītā*.

Aldous Huxley (1894-1963), introducing *Gītā* to the Western audience in an English translation jointly done by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, praises the *Gītā* for its universal philosophy applicable not only for Indians but for all mankind: "The *Gītā* is one of the clearest and most comprehensive summaries of the Perennial Philosophy ever to have been made. Hence its enduring value, not only for Indians, but for all mankind." Huxley defines the philosophy of the *Gītā* naming it "the Perennial Philosophy" (1). In his lengthy introduction, he reports: "The *Bhagavad Gītā* is perhaps the most systematic scriptural statement of the Perennial Philosophy" (4). Huxley has given an overview of the Perennial Philosophy and explained how it is expressed through the various religions of the world throughout history (Dharmadas 7). Huxley's Introduction to the *Gītā's* translation by Prabhavananda and Isherwood becomes as famous as the book for which it is written because he expounds the principles of a Universalist spiritual tradition i.e., "perennial philosophy" of which he claims the *Gītā* to be an exemplar text (M. Sinha 316). Although the context of the *Gītā* is the violent war of destruction, Huxley advocates about the universality of the text that is applicable to all contexts. In this regard, Mishka Sinha opines: "Writing in the midst of a war of destruction and violence on an unprecedented scale, Huxley reread and reimagined the *Gītā* in a role which not only subverted its prime injunction to kill, and accept the necessity of killing, but converted it into a pacifist manifesto, a means of escape from violence" (316). Huxley's interpretation of the *Gītā* praises the text for its universal philosophy and it finds the text as a manifesto of pacifism and non-violence.

Swami Gambhirananda (1899-1988), one of the Vice-Presidents of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, holds a view that the *Gītā* is the summing up of the *Upanisads* and the greatest religious book of the world: “The *Gītā* is ranked among the greatest religious books of the world, and in India it occupies a position next only to the *Upanisads*. In fact, it is considered as a summing up of the *Upanisads*. . .” The *Gītā*, according to Gambhirananda, does not tell the new thing, instead, it only conveys us the gist of the *Upanisads*. He explains about it by quoting the well-known verse made about the *Gītā* that says: “All the *Upanisads* are cows, the milker is Sri Kṛṣṇa, the calf is Arjuna, the enjoyers are the wise ones and the milk is the fine nector that the *Gītā* is” (“Introduction” xviii). The milker Sri Kṛṣṇa extracts the gist of the *Upanisads* in the form of the milk in the *Gītā*. The milk i.e., the knowledge of the *Gītā* is enjoyed not only by Arjuna, the calf, but also by all the wise human beings.

Swami Ranganathananda (1908-2005), the thirteenth President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, in his three volumed books *Universal Message of the Bhagavad Gītā*, has interpreted the *Gītā* as a book of practical philosophy that can be applied for social change. He has a strong objection to those people who use the *Gītā* as a book of *stotras* or hymns that is recited every morning as a pious act. He argues: “In the past, people mostly read the *Gītā* as a pious act, and for a little peace of mind. We never realized that this is a book of intense practicality, that this is the greatest book of practical Vedānta capable of helping us to create a society of fully developed human beings” (10). There is a general trend of reading the *Gītā* among most of the common people as fulfilling the everyday religious act or doing mental exercise for peace. According to Ranganathananda, they do not understand or like to understand the *Gītā*'s practical teachings to humanity. He gives emphasis to the *karma yoga* of the *Gītā* and argues that the text contains the philosophy of human life and action. For

him, the text not only gives a person the peace of mind but, more importantly, it teaches a person to be a good and responsible citizen. He claims: “. . . it [the *Gītā*] is not meant for putting you to sleep. It is meant to wake you up” (11). The text, he believes, is not a passive document that makes you passive and lazy; instead, it is an active document that gives you strength and vigor to move the society forward.

The setting of the *Gītā*, according to Ranganathananda, tells us about its dynamism and vigor. The message of the *Gītā* is delivered not in a temple or a cave or a forest like other teachings but it is delivered in the battlefield and both the teacher and the student are not the ordinary human beings but they are warriors having the heroic personalities:

The message of the *Gītā* was given on the tumultuous battlefield of Kuruksetra a few thousand years ago. The *Gītā* alone represents such a philosophy. All other teachings were given in a temple, or a cave or a forest. Here the student and teacher, Arjuna and Sri Kṛṣṇa, were remarkable personalities; they were warriors. And the teacher, Sri Kṛṣṇa, was a man full of compassion, and endowed with universal vision. The *Gītā* is thus a heroic message from a heroic teacher to a heroic pupil. ("Introduction" 12)

The message of the book that gives the passive philosophy cannot be delivered in the battlefield and both the teacher and the student would not be the great warriors like Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna. According to Ranganathananda, not the words but the setting of the *Gītā* alone conveys a profound message.

Ranganathananda reveals that the *Gītā* carries essence of the *Upanisads*. He also agrees with the well-known verse written about the *Gītā* that compares the text

with the *Upanisads*. The milk, the message of the *Gītā*, extracted from the cow, the *Upanisads*, by the milker, Kṛṣṇa is not for worship with flowers, he argues, but the milk is meant to be drunk that gives us nourishment and vigor:

The *Gītā* is compared to the milk taken out of the cow, meaning the Vedas, by Sri Kṛṣṇa, the milkman. What is the milk for? It is not meant for worship, but it is meant to be drunk for our nourishment. Then alone can one get strength. But all these hundreds of years, we took that glass of milk, worshipped it with flowers, and saluted it, but never drank it. That is why we are feeble, physically, mentally, and socially. That will change if we now start drinking this milk and assimilate it. ("Introduction" 10)

According to Ranganathananda, people are weak physically, mentally and socially because they have only worshipped the milk, the message of the *Gītā*, with flowers and saluted it for hundreds of years but they have not drunk it. If they start drinking the milk now, this will bring them strength and vigor and change their life. This implies that, according to him, the *Gītā* is not the book to be worshipped but it is the book that its message should be applied in people's daily life to bring change and happiness.

Ranganathananda is against those views that make the *Gītā* as a dogma, which you are not allowed to question. He claims that the *Gītā* invites our criticisms and feedbacks: "It [the *Gītā*] does not give you a few dogmas, which you are not allowed to question. It invites all to question its teachings and then only follow them. Sri Kṛṣṇa expounds his original philosophy of life for all people who are at work" ("Introduction" 15). According to Ranganathananda, the *Gītā* conveys the philosophy of life that makes a person dynamic and critical.

Ranganathananda has the different concept on the *Avatār* or the incarnation of God. He regards all of them as an incarnation of God who possess the spiritual vitality and can change the course of history with their spiritual power. He does not regard only Kṛṣṇa as an *Avatār* but there are many who possess the power like of Kṛṣṇa.

He opines:

The power that is needed to set in motion this tremendous current of spiritual energy comes only from that type of person whom we call an incarnation. . . .

It is an extraordinary power . . . which can create a new historical epoch. . . .

We treat Sri Rama, Sri Kṛṣṇa and Buddha as world-moving personalities; a Jesus, and now, in this modern period, we have

Sri Ramakrishna. ("Introduction" 43)

Ranganathananda makes no distinction between the Gods belonging to the different religions. He treats Buddha and Jesus equally with Sri Rama and Sri Kṛṣṇa. As a follower of Ramakrishna, he regards Sri Ramakrishna as an incarnation of God of the modern time.

Ranganathananda speaks for the welfare as well as the spiritual development of society. By quoting the verse of *Vedas*, he says, *pravṛtti*, outward action and *nivṛtti*, inward contemplation are required for ensuring the true *abhyudaya*, socio-economic welfare and *niḥśreyasa*, spiritual freedom of all beings. People need socio-economic development as well as their spiritual freedom, which, he says, will be possible with the combination of *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* and is taught to us by the *Gītā*: “. . . this combination of *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*, of *abhyudaya* and *niḥśreyasa*, is the great teaching of the *Gītā*. It contains a philosophy to make for total human development. That is the speciality of this great book.” Neither the *pravṛtti* nor the *nivṛtti* is sufficient for the

total human development and neither the *abhyudaya* nor the *niḥśreyasa* is enough for the total human happiness. There should be the combination between *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* and *abhyudaya* and *niḥśreyasa* for the total human development and happiness. While discussing about the combination between *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* and *abhyudaya* and *niḥśreyasa*, Ranganathananda argues that the *Gītā* gives more emphasis to *nivṛtti* and *niḥśreyasa*: “It [the *Gītā*] says that every human being is spiritual, even when he or she is in the *pravṛtti* field of life; one is never outside spirituality. That is a wonderful idea. Spirituality is life encompassing, you are never outside of spirituality. That is the attitude of the *Gītā* and the Vedānta” (“Introduction” 29, 33). The *Gītā*, according to Ranganathananda’s interpretation, suggests people to involve in worldly affairs keeping in mind the wonderful idea of spirituality.

Dharm P.S. Bhawuk, professor of Management and Industrial Relations at the University of Hawai’I at Manoa, has interpreted the *Gītā* connecting it with the tradition of Indian spirituality. His book *Spirituality and Indian Psychology: Lessons from the Bhagavad Gītā* has discussed about this issue based on his conviction that Indian people value spirituality and they possess much creativity in this domain (“Preface” xi). Anthony J. Marsella agrees with Bhawuk and suggests reading the *Gītā* to understand the wisdom of Indian tradition of spirituality: “One has only to read the more than 4000 year old *bhagavadGītā*, to grasp the wisdom of ages that has been honed by suffering, survival, and also an imaginative and creative quest for meaning and purpose by India’s people” (x). According to Marsella, the *Gītā* enriches the Indian tradition of spirituality and the text is also enriched by the imaginative and creative quest for meaning of Indian people. In this connection, Janardan Ghimire agrees with them: “My study revealed that the *Bhagavad Gītā* can be taken as an ocean of philosophical thoughts of the Eastern wisdom tradition” (67). Ghimire takes

the *Gītā* as a unique text that covers all the Eastern philosophical thoughts and wisdom tradition.

Among the different *yogas* suggested in the *Gītā*, Bhawuk finds *karma yoga* as superior: “The *bhagavadGītā* recommends *karmayoga* as superior to all other methods of self-realization.” *Karma yoga* brings happiness to people as Bhawuk explains: “The *bhagavadGītā* recommends the practice of *karmayoga*, or the path of work (or doing one’s prescribed duties), as the intervention to avoid the unhappiness resulting from the pursuit of desires” (“Process” 117). The desires bring unhappiness to human beings, so Bhawuk clarifies that the *Gītā* suggests the *niskāma karma* i.e. *karma* without desires: “We see that the *bhagavadGītā* quickly defines the purpose of work – work is to be performed for its own sake, not for its outcomes. . .” (“*Karma*” 145). For Bhawuk, the *Gītā* is a *karma-śāstra* that suggests human beings to involve in work remaining indifferent to its results.

Bhawuk defines the *Gītā's* concept of *karma yoga* connecting it with the deep rooted Indian psychology: “In the Indian worldview, concept of self and work are closely linked, and this is captured in the *bhagavadGītā* . . .” (93). As defined by the *Gītā*, the Indians are habituated to link everybody’s work with their four castes.

Bhawuk explains:

The physical self gets integrated with the social self in the social system that prescribes duties according to one’s caste (or *varṇa*) and phase of life (or *varṇazram dharma*). In this system, people are postulated to be different from each other from birth, and they take the social identity provided by their caste. With the caste comes the strong tie with work, and what is defined as

svadharma in the *bhagavadGītā* is primarily prescribed work for the four castes. (96)

The Indian people classify their work according to their different castes, which the *Gītā* termed as *sva-dharma* or one's prescribed duties of an individual by birth. Though Indian people are inclined to define the individual's work in terms of their caste i.e. *varṇasram dharma*, Bhawuk finds this impractical and irrelevant in the modern context: "I am sure there will be very few people in South Asia who would pass the test of strictly following the prescribed *varṇasram dharma*, especially because of the creation of many new jobs that do not fit the classical typology, which makes the model apparently irrelevant" (Path 98). Bhawuk finds *varṇasram dharma* advocated by the *Gītā* as classical and argues the creation of many new jobs now makes it irrelevant to most of the people of South Asia. Bhawuk interprets the *Gītā* connecting it with the Indian tradition of belief system, which he finds its strength with some weaknesses.

Bhuchandra Baidya, professor of Economics at Tribhuvan University, in his *Essence of the Gītā*, has highlighted the practical aspects of the *Gītā* that one should apply to live better and successful life so as to attain the ultimate goal of human beings. He believes: "The *Gītā* basically deals with the most fundamental question in human life, which is, the best way to live and end our life, reminding us of the goal of the human life, the hurdles in reaching the goal and the ways to overcome these hurdles." Baidya acknowledges the text with high esteem and argues that the *Gītā* works as "a wise companion" (167) for everyone as it helps him/her to point out and tackle with the obstacles come between him/her and his/her ultimate goal of spiritual salvation. He does not give the special emphasis to the *Gītā's* any one of the three

paths to liberation – the path of knowledge, the path of action, and the path of devotion. Instead, he finds that the *Gītā* gives an equal value to all of these three paths and the text brings out the interrelationship between them:

. . . all the three paths are one in essence; all the three lead us to the same post in the end. While knowledge needs to be complemented with work, action has to be backed by wisdom. With knowledge we trace out God, right action takes us closer to Him, and devotion instills in us the unswerving love for Him. This is how we win the grace of God and attain eternal union with Him. This is the state of *total* liberation. (182)

According to Baidya, the knowledge of the Supreme God, disinterested action and the devotion to God as explained in the *Gītā* lead the human beings to the same ultimate goal of liberation. He finds there is no contradiction between the three different paths, instead, they have interrelations and are complementary to each other. For him, “. . . the *Gītā* is to be read, but more than that, it is to be lived” (182). For Baidya, the *Gītā* is the book of recitation the name of God i.e. devotion to God and more than that, it is the book of practical philosophy that teaches the humanity about the right action with wisdom which brings their total spiritual liberation.

There are commentators who go against the universal celebration of the *Gītā* as a perfect philosophical and divine poem. They have analyzed the text historically and found out that the *Gītā* does not contain the divine voice and it does not speak for the people from all social strata. On the contrary, they have found out that the *Gītā* is casteist and misogynist. According to them, the *Gītā* reveals the philosophy of *Brāhmaṇism* that devalues the lower caste people and the women belonging to all castes. They have questioned on the antiquity and the single authorship of the *Gītā*

and interpreted the text as a weapon of *Brāhmaṇism* in the struggle against Buddhism. As the *Gītā* is still popular among the majority of Indian people, they have found the text as an obstacle to establish the egalitarian society in modern India.

Chief among the critics of the *Gītā* of this school is Damodar Dharmananda Kosambi (1907-1966) who “was a polymath, genius mathematician, numismatist and scholar of Sanskrit, Pali, Ardhamagadhi, amateur archaeologist and anthropologist, a critical editor of manuscripts, historian and above all a Marxist” (Thapar 20). As Kosambi possesses the knowledge of different disciplines, his interpretation of the *Gītā* is considered more reliable, scientific and trustworthy. Kunal Chakrabarti asserts: “Kosambi’s originality was primarily derived from his creative application of the Marxist method of analysis, and the amazing breadth of his scholarship, which included a deep familiarity with a variety of sources – archaeological, textual and ethnographic” (10). Kosambi, using his knowledge from the different sources like archaeological, textual and ethnographic, has basically adopted the Marxist method of analysis while interpreting the *Gītā*. As the *Gītā* is the part of the *Mahābhārata*, Kosambi has analyzed the historicity of the Mahābhārata war at first. He doubts whether the Mahābhārata war could have taken place as described:

If a Mahābhārata war had actually been fought on the scale reported, nearly five million fighting men killed each other in an 18-day battle between Delhi and Thanesar; about 130,000 chariots (with their horses), an equal number of elephants and thrice that many riding horses were deployed. This means at least as many camp-followers and attendants as fighters. A host of this size could not be supplied without a total population of 200 millions, which India did not attain till the British period, and could not have reached without

plentiful and cheap iron and steel for ploughshares and farmers' tools. Iron was certainly not available in any quantity to Indian peasants before the 6th century BC. ("Social" 17)

Kosambi analyzes the historicity of the war based on the scale of the war as described in the epic. Nobody could imagine such a high number of people, horses, elephants and other war participants participated in the war and such a large amount of iron and steel was available for weapons in ancient India when the war took place. Kosambi, therefore, regards the Mahābhārata war as a “fictitious great war” ("Aryans" 92).

Kosambi does not find logical that the entire 700 *slokas* exchange between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna in the *Gītā* took place live on the threshold of the battle as armies were waiting to begin combat. He argues: “. . . that the older *Bharata* epic had a shorter but similar *Gītā* is most unlikely” ("Social" 21). He believes on the existence of the short *Bharata* epic at the beginning and he takes the *Gītā* as one of the many later additions of the *Mahābhārata*. He claims: “The most brilliant of these additions is the *Bhagavad Gītā*, a discourse supposedly uttered by the god Kṛṣṇa just before the fighting. The god himself was new; his supreme godhead would not be admitted for centuries afterwards.” Kosambi believes that “. . . the major function of the *Mahābhārata* at the first stage of its redaction as a unitary Brāhminised epic was performed by its frame story, long before Kṛṣṇa had any status as a god” ("Aryans" 93). Kṛṣṇa was not established as a God at the time when there was the first *Brāhmin* redaction of the epic. Therefore, Kosambi believes the *Gītā* as a later interpolation in the *Mahābhārata*.

Kosambi observes the text as being the production of Indian feudalism.

Because of the fact that *Gītā* bases itself on the concept of *Bhakti*, he puts the period of its composition by sixth century A.D. when feudalism was fully developed:

The essence of fully developed feudalism is the chain of personal loyalty which binds retainer to chief, tenant to lord, and baron to king or emperor. Not loyalty in the abstract but with a secure foundation in the means and relations of production: land ownership, military service, tax-collection and the conversion of local produce into commodities through the magnates. This system was certainly not possible before the end of the 6th century AD. (39)

Kosambi takes the concept of *bhakti* found in the *Gītā* is the necessary phenomenon born out of the womb of feudalism. The concept of *bhakti* i.e., the chain of personal devotion or loyalty was necessary to bind retainer to chief, tenant to lord, baron to king or emperor or the lower class to the upper class people in the feudalism.

Therefore, according to him, the *Gītā* was the literary production of feudalism and it was written by *Brāhmins* to please the upper class people of the time. To quote him:

That the song divine is sung for the upper classes by the *Brāhmins*, and only through them for others, is clear. We hear from the mouth of Kṛṣṇa himself (G.9.32): “For those who take refuge in Me, be they even of the sinful brands such as women, *vaisyas*, and *Sūdras*.” That is, all women and all men of the working and producing classes are defiled by their very birth, though they may in after-life be freed by their faith in the god who degrades them so casually in this one. Not only that, the god himself had created such differences (G.4.13): “The four-caste (class) division has been created by Me”; this is proclaimed in the list of great achievements. ("Social" 19)

Kosambi makes it clear by quoting examples from the *Gītā* that the text was written by *Brāhmins* to please upper class *Kṣatriyas* because it devalues the other two *Varṇas*; *Vaiśyas* and *Sūdras* who belong to the working and producing classes. The *Gītā* is also misogynist because it devalues all women belonging to all four *Varṇas*. The *Vaiśyas*, *Sūdras* and women are defiled by their very birth. Kosambi does not believe, if there is God, God creates such an ill-reputed the four-caste (class) division, not to mention taking this as God's great achievement.

Kosambi observes the *Gītā*, which bring so many variant interpretations from the people belonging to different types of society, highly ambiguous and contradictory. For any moral philosophy that contains so flexible meaning, he questions about "its basic validity" (17). The *Gītā* contains such contradictory things; he finds in the text, there is the forced reconciliation between the irreconcilable phenomena:

. . . the utility of the *Gītā* derives from its peculiar fundamental defect, namely dexterity in seeming to reconcile the irreconcilable. The high god repeatedly emphasizes the great virtue of non-killing (*ahimsā*), yet the entire discourse is an incentive to war. So, G.2.19 says that it is impossible to kill or be killed. . . . In G. 11, the terrified Arjuna sees all the warriors of both sides rush into a gigantic Visnu-Krsna's innumerable voracious mouths, to be swallowed up or crushed. . . . Again, though the yajña sacrifice is played down or derided, it is admitted in G. 3.14 to be the generator of rain, without which food and life would be impossible. (21)

The *Gītā* reconciles the irreconcilable phenomena together because Kosambi observes there are no novel things in it except *bhakti*. The *Gītā* has recollected the incompatible ideas of the different schools of philosophy and put them together into it. He argues:

This function of karma is characteristically Buddhist. Without Buddhism, G. 2.55-72 (recited daily as prayers at Mahatma Gandhi's asrama) would be impossible. The brahma-nirvāṇa of G. 2.72, and 5.25 is the Buddhist ideal state of escape from the effect of karma. We may similarly trace other-unlabelled-schools of thought such as Sāṅkhya and Mīmāṃsā down to early Vedānta (G. 15.15 supported by the reference-to the Brahma-sutra in G. 13.4). ("Social" 20)

According to Kosambi, the *Gītā* has borrowed ideas from *Sāṅkhya*, *Mīmāṃsā*, *Vedānta* and Buddhism. The ideas from the materialistic *Sāṅkhya* and the idealist *Vedānta* are put together in the *Gītā*. Similarly, the ideas of sacrifice (killing or *himsā*) of *Mīmāṃsā* and the ideas of non-violence (non-killing or *ahimsā*) of Buddhism are also put together in the text. Namit Arora emphasizes: "In *Myth and Reality* Kosambi observed that a 'slippery opportunism characterizes the whole book'" (4). Kosambi observes no novel and different philosophical ideas in the *Gītā*, instead, for him, the *Gītā* appears as an opportunist text that has collected all the old contradictory philosophical ideas and claimed them its own.

Babasaheb Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891-1956), who served as Drafting Committee Chairman for the Indian Constitution of 1947, starts with the same question of validity of the text. He questions the validity of a moral philosophy or the gospel of any religion as Kosambi if the *Gītā* invites divergence of opinion among scholars:

One is forced to ask why there should be such divergence of opinion among scholars? My answer to this question is that scholars have gone on a false errand. They have gone on a search for the message of the *BhagavadGītā* on the assumption that it is a gospel as the *Koran*, the *Bible*, or the *Dhammapada* is. In my opinion this assumption is quite a false assumption. The *BhagavadGītā* is not a gospel and it can therefore have no message and it is futile to search for one. . . . the *BhagavadGītā* is neither a book of religion nor a treatise on philosophy. What the *BhagavadGītā* does is to defend certain dogmas of religion on philosophic grounds. . . . It uses philosophy to defend religion. ("Essays" 182)

Ambedkar explains the reason behind the flexibility of meanings in the *Gītā* as the scholars' wrong conception about the text because they regard the *Gītā* as a gospel like the *Koran*, the *Bible*, or the *Dhammapada*, which he himself does not accept. He only regards the *Gītā* as a book of philosophy that is used to defend certain dogmas of Hinduism (i.e. *Brāhmaṇism*). The *Gītā* essentially defends the three dogmas of *Brāhmaṇism*, which Ambedkar categorically explains: "The first instance one comes across in reading the *BhagavadGītā* is the justification of war. . . . Another dogma to which the *BhagavadGītā* comes forward to offer a philosophic defence is Cāturvarṇāḥ. . . . The third dogma for which the *BhagavadGītā* offers a philosophic defence is the Karma mārga" ("Essays" 182-83). The *Gītā* justifies the violence of war. The text works as "the chariot of Brāhmaṇism" (B. Singh 1) because there is "a justification of caste system as the law of Hindu social life" (Kadam 124) and the *Gītā* ". . . mentions that the Cāturvarṇāḥ is created by God and therefore sacrosanct" (Ambedkar "Essays" 183). Ambedkar links the *Karma mārga* of the *Gītā* with the performance of the observances, such as *Yajñas* as a way of salvation.

Ambedkar points out the two Hindu texts: Jaimini's *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā* and Badarayana's *Brahma Sūtras* whose dogmas the *Gītā* has defended. Ambedkar has corrected the wrong meaning attached to the words *Karma yoga* as 'action' and *Jñāna yoga* as 'knowledge' of the *Gītā*:

The *BhagavadGītā* is not concerned with any general, philosophical discussion of action versus knowledge. As a matter of fact, the *Gītā* is concerned with the particular and not with the general. By Karma yoga or action *Gītā* means the dogmas contained in Jaimini's karma-kanda and by Jñāna yoga or knowledge it means the dogmas contained in Badarayana's *Brahma Sutras*. ("Essays" 184)

Ambedkar does not consider the *Gītā* as an independent philosophical book that espouses the unique philosophy. Instead, the *Gītā*, as he argues, is referring to the philosophy of the earlier literature i.e. Jaimini's *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā* and Badarayana's *Brahma Sūtras* and the *Gītā* tries to renovate and strengthen them.

The authors of the *Gītā*, according to Ambedkar, felt it necessary to defend the dogmas of Jaimini's *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā* and Badarayana's *Brahma Sūtras* because they were the counter-revolutionary documents of Hinduism in the fight against Buddhism. Ambedkar believes that Buddhism brought revolution in ancient Aryan society and later when Buddhism was defeated and Hinduism was restored again, he calls it as a counter-revolution. Nalini Pandit, in her article, *Ambedkar and the Bhagwat Gītā*, remarks:

After making a detailed study of the ancient religious books, Ambedkar came to the conclusion that the Aryan community of pre-Buddhist times did not

have a developed sense of moral values. Buddhism caused a moral and social revolution in this society. When the Mauryan emperor Ashoka embraced Buddhism, the social revolution became a political revolution. After the decline of the Mauryan Empire, the Brāhmiṇs, whose interests had suffered under the Buddhist kings initiated a counter-revolution under the leadership of Pushyamita Sunga. The counter-revolution restored Brāhmaṇism. The *Bhagwat Gītā*, says Ambedkar, was composed to give ideological and moral support to this counter-revolution. (1)

Ambedkar considers the Buddha was the first great reformer in ancient India because the Buddha made a code of conduct for the first time to reform the filthy pre-Buddhist Aryan society. Buddha himself had followed the highest standards for a moral life and he inspired others to follow suit. Love, wisdom, universal pity, sympathy for all suffering beings and goodwill to every form of sentient life were the main teachings of the Buddha. The Buddha carried on a campaign against the cruelties of *Brāhmaṇism* as Ambedkar points out:

Buddha preached non-violence. He not only preached it but the people at large – except the Brāhmiṇs – had accepted it as the way of life. They had acquired a repugnance to violence. Buddha preached against Cāturvarṇāh. He used some of the most offensive similes in attacking the theory of Cāturvarṇāh. The frame work of Cāturvarṇāh had been broken. The order of Cāturvarṇāh had been turned upside down. Sūdras and women could become sannyasis, a status which counter-revolution had denied them. Buddha had condemned the Karma kanda and the *Yajñas*. He condemned them on the ground of *Himsā* or violence. ("Essays" 184)

The Buddha was against every type of violence, he repudiated the authority of *Vedas*, denounced the *Karma-kānda* and the *Yajñas*, which was based on *Himsā* or violence. Pandit illustrates: “He [Buddha] ridiculed the idea that the sacrificial animal slaughtered according to prescribed rites goes to heaven irrespective of its good or bad deeds. In that case, he asked, why do the Brāhmiṇs not offer themselves for sacrifice?” (1). The Buddha was against “‘graded inequality’ and ‘division of labourers’” (Jal 44) i.e. the system of *Cāturvarṇāh*. Pandit explains: “Buddhism was open to all, to Sūdras, women and even repentant criminals” (1). The status of *Shūdras* and women was uplifted equal to the position of the men of *Brāhmiṇs*. This indicates that Buddhism had shattered the *Brāhmaṇical* social ideals to dust.

According to Ambedkar, the *Brāhmiṇs*, whose interests had suffered under the system of Buddhism, initiated a counter-revolution. Nevertheless, it was difficult for the counter-revolutionaries to fight against the popular philosophy of Buddhism only by quoting the infallibility of the *Vedas*. Ambedkar argues:

These things were ordained by the *Vedas*, the *Vedas* were infallible, therefore the dogmas were not to be questioned. In the Buddhist age, which was the most enlightened and the most rationalistic age India has known, dogmas resting on such silly, arbitrary, unrationalistic and fragile foundations could hardly stand. (184)

Ambedkar takes the Buddhist age was the most enlightened and the most rationalistic age. The counter-revolutionaries, according to Ambedkar, could not have fought against Buddhism only with Jaimini’s *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā* and Badarayana’s *Brahma Sūtras* unless the *Gītā* gave them support: “There is no doubt that under the furious attack of Buddhism, Jaimini’s counter-revolutionary dogmas were tottering and would

have collapsed had they not received the support which the *Bhagvat Gītā* gave them” (“Essays” 185). The *Gītā*, as Ambedkar explains, was the ultimate weapon in the hands of the counter-revolutionaries in the struggle against Buddhism. In this regard, Ranganath R asserts: “*BG* provided a tottering *Brāhmaṇism* the resilience and vigor to overthrow Buddhism and take Indian civilization back to the dark ages, from which it has never emerged into light” (3). Ambedkar and Ranganath both accept the strength of the *Gītā* among the *Brāhmaṇic* literatures.

Ambedkar recognizes the strength of the *Gītā* in comparison to other Hindu religious texts. However, he observes the arguments of the text given in defense of the dogmas childish:

The philosophic defence offered by the *Bhagvat Gītā* of the Kshtriya’s duty to kill is to say the least puerile. . . . Similarly childish is the defence of the *Bhagvat Gītā* of the dogma of *Cāturvarṇāh*. Kṛṣṇa defends it on the basis of the *Guṇa* theory of the *Sāṅkhya*. But Kṛṣṇa does not seem to have realized what a fool he has made of himself. In the *Cāturvarṇāh* there are four *Varṇas*. But the *guṇas* according to the *Sāṅkhyas* are only three. (185)

The arguments like “the Kshtriya’s duty to kill” and “killing is no killing because what is killed is the body and not the soul” (“Essays” 185) given in the defence of violence and the classification of human being into four *varṇas* based on the *Sāṅkhya*’s three *guṇas*, which Ambedkar finds childish. In this regard, Meera Nanda demonstrates: “The simple truth is that once you put the *Gītā* to Ambedkar’s test of justice and reason, nothing much is left of it. The ‘soul’ of the *Gītā* – *Cāturvarṇāh* – fails the test of justice; its ‘philosophical grounds’ – the metaphysics of *guṇa* and *karma* – fail the test of reason” (44). Ambedkar, who “. . . waged a war on the caste

structure and became instrumental in abolishing untouchability and elevated the Dalits from the status of slavery to the level of equality” (Raju 250), believes the defence of *Cāturvarṇāh* as the soul of the *Gītā*. However, as Nanda argues, when we put the *Gītā* to Ambedkar’s test of justice and reason, “the philosophical grounds” of the text – the metaphysics of *guṇa* and *karma* of the *Cāturvarṇāh* of the *Gītā* – fail the test of reason. Ambedkar finds no validity in the logics given in the defence of the *Cāturvarṇāh* put forward by the *Gītā*. Nanda further argues: “The *Gītā* follows Manu’s script and consigns the doubters to ‘devilish wombs’ – providing yet again that Ambedkar was correct to call the *Gītā* ‘*Manusmṛiti* in a nutshell” (43). After examining the defence of *Cāturvarṇāh* in the *Gītā*, Ambedkar equals the *Gītā* with another casteist and misogynist Hindu text *Manusmṛiti*.

Ambedkar does not take the *Gītā* as a complete text written at the same time when *Mahābhārata* was written. Although he admits the short original, *Gītā* was written with *Mahābhārata*, he regards the other three patches of the text were written in other different times. While he takes the *Gītā* as the counter-revolutionary document, he is quite sure some patches of the *Gītā* were written after Jaimini’s *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā* and Badarayana’s *Brahma Sūtras*: “I propose first to advance direct evidence from the *Gītā* itself showing that it has been composed after Jaimini’s *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā* and after Buddhism. . . . If the *Bhagvat Gītā* does not mention *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā* it does mention by name the *Brahma Sūtras* of Badarayana.” The reference of *Brahma Sūtras* in the *Gītā* furnishes direct evidence for Ambedkar to make him sure about the later date of the *Gītā* than the *Brahma Sūtras*. He is also sure about the *Gītā*’s later date than Buddhism because he finds in the text the full of Buddhist ideas. He argues: “The *Bhagvat Gītā* discusses Bramha-Nirvāṇa. . . . From where has the *Gītā* borrowed this Nirvāṇa theory? Surely it is not borrowed from the

Upanishads. For no *Upanishad* even mentions the word *Nirvāṇa*. The whole idea is peculiarly Buddhist and is borrowed from Buddhism” (“Essays” 187, 189). Ambedkar interprets ‘the *Nirvāṇa* theory’ of the *Gītā* as the theory borrowed not other than Buddhism. Similarly, he observes, the *Gītā* has borrowed some other concepts and ideology “. . . from Buddhism and that too word for word” (Ambedkar “Essays” 190). Ambedkar’s interpretation of the *Gītā* reveals its dependent, *Brāhmaṇical* counter-revolutionary ideologies borrowed from earlier *Brāhmaṇical* texts and Buddhist texts as well.

Shrinivas Ganesh Sardesai (1907-1996), popularly known as S.G. Sardesai, has interpreted the *Gītā* as a literary production of post-Magadha period in Indian history. “From a sociological point of view,” he defines, “the Magadha period is also referred to as the Buddhist period.” This indicates that Sardesai also defines the *Gītā* as a counter-revolutionary document that came into existence after replacing Buddhism in India. He observes: “Within the framework of the basic position of the *Upanishads*, the *Geeta* modified and synthesized various subsequent traditions and views to suit the contemporary practical and ideological requirements of the property-owning, governing classes” (“Riddle” 10, 16). According to Sardesai, the *Gītā* was written in a specific time of history for the benefit of the property-owning ruling classes who mainly belonged to the upper two *Varṇas*; *Brāhmiṇs* and *Kṣatriyas*. The *Gītā* was a counter-revolutionary weapon in the hands of *Brāhmiṇs* and *Kṣatriyas* because, in course of fighting with Buddhism, it modified certain concepts of *Brāhmaṇism* and renovated and strengthened the core concept of it. Sardesai regards *Cāturvarṇāḥ* is the core concept of Hinduism as he explains: “What was the origin of Hinduism? It was the ‘Aryan’, *Kṣatriya-Brāhmiṇ* domination over the *Sūdras* and *Vaiśyas* in the form of *Cāturvarṇāḥ*” (“Peculiarities” 90). The *Gītā* has given the main

focus on caste duty, on which Buddhism and the Shaka-Kushana invasions had created confusion, as he claims: “The confusion in the *Cāturvarṇāh* hierarchy created by Buddhism and the Shaka-Kushana invasions was what the writer of the *Geeta* had in mind when he speaks of ‘*Adharma* raising its head’” (“Riddle” 16). Sardesai defines the words: *Dharma* and *Adharma* mentioned in the *Gītā* connecting them with the prescribed caste duty of the caste-system.

The next point Sardesai finds interesting in the *Gītā* is about the *door of mokṣa* (liberation) prescribed for the lower orders and women. The only path for *mokṣa* advocated by *Upanishads* was penance, i.e. defined in the *Gītā* as *Jñāna mārga*, which was not allowed to the lower orders and women. The rule was made guided by the sheer economic necessities of the *Brāhmiṇs* and *Kṣatriyas* as Sardesai explains: “. . . these upper orders also needed the back-breaking toil of the *vaiśyas* and *Sūdras* for their very existence and comfort. So who was going to allow the lower orders the luxury of retiring into the forests and meditating which was bound to deprive the upper orders of the economic foundation of their ease and comfort?” The lower orders and women were not allowed to retire into the jungle for meditation because they had to work in the field of production for the existence and luxury of the parasitical upper two *Varṇas*; the *Brāhmiṇs* and *Kṣatriyas*. The *Gītā* finds a way out for the salvation of the lower orders and women, which the text defines it as *bhakti* i.e. unconditional surrender to God with profound feelings of love and devotion. Sardesai, however, defines the concept of *bhakti* of the *Gītā* as an effective tool in exploiting the toiling masses by the governing, property owning classes. He asserts: “. . . *bhakti* towards God strengthened *bhakti* towards the king, *bhakti* towards the king strengthened *bhakti* towards God, and both together helped to consolidate the temporal and spiritual power of the governing, property-owning classes over the toiling

masses” (“Riddle” 20, 23). Sardesai has interpreted the *bhakti* of the *Gītā* as a new concept added in Hinduism born out of the womb of Indian feudalism which was fully developed in the Gupta period (300 to 500 AD) (“Riddle” 15).

Sardesai admits the usefulness of the *Gītā* in the struggle against British colonialism in the nineteenth century. The nineteenth century revivalist (Hindu) patriotic leadership had used the *Gītā* to regenerate self-respect and self-confidence among the Indian people when there was loss of self-confidence and even an inferiority complex enveloped the whole country. The *Gītā* had encouraged the freedom fighters to participate in the war and accept death happily. Sardesai explains: “No wonder Khudiram Bose embraced the gallows, inspired by the death-defying lines of the *Geeta* on his lips, ‘weapons cannot pierce Him, fire cannot burn Him, nothing can destroy Him’ (II. 23).” The *Gītā*’s concept of “the soul never dies”, as Sardesai argues, had averted the fear of the freedom fighters in the struggle against British colonialism. Although the *Gītā* played the positive role in chasing away the British colonizers from India, Sardesai argues, the text, which is based on *Cāturvarṇāh* and the mysticism of *Vedānta*, cannot play the positive role in uniting all the laboring masses, *Dalits* and the people belonging to another religion for the establishment of socialism: “. . . it cannot be forgotten for a moment that crores upon crores of the toiling Muslims, Harijans and Adivasis have to be brought into the struggle for socialism if it is to succeed in India. It is ridiculous to hope that they can be inspired by any interpretation of the *Geeta*, no matter how we may stretch the rubber.” Sardesai does not have any hope of having the positive role of the *Gītā* in the modern context no matter how we interpret and highlight some positive aspects of the text. The Indian bourgeoisie, who had used the *Gītā* as an ideological weapon in the struggle against British colonialism, is now using it as a weapon against progress,

democracy and socialism as Sardesai claims: “The Indian bourgeoisie needed the *Geeta* before independence as an ideological weapon in the struggle against imperialism. After independence, and much more so with the deepening crisis of capitalism, with the rising tide of mass discontent they need it as a weapon against progress, democracy and socialism” (“Riddle” 34, 36, 37-38). This clarifies that Sardesai basically finds the reactionary content in the *Gītā*. According to him, the text ultimately serves the interests of the ruling property-owning classes in exploiting and dominating the majority of the lower orders of people and women.

Dilip Bose, in his article “*Bhagavad-Gītā* and Our National Movement”, also brings out some of the major reactionary contents of the *Gītā*. Bose has emphasized the *sva-dharma* and *varṇasram-dharama* prescribed by the text. He finds it inhuman to *Shūdras* and he equals this system with the system prescribed by *Manusmriti* and with Plato’s attitude towards the slaves: “Our law-givers in general, Manu’s and *Gītā*’s teachings in particular, and their interpretation of *swadharma* and their eulogies of *varṇasram-dharama* denied any human status to *Sūdras* almost as Plato looked down upon the slaves as sub-human creatures.” The *varṇasram-dharama* of the *Gītā* has created the unjust hierarchy of human beings and compelled everybody to perform their prescribed duties as their *sva-dharma*. Bose has no doubt that *sva-dharma* of the *Gītā* is inherently linked with the caste duty determined from individual’s birth: “. . . what is meant by *swadharma*, that is, task or duty determined by one’s caste or *varṇa* which is unchangeable and the fulfillment of which duty through *niskāma karma*, that is, work done without awaiting or expecting any results is the way to *mokṣa* or salvation according to *Gītā*.” The *Gītā* encourages everybody to fulfill his or her caste duty without expecting any results telling him or her that it is the only way of his or her ultimate *mokṣa* or salvation. According to Bose, this call of

the *sva-dharma* of the *Gītā* never allows the lower orders to uplift their status even if they possess the higher qualities than the people of upper two *Varṇas*. The *Gītā* not only degrades *Shūdras* but it has also downgraded women as Bose points out: “The scrutinizing reader must also note in the text of the *Gītā* (IX 32) as quoted above that woman is placed in the same position as *Sūdras*, lowly born. . .” (80, 53, 79). Bose finds the *Gītā* not only the casteist but he also reveals its misogynist nature.

Bose, like Sardesai, also admits about the positive role played by the *Gītā* at the time of British colonialism when the goal of national and political liberation was not defined very clearly. The *Gītā's* call to action and its attitude towards the soul in the body as indestructible have encouraged Indian people to involve in the struggle in establishing a *dharma rāj*, which, as Bose argues, provided the common ideological basis for the search for national identity, and to deny the satanic rule British colonialism represented (80). However, he does not think the *Gītā* can play the positive role when “. . . the class question and class demands appear on the national-political scene with the working class and the toiling masses coming forward with their own ideas of national and social liberation” (Bose 80). On the contrary, Bose argues that the social conservative aspect of *Gītā's* teachings provide a handy weapon to the Indian bourgeoisie to preach class peace and harmony and thereby dampen the class ardour and intensity of the class struggle in the country (80). After the *Gītā* became the weapon in the hands of Indian bourgeoisie to damage the struggle for socialism, Bose suggests not only to avoid the *Gītā* but he also suggests the laboring masses of India to wage ideological war against the text: “But to attempt to read more, to elevate *Bhagavad-Gītā* to a revealed knowledge and seek a panacea for world’s ills today only helps the present ruling bourgeois class to prolong their system of exploitation. That needs to be ideologically combated at every stage of our

struggle” (82). Although Bose admits the positive role of the *Gītā* in the period of British colonialism, he regards the gist of the text, a sheer reactionary that serves the oppressing classes for dominating and exploiting the vast majority of laboring masses of India.

Meghnad Desai (1940-), an Emeritus Professor of Economics at LSE, in his book *Who Wrote The Bhagavad Gītā?* has expressed his doubts about the divine origin and the single authorship of the *Gītā*. Desai does not take the words of the text as delivered by the *Bhagavān*, Sri Kṛṣṇa and he does not believe that the *Gītā* was composed by the single author. He argues: “It is my argument that the *Gītā* as it finally came to us is the result of many additions to what could have been a small original fragment, if there was one at all. Of course, the entire Kṛṣṇa-Arjuna episode could have been created as a fictional device” (80). Desai assumes that the *Gītā*, originally, was a small fragment consisting of limited verses and it was enlarged in the present form in course of many additions by the different authors. Kṛṣṇa-Arjuna episode of the *Mahābhārata* is a fictional creation by the authors as a context to express the philosophy of the *Gītā*. By analyzing the stylistic changes and the frequent shift of subject matter of the *Gītā*, he has concluded on the multiple authorship of the book and divided the segments of the text into different times. Desai writes:

- (a) There are probably multiple authors of the *Gītā* as shown by stylistic changes and the frequent shift of subject matter; (b) There was probably an original short, sharp lesson for Arjuna by Kṛṣṇa assuming that these were historical characters as described in the *Mahābhārata*; and (c) The periodization of the three other segments follows the pattern of pre-

Buddhist, contemporary with Buddhism's early days and lastly in the period when *Brāhmaṇism* was reviving. ("Authorship" 132-33)

Desai divides the *Gītā* into different segments and claims that they were written into different historical times. If the *Mahābhārata* was a historical event, the first and the original segment of the *Gītā* is a sharp lesson given to Arjuna by Kṛṣṇa at the time of war. Desai takes this is only the original *Gītā* and the philosophical parts of the *Gītā* are added into the book by the different authors later. He divides the philosophical parts of the text into other three segments, which were written before the Buddhist era, at the early days of Buddhism and after the Buddhist era. These three segments of the text, he claims, incorporate the different philosophies of the time namely the *Vedas*, the *Upanisads*, the *Sāṅkhya* and the Buddhist philosophy.

Desai has connected the *Gītā* with *Brāhmaṇism*: "The *Bhagavad (Gītā)* is a central text of *Brāhmaṇism*" ("Introduction" 1). He argues the *Gītā* conveys the basic tenets of *Brāhmaṇism*. He observes: ". . . the message of the *Gītā* is casteist and misogynist and as such profoundly in opposition to the spirit of modern India" ("Preface" xiii). There is the caste hierarchy and the women are not given the due value in the Hindu society. The *Gītā*, which is a sacred book of Hindu thought, explicitly offers a divine sanction for the caste-system. The *Gītā* says *Cāturvarṇāḥ* is created by the God Himself. The *Brāhmaṇs* and the *Kṣatriyas* are kept on top and the *Vaiśyas* and the *Sūdras* are kept below in hierarchy. This division into the four *Varṇas* is not done according to their qualities, which Desai claims is not justifiable: ". . . the two top varṇas are described by their qualities- *guṇas* – as constituting their *svabhāva*. But when it comes to the lower two– 'the working classes'– they are described not by any qualities but by the work they perform." The *Brāhmaṇs* and the *Kṣatriyas* are

classified according to their qualities but even if they possess the high qualities the working class people cannot be promoted to the upper two *Varṇas*. All the working class people are classified either to the *Vaiśyas* or the *Sūdras*. This is why Desai claims: “. . . the *Gītā* is at best a text for a small minority – men of the two upper castes and no one else.” The *Gītā* speaks only for the men of the upper two *Varṇas* and it keeps not only the *Vaiśyas* and the *Sūdras* into the lower ranks but it also keeps the women of all the four *Varṇas* into the non-prestigious position. Desai verifies: “. . . there are those who get to do the karma-yoga and jñāna-yoga, etc., but they are the two top varṇas, and, of course, all of them men. But those whom the God has not endowed with any guṇas– *Vaiśyas*, *Sūdras*, all women of whatever varṇa, outcastes, those born of a womb of sin. . . can get to their highest goal via bhakti” (“Contemporary” 142, 150, 143). The God has given no qualities– good or bad– to *Vaiśyas*, *Sūdras*, all women and outcastes and they are not even allowed to involve in the *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* to achieve their highest goal. This clarifies the position of *Vaiśyas*, *Sūdras*, all women and outcastes in *Varṇa* system.

Desai has interpreted the *Gītā* as a self-centered and asocial document. The *Gītā* speaks nowhere about the welfare of others. He argues: “One would be hard to find a matching sentence in the entire *Gītā* which exhorted Arjuna to look after other people’s welfare” (“Contemporary” 165). In the *Gītā*, Arjuna is not instructed to do any action that helps others, instead, Kṛṣṇa instructs him to fulfill his duty to achieve his ultimate goal of salvation. Desai further argues: “It [the *Gītā*] is all about myself and how I can by yoga of one kind or another better myself.” This reveals the self-centeredness of the text and it is also asocial because it speaks nothing about others. He highlights: “The *Gītā* says nothing about action to mitigate misery of others around you, duty to your parents or to your wife and children, let alone about loving

your neighbor . . .” (“Contemporary” 163). Because of the casteist and misogynist nature of the text, Desai admits the Buddhist philosophy is better than the philosophy of the *Gītā*. The Buddhist philosophy does not divide the human beings into the *Varṇa* system and it also treats the women with respect. This is why, Desai argues, Buddhism attracted many Hindus of the lower ranks in the past including Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar, one of the architects of India’s constitution, in its fold: “Ambedkar was opposed to this but conceded, and later took the Dalits out of the fold of the Hindu society itself when he joined Buddhism.” As Ambedkar could not fight with the caste-system of Hinduism, he ultimately changed his religion with many Hindus of the lower ranks. Hinduism cannot give the feelings of equality to the every stratum of people living in India. Desai, however, admits “. . . the *Gītā* as a central text of Indian culture” (“Contemporary” 139) and suggest us to re-examine the message of the text in establishing the egalitarian society in the independent Republic of modern India.

The first group of commentators, mentioned above, has interpreted the *Gītā* as a divine text that deals with the *jñāna* and *bhakti mārga* and not *karma mārga*. The sectarian interpretation of the text is dominant here because all the commentators, in this group, take the *Gītā* as an authorial text of their own particular cult. The early commentators Sankarācārya, Ramanujācārya, Madhvācārya, Vallabhācārya, Nimbarkācārya, the pioneers of *Vaiṣṇava* movement including Swami Prabhupada of the twentieth century belong to this group. As the first systematizer of *Advaita Vedant*, Sankara finds the philosophy of Non-Dualism in the *Gītā*, while Ramanuja, Madhva, Vallabha, Nimbarka and Prabhupada find, in the text, the philosophy of qualified Non-Dualism, Dualism, pure Non-Dualism, the Daal-Non-Dualism and *Gaudiya Vaiṣṇavism* respectively. Although they differ in their sectarian interpretations of the *Gītā*, they are one while using the message of the text not for

solving the worldly problems but for attaining the individual salvation through either *jñāna* or *bhakti mārga* and they are also one giving the high esteem to the text regarding its divine origin.

The second group of commentators also accepts the text's divine origin but they connect the message of the *Gītā* with the problems and their solutions to the world where we live. They were the action-oriented (*karmayogīc*) commentators who highlighted the *karma mārga* of the *Gītā* in the nineteenth century when India was ruled by the British colonialism. Bankim, Vivekananda, Tilak, Gandhi, Mahadev Desai, Aurobindo and Vinoba, who belong to this group, used the *karmayogīc* message of the *Gītā* effectively to fight and chase away the British colonialism. They made the *Gītā* a combative text to wake up and encourage the Indian people for participating in the national independence struggle. The call of Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna to fight in the battlefield of Kurukṣetra against Kauravas is taken by these commentators as a call to the Indian people to fight against the British colonialism.

The third group of commentators, who wrote commentaries on the *Gītā* after the Independence of India, has taken the text as the central cultural asset of Indian nationalism and praised it for its spiritual and philosophical content. Although the commentators of this group give special emphasis to the *karma mārga* of the *Gītā*, they praise the text for its exposition of the *jānan* and *bhakti mārga* as well. They find the perfect combination of these three *mārgas* in the text and this led them to believe that the *Gītā* is not only the Gospel of any cult but it is the Gospel of Hinduism as a whole and more importantly, it is the Gospel and the perfect philosophical treatise of the whole world. Radhakrishnan, Sivananda, Gambhirananda, Ranganathananda, non-

Indian scholars Bhawuk and Baidya, western scholar Huxley and the majority of the *Gītā's* commentators, not included in this study, belong to this group.

The universal celebration of the *Gītā* as a perfect religious, philosophical and divine poem remained no longer valid for the fourth group of commentators who examined the text historically and through the point of view of social justice. Kosambi, Ambedkar, Sardesai, Bose and Meghnad Desai, who belong to this group, have rejected about the text's divine origin and regarded it as a *Brāhmaṇic* creation because they find the text casteist and misogynist. They have questioned on the single authorship of the *Gītā* and they have taken the text as a later interpolation into the *Mahābhārata*. They take the *Gītā* as a text that contains divergent philosophies mixed which makes the text self-contradictory. These commentators have shown the darker side of the *Gītā* with its minimum positive implications.

The critics, mentioned above, give mutually incompatible and self-contradictory interpretations on the *Gītā*. The first three groups of commentators take words of the text as divine that cannot be challenged and the fourth takes its creation as a *Brāhmaṇical* fraud. The most of the commentators of the first three groups consider the text as a creation of the single author, while the fourth takes it as an evolving text composed by the different authors at different times. The third group takes the text as a perfect philosophical poem, the first two groups give sectarian interpretation of the text and the fourth finds it self-contradictory. The commentators of the first three groups worship the text as a panacea for the liberation of human beings from the worldly sufferings, while the fourth finds it casteist, misogynist and the ideological obstacle for establishing the egalitarian society. The direct opposite and contradictory stand of the above commentators on the text creates the research

gap for my present study. After having reviewed the available past works on the *Gītā*, I have not found research conducted applying the Marxist concept of dialectical and historical materialism. How can the *Gītā* be interpreted through the dialectical and historical materialistic lens? This is the major research question of this study. In order to answer this question, its three dependent research questions have to be answered. What is the historical origin of the *Gītā*? Why is there controversy regarding the authenticity of contents contained in the *Gītā*? How is the social significance of the text justified in the present context? The study is based on the answers to these questions. These three research questions determine the three objectives of this study. The study identifies the text in terms of its production, examines the philosophic ideas of the text linking them with the ideas of the different contemporary schools of thought and analyzes the social significance of the text in the present context.

It is a qualitative research and the study extracts information/data through content analysis of the primary text. The study uses the Marxist concept of dialectical and historical materialism as a theoretical/methodological tool. The dialectical and historical materialism holds the view that the literature is the product of the social and economic base of a particular society and the literature, being one of the elements of superstructure, affects the social and economic base of that society. The dialectical and historical materialism takes the *Gītā* as a literary production of the social and economic base of a particular stage of Indian history and the text, being one of the elements of superstructure, affects the social and economic base of the Indian society. The study applies these two fundamental concepts of dialectical and historical materialism and using these concepts, analyzes the historical background and the textual properties of the *Gītā* in order to solve the research questions. The study identifies thematic meanings of the verses of the *Gītā* with the characteristics of the

social and economic base of the particular stage of Indian society to find out the text's origin. It examines the philosophic ideas of the text linking them with the ideas of the contemporary schools of thought and evaluates the social significance of the text at the present time.

The research is limited to study the *Gītā* from the Marxist concept of dialectical and historical materialism. It is structured into six chapters. Chapter One titled "A Debate on the *Bhagavad Gītā*" introduces a general plan of the research study and brings out the debate that is found on the *Gītā* till date. Chapter Two titled "Dialectical and Historical Materialistic Approach to Literature" discusses about the general principles of dialectical and historical materialism and their application to literature. Chapter Three titled "Contextualization of the *Bhagavad Gītā*" contextualizes the text in terms of its production. Chapter Four titled "The *Bhagavad Gītā*: A Review Synthesis of the Contemporary Schools of Thought" studies the philosophic relationship of the text with the different contemporary schools of thought. Chapter Five titled "Social Impact of the *Bhagavad Gītā*" evaluates the present social significance of the text in the modern world. Chapter Six titled "The *Bhagavad Gītā*: A *Brāhmaṇical* Literature of Slavery and Feudalism" concludes the study with concrete findings. Appendix contains phonetic symbols used in transliteration.

Chapter Two

Dialectical and Historical Materialistic Approach to Literature

The dialectical and historical materialism is the core of Marxism. The dialectical and historical materialistic approach to literature is the foundation of the Marxist literary theory. The Marxist literary theory uses the critical insights of the dialectical and historical materialism as the methodological tools for analyzing any literary creation. The critical insights of the dialectical and historical materialism are explained below.

2.1 Dialectical Materialism

The question of the relation of thinking to being or mind to nature is the fundamental question of any philosophy. The question, which is primary, mind or nature is the basic question of philosophy and its answer has a direct connection with the existence of the world. There is one of the two possibilities whether the world, where we live, is created by the external power, i.e., God or it has its eternal existence. In answering this basic question about the existence of the world, the philosophy has been divided into two opposite camps: idealism and materialism.

Frederick Engels points out:

Philosophers were divided into two great camps according to their answer to this question. Those who asserted the primacy of mind over nature and, in the last analysis, therefore, assumed some kind of creation of the world – and this creation often becomes far more intricate and impossible among the philosophers, for example, Hegel, than in Christianity – formed the camp of

idealism. The others, who regarded nature as primary, belonged to the various schools of materialism. ("*Ludwig*" 17)

Those philosophers, who advocated the primacy of mind over nature or who believed in God behind the creation of the world, fall under the group of idealism and rest of them who asserted the primacy of nature over mind and believed the eternal existence of the world are grouped under the different schools of materialism. Georgi Valentinovich Plekhanov elaborates: "The main distinguishing feature of materialism is that it eliminates the *dualism of mind and matter, of God and nature*, and considers nature to be the basis of those phenomena which, ever since the days of primitive hunting tribes, men have explained by the activity of objectified *souls* or *spirits*" (81). As nature used to be worshipped objectifying souls or spirits even by the primitive hunting tribes, this indicates the predominance of materialism over idealism since antiquity.

Between the two opposite camps of philosophy, ". . . the philosophy of Marxism is *materialism*" (Lenin "*Three Sources*" 2). While talking about their materialism, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels usually refer to Ludwig Feuerbach as the philosopher who restored materialism to its rights. However, the materialism of Marx and Engels is not identical with Feuerbach's materialism. Feuerbach's materialism was no different from eighteenth century materialism in its essence. It was mechanical and anti-dialectic because it did not apprehend the universe as a process, as matter engaged in uninterrupted historical development (Engels "*Ludwig*" 22). Feuerbach's materialism was metaphysical because it expressed the idea of immutability of universe. Although it accepted the primacy of matter over mind, it was against the dialectical change and motion of matter.

Marx and Engels are not confined to Feuerbach's materialism. They advanced materialism connecting it with the acquisitions of German classical philosophy, especially of the Hegelian system (Lenin "*Three Sources*" 3). They borrowed dialectics from Hegel but the dialectics of Marx and Engels is not identical with the dialectics of Hegel. Marx states:

My dialectic method is not only different from the Hegelian, but is its direct opposite. To Hegel, the life-process of the human brain, i.e., the process of thinking, which, under the name of "the Idea," he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurgos of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of "the Idea." With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought. ("*Afterword*" 29)

Hegel defines the process of thinking i.e. "the Idea" as a creator of the real world and the dialectics of real things as reflections of this or that stage of absolute Idea. On the other hand, being a materialist, Marx regards "the Idea" as reflections of the material world. In full conformity with Marx's ideas on dialectics, Engels argues:

Hegel was an idealist. To him the thoughts within his brain were not the more or less abstract images of actual things and processes, but on the contrary, things and their development were only the realized images of the "Idea", existing somehow from eternity before the world existed. Consequently everything was stood on its head and the actual interconnection of things in the world was completely reversed. ("*Socialism*" 69)

Being an idealist, Hegel considered the abstract idea existed from eternity before the world existed. According to Hegel, our thought moves forward as a result of

contradictions contained in concepts while Marx and Engels, being materialists, consider the concepts are merely the reflections of the contradictions contained in the material world. Therefore, Marx and Engels found Hegel's dialectics stood on its head to which they "put on its feet" (Engels "*Ludwig*" 41).

Plekhanov makes the distinction between Hegel's and Marx and Engels' dialectics in plain terms: "In Hegel the course of things is determined by the course of ideas. With us, the *course of ideas* is defined by the *course of things* and the *course of thought* by the *course of life*" (96). Marx and Engels bring Hegel's dialectics from heaven to earth by connecting it with Feuerbach's materialism. The combination of Hegel's dialectics and Feuerbach's materialism gives birth to the Marxist philosophy i.e., dialectical materialism. Marxism talks about the organic unity between dialectics and materialism. Before Marx and Engels, materialism was in the grip of metaphysics and dialectics was elaborated by idealist. Marx and Engels rid dialectics of idealism and reform it on a materialist line and thoroughly reshape materialism in the spirit of dialectics. Marx and Engels thus, merge dialectics and materialism to form an integral doctrine, dialectical materialism. Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin defines: "It is called dialectical materialism because its approach to the phenomena of nature, its method of studying and apprehending them, is *dialectical*, while its interpretation of the phenomena of nature, its conception of these phenomena, its theory, is *materialistic*" ("*Dialectical*" 1). Dialectical materialism holds the materialistic view while interpreting the phenomena of nature and it studies and apprehends the phenomena of nature by using the methodological tools of dialectics. The fundamental principles of dialectical materialism are explained below:

2.1.1 Primacy of Matter

Matter is taken as a basic category in dialectical materialism. The basic argument of all philosophies is centered on the primacy of matter or consciousness. The matter denotes the material world existing outside human consciousness. Vladimir Ilyich Lenin gives the precise definition of matter as such: “Matter is a philosophical category denoting the objective reality which is given to men by his sensations, and which is copied, photographed and reflected by our sensations, while existing independently of them” (*Collected* 130). The matter is the objective reality, which is reflected in human brain and thereby forms human thought and consciousness. Engels writes in *Anti-Duhring*: “Thought and consciousness are products of the human brain” (55). Engels repeats the same concept in *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*:

The material, sensuously perceptible world to which we ourselves belong is the only reality; and that our consciousness and thinking, however supra-sensuous they may seem, are the product of a material, bodily organ, the brain. Matter is not a product of mind, but mind is itself merely the highest product of matter. This is, of course, pure materialism. (21)

Engels makes it clear that sensuously perceptible world is the only reality and our consciousness, which is secondary, is the product of the material world reflected in human brain. Matter is not the product of human mind; on the contrary, mind is the product of matter. Lenin extends this concept in his *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*:

One asks, how can sane people in sound mind and judgment assert that “sense-perception [within what limits is not important] is the reality existing outside

us”? The earth is a reality existing outside us. It cannot “coincide” (in the sense of being identical) with our sense-perception, or be in indissoluble coordination with it, or be a “complex of elements” in another connection identical with sensation; for the earth existed at a time when there were no men, no sense-organs, no matter organized in that superior form in which its property of sensation is in any way clearly perceptible. (“Transcendence” 125)

Lenin argues no sane people can claim that sense perception is the reality existing outside us because the earth existed before there were any men or sense organs:

“Natural science positively asserts that the earth once existed in such a state that no man or any other creature existed or could have existed on it. Organic matter is a later phenomenon, the fruit of a long evolution” (“Nature” 75-6). Thus, the first and important condition for the materialist consists in recognizing the independent existence of the material world, separate from human consciousness.

The dialectical method observes interconnectedness in everything. It holds the views that no phenomenon in nature can be understood as isolated from surrounding phenomena. Stalin points out:

Contrary to metaphysics, dialectics does not regard nature as an accidental agglomeration of things, of phenomena, unconnected with, isolated from, and independent of, each other, but as a connected and integral whole, in which things, phenomena are organically connected with, dependent on, and determined by, each other. (“Dialectical” 2)

Everything in the material world has a relationship to each other and is connected to each other. B. I. Syusyukalov et al elaborates: “In other words, there is no such thing as ‘empty’ space or absolutely isolated things. The material world is a single

interconnected system whose every element interacts with other elements”

("Matter" 36). The material unity of the world is the pre-condition for the development of a thing, which includes transitions from the simple to the complex through the motion of matter.

2.1.2 Motion of Matter

The second fundamental principle of dialectical materialism is its theory of motion of matter. Dialectical method believes matter (i.e. nature) is not a state of rest and immobility, stagnation and immutability but it is a state of continuous movement and change, renewal and development, where something is always developing and something always disintegrating and dying away (Stalin "Dialectical" 2-3). Theory of motion of matter puts dialectical materialism in sharp contrast with philosophical idealism and the theological concepts of religion. Mao Tsetung explains:

Dialectical materialism's theory of movement is in opposition first of all with philosophical idealism and with the theological concepts of religion. The fundamental nature of all philosophical idealism and religious theology derives from their denial of the unity and material nature of the world; and in imagining that the movement and development of the world takes place apart from matter, or took place at least in the beginning apart from matter, and is the result of the action of spirit, God, or divine forces. ("Dialectical" 184)

Idealism and the theological concepts of religion, contrary to the principle of dialectical materialism, deny the idea of motion of matter for its development and change. Instead, they attribute the occasional change or development in matter to spirit, God or divine forces. They negate the concept of motion of matter for its development and change.

Dialectical materialism takes motion or movement as inseparable part of matter because it holds the view that there is no existence of matter without motion. Engels writes in his *Dialectics of Nature*: “Motion in the most general sense, conceived as the mode of existence, the inherent attribute, of matter, comprehends all changes and processes occurring in the universe, from mere change of place right up to thinking” (“Basic” 69). The motion in matter plays the main role behind all changes and processes of universe. There is no such thing as spirit, God or divine forces which have any role behind the change or development of matter. In this material world, all things do not remain static but they are subject to change because there is no interruption of motion of matter even for a single moment. Plekhanov argues: “The basis of all the phenomena of nature is the motion of matter.” Plekhanov considers the motion of matter as the basis of every change or development of nature. He further argues: “. . . in dialectics there is nothing immutable; everything is moving, everything is changing” (87, 102). Matter consists contradictions and the struggle between two contradictory aspects of a matter leads its motion and development. Mao admits: “The life of dialectics is the continuous movement toward opposites” (“Talk on Questions” 54). Both contradictory aspects of a contradiction are continuously engaged in struggle for gaining superiority over the others. This reveals the matter is in constant change but the dialectics says it changes and develops not arbitrarily but within certain laws.

2.1.3 The Basic Laws of Motion

The matter changes and develops according to its own laws. The inherent property of matter leads to its change and development. The inner laws of motion of

matter play the primary role behind every modification in the visible material world.

According to dialectics, there are three basic laws of motion, which are as follows:

2.1.3.1 The Unity and Struggle of Opposites

This is the core of law of motion. It is the basis of motion on which other two laws depend on. This law highlights the universality of contradiction exists in matter. Engels writes in *Anti-Duhring*: “Motion itself is a contradiction” (“Dialectics. Quantity” 152). Engels' this statement reveals the essence of this law as it holds the view that “. . . contradiction exists in the process of development of all things, and . . . in the process of development of each thing, a movement of opposites exists from beginning to end” (Tsetung "Contradiction" 91). There is the interdependence of the contradictory aspects of all things and the struggle between these aspects determines the life and development of all things. Contradiction is the basis of both the simple and the complex forms of motion. Engels analyzes in *Anti-Duhring*:

If simple mechanical change of place contains a contradiction, this is even truer of the higher forms of motion of matter, and especially of organic life and its development. We saw above that life consists precisely and primarily in this – that a living thing is at each moment itself and yet something else. Life is therefore also a contradiction which is present in things and processes themselves, and which constantly asserts and resolves itself; and as soon as the contradiction ceases, life, too, comes to an end, and death steps in. (“Dialectics. Quantity” 153)

Contradiction exists in every form of motion and even in organic life. Contradiction is the life of matter because if there is no contradiction in matter, the existence of matter ends. The universality of contradiction is exhibited by the following example:

In mathematics: + and –. Differential and integral.

In mechanics: action and reaction.

In physics: positive and negative electricity.

In chemistry: the combination and dissociation of atoms.

In social science: the class struggle. (Lenin "Question" 280)

There are two sides in everything and they coexist in a single entity. The above example of Lenin proves this. The two aspects of a thing are at once in conflict and in interdependence. There is no existence of one without the other.

Everything consists opposite aspects and the contradictory aspects of a thing coexist to each other in a mutual relation of unity and struggle. But, these two relations of contradictory aspects of a thing differ in significance. Lenin explains: “The unity (coincidence, identity, equal action) of opposites is conditional, temporary, transitory, relative. The struggle of mutually exclusive opposites is absolute, just as development and motion are absolute” (“Question” 281). Up to the certain periods of development, the contradictory aspects of a thing possess their equilibrium or equal action but it will be conditional, temporary, transitory and relative. On the other hand, the two opposite aspects of a contradiction “. . . in every process exclude each other, struggle with each other, and are in opposition to each other” (Tsetung "Contradiction" 118). Between the two relations of a contradiction, struggle is the fundamental and decisive one. Being the chief relation of the contradiction, struggle of opposites is absolute and “. . . it alone resolves contradictions and assures further development” (Syusykalov "Basic" 45). The contradiction of a thing cannot be resolved by the unity of opposites, instead, it is the struggle that resolves the

contradiction and pushes the development of a thing forward. Lenin interprets struggle as development: “Development is the ‘struggle’ of opposites” (“Question” 281). This signifies the importance of struggle between the two relations of the contradictory aspects of a thing.

The chief source of development of a thing is its inner contradiction. The inner contradiction of a thing develops and at certain stage, the interrelation of their aspects changes. Mao points out: “The fundamental cause of the development of a thing is not external but internal; it lies in the contradictoriness within the thing. This internal contradiction exists in every single thing, hence its motion and development.” It does not mean that the external causes do not have any role for the development of a thing. They have their role, but it will be secondary cause for the development and change of anything. Mao further points out: “Contradictoriness within a thing is the fundamental cause of its development, while its interrelations and interactions with other things are secondary causes” (“Contradiction” 88). This implies the importance of inner contradiction of a thing for its development and change. But, the inner contradiction leads a thing to its development and change not arbitrarily, instead, it has its own law for leading the thing to its development and change.

2.1.3.2 Transition from Quantitative to Qualitative Change

This is the second law of motion, which deals with the process of development of a thing. The dialectical method holds the view that the process of development does not happen in a circle as a simple repetition of what has already occurred, instead, there is an onward and upward movement, as a transition from an old qualitative state to a new qualitative state, as a development from the simple to the complex, from the lower to the higher (Stalin “Dialectical” 3). This is the process of

development of the natural world itself, which justifies the validity of the laws of dialectics. Engels explains:

Nature is the test of dialectics, and it must be said for modern science that it has furnished this test with very rich and daily increasing materials, and thus has shown that in the last resort nature works dialectically and not metaphysically; that she does not move in an eternally uniform and perpetually recurring circle, but goes through a genuine historical evolution. In this connection Darwin must be named before all others. He dealt the metaphysical conception of nature the heaviest blow by his proof that the organic world of today – plants, animals, and consequently man too – is the product of a process of evolution going on through millions of years. (*"Socialism"* 67)

The research done by Charles Darwin in the field of the organic world gives the proof about the evolution of plants, animals and human beings and it is the result of upward development of things through series of transformations from the old qualitative state to the new one.

A thing does not come to the qualitative state at once. The thing changes from old to the new qualitative state only going through its quantitative change:

“To become *qualitative*, a change must attain a certain *quantitative limit*” (Plekhanov 91). Engels makes it clear by giving the well-known example of evaporation and freezing process of water:

. . . that of the change of the aggregate state of water, which under normal atmospheric pressure changes at 0° C. from the liquid into the solid state and at 100° C. from the liquid into the gaseous state, so that at both these turning-

points the mere quantitative change of temperature brings about a qualitative change in the state of the water. ("Dialectics. Quantity" 160)

There is a quantitative change in the temperature of water before the water evaporates or freezes – the state of qualitative change. When the temperature of liquid water begins to rise or fall, a moment arrives when this state of cohesion changes and the water is converted in one case into steam and in the other into ice. This law of dialectics is applied in every phenomenon of nature and social science. Marx has given an example about the formation of capital through the accumulation of surplus value of number of laborers:

The fact that a sum of value can be transformed into capital only when it has reached a certain size, varying according to the circumstances but in each case a definite, minimum size – this fact is a *proof of the correctness* of the Hegelian law. . . . *Because*, according to the Hegelian law, quantity changes into quality, “*therefore* an advance, when it reaches a certain limit, becomes capital”. (qtd. in Engels "Dialectics. Quantity" 159)

Only after the accumulation of small sum of surplus value of countless workers, a quantitative change, there is the formation of capital, a qualitative change. We find the similar examples of this law of dialectics in other sphere of social science.

Mao makes it clear about this law of dialectics by explaining the necessary presence of two states of motion in all things, i.e. relative rest and conspicuous change equivalent to quantitative and qualitative change:

There are two states of motion in all things, that of relative rest and that of conspicuous change. Both are caused by the struggle between the two

contradictory elements contained in a thing. When the thing is in the first state of motion, it is undergoing only quantitative and not qualitative change and consequently presents the outward appearance of being at rest. When the thing is in the second state of motion, the quantitative change of the first state has already reached a culminating point and gives rise to the dissolution of the thing as an entity and thereupon a qualitative change ensues, hence the appearance of a conspicuous change. (123-24)

The dialectical method holds the view that all things are in constant change but when there is quantitative change in things, it appears as if they are at rest and the change in things can be seen and felt only when there is qualitative change. Therefore, unity and harmony in things are quantitative change and the dissolution of unity and the destruction of solidarity are qualitative change. Mao further explains:

Such unity, solidarity, combination, harmony, balance, stalemate, deadlock, rest, constancy, equilibrium, solidity, attraction, etc., as we see in daily life, are all the appearances of things in the state of quantitative change. On the other hand, the dissolution of unity, that is, the destruction of this solidarity, combination, harmony, balance, stalemate, deadlock, rest, constancy, equilibrium, solidity and attraction, and the change of each into its opposite are all the appearances of things in the state of qualitative change, the transformation of one process into another. ("Contradiction" 124)

Both states of motion are caused by the struggle between the two contradictory aspects of a thing. There is no interruption of struggle in both states, but in the first state the contradiction remains continued and only in the second state, the contradiction gets its outlet. This is the reason why we say that the unity of opposites

is conditional, temporary and relative, while the struggle of mutually exclusive opposites is absolute (Tsetung "Contradiction" 124).

The law of dialectics does not hold the view that quantitative change only brings qualitative change. They have reciprocal relationships. Mao claims: "At any rate, quantity transforms into quality and quality transforms into quantity" ("Examples" 205). When the quantitative change of a thing comes to the qualitative state, the old contradiction resolves, thereby creating the new contradictions and the new quantitative change begins inside a thing. As there is the reciprocal relationship between quantitative and qualitative changes, in objective reality and in the process of cognition, there also takes place a reverse transition – from qualitative to quantitative changes, which means that new qualities impart new quantitative characteristics to objects (Syusyukalov "Basic" 47). The qualitative change gives birth to the new state of quantitative change that leads to the new qualitative change. This is the process of development of a thing that goes to infinity. It brings the thing to a higher state of development. This implies the development of a thing goes without repetition; however, the dialectics also accepts the occasional repetition but only in more advanced state.

2.1.3.3 The Negation of the Negation

This is the third law of motion that deals with the interconnection of successive stages of development of a thing. The law of the negation of the negation is a law of development of the external world and a law of cognition, which is accomplished as the replacement, the negation of the one stage by another, higher, more exact and complete ones (Syusyukalov "Basic" 50). This is the universal law of dialectics, which we find not only in natural world, but we equally find it in the field

of social science as well. What do we mean by the law of the negation of the negation? Engels makes it clear by giving the simple example of a grain of barley:

Let us take a grain of barley. Billions of such grains of barley are milled, boiled and brewed and then consumed. But if such a grain of barley meets with conditions which are normal for it, if it falls on suitable soil, then under the influence of heat and moisture a specific change occurs in it, it germinates; the grain as such ceases to exist, it is negated, and in its place there appears the plant which has arisen from it, the negation of the grain. But what is the normal life-process of this plant? It grows, flowers, is fertilized and finally once more produces grains of barley, and as soon as these have ripened, the stalk dies, is in its turn negated. As a result of this negation of the negation we have the original grain of barley once again, but not as a single unit, but ten-, twenty- or thirty-fold. ("Dialectics. Negation" 172-73)

A grain of barley germinates when it falls on suitable soil. The plant, then, appears negating the grain and after the plant produces ripened grains of barley, the plant itself is negated. The negation of the negation brings the original grain once again but more in quantity. But if the same grain is negated by milling or grinding, it will not produce more grains. Engels further clarifies: "Negation in dialectics does not mean simply saying no, or declaring that something does not exist, or destroying it in any way one likes" ("Dialectics. Negation" 180). According to the particular nature of each individual case, we must set up the first negation in such a way that second act becomes possible. If we grind a grain of barley only carrying out the first act and making the second act impossible, the grain would not produce more grains according to the law of the negation of the negation (Engels "Dialectics. Negation" 181).

This process of the negation of the negation also occurs with most insects. Engels verifies it: “Butterflies, for example, spring from the egg by a negation of the egg, pass through certain transformations until they reach sexual maturity, pair and are in turn negated, dying as soon as the pairing process has been completed and the female has laid its numerous eggs” (“Dialectics. Negation” 173). This process of the negation of the negation occurs with all other plants, animals and human beings no matter how some of them die producing seeds, eggs or offspring once and others many times.

The law of negation of the negation applies in a similar way in mathematics. Engels validates it: “Let us take any algebraic quantity we like: for example, a . If it is negated, we get $-a$ (minus a). If we negate that negation by multiplying $-a$ by $-a$, we get $+a^2$, i.e., the original positive quantity, but at a higher degree, raised to its second power” (“Dialectics. Negation” 174). When we negate the algebraic quantity a two times, it becomes the original positive quantity with higher degree i.e., a^2 . It is no different from the quantity we obtain after we multiply the positive a by itself.

The same process is observed in human history and the history of philosophy. There was primitive communal society with the common ownership of the means of production. This common ownership became a fetter on production in the course of the development of agriculture. This common ownership was negated giving birth to the private property. But at a higher stage of agricultural development, the private property becomes fetter and it should once again be transformed into common property. But, this is not the restoration of the old primitive common ownership, instead, it will be the common ownership more advanced with the use of modern chemical discoveries and mechanical inventions (Engels “Dialectics. Negation” 176).

Similar to the process of development of human history, the history of philosophy also passes through the process of the negation of the negation. The philosophy of antiquity was primitive, natural materialism, which was negated by idealism, and the idealism, in turn, was negated by modern materialism. This modern materialism is not only the replacement of primitive materialism, instead, it is the scientific materialism enriched by the completely intellectual content of two thousand years of progress in philosophy and natural science (Engels "Dialectics. Negation" 176-77).

The law of negation of the negation reveals that there is a repetition in the process of development of a thing. However, between the dialectical unity of advance and relative repetitiveness, the advance is the main thing. A repetition does not necessarily come after two negations; it may and often does come after many negations. Not all negations are complete, that is, not all of them are a transition of their opposites; on the contrary, most negations are partial as for the transition to an opposite, several negations are required (Syusyukalov "Basic" 50). The primitive communal ownership is repeated only after the four negations in socialist society. But, according to the law of negation of the negation, the repetition is not the mere replacement of the old, instead, it will be the repetition in more advanced level both in quantity and quality.

2.1.4 The Dialectical Materialist Theory of Knowledge

The materialist theory of knowledge recognizes the things, which are reflected by our mind, exist outside us. Lenin points out: “. . . the materialist theory, the theory of the reflection of objects by our mind, is here presented with absolute clarity: things exist outside us. Our perceptions and ideas are their images.” Opposed to idealism, which regards things as the reflection of absolute idea, the materialist theory of

knowledge considers the objective world as our source of knowledge. The horizon of our knowledge increases after our mind interacts with nature. Opposed to agnosticism, material theory of knowledge affirms the existence and knowability of the material world. Lenin illustrates: “. . . the materialist affirms the existence and knowability of things-in-themselves. The agnostic *does not even admit the thought* of things-in-themselves and insists that we can know nothing certain about them” (“Transcendence” 119, 117). Agnostics doubt about the certainty of the knowledge of the external world because they think the external world goes beyond sensations but the materialist believes that the senses give us faithful images of things outside us.

Is it possible to know the objective world fully? Are there any absolute, eternal, ultimate and immutable truths? It is quite impossible to give the answers of these questions only by the materialist theory of knowledge. The materialist theory will be one-sided if it is not coincided with the dialectical theory. Plekhanov points out: “. . . *the materialist interpretation of nature lies at the basis of our dialectics*. It rests on this basis, if materialism were fated to fall, it too would fall. And vice versa. Without dialectics, the materialist theory of knowledge is incomplete, one-sided, nay, more, *a materialist theory of knowledge is impossible*” (95). The dialectical theory holds the view that there is nothing immutable in the objective world. As everything is changing in the outside world, the dialectical theory does not recognize the possibility to know the objective world fully and it rejects any idea about absolute, eternal, ultimate and immutable truths. Engels argues:

Dialectical philosophy dissolves all conceptions of final, absolute truth and of absolute states of humanity corresponding to it. Nothing final, absolute or sacred can endure in its presence. It reveals the transitory character of

everything and in everything and nothing can endure in its presence except the uninterrupted process of becoming and of passing away, of endless ascent from the lower to the higher, of which it is itself the mere reflection in the thinking brain. ("*Ludwig*" 8)

As everything has transitory character and there is the uninterrupted process of coming and going, thinking brain of human being cannot capture the full image of the objective world. When we grasp one thing, other is missing in the process of acquiring knowledge of the objective world. This justifies that we cannot understand the world fully and there is no absolute, eternal, ultimate and immutable truths.

Dialectical materialistic theory of knowledge sees the possibilities of acquiring knowledge of the objective world to the maximum possible extent. Unfortunately, we have little knowledge of the objective world yet to define it fully and to propagate the eternal truths about something. There are many investigations to be done by scientists in the field of "inanimate nature", "living organisms", and "the historical ones" (Engels "Morals" 109, 110, 111). There are no eternal truths in the field of mathematics, astronomy, mechanics, physics, chemistry, geology and not to mention in the field of social sciences. Everyday new discoveries are being made in the field of natural science and old are replaced and made outdated. In the field of social sciences, human conditions, social relations and forms of law and government with their ideal superstructure of philosophy, religion, art etc are being changed in different historical epochs. Therefore, dialectical materialistic theory of knowledge regards knowledge only as relative one. Engels explains:

Knowledge is here essentially relative, because it is limited to the investigation of the interconnections and consequences of certain forms of society and state

which exist only in a particular epoch and among particular peoples and are transitory by their very nature. Therefore, anyone who sets out here to hunt down final and ultimate truths, genuine, absolutely immutable truths, will bring home but little, apart from platitudes and commonplaces of the sorriest kind – for example, that generally men cannot live without working; that up to the present they have for the most part been divided into rulers and ruled; that Napoleon died on May 5, 1821; and so on. ("Morals" 112)

All truths are relative according to particular time and place. The truths change when the time changes and the truths differ when the place where the people live differs. Only some general truths like the date of Napoleon's death, twice two makes four, that birds have beaks etc. can be proclaimed as eternal and immutable truths.

There are also no eternal and immutable moralities. All moralities correspond to the particular time and place. There was first Christian-feudal morality, which was divided into a Catholic, and a Protestant morality, and there came the modern-bourgeois morality, which would transform into the proletarian morality in the future (Engels "Morals" 112). Therefore, dialectical materialistic theory of knowledge rejects any attempt to impose on us any moral dogmas categorizing them as an eternal, ultimate and immutable. No morality stands above human history.

Engels argues:

. . . that so far every moral theory has, in the last analysis, been the product of the economic conditions of society obtaining at the time. And just as society has so far moved in class antagonisms, so morality has always been class morality; it has either justified the domination and the interests of the ruling class, or, as soon as the oppressed class became powerful enough, it has

represented its revolt against this domination and the future interests of the oppressed. ("Morals" 118-19)

As society is divided into the classes of oppressor and oppressed, every morality is class morality. Either the morality justifies the domination of the ruling class or it preserves the interests of the oppressed class in class society. In a society with class antagonisms, no morality stands above class morality.

The knowledge is gained by comprehending the objective reality.

The objective reality is comprehended with our involvement in social practice.

Mao asserts: "Where do correct ideas come from? Do they drop from the skies? No. Are they innate in the mind? No. They come from social practice, and from it alone; they come from three kinds of social practice, the struggle for production, the class struggle and scientific experiment" (502). When man involves into social practice ". . . countless phenomena of the objective external world are reflected in a man's brain through his five sense organs – the organs of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch" (Tsetung "Where Do" 502). In the process of acquiring knowledge, this is the first stage of cognition when we gain sense perceptions and impressions. As social practice continues, man's sense perceptions and impressions are repeated many times, then a sudden change or leap takes place in the brain and concepts are formed. After thinking over the concepts, by means of judgment and inference, one is able to draw logical conclusions. This is the second stage of cognition. Mao illustrates:

It can be seen that the first step in the process of cognition is contact with the objects of the external world; this belongs to the stage of perception. The second step is to synthesize the data of perception by arranging and reconstructing them; this belongs to the stage of conception, judgment and

inference. It is only when the data of perception are very rich (not fragmentary) and correspond to reality (are not illusory) that they can be the basis for forming correct concepts and theories. ("Practice" 74)

The knowledge, according to the dialectical materialist theory, is gained in two successive stages; the stage of perception and the stage of conception, judgement and inference. The knowledge, theory believes, should pass these two stages to get its maturity, reliability and scientificity. The perceptual knowledge will be incomplete if it does not develop to the level of rational knowledge and the rational knowledge will not be reliable if it does not depend on the perceptual knowledge.

There is the dependence of rational knowledge upon perceptual knowledge. Mao asserts: "Anyone who thinks that rational knowledge need not be derived from perceptual knowledge is an idealist" ("Practice" 74). Knowledge begins with experience because nobody can acquire knowledge without being familiar with the objective world. The world outside us is the source of our knowledge. If a person claims acquiring knowledge without experience and depends only on reason, he is a "rationalist" and his knowledge would not be reliable. Likewise, if a person only believes in sense perceptions and does not feel necessary in developing perceptual knowledge to the level of rational knowledge, he is an "empiricist" and his knowledge would be one-sided and superficial. Empiricism does not reflect things completely and their essence. Therefore, dialectical materialist theory of knowledge finds the dialectical relationship between perceptual and rational knowledge. Mao explains:

Rational knowledge depends upon perceptual knowledge and perceptual knowledge remains to be developed into rational knowledge – this is the dialectical materialistic theory of knowledge. In philosophy, neither

“rationalism” nor “empiricism” understands the historical or the dialectical nature of knowledge, and although each of these schools contains one aspect of the truth (here I am referring to materialist, not to idealist, rationalism and empiricism), both are wrong on the theory of knowledge as a whole. The dialectical materialist movement of knowledge from the perceptual to the rational holds true for a minor process of cognition (for instance, knowing a single thing or task) as well as for a major process of cognition (for instance, knowing a whole society or a revolution). ("Practice" 75-6)

A person who depends on one of these two kinds of knowledge makes a mistake either of “rationalism” or “empiricism”. The rationalism negates the perceptual knowledge while the empiricism does not develop the perceptual knowledge to the level of rational knowledge. The dialectical materialist movement of knowledge from perceptual to the rational is necessary for understanding and having the knowledge of every minor to major things.

The dialectical materialist movement of knowledge does not stop at rational knowledge. As far as the Marxist philosophy is concerned, the most important problem does not lie in understanding the laws of the objective world but in applying the knowledge of these laws actively to change the world. Marx points out it in his maxim: “The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it” ("Theses" 32). This is the essence of the Marxist philosophy. The knowledge or theory being not applied to change the objective world is useless. The world is changing without interruption in its own rule but it is our job to accelerate its movement to positive direction. From Marxist viewpoint, theory is important to bring social change as Lenin states: “Without a revolutionary theory

there can be no revolutionary movement” (“Engels” 28). Marxism has given emphasis to the importance of theory because it can guide action. The revolutionary theory illumines the path of revolutionary practice as Stalin points out: “Theory becomes purposeless if it is not connected with revolutionary practice, just as practice gropes in the dark if its path is not illumined by revolutionary theory” (“Theory” 22). There is a dialectical relationship between theory and practice. If we have a correct theory but do not put it into practice, then it is of no significance: “Knowledge begins with practice, and theoretical knowledge which is acquired through practice must then return to practice” (Tsetung “Practice” 76). The correctness of the theory gained from practice will not be tested until we put it into new practice: “The knowledge gained in the first stage is applied in social practice to ascertain whether the theories, policies, plans or measures meet with the anticipated success. Generally speaking, those that succeed are correct and those that fail are incorrect” (Tsetung “Where Do” 503). Application of the theory into practice examines its correctness and makes it more developed. Therefore, the process of gaining and developing knowledge through practice goes without interruption to infinity. Mao concludes:

Practice, knowledge, again practice, and again knowledge. This form repeats itself in endless cycles, and with each cycle the content of practice and knowledge rises to a higher level. Such is the whole of the dialectical materialist theory of knowledge, and such is the dialectical materialistic theory of the unity of knowing and doing. (“Practice” 82)

Knowledge does not drop from the sky and it does not come from the grace of God. Knowledge is not the production of human mind disconnected with practice, instead, it has a living connection with practice and from practice alone, human knowledge

originates and develops. This is the essence of dialectical materialist theory of knowledge.

2.2 Historical Materialism

The extension of the principles and laws of dialectical materialism to study human society is known as historical materialism. Lenin indicates: “Deepening and developing philosophical materialism, Marx completed it, extended its knowledge of nature to the knowledge of *human society*. Marx’s *historical materialism* was the greatest achievement of scientific thought” (“*Three Sources*” 3). As dialectical materialism studies the inner laws of nature, historical materialism studies the inner laws of human society. Dialectical materialism deals with the natural science, whereas historical materialism deals with the social science. Syusyukalov et al. explain:

Forming an inalienable part of Marxist-Leninist philosophy, historical materialism is organically linked with dialectical materialism and at the same time constitutes a relatively independent entity. The unity of dialectical and historical materialism is manifest in the fact that historical materialism exemplifies the application of the principles and laws of dialectical materialism to the development of society. (73-4)

Although there is an organic relationship of historical materialism with dialectical materialism, historical materialism constitutes a relative independence and it has its own particularities while dealing with the principles and laws of human society.

Syusyukalov et al. elaborate:

Historical materialism is a science of the more general laws of social development and its motive forces, of the structure of society and its

functioning, and of the interrelationship between social being and social consciousness. . . . it studies society as a single and integral system, with all of its aspects and elements taken in unity and interaction. ("Materialist" 74)

Historical materialism deals with the general laws of historical development of human society and while studying the human society, it takes the society as a single organic whole having its different constituent parts interacting to each other. The basic concepts of historical materialism are as follows:

2.2.1 Materialist Conception of History

The continuation and extension of the principles of materialism into the domain of social phenomena gives birth to materialist conception of history. Pre-Marxist sociology was incapable of evolving a true science of society or discovering the objective laws of the historical process (Syusyukalov "Materialist" 73). Lenin shows the two main defects of earlier historical theories:

In the first place, they at best examined only the ideological motives of the historical activity of human beings, without investigating what produced these motives, without grasping the objective laws governing the development of the system of social relations, and without discerning the roots of these relations in the degree of development of material production; in the second place, the earlier theories did not cover the activities of the *masses* of the population. ("*Karl Marx*" 17)

The earlier historical theories adopted an idealist approach to examine the process of historical development of human beings giving preference to ideological motives, without investigating the objective laws that produced these motives. Likewise, their

theories did not cover the activities of the general masses of population, who, in real sense, are “the maker of history” (Engels "*Ludwig*" 46).

The materialist conception of history reverses the process in interpreting the human history. Marx and Engels write in *The German Ideology*: “The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behavior” (“Feuerbach” 24-5). Ideas, conceptions, consciousness, conceiving, thinking and all the mental activities of men are the production of their material behavior. Historical materialism gives the right answer of the fundamental question of philosophy as applied to social life, the question of relationship between social being and social consciousness. Marx points out it in his maxim: “It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness” (“Preface” 137). Social being stands for the material life of society and social consciousness stands for the sum total of ideas, theories, views, feelings, moods, customs and traditions which are the reflections of the nature and material life of society. The materialist conception of history evolved by Marx and Engels and carried on by Lenin, Stalin, and Mao marked a revolutionary change in sociological views (Syusyukalov "*Materialist*" 74). The materialist conception of history is the essence of historical materialism.

2.2.2 Base and Superstructure

The materialist conception of history defines the basis of every social order according to the production and the relation of production of that particular stage of human society. Engels demonstrates: “In every society that has appeared in history,

the distribution of wealth and with it the division of society into classes or estates are dependent upon what is produced, how it is produced, and how the products are exchanged” (“*Socialism*” 74). The modes of production and exchange of that particular society form ‘the economic structure of society’ which is generally known as the economic ‘base’ and “. . . from this economic base, in every period, emerges a ‘superstructure’ – certain forms of law and politics, a certain kind of state, whose essential function is to legitimate the power of the social class which owns the means of economic production” (Eagleton “Base” 5). In the Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx formulates the concept of base and superstructure:

In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. (137)

A legal and political superstructure is seen as mere reflection of the economic base of particular society. Beside law and politics, the superstructure also includes certain ‘definite form of social consciousness’ i.e., religious, ethical, aesthetic and so on, which Marxism designates as *ideology* and it functions to legitimate the power of the ruling class in the society (Eagleton “Base” 5). Marx and Engels write in *Manifesto of the Communist Party*: “The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its

ruling class" ("Proletarians" 57). The dominant ideologies of a particular society are the ideologies of its ruling class.

The ideas, views and conceptions of human beings i.e., human's consciousness changes with every change in the conditions of his/her material existence, i.e., his/her social life and social relations. The change of economic base results in the change of superstructure. In other words, the economic base influences the superstructure. But, it does not mean that the superstructure never influences economic base. There is a dialectical relationship between the base and the superstructure. Engels makes it clear in a letter to Joseph Bloch in 1890:

According to the materialist conception of history, the *ultimately* determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the *only* determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure – political forms of the class struggle and its results, constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc., juridical forms, and even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the participants, political, juristic, philosophical theories, religious views and their further development into systems of dogmas – also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their *form*. (682)

The economic base is the ultimate determining element in history, but, in many cases, various forms of superstructure, i.e., political forms, constitutions, political, legal and

philosophical theories, religious ideas, literature and art also play an active role in determining their form. The objective factors are not only responsible to bring social change; the subjective factors are equally responsible to push social development forward. Historical materialism is against the proposition that defines any mechanical, one to one relationship between base and superstructure, instead, it advocates as having two-way dialectical relationship between them.

2.2.3 Material Production as the Basis of Social Development

Having recognized that the economic base is the foundation on which the political superstructure is erected, it is essential to know the features of the economic base of a given society. It is necessary to know the essence of the economic base of a given society that determines the character of the social system and the development of society from one system to another. Historical materialism holds that the method of procuring the means of life necessary for human existence, i.e., the mode of production of material values – food, clothing, footwear, houses, fuel, instruments of production, etc. – which are indispensable for the life and development of society, is the essence of the economic base of any society (Stalin "Dialectical" 15). Therefore, the mode of production of material values that reflects the existence of material production in concrete historical forms is the essence of the economic base of a given society. Syusyukalov et al. explain:

Marx and Engels were the first to introduce in sociology the concept of *the mode of production of the material wealth*, reflecting the existence of material production in concrete historical forms. Several modes of production – primitive communal, slave-owning, feudal and capitalist – have existed and succeeded one another ever since society came into existence. Nowadays the

communist mode of production is coming to replace outgoing capitalism. ("Material" 82)

There are five modes of production, which reflect the five concrete historical forms of human society. Primitive communal, slave owning, feudal and capitalist came into existence one after the other, and now, the capitalism is going to be replaced by the communist mode of production.

The mode of production of material values consists of two contradictory aspects: the productive forces and relation of production. Stalin illustrates: “The *instruments of production* wherewith material values are produced, the *people* who operate the instruments of production and carry on the production of material values, thanks to a certain *production experience* and *labor skill* – all these elements jointly constitute the *productive forces* of society” (“Dialectical” 15). As the productive forces include the instruments of production and people’s labor skill and experience, “. . . they reflect the people’s relation to nature. Their development level – from primitive stone implements in ancient times to modern unique machines – demonstrates the degree to which man has mastered nature.” The productive forces are developed in a significant way from ancient times to the present through the struggle of man with nature. The relation of production is the relation of men to each other in the process of production, distribution and exchange: “Production relations also include relations of ownership of the means of production, relations established among classes and social groups during production and also the forms and methods of distributing material benefits” (Syusyukalov "Material" 83). The relation of production indicates the different forms of ownership to the means of production.

The production or the mode of production possesses its special features. Stalin outlines the three features of production. The first feature of production is that it is not a static but a dynamic phenomenon. It is subject to change without interruption.

Stalin mentions:

The *first feature* of production is that it never stays at one point for a long time and is always in a state of change and development, and that, furthermore, changes in the mode of production inevitably call forth changes in the whole social system, social ideas, political views and political institutions – they call forth a reconstruction of the whole social and political order. (16)

The development of production system alone cannot escape from the dialectical laws of motion of matter. The production system changes and the whole social system change with it. The development of production plays a vital role in every social development. Therefore, historical materialism defines the main role of the producers of material values, of the laboring masses and negates the role of some people in power like kings and generals behind the every social development. Stalin argues:

If historical science is to be a real science, it can no longer reduce the history of social development to the actions of kings and generals, to the actions of ‘conquerors’ and ‘subjugators’ of states, but must above all devote itself to the history of the producers of material values, the history of the laboring masses, the history of peoples. ("Dialectical" 17)

The history of the producers of material values, the history of the laboring masses alone furnishes the history of social development. The causes of all social development and political revolutions, therefore, should not be sought in men’s brains, in the views and ideas of society, but in the mode of production and the

economic life of society. Engels writes: “The ultimate causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in men’s brains, not in their growing insight into eternal truth and justice, but in changes in the modes of production and exchange. They are to be sought, not in the *philosophy*, but in the *economics* of each particular epoch” (“*Socialism*” 74). Historical materialism gives prime focus to study and disclose the laws of production, the laws of development of the productive forces and of the relations of production, the laws of economic development of society.

The production changes and develops through its inner contradiction between the two aspects i.e., the productive forces and relations of production. Between the two aspects, the productive forces are the principal aspect, which plays the main role in bringing change and development of production. But, in certain conditions, the relations of production themselves play the principal and decisive role.

Stalin elaborates:

The *second feature* of production is that its changes and development always begin with changes and development of the productive forces, and in the first place, with changes and development of the instruments of production.

Productive forces are therefore the most mobile and revolutionary element of productions. First the productive forces of society change and develop, and then, *depending* on these changes and *in conformity with them*, men’s relations of production, their economic relations, change. This, however, does not mean that the relations of production do not influence the development of the productive forces and that the latter are not dependent on the former. While their development is dependent on the development of the productive forces,

the relations of production in their turn react upon the development of the productive forces, accelerating or retarding it. ("Dialectical" 17)

First, changes and development begin with changes and development of the productive forces, which bring changes in men's relations of production, their economic relations. Thus, the productive forces are regarded as mobile, revolutionary and determining one. But, sometimes, relations of production also play their role in accelerating or retarding the development of productive forces. There is a dialectical relationship between the productive forces and relations of production. Mao indicates: "When it is impossible for the productive forces to develop without a change in the relations of production, then the change in the relations of production plays the principal and decisive role" ("Contradiction" 116). Therefore, the role of the relations of production also cannot be ignored in the process of development in production.

Men, while involving in production for securing immediate and tangible advantages, do not know what their involvement in production will lead to. They are unaware that their involvement in particular type of production leads to the development of productive forces, which oblige to bring the new social system that goes contrary to their interest. In other words, while involving in production, men unconsciously enter into certain relations of production, which may go against their will. Marx illustrates it in his maxim: "In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces" ("Preface" 137). Based on this quotation of Marx, Stalin outlines the third feature of production:

The *third feature* of production is that the rise of new productive forces and of the relations of production corresponding to them does not take place separately from the old system, after the disappearance of the old system, but within the old system; it takes place not as a result of the deliberate and conscious activity of man, but spontaneously, unconsciously, independently of the will of man. ("Dialectical" 23)

The new productive forces and of the relations of production corresponding to them rise within the old system and they come into existence not because of conscious activities of men. Members of primitive communal society did not know that the use of iron tools instead of stone tools would bring a revolution in production and ultimately that would lead to slave system (Stalin "Dialectical" 23). Those members of primitive communal society would not have used iron tools if they had known that they would be transformed into slaves in the slave system. In the period of the feudal system, when the young bourgeoisie of Europe began to erect, alongside of the small guild workshops, large manufactories, and developed the productive forces, they did not know that this "small" innovation would lead to the overthrow of the power of kings and the nobility (Stalin "Dialectical" 24). Kings and the nobility would not have supported the young bourgeoisie if they had known that their support would lead to their own downfall. The Russian capitalists implanted modern large-scale machine industry in Russia, but they did not know that this would bring a victorious socialist revolution (Stalin "Dialectical" 24). Socialist revolution was not the interest of Russian capitalists.

This does not mean that the development of production alone manages to bring social revolution. The transition from old relations of production to new

relations of production does not proceed smoothly, on the contrary, new relations of production establishes only by overthrowing the old ones. Stalin writes:

Up to a certain period the development of the productive forces and the changes in the realm of the relations of production proceed spontaneously independently of the will of men. But that is so only up to a certain moment, until the new and developing productive forces have reached a proper state of maturity. After the new productive forces have matured, the existing relations of production and their upholders – the ruling classes – become that “insuperable” obstacle which can only be removed by the conscious action of the new classes, by the forcible acts of these classes, by revolution.

("Dialectical" 24-5)

The changes in the realm of the relations of production proceed spontaneously up to the certain point with the development of productive forces. Then, the existing relations of production and their upholders, the ruling classes appear as an obstacle and the obstacle can only be removed by the use of force by new classes through revolution. The development in mode of production only makes a necessary condition for the new social classes to bring the new social system overthrowing the old ones by means of revolution.

2.2.4 Class Struggle

The struggle between the productive forces and relations of production is reflected into the class struggle. The productive forces comprise the people of different classes and they struggle to each other for relations of production, i.e., for gaining the ownership of the means of production. The struggle of classes is, therefore, regarded as the basis and the driving force of the whole development (Lenin

"*Three Sources*" 7). The main objective of people in involving the class struggle is to capture the means of production, i.e. to get economic emancipation. Engels writes in *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*: "In modern history at least it is, therefore, proved that all political struggles are class struggles, and all class struggles for emancipation, despite their necessary political form – for every class struggle is a political struggle – turn ultimately on the question of *economic emancipation*" (51). All political struggles that we see in modern human history are class struggles and they ultimately aim to have economic security and freedom.

There was not the existence of classes in primitive communal society. Every person used to participate in production and there was a trend of sharing the means of subsistence in equal basis. Classes emerged with the emergence of slavery when people were divided into two hostile camps: slaves and slave-owners. Lenin defines classes as follows:

Classes are large groups of people which differ from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated in law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organization of labour, and, consequently, by the mode of acquisition and the dimensions of the share of social wealth of which they dispose. Classes are groups of people one of which can appropriate the labour of another owing to the different places they occupy in a definite system of social economy. ("*Great*" 13)

Classes are the large groups of people who possess the different status in social production, and in their relation to the means of production. They have different role in the contribution of labor for material production and they get the unequal share of

social wealth. According to the certain system of social economy, some earn their living doing labor and others collect material wealth appropriating others' labor. Classes are based on the appropriation of labor of the other people and they are designated differently according to the mode of appropriation. Lenin further clarifies: "If one section of society appropriates all the land, we have a landlord class and a peasant class. If one section of society possesses the mills and factories, shares and capital, while another section works in these factories, we have a capitalist class and a proletarian class" ("*Tasks*" 12). According to the appropriation of others' labor, slavery is divided into two major contending classes a slave-owner and a slave, feudalism is divided into two opposing classes a landlord class and a peasant class, and likewise, capitalism is divided into a capitalist class and a proletarian class.

It is obvious that every class looks after their own interests behind their actions in class-based society. Particularly, the ruling class adopts such strategies that help them to rule and oppress the oppressed class. They use ethics, morality and religion to hoodwink the oppressed class so that they do not come against the ruling class. Lenin asserts: "In the sense in which it is preached by the bourgeoisie, who derived ethics from God's commandments. We, of course, say that we do not believe in God, and that we know perfectly well that the clergy, the landlords and the bourgeoisie spoke in the name of God in pursuit of their own interests as exploiters" ("*Tasks*" 11). The clergy, the landlords and the bourgeoisie, who belonged to the class of oppressor, try to enforce ethics and morality to the oppressed class in the name of God only to preserve their own class interests. There are no eternal ethics and morality; on the contrary, all the ethics and morality are class based. However, the ruling class manages to deceive the people by creating different moral, religious, political, social phrases and promises. If people do not understand the motives behind

such phrases and promises, they will be deceived forever. Lenin suggests: "People always were and always will be the foolish victims of deceit and self-deceit in politics until they learn to discover the *interests* of some class or other behind all moral, religious, political and social phrases, declarations and promises" (7). The ruling class does not hesitate to take any steps and do any jobs to preserve their class interests. The members of the oppressed class, therefore, should know and discover the evil interests of the ruling class and they should be organized in the struggles against the ruling class. The class struggle alone is capable of smashing the resistance of the ruling class and creating the new system. Lenin declares: "And there is only one way of smashing the resistance of these classes, and that is to find, in the very society which surrounds us, and to enlighten and organize for the struggle, the forces which can – and owing to their social position, must – constitute the power capable of sweeping away the old and creating the new" ("*Three Sources*" 7). Hence, the class struggle is the essential phenomenon in bringing social change. The class struggle is not the desire of anybody but it is the historical necessity for the development of society.

There is the fundamental role of class struggle in changing human society from slavery to the present time. Marx and Engels have studied deeply the trend of social change and the role of class struggle behind this change and written in *Manifesto of the Communist Party*:

The history of all hitherto existing society (with the exception of its primitive stages – Engels added subsequently in his book *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, page 71) is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word,

oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes. (32-3)

Keeping the history of the primitive communal society aside, the history of human society is no more than the history of class struggles, which led the development of human society up to the present time. The people belonging to the oppressor and oppressed class have involved in class struggles without interruption no matter how the degree of intensity in their struggles differs. Class struggle continues no matter how the forms of society changes. Now, in capitalist society, the people are divided into bourgeoisie and proletariat and the class struggle between them continues until the proletariat overthrows the power of bourgeoisie and socialism is established. The class distinctions, however, will not be abolished even in socialism. The classes emerged with the emergence of private property and inequalities between people in different sectors and the classes will be abolished only with the elimination of private property and these inequalities. Lenin asserts:

In order to abolish classes completely, it is not enough to overthrow the exploiters, the landlords and capitalists, not enough to abolish *their* rights of ownership; it is necessary also to abolish *all* private ownership of the means of production, it is necessary to abolish the distinction between town and country, as well as the distinction between manual workers and brain workers. This requires a very long period of time. ("*Great*" 13)

Class distinctions will be abolished only after the realization of communism where every kind of private ownership of the means of production and inequalities between

human beings are eliminated. The classless primitive communal society will be developed into classless scientific communal society after negating five modes of production. The class struggle plays the vital role in negating these modes of production.

2.3 Marxism and Literature

The basic concepts of dialectical and historical materialism are explained so far to be equipped with the methodological tools for analyzing literature.

Lee Baxandall and Stefan Morawski state: "Dialectical and historical materialism is the context in which the aesthetic thought is cradled and in which it functions" (1). The Marxist aesthetic thought does not go beyond the principles of dialectical and historical materialism. Marx and Engels are better known for their political and economic rather than literary writings (Eagleton "Marx, Engels and Criticism" 1), but whatever they write on literature and art, they are sufficient to convey their dialectical and historical approach to literature and art.

Marx's concept of literature and art is expressed in his famous quotation written in his Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*: "The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness" (137). The social being, i.e., the mode of production of material life determines the social consciousness i.e., the social, political and intellectual life process that also includes the production of literature and art. It is the materialist conception of history, which goes contrary to the idealist approach that keeps social

consciousness prior to social being. Marx and Engels further explain the concept more clearly in *The German Ideology*:

Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behavior. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc., of a people. Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc. – real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms. (25)

As the mental intercourse of human beings like conceiving and thinking are the product of material behavior, all the mental productions like politics, laws, morality, religion, literature and art are the results of the material activities of human beings. Marx and Engel's focus on "real active men" indicates that the active human beings are the producers of the definite conceptions and ideas of a particular age according to a definite development of their productive forces.

The definite development of productive forces provides the definite forms of materials for the literary production of a particular age. In the infancy of the development of productive forces, Greek mythology provides as a material basis for the production of Greek art. Marx writes in his well-known work *Grundrisse*:

We know that Greek mythology is not only the arsenal of Greek art, but also its basis. Is the conception of nature and of social relations which underlies Greek imagination and therefore Greek [art] possible when there are self-acting mules, railways, locomotives and electric telegraphs? . . . Greek art presupposes Greek mythology, in other words that natural and social

phenomena are already assimilated in an unintentionally artistic manner by the imagination of the people. . . . Egyptian mythology could never become the basis of or give rise to Greek art. ("Uneven" 34-5)

The Greek mythology, which was the basis of Greek art, was formed with the concept of nature and of social relations of the time and not with the concept of railways, locomotives and electric telegraphs of modern time. If literature is not the product of the material condition of the time, there would be the reflection of Egyptian mythology in Greek art. The material condition of the time imprints in the mind of the artists unintentionally and unconsciously which is reflected in literature and art.

There is no difficulty for Marx to understand the Greek art as the product of the material condition of the time, but it makes Marx difficult to define the reasons behind the popularity of the Greek art even in modern time. Terry Eagleton answers it: "The Greeks, Marx is arguing, were able to produce major art not *in spite of* but *because of* the undeveloped state of their society" ("Literature" 11). The innocence of the early stage of humanity, when there was not such a fragmentation of 'division of labor' like in capitalism, alone was capable to give birth to high arts. Marx confirms it: "The charm their art has for us does not conflict with the immature stage of the society in which it originated. On the contrary its charm is a consequence of this and is inseparably linked with the fact that the immature social conditions which gave rise, and which alone could give rise, to this art cannot recur." Marx has interpreted the Greek periods as the childhood of humanity. The childhood is the period of innocence when there is no room for immoralities and cruelties. Marx has taken the Greek periods as a classless society like the society based on the primitive communal system and he finds the reflection of such society in Greek art. Marx argues: "An adult cannot

become a child again, or he becomes childish. But does the naivete of the child not give him pleasure, and does not he himself endeavour to reproduce the child's veracity on a higher level?" ("Uneven" 35). The Greek art delights us because we find there the reflections of the innocence of infant humanity. As Marx speaks of 'endeavouring to reproduce the child's veracity on a higher level', he is clearly speaking of the future communist society where unlimited resources will serve, an unlimitedly developing man (qtd. in Eagleton "Literature" 12). Marx's interpretation of Greek art reveals the dependency of literature and art, i.e., superstructure to the economic base and the reasons behind the greatness of Greek art, which still influence the minds of modern people.

Human beings are the producers of literature and art and the literature and art influence and challenge the opinions of human mind. Literature and art are the reflections of economic base and they play role in bringing change in the economic base too. In other words, there is a dialectical relationship between the economic base and literature and art. Engels makes this clear in a letter to Joseph Bloch written in 1890:

The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure – political forms of the class struggle and its results, constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc., juridical forms, and even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the participants, political, juristic, philosophical theories, religious views and their further development into systems of dogmas – also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their *form*. (682)

There is no mechanical, one-to-one correspondence between economic base and literature and art; literature and art and other elements of the superstructure constantly react back upon and influence the economic base. Eagleton insists: "The materialist theory of history denies that art can in *itself* change the course of history; but it insists that art can be an active element in such change" ("Literature" 9). In the contradiction between the economic base and the superstructure, the economic base is the principal aspect. The economic base generally plays the principal and decisive role, but, in certain conditions, the superstructure in turn appears itself in the principal and decisive role (Tsetung "Contradiction" 116). This indicates the fundamental role of literature and art in bringing social change.

Engels views on literature and art is clearly demonstrated in his letter written to the novelist Mārgaret Harkness in April 1888. In the letter, he criticizes Harkness for the wrong portrayal of working class people in her story *A City Girl*. The story lacks "the truthful reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances" (Engels "Letter to Mārgaret" 114). Engels points out: "Now your characters are typical enough, as far as they go; but the circumstances which surround them and make them act, are not perhaps equally so. In the '*City Girl*' the working class figures as a passive mass, unable to help itself and not even making any attempt at striving to help itself" ("Letter to Mārgaret" 114). Harkness has portrayed the working class people in her story as "a passive mass" unable to change their miserable fate fell on them. She had to portray in her story "the militant proletariat" (Engels "Letter to Mārgaret" 115) of 1887, the year when she set her story. For Engels, it is the violation of the portrayal of realism when Harkness portrays "the passive side of working class life" at the time when the working class people have already developed their strength

to change the power structures, particularly "in the civilized world" (Engels "Letter to Mārgaret" 116), the place where she set her story.

The portrayal of the working class people in literature and art only does not qualify them to be the proletarian literature and art unless the literature and art portray the revolutionary optimism of the proletarian class. Engels criticized *A City Girl* because characters portrayed in the story belonging to the working class are pessimistic for their future. Likewise, nobody can be a proletarian writer and artist only labeling himself as such unless their works do not reproduce truthfully the real class struggle of the existing society in which the new emerging class would be presented as victorious one. Therefore, for Engels, intentions or opinions of the writer and artist are not important, what is important for any literature and art is their output, their message that would educate the new revolutionary class in the class struggle. Engels believes: "The more the opinions of the author remain hidden, the better for the work of art. The realism I allude to, may crop out even in spite of the author's opinions" ("Letter to Mārgaret" 115). The readers do not care about the opinions of the writers, instead, they are concerned with the message of the works of literature and art. Literature is not ordinary writing, it is artistic one. So, Engels suggests hiding the opinions of the writer so as to bring the objective reality through literature. If they are truthful in reproduction of reality, the author's opinions cannot be obstacles to literary production.

Engels has given the example of Balzac whose novels have truthfully reproduced the class struggle of his time and they have demonstrated the bourgeoisie class as victorious one, though Balzac's sympathy goes to feudalism. Although "Balzac sympathizes most deeply – the nobles", his novels have portrayed "the

progressive inroads of the rising bourgeoisie upon the society of nobles" (Engels "Letter to Mārgaret" 115). In his novels, ". . . Balzac always speaks with undisguised admiration, are his bitterest political antagonists, the republican heroes . . . who at that time (1830-36) were indeed the representatives of the popular masses" (Engels "Letter to Mārgaret" 115-16). Engels further points out: "Balzac thus was compelled to go against his own class sympathies and political prejudices, that he *saw* the necessity of the downfall of his favorite nobles, and described them as people deserving no better fate; and that he *saw* the real men of the future where, for the time being, they alone were to be found. . ." ("Letter to Mārgaret" 116). While reproducing truthfully the real class struggle of his time in his novels, Balzac was compelled to go against his own class sympathies, he admitted the downfall of his own favorite nobles and saw the real victorious class of the future i.e., bourgeoisie class. Some critics have interpreted this stand of Engels literary criticism as "the necessary freedom of art from direct political determinism" (Barry 154) or as "overt political commitment in fiction is unnecessary" (Eagleton "Marx, Engels and Commitment" 44). Contrary to the views of these critics, Engels demands rigid political commitment from the writers consciously or unconsciously in producing truthful literature and art for the new victorious class in every stage of human development for bringing social change. Engels speaks for the progressive literature and art, which will enlighten the path of future revolution.

Marxist literary theory is more developed and enriched with the writings of Lenin on literature and art. Lenin has outlined his views on literature in his article "Party Organization and Party Literature". Engels views on political commitment for the new emerging classes in literature and art is extended in Lenin's this article to the concept of class-partisan literature for the proletarian class at a time when the

proletarian class was involving in a sharp class struggle against capitalist class in order to establish socialism in Russia. Lenin writes:

Down with non-partisan writers! Down with literary supermen! Literature must become *part* of the common cause of the proletariat, "a cog and a screw" of one single great Social-Democratic mechanism set in motion by the entire politically-conscious vanguard of the entire working class. Literature must become a component of organized, planned and integrated Social-Democratic Party work. (149)

Lenin has compared literature with "a cog and a screw" of a "great Social-Democratic mechanism" which he means to suggest that literature should be the inseparable part of the proletarian revolution. This indicates literature possesses a great power in bringing social change if literary writings contain the progressive messages which help in educating and encouraging the working class people in proletarian revolution. There are many literary writings, which take side with the ruling class by conveying the message that their power is invincible and immutable and thereby discouraging the emerging new classes. Lenin speaks against those writers who claim themselves to be non-partisan and literary supermen but, in reality, no writers are literary supermen who stand above classes and no writers are non-partisan who do not take side with any classes. Consciously or unconsciously, every writer belongs to certain class and they are loyal to their own favorite class in course of literary production.

The question of class-partisanship of writers is related to the question of freedom of writers. Class-partisanship does not allow any writers to be absolutely free while writing because they are obliged to express the ideologies of this or that class in class based society. Lenin further writes:

We must say to you bourgeois individualists that your talk about absolute freedom is sheer hypocrisy. There can be no real and effective "freedom" in a society based on the power of money, in a society in which the masses of working people live in poverty and the handful of rich live like parasites. . . . The freedom of the bourgeois writer, artist or actress is simply masked (or hypocritically masked) dependence on the money-bag, on corruption, on Prostitution. ("Party" 151)

The writers, who are loyal to the bourgeoisie class, write for the interests of the bourgeoisie and their writings no way represent the interests of the working class people. Therefore, ". . . absolute freedom of the artist is an illusory freedom. Artistic work is inevitably entangled in the ideological battle" (Morawski 15). In the society full of exploitation of one class by another, every writer is inevitably entangled with the interests of the exploiting or the exploited classes. According to Lenin, that literature will be free if they are free from greed and careerism and are written for the working class people with the idea of establishing socialism:

It will be a free literature, because the idea of socialism and sympathy with the working people, and not greed or careerism, will bring ever new forces to its ranks. It will be a free literature, because it will serve, not some satiated heroine, not the bored "upper ten thousand" suffering from fatty degeneration, but the millions and tens of millions of working people – the flower of the country, its strength and its future. ("Party" 151-52)

Lenin speaks for those literature and art, which are written not for the minority of the ruling class people, but are written for the majority of the working class people who are the new emerging classes capable of establishing socialism and communism.

Lenin, while speaking for the proletarian literature and art, speaks against the feudal or bourgeois literature and art, which carry the feudal or bourgeois ideology. However, Lenin gives high priority to the past literature that contained the truthful reproduction of the class struggle of different stages of human society. He admires Leo Tolstoy for his novels, which have truthfully portrayed the downfall of feudalism in Russia in spite of Tolstoy's sympathy towards feudalism. Although Tolstoy considers "the ideological reflection of the old order, the feudal order" as "the 'eternal' principles of morality, the eternal truths of religion", he accepts in his novel *Anna Karenina* that ". . . in Russia everything has now been turned upside down" (Lenin "Leo" 43). Lenin appreciates Tolstoy for his truthful reproduction of the downfall of feudalism but it does not mean that he accepts Tolstoy's ideologies expressed in his novels. Lenin makes us aware that it would be harmful if we follow Tolstoy's doctrine manifested in his writings: "In our days, the most direct and most profound harm is caused by every attempt to idealize Tolstoy's doctrine, to justify or to mitigate his 'non-resistance', his appeals to the 'spirit', his exhortations for 'moral self-perfection', his doctrine of 'conscience' and universal 'love', his preaching of asceticism and quietism, and so forth" ("Leo" 45). Pessimism, non-resistance, appeals to the 'spirit', concept of eternal truths, morality and universal 'love', asceticism and quietism are the essence of Tolstoy's doctrine, which, in reality, are the ideologies of feudalism.

Lenin speaks against every kind of old ideologies, which play the role in misleading the new emerging classes in the class struggle. Lenin, however, holds the view that every literature and art contains some materials that would be useful for the advanced classes in every stage of human development. In relation to the literature of Tolstoy, Lenin concludes: "Tolstoy's doctrine is certainly utopian and in content is reactionary in the most precise and most profound sense of the word. But that

certainly does not mean that the doctrine was not socialistic or that it did not contain critical elements capable of providing valuable material for the enlightenment of the advanced classes" ("Leo" 45). Lenin favors the proletarian literature but, at the same time, he suggests us to borrow some useful materials from feudal, bourgeoisie and other different kinds of literature for the benefit of working class people in the class struggle.

Marxist literary theory is systematized more fully by Mao's famous article "Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Art and Literature". There is more comprehensive and thorough elaboration of Marxist literary theory in the article. Lenin's concept of class-partisan literature and art has been extended in the article more clearly and in a confident way, because Mao argues there is nothing that stands above classes in the present class-based society: "In the world today all culture, all art and literature belong to definite classes and follow definite political lines. There is in fact no such thing as art for art's sake, art which stands above classes or art which runs parallel to or remains independent of politics." Marxist literary theory opposes the bourgeoisie concept of art for art's sake and literature and art, which stand free from the politics of classes. Similar to Lenin's concept of "cogs and screws" in the whole Social-Democratic machine, Mao considers literature and art as an inseparable part of class politics: "Art and literature are subordinate to politics, but in turn exert a great influence on politics" ("*Talks at*" 30, 31). Literature and art are created on the grounds of class politics and, in turn, they serve the politics of a particular class. There is a dialectical relationship between literature and art and politics.

The different kinds of politics beget different kinds of literature and art. Contrary to bourgeoisie literary theory, Marxist theory interprets any literature and art

categorizing them into different groups. The literature and art that are written to benefit a certain class call for to label them with different names. The literature and art written for the feudal class are feudal literature and art, the literature and art written for the bourgeoisie class are bourgeoisie literature and art, as Mao points out: "The art and literature for the landlord class are feudal art and literature. . . . The art and literature for the bourgeoisie are bourgeois art and literature. . . . The art and literature intended for the imperialists . . . are collaborationist art and literature" (*Talks at* 13). All these different kinds of literature and art are the ideological expressions of the different classes and they serve their own particular classes.

Among the different kinds of literature and art, Marxism takes side with revolutionary literature and art. The literature and art written about the new revolutionary class or the working class people with the intention to serve them are regarded as revolutionary literature and art. Mao notes: "Revolutionary art and literature are the products of the brains of revolutionary artists and writers reflecting the life of the people" (*Talks at* 21). Revolutionary literature and art are the ideological expressions of the new, emerging revolutionary class, i.e., working class people. In the era of capitalism and imperialism, revolutionary literature and art are the ideological expressions of the proletarian class. So, revolutionary literature and art are also called the proletarian literature and art.

Mao outlines the four basic problems should be addressed to be the genuine revolutionary literature and art. They are the standpoint, the attitude, the public of the artists and writers and the study (2). The standpoint varies according to different kinds of literature and art and the revolutionary literature and art ". . . take the standpoint of the proletariat and the mass of the people" (Tsetung *Talks at* 2). The standpoint

defines specific attitudes towards specific things. The attitude comprises the fundamental question of any literature and art, i.e., the question whether to extol or expose something. Mao explains: "Only truly revolutionary artists and writers can correctly solve the problem whether to extol or to expose. The fundamental task of all revolutionary artists and writers is to expose all dark forces which endanger the people and to extol all the revolutionary struggles of the people" ("*Talks at*" 38-9). The true revolutionary literature and art always expose the dark and reactionary forces and extol the bright and revolutionary forces. It is the chief task of any literature and art to expose and extol the particular forces according to their particular standpoint.

Third problem Mao outlines for revolutionary literature and art is the public of the artists and writers. The revolutionary literature and art are produced for the working class people. Mao quotes Lenin: "As far back as 1905, Lenin emphatically pointed out that our art and literature should 'serve the millions upon millions of working people'" (11). Mao does not have any disagreement with Lenin that the goal of any true revolutionary literature and art is to serve the majority of the working class people. In order to serve the working class people through literature and art, the revolutionary writers and artists should give equal importance to "elevation" and "popularization". Popularization is related to "diffusion of art and literature among people" and "elevation means the raising of their artistic and literary standards" (20). In other words, popularization is related to "content" and elevation is to "form" of the literature and art. Although the literature and art belonging to all exploiting classes possess the reactionary political content, they could have "some artistic merit". On the other hand, "Works of art, however politically progressive, are ineffective if they lack artistic quality" (Tsetung "*Talks at*" 36). The major problem for any revolutionary literature and art is to integrate the form and content as Mao points out: "The problem

now is how to integrate 'The Spring Snow' with the 'Song of the Rustics', to integrate elevation with popularization" (*Talks at* 29). Mao gives equal emphasis to the revolutionary political content and the artistic quality for producing the effective revolutionary literature and art.

The last problem Mao outlines for any revolutionary literature and art is that of study. The revolutionary writers and artists should have the correct understanding "of Marxism-Leninism and of society" to produce the revolutionary literature and art. According to Mao, those who do not have ". . . a fundamental Marxist viewpoint is that existence determines consciousness, that is, the objective reality of class struggle and national struggle determines our thoughts and feelings" (8), they could not produce revolutionary literature and art. Revolutionary writers and artists should study Marxism not to write about philosophy in literature and art but to apply the dialectical and historical materialistic viewpoint while approaching literature and art. Mao explains: "We study Marxism in order to apply the dialectical materialist and historical materialist viewpoint in our approach to the world, to society and to art and literature, but not in order to turn our works of art and literature into philosophical discourses" (43). The study of Marxism refines revolutionary literature and art avoiding feudal, bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology, liberalism, individualism, nihilism, art-for-art's sake and aristocratic, decadent, pessimistic outlook (*Talks at* 43). Instead of advising revolutionary writers and artists to study orthodox Marxism, Mao advises them to study living Marxism, the Marxism that has the living connection with the social practice:

Many who have read Marxist books have become renegades from the revolution, whereas illiterate workers often grasp Marxism very well. Of

course we should study Marxist books, but this study must be integrated with our country's actual conditions. We need books, but we must overcome book worship, which is divorced from the actual situation. ("Oppose" 27)

Marxism is a practical philosophy. It originates from practice and survives with practice. Mao speaks against having the bookish knowledge of Marxism and speaks for the application of Marxism in society to change it. Revolutionary writers and artists should also follow this principle while studying Marxism for the production of revolutionary literature and art.

It is not obligatory to be a member of the communist party while producing any great revolutionary literature and art. Lu Hsun is regarded as the greatest revolutionary literary figure of People's Republic of China but he is not a member of the communist party. Mao admits in his speech given at the meeting commemorating the first anniversary of the death of Lu Hsun: "Although he did not belong to the communist party organization, his thinking, action, and writing were all Marxianized. He showed more and more youthful energy as his life drew to its end. He fought consistently and incessantly against feudal forces and imperialism" (88). Although Lu Hsun is not the member of the Chinese Communist Party, his literary writings are revolutionary and fully guided by the philosophy of Marxism. His correct "political vision", "his militancy", "his fearlessness" are sharply reflected in his writings which had enlightened the path of Chinese revolution ("Lu Hsun" 88-9).

Mao, while speaking for the revolutionary literature and art, does not reject the legacy of the literature and art belonging to the ancients and the foreigners. Revolutionary literature and art can imitate and assimilate "all the fine artistic and literary legacy" (21) from the ancient and the foreign literature and art, though they

belong to feudal or bourgeois category. Mao suggests: "We must not reject the legacy of the ancients and the foreigners, even though it is feudal or bourgeois, or refuse to learn from them." We should follow them only to make our revolutionary literature and art better, but we should not allow them to replace our creativity and revolutionary content. Mao warns us: "The most sterile and harmful doctrinairism in art and literature consists in uncritically borrowing and copying from our predecessors and foreigners" ("*Talks at*" 22). It would be harmful and disastrous for any revolutionary literature and art if they uncritically imitate and copy the ancient and the foreign feudal or bourgeois literature and art. Revolutionary literature and art should be able to sort out the wheat from the chaff while borrowing from the ancient and the foreign literature and art.

Marxist literary theory is based on the application of the principles of dialectical and historical materialism to literature and art. It is based on the fundamental Marxist viewpoint i.e., social being determines social consciousness. Literature and art belong to the superstructure that is determined by the economic base. But, the literature and art, the superstructure, also influence economic base and in certain conditions, they play the principal and decisive role in bringing the social change. Literature and art should not only be confined to reflecting social reality, their major function is to help in bringing social change. Marxist literary theory is, therefore, determined by Marx's famous quotation: "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it" ("*Theses*" 32). According to Marxist philosophy, the most important problem does not lie in understanding the laws of the objective world, but in applying the knowledge of these laws actively to change the world (Tsetung "*Practice*" 76). This principle is also applied while interpreting literature and art. Eagleton states:

"The originality of Marxist criticism, then, lies not in its historical approach to literature, but in its revolutionary understanding of history itself" ("Marx, Engels and Criticism" 3). Literature and art should truthfully reproduce the historical situation, and more than that, they should play an active role in bringing revolutionary change in society. This basic principle is reflected in the writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Mao on literature and art. Marx and Engels speak for those literature and art that arouse a revolutionary optimism of the new raising classes. Lenin highlights on revolutionary role of literature and art, comparing them with "cogs and screws" of whole Social-Democratic machine and Mao defines revolutionary literature and art, having their own features and mission for social change, different from other reactionary literature and art.

This chapter provides the theoretical foundation of dialectical and historical materialism as the tool to analyze the *Bhagavad Gītā*. It defines the fundamental principles of dialectical and historical materialism to inform and awaken readers how it can be applied to any work of literature and art that inherits the Marxist aesthetic experience.

Chapter Three

Contextualization of the *Bhagavad Gītā*

The dialectical and historical materialist study of the *Bhagavad Gītā* enquires about the social and economic character of the particular time of history in which the text was produced. The Marxist concept of dialectical and historical materialism defines all the mental activities of men, the formation of ideas and conceptions as the production of their material behavior. "The mode of production of material life", writes Marx: "conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness" ("Preface" 137). The mode of production of material life determines the social, political and intellectual life process, which also includes the production of literature and art. The dialectical and historical materialist approach to literature and art goes contrary to the idealist and metaphysical approach that ". . . explain the ancient systems and doctrines in isolation from their social and economic basis" (Damodaran "Introduction" 6). The dialectical and historical materialist approach to study does not analyze any works of literature and art isolating them from their social and economic base. Therefore, while analyzing the *Gītā* through the dialectical and historical materialist approach, it is necessary to contextualize the text in a particular time of history, which creates the ground to produce it. The chapter studies about the development of the text up to the present form and based on the textual evidences, contextualizes the text in the particular stages of Indian history in terms of its production.

3.1 The *Mahābhārata*: An Evolving Epic

The brief history of the epic *Mahābhārata* will be helpful in contextualizing the *Bhagavad Gītā*. The *Mahābhārata*, which consists of 18 books, is the largest epic in the world. The epic consists of 1,00,000 verses which is more than seven times the size of the *Iliad* (760-710 BCE) and *Odyssey* (725-675 BCE) combined (Kuiken 20-1). The epic is based on the Mahābhārata war. Is the Mahābhārata war historical? Shripad Amrit Dange gives the answer in the affirmative based on his historical materialistic analysis of "Hindu mythology and religious social laws and practices":

Several scholars denounced the whole *Mahābhārata* to be a fiction or at best an allegory. It is my firm opinion that the vast store house of Hindu mythology and religious social laws and practices, if read and sifted on the basis of historical materialism, would yield a consistent and rational picture of India's ancient history. ("Contemporary" 19)

The historical materialistic readings of "Hindu mythology and religious social laws and practices" reveal Dange "a consistent and rational picture of India's ancient history" in which he observed the Mahabharata war as being a historical one. If the Mahābhārata war were only a fiction and allegory, all ancient history of India would not have been based on the Bharata war as Dange claims:

All ancient history of India thus can be divided into the pre-Bharata and post-Bharata periods. Every tradition – popular, historical, mythical – agrees that that was an event in history which changed the whole course of development and ushered in a new epoch. Tradition sums it up by saying that the present *Kaliyuga* – *Kali* era – began with the Bharata war. ("Mahābhārata" 155)

This implies that there must have been the Bharata war in the history of ancient India. Dange observed the event as a turning point that marked the "new epoch" or "the present *Kaliyuga* – *Kali* era –" in the history of India.

Kosambi, however, regards the Mahābhārata war as a “fictitious great war” (“Aryans” 92). He came to this conclusion based on the scale of the Mahābhārata war described in the present form of the epic, which, he believes, could not be possible in ancient India:

If a Mahābhārata war had actually been fought on the scale reported, nearly five million fighting men killed each other in an 18-day battle between Delhi and Thanesar; about 130,000 chariots (with their horses), an equal number of elephants and thrice that many riding horses were deployed. This means at least as many camp-followers and attendants as fighters. A host of this size could not be supplied without a total population of 200 millions, which India did not attain till the British period. . . . (“Social” 17)

Kosambi's guess of the Mahābhārata war as a fictitious war based on the scale of war depicted in the present form of the epic is untenable because the epic has come to this size after much later inflations that he admits himself:

The Brāhmin redaction, which is all that now remains, took its present form between 200 B.C. and A.D. 200 as a collection of over 80,000 verses, with a few prose passages. . . . The new editors added every conceivable sort of legend and myth to attract varied audiences. Many episodes that have nothing to do with the war as such appear nevertheless as tales within the tale, narrated by various characters. The inflation was made more natural by adding a frame story. (“Aryans” 92)

This proves that there must have been a Bharata war in ancient India, but it was small in scale and in the course of time, the reciting bards and the editors of the epic increased its scale up to the present form.

The epic *Mahābhārata* came to this present form in the course of its evolution. K. C. Mishra asserts: "It is an undisputed fact that the epic has reached its present form by a gradual process of additions and alterations" ("Introduction" 3). It is agreed that the *Mahābhārata* has undergone three major editions and with each edition the title and subject matter was changed. The first edition of the *Mahābhārata* was very small in size, which was known as '*Jaya*' means Triumph. It only consisted of 8800 *shlokas*. The second edition was known as '*Bharata*' that consisted of 24000 verses. The third edition of the epic came to be known as *Mahābhārata*, which consisted of 96836 *shlokas* or around 1,00,000 verses. The original '*Jaya*' was only a story of the war between the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas. From a purely historical work, '*Bharata*' became a didactic work aiming to teach a right code of social, moral and religious duties. In the last edition of the epic, the smaller floating legends and historical stories that existed independently of the *Bharata* were brought together. It was also made a storehouse of learning and knowledge adding all branches of knowledge, such as politics, geography and archery. This increased the size of the '*Bharata*', making it into *Mahābhārata* (Ambedkar "Literature" 80-1).

There is not enough investigation done on these two inflations of the epic. Less exploration has been done on the inflation of the text from *Jaya* to *Bharata* (Meghnad Desai "Mahābhārata" 42), but Kosambi has investigated the inflation of *Bharata* into *Mahābhārata*:

To be sure it is called the *Mahābhārata* near the beginning (1.1.10), but the name throughout is merely the Bharata. The adjective is explained at the end (1.1.208–9). The greatness is not derived from the extent but from its importance and weight, for it outweighed all the four *Vedas* taken together when the gods and sages put it in the other pan of the balance.

(qtd. in Meghnad Desai "Mahābhārata" 43)

After the epic *Bharata* consisting of 24000 *shlokas* was enlarged with 1,00,000 *shlokas* and named *Mahābhārata*, Kosambi figured it out as more important treatise than the four *Vedas* combined.

It is a difficult task to attribute the authorship of the ancient texts. Devdutt Pattanaik argues: "Everyone worked anonymously and attributed their work to one Vyasa, who was the son of a fisherwoman. He was also credited with reorganizing the lost Vedas. The word 'vyasa' means compiler: compiler of Vedic knowledge, as well as compiler of Puranic stories" ("Before" 20). As a tradition, different ancient authors wrote anonymously and attributed their works to the single author Vyasa. They did it to gain prestige and validity for their works. Otherwise, it would have been impossible for the single author Vyasa to write all ancient literature, which were separated themselves by several centuries. Ambedkar argues:

. . . we have Vyasa as the author of the Mahābhārata, Vyasa as the author of the Purāṇas, Vyasa as the author of Bhagavat Gītā and Vyasa as the author of the Brama Sūtras. It cannot therefore be accepted as true that the same Vyasa is the author of all these works separated as they are by a long span of time extending to several centuries. ("Essays" 194)

It is generally agreed that Vyasa is credited to have composed the original edition *Jaya*, his pupil Vaishampayana composed *Bharata* and Sauti or Suta composed the final edition of the epic *Mahābhārata* (Ambedkar "Literature" 80; K. Mishra "Introduction" 2- 3).

Like the authorship, it is difficult to fix the date of the ancient texts. Pattanaik argues: "Dating of Hindu history is always approximate and speculative, and often a range, as orally transmitted scriptures precede the written works by several centuries, and parts of the written work were composed by various scribes over several generations, in different geographies" ("Before" 13). Ancient texts were not written by the single author at particular time in particular geography. Those texts were not the single author's sole creation; instead, they were collected and written by the different authors. They were composed from the already existing orally transmitted materials, made on some particular events or particular ideas, concepts and philosophies. Therefore, the dates of the ancient events and texts need to be treated as approximate and speculative.

In speculating the date of the epic *Mahābhārata*, it is worth mentioning the date of the Mahābhārata war, on which the epic is based. Dange Claims:

It is after reaching the Gangetic valley that the classical Hindu slave State becomes ripe for birth. It is then that the Mahābhārata war takes place. This has occupied the period of 2,000 B.C. to 1,500 B.C. which is the latest date given for the Mahābhārata war. Some give about 3,000 B.C. as the date of the Mahābhārata war, which, however, is not generally accepted.
(“Gana-Samghas” 136)

Although it is speculative, Dange puts the date of the Mahābhārata war in the period between 2,000 B.C. to 1,500 B.C. It was the time when Aryans destroyed the Indus valley civilization and established the classical Brāhmaṇic slave-state in the Gangetic valley. This gives us a glimpse on the speculation of the date of the epic's composition. The war between the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas was a very ancient event, but that does not mean that composition of the epic should be as old as the event or contemporaneous with the event (Ambedkar "Literature" 81). The professional bards (*suta*), who made the panegyric verses praising the war hero, were the original poets and singers (Kosambi "Aryans" 92). The bards sang the songs for several centuries and the writing process began after that, collecting all those orally transmitted verses. K. Mishra puts the date of the epic between 1,000 B.C. to 500 A.D. ("Introduction" 9), Ambedkar between 400 B.C. to 400 A.D. ("Essays" 193), K. Damodaran between 300 B.C. to 200 A.D. ("Bhagavad" 186), Richard Garbe between 200 B.C. to 200 A.D. (qtd. in Damodaran "Bhagavad" 186) and Kosambi between 200 B.C. to 200 A.D. ("Aryans" 92). It shows the lack of agreement among the scholars concerning the date of the epic *Mahābhārata*.

3.2 The *Bhagavad Gītā*: A Developing Text

The *Bhagavad Gītā* is regarded as a part of the *Bhisma Parva* of the *Mahābhārata*, but the text as the part of the epic invites varying views of scholars. Some view that it is the part of the *Mahābhārata* while others maintain that it is a later interpolation into the epic. Radhakrishnan, for instance, believes that the *Gītā* is the part of the epic: "There are internal references to the BhagavadGītā in the Mahābhārata which clearly indicate that from the time of the composition of the Mahābhārata the Gītā has been looked upon as a genuine part of it" ("Theism" 445-6).

Tilak relates the *Gītā* with the Bhagavata religion and claims that both the *Mahābhārata* and the *Gītā* are complementary to each other as both treatises belonged to the same religion and were written by the same author Vyasa (“Introductory” 2). Surendranath Dasgupta also thinks that the *Gītā* belongs a work of the Bhagavata School and a part of the *Mahābhārata*:

The *Gītā* may have been a work of the Bhagavata school written long before the composition of the *Maha-bharata*, and may have been written on the basis of the Bharata legend, on which the *Maha-bharata* was based. It is not improbable that the *Gītā*, which summarized the older teachings of the Bhagavata school, was incorporated into the *Maha-bharata*, during one of its revisions, by reason of the sacredness that it had attained at the time. (“Philosophy” 552)

Dasgupta considers the *Gītā* more a treatise of the Bhagavata School than the part of the epic. He claims that the already written *Gītā* was re-written later on the basis of the Bharata legend and it was incorporated later into the *Mahābhārata* because of the sacredness of the *Gītā* that includes the older teachings of the Bhagavata School.

There is a long philosophical discussion in the *Gītā* over the imminence of the Great War. It is unlikely to have such a long philosophical discussion at this critical moment of the war. Dange points out: “Certainly the eighteen chapters of the *Geeta* were not produced between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna right in the middle of the field of battle, as the traditional account tell us. . . . The theoretician of the Mahābhārata war compiled that book in some peaceful corner” (“Mahābhārata” 160). Dange doubts on the possibility of the long philosophical discussion between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna that took place in the battlefield but he accepts the text as a part of the *Mahābhārata*

because he does not find the philosophy of the *Gītā* separate from the philosophy of the epic. Besides, he thinks that the *Gītā* theorizes the philosophy of the epic in more systematic manner.

Some scholars, however, do not accept the *Gītā*, in the present form, as being the part of the epic. Kosambi raises the similar question as Dange has raised, concerning the *Gītā's* long philosophical discussion in the battlefield:

What is highly improbable – except to the Brāhmiṇ bent upon getting his *niti* revisions into a popular lay of war – is this most intricate three-hour discourse on moral philosophy, after the battle-conches had blared out in mutual defiance and two vast armies had begun their inexorable movement towards collision. (“Social” 21)

Three-hour long discourse on moral philosophy in the battlefield where two enemy sides were going to collide is most unlikely. This led Kosambi to believe that “. . . the *Gītā* was obviously a new composition”, and it is not the part of the *Mahābhārata*. Unlike Dasgupta, Kosambi does not believe that the *Gītā* was written prior to the *Mahābhārata* and inserted it in the epic later. Kosambi asserts that the *Gītā* was a later composition of the *Brāhmiṇs*, who had inserted it into the heroic lays of the *Mahābhārata* war to influence and incorporate the people of the lower classes into *Brāhmaṇical* fold: “The lower classes were necessary as an audience, and the heroic lays of ancient war drew, them to the recitation. This made the epic a most convenient vehicle for any doctrine which the Brāhmiṇs wanted to insert” (“Social” 21). The size and the content of the *Gītā* supports Kosambi’s claim that it is a *Brāhmaṇical* trick to make the *Gītā* as the part of *Mahābhārata* as the *Brāhmiṇs* found no other context for

the *Gītā* than the popular story of the *Mahābhārata* that had already attracted the majority of the general masses of Indian people.

In discussing the validity of the *Gītā* as a part of the *Mahābhārata*, Meghnad Desai puts forward similar line of argument: "The *Gītā* could have been, to begin with, a short, sharp rebuke for Arjuna to get out of his despondence and fight. Time was urgent and people were impatiently waiting to start fighting. This was no time for a long philosophical treatise" ("Arjuna" 63). There might have been a short *Gītā* which could give a short, sharp motivation to despondent Arjuna, but Meghnad Desai finds it impossible to have such a *Gītā* which contains so long philosophical discussions in the battlefield. This leads him to believe that the *Gītā*, in the present form, could not be the part of the *Mahābhārata*. Ambedkar puts forward the different logic to prove that the *Gītā* is an independent treatise, but not the part of the *Mahābhārata*: "Who set 18 as the sacred number, the *Mahābhārata* or the *Gītā*? If the *Mahābhārata*, then *Gītā* must have been written after the *Mahābhārata*. If it is the *Bhagvat Gītā*, then the *Mahābhārata* must have been written after the *Gītā*. In any case, the two could not have been written at one and the same time" ("Essays" 194). There was a tradition in ancient India to regard certain name and certain number with great sanctity. The name Vyasa and no 18 were connected with the *Mahābhārata*, *Purāṇas* and *Gītā* as well. This implies Ambedkar to say that the *Mahābhārata* and the *Gītā* are independent texts, not representing the same treatise.

The *Gītā*, in the present form, cannot be accepted as the part of the epic because the text's lengthy discussion on moral philosophy in the battlefield does not fit to the context of the war. But, it is agreed that there must have been a short, sharp 'original *Gītā*' which could be regarded as the part of the *Mahābhārata*. Kosambi

admits: "That the older Bharata epic had a shorter but similar *Gītā* is most unlikely" ("Social" 21). This line of enquiry about the *Gītā* gives us a clue that like the epic, the *Gītā* also developed up to the present form through the process of evolution. Garbe and Rudolf Otto, a student of Garbe, hold that there are two parts of the *Gītā*; one original and one added. For Otto, the original *Gītā* contains 118 verses (21-33). For H. Oldenburg the 'original epic' BG ends in BG 2.38 and he regards the rest of the verses as a later interpolation. Oldenburg's original *Gītā* counts only 85 verses (328-38). Hermann Jacobi regards only 70 verses as original one that he collects them from chapter 1, 2 and 18 (323-27). In Von Humboldt's view, the teaching of the *Gītā* contained in chapters 1 to 11 and other 16 verses from BG 18.63 to BG 18.78 and he found the remaining verses more as an appendix to, or repetitions from chapters 1 to 11 (46-7). Morton R. Smith, calculating the ratio of types of stems, compounds and particles to lines, discovered that chapters 1 to 12 with BG 18.55-78 have been written by the first author, chapters 13 to 16 by a second author and the layer BG 17.1-18.54 by a third author (39-46).

Gajanan Shripat Khair, a Maharashtrian scholar, makes the similar line of enquiry into the *Gītā* in his book *Quest for the Original Gītā*. Based on his own textual analysis of the text, Khair concluded that the *Gītā* has three different parts written by at least three authors, identifying an original *Gītā* of 126 verses from most of the chapters 1 to 6. The second part of the text includes portions of chapter 8, chapters 13 to 15, 17 and portions of chapter 18 that comprise altogether 119 verses. The third part of the text is the longest one of the remaining 455 verses from different chapters. He calls this arrangement of the *Gītā* as *Trikala Gītā* (205-39). Mislav Jezic also divides the *Gītā* into different layers. Jezic has found the poetic parts of the *Gītā* are more ancient than the didactic parts and that the *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga* layers precede

the *Vedāntic* elements while the *bhakti* layers come last (125-42). Phulgenda Sinha regards only 84 verses in the first three chapters as original. These 84 verses include the problem of Arjuna in 11 verses in chapter 1, the reply of Kṛṣṇa in 42 verses in chapter 2 and two verses of Arjuna's question about the superiority of knowledge or action and 29 verses giving the answer of his question in chapter 3 (25-30). Angelica Malinar divides the *Gītā* into three different parts according to two historical stages and one as a commentary on earlier chapters. The first part that contains 306 verses belonged to the stage when Kṛṣṇa was not regarded as the highest God, the second part contains 218 verses that belonged to the stage when Kṛṣṇa was promoted to the highest God, propounding a monotheistic doctrine and the remaining verses belong to the part of the commentary (394-415).

Ambedkar divides the text into four parts in terms of its evolution; one original *Gītā* and other three patches included later in the original one. His original *Gītā* includes the heroic tale recited by the bards of how Arjuna was not prepared to fight and how Kṛṣṇa forced him to involve in the battle. The first patch on the original *Gītā* consists the part in which Kṛṣṇa is spoken of as *Ishwara*, the God of the Bhagavat religion. The second patch on the original *Gītā* includes that part which introduces the *Sāṅkhya* and *Vedānta* philosophy as a defense to the doctrines of *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā*. The third patch on the original *Gītā* comprises that part in which Kṛṣṇa is elevated from the position of *Ishwara* to that of *Parmeshwara* ("Essays" 195-6).

Ambedkar divides the *Gītā* according to its stages of development. Meghnad Desai has investigated the question of the original *Gītā* and its later developments based on Khair's *Trikala Gītā*. Although he accepts Khair's proposition of three authors of the *Gītā*, he himself divides the *Gītā* into four *Gītā* s. They are: a) Arjuna's *Gītā* b) the *Veda-Vedānta Gītā* or *Karma Yoga Gītā* c) the *Sāṅkhya Gītā* or *Jñāna Yoga Gītā* and

d) the *Bhakti Yoga Gītā* (“Authorship” 126). Desai divides the *Gītā* according to the themes conveyed by all these four *Gītās*.

There are different opinions regarding the authorship and the date of the text. Radhakrishnan considers the *Gītā* as a genuine part of the *Mahābhārata* but he cannot assign Vyasa as the author of the *Gītā*: "We do not know the name of the author of the *Gītā*. Almost all the books belonging to the early literature of India are anonymous. The authorship of the *Gītā* is attributed to Vyasa, the legendary compiler of the *Mahābhārata*" (“Introductory” 5). He is not even sure for being Vyasa as the author of the *Mahābhārata* because he acknowledges that almost all the ancient books are anonymous. Radhakrishnan assigns the date of the *Gītā* to the fifth century B.C. (“Theism” 447). Tilak considers Vyasa as the author of both the *Mahābhārata* and the *Gītā* (“Introductory” 2). Tilak pointed out about the antiquity of the *Gītā* as he assigns Vyasa as the text's authorship. Dasgupta cannot tell the author of the *Gītā* (443), but he assigns the date of the *Gītā* as pre-Buddhist:

We are thus led to assign to the *Gītā* a very early date, and, since there is no definite evidence to show that it was pos-Buddhistic, and since also the *Gītā* does not contain the slightest reference to anything Buddhistic, I venture to suggest that it is pre-Buddhistic, however unfashionable such a view may appear. An examination of the *Gītā* from the point of view of language also shows that it is archaic and largely un-Paninean. (“Philosophy” 551)

Dasgupta assigns the text as pre-Buddhistic based on his analysis of the language style of the text and whether he found the text has included some Buddhist references or not but he is not convinced for his proposition in the absence of reliable evidences.

Kosambi has taken the *Gītā* as "the Brāhmiṇ redaction" ("Aryans" 92), but he cannot give the proper name of the author of the text. He even could not give the proper date of the composition of the *Gītā* as he says: "The works survive, but the author's date is rarely known. With luck, it may be possible to determine roughly the century to which the writing belonged; often it can only be said that the writer existed" ("Historical" 10). He has given the approximate date of the composition of the *Gītā* i.e., "somewhere between 150-350 A.D." ("Social" 20). Sardesai approaches the *Gītā* as the post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇic* creation (15) and he assigns the date of the text "somewhere between the beginning of the Christian era and 250 A.D." ("Riddle" 6). R. G. Bhandarkar assigns the date of the *Gītā* to 4th Century B.C. and Garbe assigns the original *Gītā* to 200 B.C. and the present form of the *Gītā* to A.D. 200 (qtd. in Radhakrishnan "Theism" 446). Khair, without giving proper names, assigns the three authors for his Trikala *Gītā* and assigns the date of the first part of the *Gītā* to pre-Buddhist, the 2nd part to contemporaneous with the Buddha and the last part to 300 to 200 BCE. Malinar cannot give the proper name of the authors of her three divisions of the *Gītā*, but she assigns the date to the first part between the 3rd and 2nd century BCE, the second part between the 2nd and 1st century BCE and the last part during the early Kusana period (1st century CE). Although Gerard D.C. Kuiken does not mention the authors of "a layered structure" of the *Gītā*, he assigns the date between 400 to 100 BCE, to which he finds chapter 11 was inserted sometime in the first century CE (10).

Ambedkar cannot give the proper names of the authors for his original and other three patches of the *Gītā*. But, he has objection of Vyasa being the author of the *Gītā*: "It is well-known how orthodox writers wishing to hide their identity get better authority for their works by the use of a revered name were in the habit of using

Vyasa as a nom-de-plume or pen name. If the author of the *Gītā* is a Vyasa, he must be a different Vyasa” (194). He believes it was a tradition in ancient India where the orthodox writers used to hide their name and keep a revered name Vyasa for their every writing to acquire authenticity and prestige. Ambedkar accepts the original unphilosophic *Gītā* as the part of the first edition of the *Mahābhārata* called *Jaya* and its date must be the date of the *Jaya* and he assigns the date of the first patch of the *Gītā* “Sometimes later than Megasthenes when Kṛṣṇa was only a tribal God.” He assigns the date of the second patch of the *Gītā* “later than the sūtras of Jaimini and Badarayana”, and the third patch “during the reign of the Gupta Kings” (“Essays” 197). Meghnad Desai cannot give the valid name and the date of the *Gītā* (preface XII), but he ventures to give the proper name of the author of the last segment of the *Gītā*: “Badarayana was the third author who gave a shape to the *Gītā* which has made it a classic of Sanskrit literature as well as a philosophic treatise. His theistic gloss on the Upanishads in the *Brahmasūtra* encourages me to think of him as the author of the bhakti chapters in the *Gītā*” (126). The *Gītā* gives the reference of the *Brahmasūtra* in XIII.4 and Badarayana is known as the author of the *Brahmasūtra* that conveys the similar theistic philosophy of *Upanisads* like in the *Gītā*. This makes Desai conclude that Badarayana must be the author of the final segment of the *Gītā*. Like Ambedkar, Desai admits the original short *Gītā*, which discussed about the war, as the part of the first edition of the *Mahābhārata* and assigns the date of the three other segments to pre-Buddhist, contemporaneous with the Buddha and to the period when *Brāhmanism* was reviving (“Authorship” 133).

It is evident that like the *Mahābhārata*, the *Gītā* too develops in the present form through different additions and alterations. The scholars are not unanimous on the distinct division of the *Gītā* as most of them agreed on the three distinct divisions

of the *Mahābhārata* i.e., *Jaya*, *Bharata*, and *Mahābhārata*. However, most of them agreed that there was one original short, sharp *Gītā* related to the context of the historical Bharata war. There was no room for the long philosophical discussion in that *Gītā* and “. . . it was nothing more than a heroic tale” (Ambedkar "Essays" 195). The original *Gītā* only concerned about the war situation, Arjuna’s refusal to fight in the war to kill his kith and kins and Kṛṣṇa’s short, sharp lesson for Arjuna to participate in the war. The original *Gītā* is the genuine part of the heroic story of the *Mahābhārata*. The finding of Oldenburg corroborates my finding in relation to the division of the original *Gītā*. The original *Gītā* ends in the verse II.38 (83) as the rest of the verses after II.38 are not concentrated on the subject of war. It is true there are some verses even after II.38 that deal with the question of the war but they do not appear genuine and relevant to the war context. For example, in XI.26-34, the *Gītā*, in an attempt to encourage Arjuna to participate in the war, mentions the imaginary deaths of almost all warriors of the battlefield, entering into the voracious mouth of *Birāt* Kṛṣṇa (Gambhirananda's translation 446-52). But, it is childish and not genuine because no war commander, in the battlefield, adopts such a tactic to encourage the warriors. It is only an attempt of the author of the interpolated version of the *Gītā* to connect the monotheistic document discussed in this part of the text with the heroic story of the epic. Similarly, other verses after II.38 are engaged in discussing about the essence of different schools of philosophy such as; *Vedas*, *Upanisads*, *Sāṅkhya*, *Yoga* and *Lokāyata* and some of the verses, though they appear irrelevant and artificial, try to link the essence of the discussed philosophies with the issue of the encouragement of Arjuna to participate in the war. This part of the *Gītā*, i.e., all the verses after II.38, which deviates from the context of the war, was interpolated later into the epic so as to make it popular along with the popularity of the heroic story of

the *Mahābhārata*. This is interpolated *Gītā*, which is mainly concentrated on the discussion of the different schools of philosophy.

Dialectical and historical materialist interpretation of the two *Gītās*, i.e., the original and the interpolated one, reveals that both are the ideological productions of the two different stages of Indian history. The first one is short and only concerns about the war, but it carries the ideologies of the period. The original *Gītā* conveys the ideologies of the period when ancient Indian *Gaṇa-Saṃghas* and gentile societies were disintegrating and the territorial slave states were being strengthened. The interpolated *Gītā* is found to be the post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇical* creation and it carries the ideologies of the period. The post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇs* has made the *Gītā* with its interpolated version as their principal weapon to fight against the Buddhist domination.

3.3 Contextualization of the Original *Gītā*

The context of the original *Gītā*, being the genuine part of the epic *Mahābhārata*, can be studied along with the context of the epic itself. The whole story of the *Mahābhārata* is about ". . . a fratricidal war, arising out of heirship controversy" (K. Mishra "Social" 333). It is based on the historical Bharata war, the war between the princes of the same ruling family of the kingdom of Hastināpura. The war began as a civil war among kins ("Mahābhārata"159). The Bharat war, which took place in ancient India in the period somewhere between "2,000 B.C. to 1,500 B.C." ("Gana-Samghas"136), is regarded as a great historical event in which ". . . the whole old world of the *Gaṇa-Saṃghas*, military democracies, aristocratic *Kula-Saṃghas*, slave states and all were thrown in one boiling cauldron of the war" (159). The Bharat war is considered as a critical juncture in Indian history and it ends the

values, morality, ethics, economy and social relations of the old world of *Gaṇa-Saṃghas* (Dange "Mahābhārata" 159). The original *Gītā*, written with the epic, theorizes values, ethics and morality of the new slave territorial states based on private property and class relations. Dange claims:

Leaving aside for the moment the various schools of philosophy which that book [*Bhagavad Gītā*] discusses, its origin suggests that it gave the final death-blow to the collective *Gaṇa* relations and their ideology and enthroned, almost in a cynical fashion, the supremacy of the morality of private property and class relations. The new relations had become a fact, the word of *Geeta* gave them a theory and tried to silence critics, who may speak from the standpoint of the old *Gaṇa* democracy. ("Mahābhārata"160)

Dange, in the above passage, suggests not the whole portion of the *Gītā*, but "its origin" or the original *Gītā*, the part of the *Mahābhārata*. He takes the original *Gītā* as a product of that historical situation when the old *Gaṇa-Saṃghas* were being disintegrated and the new territorial slave states were becoming strengthened. The original *Gītā* works as a mouthpiece of the new slave territorial states based on private property and class relations.

The *Gaṇa-Saṃgha* is the political organization of the primitive Aryan commune. The *Gaṇa-Saṃgha* is ". . . a Gaṇa (gentile) organization, in which all members were related by blood, in which there was collective labour and property in the very early stages, no division of classes or castes, no state, no king, no exploiters and exploited; it was a self-acting armed organization of the people" (Dange "Gana-Gotra" 62). Engels defines the *Gaṇa-Saṃghas* as ". . . the old gentile associations, built upon and held together by ties of blood." These gentile associations or the *Gaṇa-*

Samghas had their own gentile constitution, which ". . . had grown out of a society that knew no internal antagonisms, and was adapted only for such a society. It had no coercive power except public opinion" ("Origin" 327, 325). The *Gaṇa-Samgha* is also known as tribal society or organization in which the members of the same tribe having the kinship or blood relationship to each other live together in a common territory, speak a common dialect, possess a common culture and it is also known as a political organization of primitive people (K. Mishra "Development" 35).

The definition of the word *Gaṇa-Samgha* or tribal or gentile society reveals that such *Samgha* or society was "democratic and also communistic" because "There was no such thing in it as private or individual ownership of property" (Chattopadhyaya "Samgha" 492). It is generally known such society as the primitive commune, which ". . . produced its wealth on land and cattle in common and shared the product in common consumption" (Dange "Preface" XIV). There is a debate on the question of the existence of the primitive commune in ancient India. Kosambi does not believe in having such a society in India: "Some people even now talk of primitive communism as if it were an ideal state of society in which all shared alike and satisfied their simple needs by co-operation. Carried to its extremes, this is again the legend of the 'Golden Age' in pinkish modern garb" ("Primitive" 30). He takes such a society only as the legend of the 'Golden age'. Dange, however, observes such society in ancient India: ". . . the *Gaṇa* communes of ancient days and the later development of classes and class contradictions among them, leading to changes in their organizational structure and ideological make-up, are a fact of Indian history and not a fiction" ("Gana-Samghas" 145). While studying the ancient Indian history through historical materialism, Dange views that India also came to the present time passing through the different stages of human development. Dange's proposition is

corroborated by literary evidence of the *Mahābhārata*. Bhisma, in the *Sāntiparva*, states: "At that time, i.e. in the *krita yuga*, there was no state, no king, no punishment, no punisher. All men used to protect one another by Dharma" (qtd. in Damodaran "Chatur-Varnya" 57). There is a similarity between the primitive commune and the mythological *krita-yuga* because both of them describe the similar type of ancient Indian societies. They describe the ancient societies as being democratic and communistic. This provides us further proof for the existence of the primitive commune or *Gaṇa-Saṁghas* in ancient India because Hindu mythology, if interpreted through historical materialism, provides a consistent and rational picture of India's ancient history ("Contemporary" 19). The study of myths and gods portrayed in *Vedic* and Epic literature is the only way to reach to the social structure of the ancient Aryan commune life. The myths formed from the social needs of existence reveal us the form and the system of the primitive Aryan communistic societies (Dange "Yajña, Brahman" 57).

In ancient India, when people lived in primitive communistic societies, there was no division of labor because "The backwardness of the instruments of production ruled out any division of labour in the commune at this stage" ("Gana-Gotra" 60). Survival is the primary concern of human beings from the early stages of human history. Man struggles for food, shelter and clothing in order to survive. The condition of the man is determined by the tools, the instruments of production that he develops and, hence, his social relations are determined by the development of productive forces ("Contemporary" 14). In ancient days, the productive forces were not developed so much because ancient men gathered the food necessary for them with the help of the primitive tools like stone tools etc and living in ". . . the primitive commune which was a very small unit" (Dange "Yajña: The Collective" 47)

consumed the food collectively. There was not necessary for the division of labor in those days. But, when the productive forces developed up to a certain level, the division of labor became the necessary condition for the progress of the society. Marx claims: "The social division of labor arises from the exchange between spheres of production that are originally distinct and independent of one another" ("Division" 332). When the different communities having the different means of production and different means of subsistence came into contact, this calls forth the mutual exchange of products and it creates such a condition in which the members belonging formerly to different communities are obliged to involve in the different specialized field of production. The size of the primitive commune increased as the members who came from different communities having their knowledge in the specialized field of production, increased. As a result, the variety of products and work grew which gave birth to the division of labor or *varṇas* in the old Aryan commune of collective labor and consumption ("Mahābhārata" 161). Dange claims that the division of labor, i.e., *varṇas* came into existence in ancient India "before the Mahābhārata war" ("Gana-Samghas"135) when "The domestication of cattle in Asia, including the horse, had created the pre-conditions of the *Varṇa* division of social labour for the Aryan commune" (Dange "Rise" 98).

In the early stages, the *varṇas* in ancient Aryan commune were not the hostile classes. The different tasks divided the ancient people into different *varṇas* but, because of the absence of the private property, they did not have the antagonistic relationship to one another. Dange argues:

The members of a whole commune get differentiated and tied to different tasks and become crystallized into *varṇas*. But this crystallization into *varṇas*

at the early stages, due to the absence of private property and collective ownership of the principal means of production, does not allow the *varṇas* to become hostile classes, as they do later on. ("Rise" 100)

Each *varṇa*, in ancient Aryan commune, worked in their specialized field of production but they did not have property rights and all the products were social and consumed collectively. The *varṇa* division only specialized labor and improved the social production. It was the *varṇa* duty of the *Kṣatriyas* to wage war and annihilate the enemy, but the enemy in *Gaṇa* commune days was always an alien. As there were no class antagonisms inside the primitive Aryan commune, there was no question of the *Kṣatriyas* fighting with their own *Gaṇa* members, who were all kins and blood relations to each other ("Mahābhārata" 161-62). The war among one's own kins, wars between brother and brother were unknown to the ancient commune (Dange "Falling Commune" 114). There were wars and violence but they warred with the members of the different tribes. Sardesai states:

War and violence were there in tribal societies. But that took place between different tribes, not connected with one another by blood. Violence against a member of one's own tribe, i.e., within the periphery of blood relations, was unknown to tribal societies. It was just not done. Such violence violated the sacred principle of *Kula dharma* and was impermissible. ("Riddle" 24)

The principle of *Kuladharmā* of the ancient Aryan societies did not allow the warrior to fight among the members of the same tribe, instead, the principle made them believe that it was the sacred duty of the warrior to protect his kins and *kula* (Neupane 157). This implies that the *Kṣatriyas*, in those days, waged war

not against their kin members but against the alien tribes in order to protect the right of their kins and *kula*.

It is the main problem for Arjuna to participate in the war, where he had to kill his own kith and kins. Arjuna has no objection to killing the outsiders other than his kins, as Gandhi points out: "The first thing to bear in mind is that Arjuna falls into the error of making a distinction between kinsmen and outsiders. Outsiders may be killed even if they are not oppressors, and kinsmen may not be killed even if they are" (qtd. in Meghnad Desai "Arjuna's" 57). Arjuna is a strong supporter of the ancient *Gaṇa-Saṃghas* (Upadhyaya 198) and as a result, he fears for the question of violating the sacred principle of *kuladharmā*, killing his own kinsmen. The *Gītā*, in I.33-4, discloses this difficulty of Arjuna:

yeṣāṃ arthe kāṅkṣitaṃ no rājyaṃ bhogāḥ sukhāni ca

ta ime 'vasthitā yuddhe prāṇāṃstyaktvā dhanāni ca

ācāryāḥ pitarāḥ putrās tathaiṃ ca pitāmahāḥ

mātulāḥ śvaśurāḥ pauṭrāḥ śyālāḥ sambandhinastathā

[Those for whose sake we desire kingdom, enjoyments and pleasures, they stand here in battle, renouncing their lives and riches. Teachers, fathers, sons and also grandfathers; uncles and fathers-in-law, grandsons and brothers-in-law and (other) kinsmen.]. (Radhakrishnan's translation 101)

The above verses of the original *Gītā* clarify the reasons behind Arjuna's objection to involving into the war of the *Mahābhārata*. Arjuna is fully aware of the principle of *kuladharmā*, which led him to believe that he had to fight for securing the kingdom, enjoyments and pleasures for his kinsmen but not for killing them. This feeling of

Arjuna does not contradict with the principle of *kuladharmā* of the ancient Aryan communistic *Gaṇa-Saṃghas*. Arjuna, though he knows the sons of Dhrtarastra are the felons (*ātātāyīnah*) (I.36, 25), denies killing them as they are his relatives (I.37, 25), sees sin in the destruction of the family (I.39, 26) and fears for the destruction of the traditional rites and duties (*kuladharmāh*) caused by the ruin of the family (I.40, Gambhirananda's translation 26). Arjuna, as Gandhi says, has no hesitation in killing the Kauravas if they were outsiders. Arjuna hesitates in involving in the war only because he cannot shake off the morals of the ancient *Gaṇa-Saṃghas*. This shows that Arjuna carries the ideology of the dying *Gaṇa-Saṃghas*.

The division of labor helped to increase the production in tribal societies and "Tribal or *Gaṇa* democracy had allowed the *Varṇas* to develop their spheres of activity. . . ." ("Falling" 109). However, *Gaṇa* rights began to clash with *varṇa* rights when the diversified divided *varṇa* economy developed up to its maturity within the womb of the old undivided *Gaṇa* economy (Dange "Struggle" 128). The new productive forces and the relations of production corresponding to them developed within the old undivided *Gaṇa* economy and they came into existence not as the result of the conscious activities of the *Gaṇa* members. Marx points out: "In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces" ("Preface" 137). The primitive *Gaṇa-Saṃghas* would not have allowed the development of the *varṇas* if they had known that the *varṇas* would ultimately end their own pristine communistic collectivism.

The will of man does not determine the course of history. The motion of history moves forward continuously without interruption. The means and relations of production work as the driving force to move the human history ahead. The human history is, in fact, the history of the successive changes in the means and relations of production (Kosambi "Historical" 10). The history of the primitive Aryan *Gana-Samghas* took its turn when there arose the qualitative change in the means of production thereby creating the new relations of production corresponding to them. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya explains:

The final qualitative change – the full transformation of the pre-class into the class-divided society – could only be the result of the accumulated quantitative changes, the gradual increase in the productivity of human labor which ultimately enabled it to produce more than was necessary for its maintenance, i.e., created the possibility for a few to live on the labour of many, the essential precondition for the division of society into classes. (“Varuna” 555-56)

The surplus production, the result of the qualitative change in the primitive mode of production, was the essential pre-condition for the division of society into two hostile classes because some people lived in their own production while some lived appropriating the surplus production produced by others. Dange observes: “Society had split into those who produce and those who appropriate the surplus of the producers, into exploiters and exploited; and the exploited poor had to give up their old *sātra* rights, their collectivism, to the rule of the exploiters, or fight” (“Falling Commune” 113). The revolution that had taken place in the field of the

productive forces, ultimately, destroyed the primitive Aryan *Gaṇa-Saṃghas* based on collectivism.

The productive forces developed and the human society came to the stage of civilization from barbarism, but exploitation of one class by another became the basis of civilization. Engels examines: "Every advance in production is at the same time a retrogression in the condition of the oppressed class, that is, of the great majority. What is boon for the one is necessarily a bane for the other; each new emancipation of one class always means a new oppression of another class." Civilization provides the opportunities for some people to appropriate the surplus production produced by others and accumulate them to increase the private property, and, as a result, naked greed becomes the principal feature of the civilization. Engels asserts: "Naked greed has been the moving spirit of civilization from the first day of its existence to the present time; wealth, more wealth and wealth again; wealth, not of society, but of this shabby individual was its sole and determining aim" ("Origin" 333). Previously, the people worked for the commune, but after the societies divided into class antagonisms, the accumulation of wealth for the individual has become the sole and determining aim of the people.

The primitive Aryan *Gaṇa-Saṃghas* disintegrated and the *varṇas*, which were not the hostile classes previously and worked for the welfare of the collectivism, turned into the hostile classes and began to work for the individual in accumulating wealth and increasing private property. With the emergence of exchange, trade, private property and money, each private family began to create its private property and rights according to the *varṇa* in which it was situated. The *varṇas* connected with war, exchange and direction of production became the economically dominant *varṇas*.

The poor even in the dominant *varṇas* of the *Brāhma- Kṣatriya*, were thrown out into the toiling *varṇas*, into *Viśhalatva*. It was the transformation of the *varṇas* into classes. *Varṇa* affinity was replaced by class affinity, loyalty, duty and rewards. The upper two *varṇas*, the *Brāhma- Kṣatriya*, became the exploiting class and the other two, *Vaiśhya-Śhūdra*, the exploited ones. The *varṇas*, however, were not hereditary. Except the '*Śhūdra* slave', one could change his *varṇa* or his class from one into another according to his property and status. After the conversion of *varṇas* into classes, *varṇa* or class rights became superior and *Gaṇa* commune rights were mercilessly suppressed (Dange "Mahābhārata" 162).

In the early phase of the Aryan *Gaṇa* commune, there was not the state machinery. In the small *Gaṇa* commune, the whole *Viśha* used to administer its affairs, electing the leader by the whole commune members. After the war developed into profession, the elected leadership of the *Gaṇa* commune assumed the character of more or less permanency and became a kind of aristocracy. But, the power of leadership was derived from election as the elected leader had to take the consecration from the *Gaṇa*. When the private property, hostile *varṇas* and slavery took birth from the womb of the *Gaṇa* commune, the commune transformed into the state (*Rājyam*) and the leadership elected 'to rule' became the king (*Rājans*) (Dange "Gana-Samghas" 140).

The elected leadership of the *Rājyam* or the state, however, had not still become a hereditary monarchy. Engels explains: "The customary election of successors from one family, especially after the introduction of father right, was gradually transformed into hereditary succession, first tolerated, then claimed and finally usurped; the foundation of hereditary royalty and hereditary nobility was laid."

After the introduction of hereditary monarchy, the *Rājyam* or the state, which was initially the administrative organ of the tribes, transformed into the coercive organ, which began to rule and oppress the people of alien tribes as well as their own people.

Engels further explains:

. . . from an organization of tribes for the free administration of their own affairs it became an organization for plundering and oppressing their neighbors; and correspondingly its organs were transformed from instruments of the will of the people into independent organs for ruling and oppressing their own people. ("Origin" 322)

The hereditary monarchy, thus, became a process of shifting *Gaṇa* authority into the territorial authority. With the emergence of class antagonisms and economic inequalities, territorial factors played a greater role in undermining the bond of kinship because new units of people began to emerge living within well-defined areas. Undermining the gentile organization, territorial organization began to emerge and the tribal chieftains transformed into kings of territories (Damodaran "Chatur-Varnya" 60-1).

This was the critical juncture in Indian history when the old communistic *Gaṇa-Samghas* were disintegrating and the new territorial slave states were expanding their empires overthrowing the neighboring tribal kingdoms. Dange writes:

The Rajan families went to war with each other, a thing unheard of and considered most sinful in the old *Gaṇa* democracy. Kamsa of Mathura, Jarasandha of Magadha and the Kauravas of Hastināpura were attempting to become big empire builders, overthrowing all vestiges of the old tribal military democracy and establishing absolute hereditary kingships, amassing wealth,

land and slaves, by a furious war with neighboring tribes and civil war with one's own rival kins. ("Mahābhārata" 157)

The old communistic *Gaṇa-Samghas* developing first a hereditary nobility, later the monarchical slave-states and the clash of these expanding slave states with each other and with the *Gaṇa-Samghas* of the original inhabitants for appropriation of the vast wealth produced by toiling masses, the *Vaiśyas* and *Sūdras*, ultimately, culminated in the Mahābhārata war ("Gana-Samghas" 144; "Mahābhārata" 157). According to native traditions, it is believed that the mythological *Kaliyuga* – *Kali* era began with the Mahābhārata war because it was an age of great social transformations from tribal to class society (Dange "Mahābhārata" 155; K. Mishra "Conclusion" 383). The features of the mythological descriptions of *Kaliyuga* almost resemble the features of the class society based on inequality and exploitation.

The *Mahābhārata* has recorded the events of the war and encoded the ethics, moralities and values of the new territorial slave states. The epic was a *Shāstra* of the slave-owning classes and it was used as an ideological weapon by the slave-owners and the kings of the new territorial slave states. The *Shāstra*, regarded as the laws of coercion or the mode of dictatorship of one class over another, is a product of class society. There was no need of the *Śhāstras* in the old society without class antagonisms but they soon became the ideological weapons of the kings of the slave states (Dange "Sanguinary" 152). The original *Gītā*, the genuine part of the *Mahābhārata*, became an effective ideological weapon of the slave-owners and the kings of the expanding territorial slave states as the epic conveys its ethics and morality of the new age through it. Kṛṣṇa, who stands as an ideologue of the new territorial slave states in the original *Gītā*, motivates Arjuna to participate in the

bloody war by revealing the ethics and morality of the new age. The *Gītā*, in II.31 and 37, has summed up the overall ethics of the new age:

svadharmamapi cāvekṣya na vikampitumarhasi

dharmyāddhi yuddhācchreyo 'nyat kṣatriyasya na vidyate

.....

hato vā prāpsyasi svargam jivā vā bhokṣyase mahīm

tasmāḍuttidṭha kaunteya yuddhāya kṛtaniścayaḥ

[Further, having regard for thine own duty, thou shouldst not falter, there exists no greater good for a ksatriya than a battle enjoined by duty. Either slain thou shalt go to heaven; or victorious thou shalt enjoy the earth. Therefore arise, O son of kunti (Arjuna), resolved on battle.]. (Radhakrishnan's translation 127, 129)

Kṛṣṇa says in plain words in the above verses that it is the duty of a *Kṣatriya* to participate in the bloody war to kill his kins or outsiders for amassing wealth, power and pleasure to an individual. Kṛṣṇa suggests Arjuna for participating in the war not for the welfare of the kin members or of the kin groups. The principal aim of the war, as Kṛṣṇa suggests, would be to win heaven or the pleasure of the earth for the individual warrior, Arjuna. It is the theory and principle of a class society where people run after personal gain, power, pleasure and prosperity because whatever they plunder or earn, it would be their private property.

After the *varṇas* turned into hostile classes, the *Kṣatriya* and *Brāhmiṇ* became the exploiters and the organs of force in exploiting toiling *Viśhas* and slaves. But, they

were not satisfied only in exploiting the people of the exploited classes. The greed for wealth led them to fight each other and the war became the professions of the exploiting *varṇas*. Kṛṣṇa interprets the battle (*yuddham*) as the open gate to heaven (*svarga-dvāram-apāvṛtam*) for *Kṣatriyas* (II.32, 79-80). The *Kṣatriyas* will incur sin (*pāpam-avāpsyasi*) and people will speak of their unending infamy (*avyayām akīrtim*) if they do not fight in the battle (II.33-4, Gambhirananda's translation 80-1). This shows that the *Kṣatriyas* were obliged to fight if they wanted to maintain their status and prestige in the society. This justifies the professionalism of the war for the exploiting class, the *Kṣatriyas*. The new territorial slave states were in competition in amassing wealth, and slaves and expanding their empires. Thus, the greed for wealth, power and prosperity became the ethics and morality of the new age. By revealing this truth of the new age, Kṛṣṇa, in the original *Gītā*, tries to convince the hesitating Arjuna, who still could not shake off the old *Gaṇa* moralities and *dharmas*. According to the *dharma* of the old communistic *Gaṇa-Saṁghas*, Arjuna could not kill his kith and kins but Kṛṣṇa makes him aware that according to the *dharmas* of the class state based on exploitation, he could kill anybody else whether he may be a kin, blood relation, teacher or grandfather, *Gaṇa* member or alien (Dange “Mahābhārata” 162). It is the major teaching of the original *Gītā*. The moral of the original *Gītā* directly contradicts with the morality of the old communistic Aryan *Gaṇa-Saṁghas*. This reveals that the original *Gītā* was set at a time when the struggle of the new expanding territorial slave states to one another and against the old communistic Aryan *Gaṇa-Saṁghas* was acute, and it culminated into the historical Mahābhārata war. It was the turning point in Indian history heralding the end of Aryan primitive communism and the rise of Indian slavery.

3.4 Contextualization of the Interpolated *Gītā*

The interpolated *Gītā*, being a later addition into the epic, has a different context and it is the creation of post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism*. Kosambi claims: "Most of the later additions [of the *Mahābhārata*] are religious in character . . . The Brāhmiṇs thereby regained an important position in society after Buddhism had deflated their ancient prestige. The most brilliant of these additions is the *Bhagavad Gītā*" ("Aryans" 93). Kosambi regards the *Bhagavad Gītā* as the epic's latter addition and the creation of the post-Vedic *Brāhmaṇism*. The post-Vedic *Brāhmaṇism* can also be called the post-Buddhist or the neo-*Brāhmaṇism* because the *Brāhmaṇism* assumed the new or post-Vedic character when they regained power in society after defeating Buddhism in India. The post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism*, which came into existence after the decline of Buddhism in India, modified the old ritual-based Vedic religion and custom in the light of new religious movements of Buddhism and Jainism (K. Mishra "Social" 363). Radhakrishnan, though he assigns the date of the *Gītā* to "the fifth century BC" ("Theism" 447), regards the text as a later interpolation into the *Mahābhārata*:

What was originally a heroic poem becomes a Brāhmaṇical work, and is transformed into a theistic treatise in which Visnu or Siva is elevated to the rank of the Supreme. The *BhagavadGītā*, perhaps, belongs to this stage, though as a rule the philosophical portions of the *Mahābhārata* should be assigned to the last stage. ("Epic" 406)

Radhakrishnan's assigned date of the *Gītā* and his description of the nature of the text appear contradictory. He assigns the date of the *Gītā* as pre-Buddhist and gives its description as post-Buddhist. It was not possible for the *Brāhmiṇs* to transform the

heroic poem into a *Brāhmaṇical* work when there was still Buddhist domination in India. The *Brāhmiṇs* could do it only after they gained power defeating Buddhism. The post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* elevated Visnu, a minor god in the *Ṛgveda* and the Dravidian god Siva to the rank of the Supreme God (K. Mishra "Social" 370, 372-73). Radhakrishnan's assigned date suits to the original *Gītā* but not to the interpolated one. Both Kosambi and Radhakrishnan do not see the division in the text and regard the whole portion of the *Gītā* as the creation of the same time and context. However, the *Gītā* is the developing text, and we cannot understand the essence of the interpolated *Gītā* if we mix it with the original one. So, not the whole portion, but only the interpolated *Gītā* can be regarded as a literary production of the post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* when the *Vedic Brāhmaṇism* was fully revived defeating Buddhism and it adopted non-ritual *bhakti*-based monotheistic religion.

The general survey of the birth, rise and fall of Buddhism in ancient India is required in contextualizing the interpolated *Gītā*. Was there the objective condition prevailed for the birth and rise of Buddhism in ancient India where the *Vedic-Brāhmaṇism* had gained a dominant position for centuries? The *Vedic-Brāhmaṇism* was the sole religion of the early Aryan slave-society in India. Damodaran points out:

The religion of the Aryans of the early slave society came to be known as Brāhminism. It took shape in the first half of the first millennium B.C., i.e., between the tenth and the seventh centuries B.C., and was elaborated step by step in the priestly literature of the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas, Upanishads, Mahābhārata etc. ("Chatur-Varnya" 67-8)

The religion of the *Vedic-Brāhmaṇism* was widespread among the people of India before the advent of Buddhism. The *Brāhmiṇs*, the people of the privileged class, had

strong influence in society through the ideological weapons of the priestly literature like *Vedas*, *Brāhmaṇas*, *Āraṇyakas* and the earlier *Upanishads* and the early version of the *Mahābhārata*. The *Brāhmiṇs* were called *Bhudevās* i.e., gods on the earth and the order of the world, in the final analysis, depended not on gods but on the *Brāhmaṇas* ("Social" 368-69). The monarch of the expanding slave states, though they were powerful, also depended on the *Brāhmiṇs* for ritual rites and sacrifices (K. Mishra "Conclusion" 384). After the division of labor in the Aryan *Gaṇa-Saṃghas* transformed into the hostile classes, the *Brāhmiṇs* and *Kṣatriyas* only enjoyed the rights and privileges while the condition of the majority of the people belonging to the producing classes i.e., *Vaiśyas* and *Sūdras* was deteriorating as ". . . [they were] to be preyed upon by the *Ksatriya* nobles with theological support from the *Brāhmiṇ* . . ." (Kosambi "Stages" 36). The gap between the haves and have-nots was increasing and the *Vedic-Brāhmanic* religion became the ideological tool for widening the gap instead of minimizing it. This created the objective ground for the birth of Buddhism as the new religion emerged on the basic principle of ending up human miseries.

The development of the productive forces changed the relations of the production. As the productive forces developed, they destroyed the collectivism of the ancient Aryan primitive *Gaṇa-Saṃghas* and gave birth to the classes, private property and the state. The increased production in all branches demanded the additional labor power, and the captives of war who were made slaves, fulfilled it. This divided the human society into masters and slaves (319). The exploitation of one class by another began with the emergence of slavery. Engels writes: "Every advance in production is at the same time a retrogression in the condition of the oppressed class, that is, of the great majority. What is boon for the one is necessarily a bane for the other; each new

emancipation of one class always means a new oppression of another class" ("Origin" 333). The advance in productive forces helped the Aryan slave states to expand their empires in India. Cheap metals and plentiful human labour power were necessary to open up the forested Gangetic plain and it became possible when iron was discovered and the large numbers of captives provided by the war were turned into slaves. Tribal rules and the protection of tribes did not help the expanding slave states. Magadha (originally a tribe) became the dominant slave state in India because India's greatest resources of copper and iron were found to the south-east of Rajgir (Kosambi "Stages" 37). Jungles and forests of the Gangetic valley were cleared with the help of the newly discovered iron tools and it caused improvement in agriculture, trade and transport on a rapid scale. Money economy, towns, cities, and population increased with the growing means of subsistence. The new economy demanded powerful centralized territorial states and the Magadha fulfilled the demand of the time. All types of taxes were introduced and paid civil administration was created. Swords, spears and shields began to replace bows, arrows and the mace and standing armies were formed. The cultural and political center of India shifted from Mathura – Hastināpura – Indraprastha area to Rajagriha and Pataliputra (Patna in modern Bihar) (Sardesai "Riddle" 9).

The transition of the tribal to the territorial slave states brought the changes in the administrative machinery. The tribal administration designed to serve their members transformed into an organization of plundering and oppressing neighbors and their own people. Engels points out:

. . . from an organization of tribes for the free administration of their own affairs it became an organization for plundering and oppressing their

neighbors; and correspondingly its organs were transformed from instruments of the will of the people into independent organs for ruling and oppressing their own people. (“Origin” 322)

The tribal organization transformed into its opposite when it became state organization because the state organization did not look after the welfare of the tribal members, instead, it began to plunder and oppress its neighbors and its own people to feed the state administration. The standing army and the paid civil administration of the state could not be maintained without the regular taxes and extensive revenues. This caused the horror of taxation among the people of a slave state. R. Fick gives an example of the horror of taxation among the people of ancient India lived in a slave state:

Oppressed with taxes (*balipitita*) the inhabitants lived in the forest like beasts with their wives and children; where there was once a village, there no village stood any more. The men could not, for fear of the King’s people, live in their houses; they surrounded their houses with hedges and went after sunrise to the forest. In the day the King’s people (*rajapurisa*) plundered, at night the thieves. (qtd. in Chattopadhyaya “Samgha” 476-77)

The people suffered by the loot and plundering of the Kings and thieves, and they were equally exploited by the new institutions, stabilized with the help of the state-powers. *Jatakas* and *Arthaśāstra* provide the plenty of materials in which we find the descriptions about how a strong and influential new merchant class, emerged during the period, exploited the common people by a new set of institutions like mortgage, interest and usury (qtd. in Chattopadhyaya “Samgha” 477). The inhuman suffering of

the people created by the horror of taxation and the newly established institutions of the time was one of the causes behind the birth and success of early Buddhism.

The suffering of the people created by taxation and such newly institutions was less horrible in front of the suffering of the people created by the horror of the constant wars between slave states and their wars against the tribal *Gaṇa-Saṃghas*. It was the time of the Buddha and he had to witness all of these horrors. Chattopadhyaya explains: “Thus the age of the Buddha was the time when the organization of state was beginning to develop within the womb of the tribal organizations, and in the case of the Magadhas and the Kosalas, they had already emerged as such on the ruins of the tribal organizations” (471). In addition to the development of Magadha slave state now to the South of Bihar, another equally powerful slave state Kosalas had developed to the West of Magadha and the north of the Kasis as far as the Himalayas and on the northern borders, the Sakyas settled. By the sixth century B.C., these two slave states, the Magadha and Kosala had already developed out of tribal organizations into two rival Kingdoms (470). The Buddha belonged to the Sakya Kingdom, still a tribal state (471) and he saw with his own eyes how Kosalas attacked the Sakyas and massacred them, including their women and children (473- 74). Buddha had witnessed how the Magadhas attacked ruthlessly against the confederacy of the Vajjians (“Samgha” 473). The Buddha could not stop these disasters created by the expanding slave states of his time and he simply witnessed the massacre of the people of the neighboring kingdoms as well as of his own people.

The Buddha witnessed how human greed and insatiable desire, born with class society and private property, increased in such a scale that they destroyed the happiness of the common people and the rulers too. Buddha saw how his friend

Pasenadi, the King of Kosala, was treacherously betrayed by his son Vidudabha and how his another friend, Bimbisara, the King of Magdha, was imprisoned and starved to death by his son Ajatasattu (479). The human cruelties born out of greed and insatiable desire do not have their limitation that the usurpation of the throne by the successive heirs continued in Magadha even after the Buddha's death.

Chattopadhyaya writes:

And if the Buddha had lived only a little longer he could have also seen how the same process, the same expression of insatiable greed for riches and power continued to characterize the political history of the age: Ajatasattu was killed by his son Udayabhadda; Udayabhadda was killed by his son Anuruddhaka; Anuruddhaka was killed by his own son Munda; Munda was killed by his son Nagadasaka. ("Samgha" 479)

It was the concrete material ground that made the Buddha think about the causes behind human sufferings, and their solutions – the concept formed by him and the same concept later developed into Buddhism.

The *Vedic-Brāhmaṇism* gave theological support for the constant warfare during the Buddha's time. Every warfare “. . . preceded by Vedic *yajña* fire sacrifice" ("From Tribe" 101) which used to be organized mainly for the "success in war" (Kosambi "Early Stages" 82). The *Vedic yajña* provided the religious license for those bloody wars and the *yajña* itself became one of the main causes of people's sufferings and the chief impediments for the development of productive forces in the days of the Buddha. Kosambi points out:

Cattle and other animals were requisitioned in increasing number for the *yajña* without payment. This is shown by Pali stories of royal fire-sacrifices. The

strain upon regular agriculture was intolerable. Only a few Brāhmiṇ priests (such as those to whom the sixth century monarchs like Pasenadi and Bimbisara gave away whole villages) gained permanently. Thus, it is natural that all the new sects denied flatly the validity of any ritual, especially of Vedic ritual. (“From Tribe” 101-02)

The Vedic *yajña* had become “more and more complicated and extravagant” (K. Mishra “Social” 366), because instead of the moderate fees of *Vedic* times, the whole villages were given to some of the fortunate *Brāhmaṇas* in fees for their services at the sacrifice. In early Pali literature there is a description of King Pasenadi’s great *yajña* in which five hundred bulls, five hundred male calves, five hundred female calves, five hundred goats and five hundred rams were tied to sacrificial posts for killing and the King’s slaves, messengers, workmen were busy on their duties shedding tears, in fear of punishment. It was clear that those cattle were taken for sacrifice from the surrounding countryside without compensation (Kosambi “Early Stages” 82; Ambedkar “Reformers” 22). This shows how sacrifices were growing in complexity and magnitude and how it became uneconomic and the strain upon growth of agriculture of the time. It created the doubt in people’s mind on the validity and usefulness of the *Vedic* rituals including the *yajña*. The increasing numbers of people were in search of the alternative of the *Vedic* religion and the early Buddhism became their alternative.

The *Vedic yajña*, fire sacrifice had become the curse in the Buddha’s time for the majority of producing population but the *Brāhmaṇa* class had gained high prestige and power through it “by gaining the sole monopoly over sacred rites” (K. Mishra “Social” 366). It was the main profession of the *Brāhmaṇas* as they

“. . . lived by sacrificial fees” (Kosambi "Early Stages" 82). The *Vedic yajña*, which was the doomsday for the innocent cattle and the majority of toiling people, was the great festival for the minority of the ruling classes including the *Brāhmaṇas*.

Ambedkar illustrates:

The Yadna [*yajña*] besides involving a terrible carnage was really a kind of carnival. Besides roast meat there was drink. The *Brāhmiṇs* had soma as well as sura. The others had sura in abundance. Almost every Yadna was followed by gambling and what is most extraordinary is that, side by side there went on also sexual intercourse in the open. Yadna had become debauchery and there was no religion left in it. (“Reformers” 22-3)

There was no restriction for the *Vedic Brāhmiṇs* eating the meat of different animals and they “. . . had fattened upon a steady diet of sacrificed beef” (Kosambi "From Tribe" 102). Gambling and drinking had become widespread among the Aryan *Brāhmiṇs* and they had become sexually immoral. The Aryan civilization was degraded socially and spiritually in pre-Buddhist days (Ambedkar “Ancient Regime” 4-5). The Buddha started the mission of his life on this material ground.

The theoretical basis of Buddhism depends upon two formulas that the Buddha evolved and they are the Four Noble Truths (*ārya-satyas*) and the doctrine of the dependent origination of things (*pratītya-samutpāda*). The Four Noble Truths are: "(1) everything was suffering, (2) suffering had a cause, (3) suffering could be extinguished, and (4) there was a path leading to this extinction” (“Buddha” 124). Did the Buddha evolve his two basic truths from within because of his seven days penance at the foot of the *bodhi-tree* or he evolved them through his concrete experiences of his life? The concrete material conditions of his time proved that the Buddha’s

discovery about his two basic truths was not produced only from his pure thought disconnected from reality, but it was the product of his time. Chattopadhyaya verifies:

. . . the fact that everything about these *ārya-satyas* was concerned with the tyranny of suffering, and further, that these truths were formulated at a critical period of history which actually witnessed the tyranny of the state-power and private property and the fact that people around him were actually floating on the ocean of misery, shows that the real motive force that impelled the Buddha to formulate these truths did not arise from pure thought. He saw the power of wealth and the insatiable greed it created. He saw his great friend King Bimbisara starved to death by prince Ajatasattu. He saw the throne of Kosala washed by the blood of his own kinsmen. (“Samgha” 501)

The sufferings of the people he saw through his naked eyes impelled the Buddha to formulate his theory, which possessed no special aims other than to end up those human sufferings from the face of the world.

The doctrine of *pratītya-samutpāda* exposes “the chain of causes and effects” (499) after every real thing and event. As the doctrine believes that every real thing or event has a cause behind it, the doctrine does not presuppose the existence of external power i.e., God behind the creation of the world. Therefore, the God or the creator does not find a place in the Buddhist doctrine of *pratītya-samutpāda* (482) and “. . . the Buddha did not himself have any belief in God” (495). Although a primitive and naïve one, the Buddhist doctrine of *pratītya-samutpāda* expresses an attitude of stark materialism (482). However, the Buddha developed a popular religion, which could become the alternative of the Aryan's *Brāhmaṇic* religion. The Buddha developed a religion without God (Chattopadhyaya “Samgha” 497). It is considered

that the word 'religion' presupposes the belief in God but how could the Buddha, denying the existence of God, begin such a powerful religious movement?

The answer can be found in the definition of religion given by Marx:

Man makes religion, religion does not make man. . . . But man is no abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is the world of Man – state, society. This state and this society produce religion, which is an inverted consciousness of the world, because they are an inverted world. . . . Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people. (“Contribution” 7)

God is not required to form a religion because the religion is itself a product of human beings and society. The religion gives the illusory happiness to the oppressed section of the people. It gives an anesthetic effect to them as the opium gives so that they can forget their pain and sufferings for a while.

The pain and sufferings of the people created by the expanding slave states and resultant state mechanisms could not be easily solved even if the Buddha wanted to solve them. There was no possibility to understand the real causes of human sufferings and no real way out to suggest for the real remedy in Buddha's time. So, the Buddha felt only possible solution was to provide the sufferers the mental intoxicants or the illusory happiness. Chattopadhyaya evaluates:

Historically speaking, what was left for him was to transform the *real* problem into an *ideal* one, to interpret the objective phenomenon in subjective terms; in short, to produce 'a reversed world-consciousness'. The result was the transformation of the mass misery of the age into a metaphysics of misery. Early Buddhism, thus, became the most perfect *illusion of the epoch*. (500)

Being unable to give the proper remedy for the sufferings of the people of his time, the Buddha had only created the right type of illusion for the epoch. Buddhism was "the spirit of a spiritless situation" ("Samgha" 498).

The Buddha developed the concept of *Samghas*, which was a "classless societies within the bosom of the class society" (503), to create ideal societies free from every kind of human exploitation. The Buddha was fully aware that all human sufferings resulted from the human greed born with private property and the state (493). He had the nostalgia of the past tribal *Gaṇa-Samghas* based on the collectivism. The Buddha had taken the lost collective life of the past as the golden age and it was a life he had in mind when he spoke of the Kingdom of Truth and Righteousness (482-83). Therefore, the Buddha modeled his *Samghas* on the basic principles of the lost communistic *Gaṇa-Samghas*. Chattopadhyaya believes:

. . . the Buddha was modelling his *samghas* on the basic principles of the tribal society and was advising the brethren of his order to mould their lives according to these principles. . . . In building up his own *samghas*, the Buddha could provide the people of his times with the illusion of a lost reality, of the dying tribal collective. (485)

The Buddhist *Samghas* had an ultra-democratic constitution, which the Buddha had imitated from the tribal democracies (489). According to their constitution, the members of the *Samghas*— the *bhikkhus*— lived a perfect communistic and detached life ("Samgha" 485). All members of the *Samghas* enjoyed "full equality and democracy" ("Buddha" 127) and they were not allowed to be involved in the worldly affairs because they had to transform their "personality on the lines of the simple moral grandeur of the pre-class tribal life" ("Samgha" 485).

The Buddha carried on a great campaign against the three things of *Vedic-Brāhmaṇism* that he had observed as the causes of human sufferings. In the *Ambattha Sutta* the Buddha denounced the *Varṇa*-system, in the *Kutadanta Sutta* he denounced the *yajña* as a form of religion and in the *Tevijja Sutta* he repudiated the authority of the *Vedas* (Chattopadhyaya “Samgha” 505; Ambedkar “Reformers” 34, 49).

The Buddha’s attitude to the injustices of the *Varṇa*-system or to the barrenness of the *Brāhmaṇical* rituals was responsible for the popularity of early Buddhism (Chattopadhyaya “Samgha” 467). Kosambi demonstrates:

Buddhist scriptures work out the duties of a householder and peasant regardless of caste, wealth, profession – and with no attention whatever to ritual. They argue against Brāhmaṇ pretensions and specialized ritual with consummate skill but in the simplest words. Caste might exist as a social distinctions; it had no permanence, no inner justification. Nor did ritual, which was irrelevant and unnecessary for the good life. (“From Tribe” 113)

Buddhism treated all the people belonging to different *varṇa*, class and profession on an equal basis, and it exposed the *Brāhmaṇic* pretensions and the irrelevancy of the *Brāhmaṇic* rituals. So, Buddhism, as a religion, became established in India displacing the ancient *Vedic-Brāhmaṇic* religion. Moreover, Buddhism provided the new philosophy for the people of his age that gave them the illusory happiness when they were struggling against the hardships of their life.

Buddhism became the alternative religion of the majority of toiling masses in the Buddha’s time and it also became fruitful to the monarchs and the merchants for the expansion of their empires and the development of their trade. Damodaran writes:

It cannot, however, be denied that Buddhism with its emphasis on moral purity, non- violence, kindness and charity had a humanizing effect on the kings and the slave owners. Even for the expansion and maintenance of a vast slave-owning empire and for the development of trade, a more generous approach to the slaves had become a necessity. (“Early Buddhism” 120)

According to the *Arthasāstra* schedule, the maintenance of a cash paid huge bureaucracy, large standing army had become impossible because of difficult communications and a kind, and generous method other than a naked force to the toiling people and slaves had to be discovered by 250 B.C. to keep the empire together. So, the new religion, Buddhism, became successful to be the alternative for the emperors too (qtd. in Kosambi “Stages” 37). As a result, the monarchs and the merchants patronized and encouraged Buddhism from its early days and Buddhism helped in the expansion of the Magadha Empire as well as the Magadha trade (“Samgha” 466). Asoka, the emperor of the Magadha, converted himself into Buddhism and “. . . by the third century B.C. Buddhism became the state religion of the greatest Indian empire” (Chattopadhyaya “Later Schools” 138). As a religion, Buddhism had occupied “a central place in any serious treatment of Indian civilization” (Kosambi “From Tribe” 97).

At the later phases of Buddhism, it, however, lost its charm and enthusiasm after it deviated from its original philosophy, culminating the whole movement into the world-denying idealistic outlook, which went against science and adopted various superstitions. The reason behind the degeneration of Buddhism could be found on the degeneration of the Buddhist *Samghas*. The Buddhist *Samghas* began to be subsisted wholly on the gifts of the monarchs and merchants and this led the philosopher-monks

to come out of the labor of production. Their aloofness from material or manual labor deprived them of a living contact with the world and natural laws of the world, which provided them the material ground for producing the world-denying idealist philosophy (Chattopadhyaya “Later Schools” 139). The division of the mental and manual labor is one of the pre-conditions for the birth of idealism.

Marx and Engels assert:

Division of labor only becomes truly such from the moment when a division of a material and mental labor appears. From this moment onwards consciousness *can* really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice, that it *really* represents something without representing something real; from now on consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world and to proceed to the formation of “pure” theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc. (“Feuerbach” 33)

The mental laborers, after separating themselves from the manual labor process, think that the human consciousness is an independent entity having no relationship with the outside world and they begin to formulate the idealist “pure” theory and philosophy. This theory was applied to the philosopher monks of the Buddhist *Samghas*. They diverted themselves from the original materialistic Buddhist philosophy and began to propound the idealist "pure" theory and philosophy behind the banner of Buddhism.

It was noticed with the later schools of Buddhism. Two schools of later Buddhism known as the Madhyamika and the Yogacara, the offshoots of a broad theological movement, Mahayana, openly vindicated the idealistic outlook in Buddhism and in comparison to Hinayana, Mahayana represented a complete departure from the spirit of original Buddhism (150- 51). The core of the

Madhyamika philosophy was substantially the same as that of the *Upanisadic* idealists and the Madhyamika's philosophy was called *sunya-vāda*, the doctrine of the void. The original doctrine of *pratītya-samutpāda*, which stressed that to be a real thing it should have a cause, was twisted to mean that everything that had a cause was bound to be unreal (154-55). The Buddha, who himself did not believe in the existence of God, was made at first “a supernatural or super mundane being, a veritable deity” and finally “the God” by the later Mahayana Buddhists (Chattopadhyaya “Later Schools” 141). This was a complete departure from the early, original materialistic Buddhism. After the *bhikkhus* of the Buddhist *Samghas* separated themselves from the manual labor, they were transformed into the aristocracy, the gap between the *bhikkhus* and the majority of toiling masses increased, and people began to find no difference between the *bhikkhus* and the *Vedic-Brāhmiṇs*. No *bhikkhus* of the Buddhist *Samghas* could become the alternative of the Buddha, who thought and did so much to alleviate the worldly human sufferings. This led to create a belief in people's mind that the Buddha was not an ordinary human being, but he possessed the supernatural power and he was, in fact, the incarnation of God himself – the belief that the Mahayanists wanted to implant in people's mind. Buddhism, thus, left nothing more than the ultimate hope on the Buddha alone – the similar hope the *Brāhmiṇs* made the people to keep on *Brahman* or God – for the people to find the real remedy for their practical worldly sufferings. This kept the Buddhist religion on the equal footing of the *Vedic-Brāhmaṇic* religion and Buddhism could not maintain its older prestige of being the alternative religion for the majority of toiling Indian people.

Buddhism, as a religion, was paralyzed and could not function any more in changing circumstances. As a religion, the ancient *Vedic-Brāhmaṇism*, in its unaltered

form, also could not come forward to meet the demand of the time because it had already been exposed and lost its usefulness among the majority of the Indian people. The old religions faded out and the new was yet to be born. In such a circumstance, a renovated ancient *Vedic Brāhmaṇic* religion, which is later known as Hinduism, came into existence to fulfill the religious requirement of the people of the time.

Damodaran claims:

Hinduism, as distinct from ancient Brāhminism, arose in this period as the religion of feudalism *par excellence*. Hinduism emerged as the result of a struggle against declining Buddhism and the progressive materialist content of the Sāṅkhya -Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophies, and also as the result of a rationalization and assimilation of the deep-rooted superstitions and ritualism which had prevailed all along among the people. (204)

Hinduism did not exist in the *Vedic* period and the term "Hindu" was only the product of the Middle ages. There was no mention of the term in the older philosophical discussions and it only came into vogue when the Persians used it for the first time while referring to the inhabitants of the Indus (Sindhu) valley of those times as Hindus in the eighth century A.D. The term 'Hindu' was made from the name of the river 'Sindhu' when it was misspelled. Later, it began to be used the term "Hindu religion" or "Hinduism", frequently, to make a distinction from the Muslims after the Muslim invasion in India ("Feudalism" 205). Though the term "Hinduism" came later, it referred the renovated ancient *Vedic-Brāhmaṇic* religion, and therefore, it could also be called as the post-*Vedic Brāhmaṇism*, the neo-*Brāhmaṇism*, or the post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* (henceforth post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism*) because the post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇis* renovated the ancient *Vedic-Brāhmaṇic* religion unifying the

diverse ideas and beliefs prevalent at the time. The post-Buddhist *Brāhmiṇs* skillfully blended the ancient *Brāhmaṇical* doctrines and their rituals with the pre-Aryan tribal traditions of animism and totemism and to meet the challenge of Buddhism, they modified the *Vedic-Brāhmaṇic* religion in the light of the progressive materialist content of Buddhism and the Sāṅkhya -Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophies. The post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* appeared as a synthesis or conglomeration of diverse traditions, beliefs and ideas, though, it put the *Vedic-Upanisadic-Brāhmaṇic* idealism and its reactionary contents at the top. The post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* could do this all only after their revivalism and their revival became possible in Buddhist India after the fall of Mauryan Empire. The leadership of the *Brāhmaṇic* revolution against the established Buddhist religion was attributed to "the founder of the Sunga dynasty" (R. Mishra 50), Pushyamitra Sunga (Ambedkar "Literature" 79; Damodaran "Chatur-Varna" 65).

In the favorable environment created by the *Brāhmaṇic* revolution under the leadership of Pushyamitra Sunga, the post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* produced many priestly literatures like *Sūtras* and *Purāṇas* (Ambedkar "Literature" 87; Kosambi "Primitive" 49, 51). It is believed that the *Brāhmaṇic Dharmaśāstra*, ". . . the *Manu Smṛiti* was composed at the command of Pushyamitra himself. . . ." (Ambedkar "Triumph" 107). The post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* used all these literature as their ideological weapons to fight against Buddhism and strengthen their *Brāhmaṇic* religion. The textual evidences of the *Bhagavad Gītā* reveal that the interpolated part of the *Gītā* too was the creation of the post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism*.

The post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* revived the *Vedic* ritual i.e., *yajña* but it was "not exclusively the *Vedic* type" ("Towards" 168). The *Vedic* sacrifices were

extremely rare (38) and the nature of sacrifices was changed. The *Vedic* killing *Brāhmiṇs* had been changed into “non-killing *Brāhmiṇs*” (“Stages” 38) and they had begun to “. . . place beef-eating on the same level as cannibalism. . .” (“From Tribe” 102). The *Vedic yajña* rites were supreme in theory and neglected in practice. Some kings, occasionally, performed the horse sacrifice (*asvamedha*) but it also could not become the reliable source of income for the *Brāhmiṇ* priests (Kosambi “Towards” 168). Corn victims began to replace the animals slaughtered and gift to *Brāhmiṇ* priests was proclaimed as equal to the performance of sacrifice (K. Mishra “Social” 369). The bloody *Vedic* sacrifices had lost their charm and luster and other different types of sacrifices had been given equal importance. The *Gītā*, in IV.23-33, explains this theme of the altered nature and importance of sacrifices. The verse IV.33 recommends:

śreyān dravyamayād yajñāj jñānayajñaḥ parantapa

sarvaṁ karmākhilam partha jñāne parisamāpyate

(O destroyer of enemies, knowledge considered as a sacrifice is greater than sacrifices requiring materials. O son of Prtha, all actions in their totality culminate in knowledge.). (221)

The above verse of the *Gītā* has dismissed the importance of the sacrifice of the material objects (*dravya- mayād yajñāj*) not to mention the animals slaughtered and regarded such a sacrifice as an inferior to the wisdom or knowledge considered as a sacrifice (*jñāna-yajñaḥ*) (Gambhirananda's translation 221-22). This gives the clear indication that the verse could not have been the ideological production of the pre-Buddhist *Vedic-Brāhmaṇism* that considered sacrifice, particularly the animal

sacrifice, as everything for the fulfillment of human desire. The pre-Buddhist *Vedic-Brāhmaṇism* did not imagine any bloodless sacrifices or no sacrifices at all.

The Post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* revived the *Varṇa*-system of the *Vedic-Brāhmaṇism* and made it hereditary. There were only *varṇas* in the *Vedic-Brāhmaṇism* and no castes (Damodaran “Feudalism” 206). *Varṇa* was not hereditary either in status or occupation (117) and the post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* “. . . converted the *Varṇa* into caste” (109) “. . . in which status and occupation are hereditary and descend from father to son” (Ambedkar “Triumph” 117). The *Puruṣa Sūkta* hymn of the *Ṛgveda* introduces *Cāturvarṇāḥ* or the four *Varṇa*-system for the first time (Griffith's translation 21) but it was based on the division of labor in society (Damodaran "Chatur-Varnya" 58). This implies that *Ṛgvedic Cāturvarṇāḥ* was not hereditary. The *Gītā*, in IV.13, introduces *Cāturvarṇāḥ* (185-86) but it is hereditary. In IX.32, the *Gītā* speaks about the hereditary status of *Vaiśyas* and *Sūdras*. The verse describes *Vaiśyas* (*Vaiśyah*) and *Sūdras* (*sūdraḥ*) as the people who are born of sin (*pāpa-yonayaḥ syuḥ*) (396-97). The verse defiles the status of both *Vaiśyas* and *Sūdras*, the overwhelming majority of working class people, by their very birth. This is the essence of the hereditary caste-system. The people acquire their respective castes not according to their qualities and actions but by their very birth from their fathers. The *Gītā*, in III.35, recommends us for the strict implication of the prescribed hereditary based caste duties (*sva-dharmaḥ*). The verse does not allow people to exchange their caste duties according to their capability and interest and warns us that the performance of another's duty (*para-dharmaḥ*) would be perilous (*bhayāvahaḥ*) (Gambhirananda's translation 166). This reveals that the above verses, which discuss about the hereditary caste system, could not be the ideological production of pre-Buddhist *Vedic Brāhmaṇism*. These verses are the production of the post-Buddhist

Brāhmaṇism, when *Varṇa*-system, based on the division of labor, converted into the hereditary caste system. The post-Buddhist *Cāturvarṇāh*, as elaborated in the above verses of the *Gītā*, fixed the *varṇa* of man according to his innate, inborn qualities (Ambedkar “*Babasaheb*” 360-61). In this system of *Cāturvarṇāh* “. . . people are postulated to be different from each other from birth” (Bhawuk, “Paths” 96) and “. . . *swadharma* [of each individual caste] like one’s mother, is not chosen but pre-determined” (Bhave “Teaching” 22). Kuiken claims: “The four classes were introduced in verse 4.13 of the *BhagavadGītā* some time in the second century BCE” (41). This also supports on the finding of this study that the interpolated part of the *Gītā* is the ideological production of the post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism*.

The post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇic* creation of the interpolated *Gītā* is also proved by analyzing the historicity and the transformations of Kṛṣṇa through the different stages of Indian history. The Buddha was a historical figure but it is difficult to find anything historical about Kṛṣṇa because the myths and legends formed on him have talked about the numerous Kṛṣṇas from pre-*Vedic* period to the later time (114). Kṛṣṇa of the *Ṛgveda* (8.96.13-15) was a demon and he fought with the *Vedic* war God Indra (*Rgveda*, X. 103.1). Kṛṣṇa belonged to one of the hostile dark-skinned pre-Aryans as the generic designation of his name suggests (“From Tribe” 115). Kṛṣṇa’s pre-Aryan origin is explained by a Paninian reference 4.3.98 (“Social” 33) and the sole archaeological datum about Kṛṣṇa has suggested that Kṛṣṇa’s favorite weapon, the sharp wheel, the missile discus (*cakra*) was pre-*Vedic* and went out of fashion long before the time of the Buddha (Kosambi “From Tribe” 115). This suggests that, in the early phase, Kṛṣṇa was no more than a pre-Aryan “tribal god” (Gambhirananda “Introduction” xv).

In the second phase, Kṛṣṇa legend interprets Kṛṣṇa as a Yadava hero, a Satvata, an Andhaka-Vrishni, son of Devaki and Vasudeva, a Kamsa killer, divine and loveable infant, mischievous shepherd boy, lover of all the milkmaids and husband of innumerable goddesses. Kṛṣṇa is interpreted as a late intruder in the epic *Mahābhārata*, in which his position was not elevated up to the level of all-God (Kosambi “From Tribe” 114-17). Before Kṛṣṇa appeared as the all-God in the *Gītā*, he was not accepted by all even as a minor god in the *Mahābhārata*. The people were not ready to give him the proper respect and Shishupala, Kṛṣṇa’s near relative, even abused him of being the person of low origin and loose morals (Ambedkar “Essays” 194). Whether or not he was the same Kṛṣṇa, the *Chāndogya Upanishad* III: 17.6 says that Kṛṣṇa, the son of Devaki, was taught by Ghora Angirasa (Hume's translation 160). The Greeks had found their cult in India at the time of Alexander’s invasion, and they identified the dark-skinned Kṛṣṇa, who had trampled down and expelled a poisonous many headed naga, Kaliya, with their own black-skinned Herakles – the killer of the Hydra (a many-headed snake like Kaliya). In the fight against *Vedic* God Indra, Kṛṣṇa appeared as a victor, in this phase, because he was portrayed in the legend as a protector of the cattle of the *Gokula* against Indra (Kosambi “From Tribe” 117). The pastoral tribes, who were changing over to agriculture, had begun to prefer Kṛṣṇa to Indra. Kosambi illustrates:

The pastoral life was yielding to the agrarian. Vedic sacrifice and constant fighting may have suited the former, but would have become a costly, intolerable nuisance for the latter. Kṛṣṇa was a protector of cattle, never invoked at a fire-sacrifice where animals were offered up, as Indra, Varuna, and other Vedic deities were regularly invoked. (117-18)

Kṛṣṇa, thus, marked the transition from pastoral to agricultural life and Kṛṣṇa's Titan brother Balarama's special weapon "the plough" justifies this proposition (118).

The dark god Kṛṣṇa's marriages with thousand unnamed "wives" marked an important step forward in assimilating patriarchal Aryans to some matriarchal pre-Aryans (116). The ambiguous position of the Yadus in the *Rgveda* and Kṛṣṇa's dark skin can be taken as another step in the recombination of Aryan with aborigine as the irreconcilable Naga stories give an indication in that direction ("From Tribe" 117). This suggests, Kṛṣṇa, in the second phase, represented an omniformed demigod, popular among herdsmen at a time when the pastoral life of the people was transforming to the agrarian. The general features of the time as well as Kṛṣṇa's activities concentrated in the geography around Gokula, Indraprastha, Hastināpur and no mention of any important geographical names of the Magadhan territory by the Kṛṣṇa legend indicate that it might have been the time before Magadha period (the time of the Buddha).

In the third phase, Kṛṣṇa gained the position of supreme God after the revival of *Brāhmaṇism* in India. At the time, when Buddhism was influential and widespread in India, *Brāhmaṇism* had suffered a lot because of its own past weaknesses. After its revivalism, *Brāhmaṇism* corrected its past mistakes, and it modified the *Brāhmaṇic* religion according to the demand of a rapidly changing society. The post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇins* felt that the cult of *Vedic*-sacrifice became inadequate to quench the religious thirst of the masses after the vigorous movement of Buddhism. The cult of *Vedic*-sacrifice was gradually replaced by the faith in personal deity. The faith in personal deity affected the reputation of early *Vedic* gods like Indra and Varuna and Visnu, a minor god in the *Rgveda*, promoted to the supreme position (K. Mishra "Social" 370). Later Buddhism made the Buddha a personal deity and an

incarnation of God and the concept was well established among the people, and it opened the door for the post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* to formulate the new concept of personal, tangible, human deity and 'theory of incarnation' (Sardesai "Riddle" 20-1). The genius of the Epic produced the theory of incarnation and it was fully developed in the *Purāṇas* (K. Mishra "Social" 370).

The theory of incarnation helped the post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* to incorporate any local heroes or the tribal deities to its fold. Not only Kṛṣṇa, but also other mythical figures like Parasurama, Rama, even the historic figure the Buddha himself and some totemic deities including the primeval fish, Tortoise and Boar were made into incarnations of Vishnu-Narayana. The monkey faced Hanuman, a popular deity of the peasantry, was made the faithful companion- servant of Rama. The Dravidian god Shiva, whose phallic emblem was detested by the *Ṛgvedic* Aryans, was grafted in his human form with *Vedic* Rudra and given a place in the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva – the principal object of *Brāhmaṇic* worship in the post-*Vedic* days. The Goddess Kali, in her fierce and detested form, was adopted probably from the Austric people as the symbol of all mother goddesses. Cobra was made as a canopied bed to sleep upon the waters for Vishnu-Narayana and the same cobra was used as Shiva's garland and a weapon of Ganesh. The admission of Shiva in Aryan Pantheon paved the way for many alien gods to assimilate. Skanda and Ganesh were recognized as Shiva's sons. Shiva's bull Nandi was worshipped in the South Indian neolithic age independently. The process of assimilation was done in the give-and-take formula. The former worshippers of the cobra accepted Shiva as a god and the followers of Shiva simultaneously paid respect to the cobra in their own ritual services. Patriarchy won over the matriarchal elements by identifying the mother

goddesses with the 'wife' of some male god, i.e., Durga-Parvati was wife of Shiva and Lakshmi for Vishnu (Kosambi "Towards" 168-70; K. Mishra "Social" 370-73).

The post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism*, with the help of the theory of incarnation, incorporated ". . . almost all the existing deities, belonging to different social or cultural milieux . . . in the Aryan pantheon as the manifestation of Visnu" (K. Mishra "Social" 371). Out of the many gods, the post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* had to choose one personal God so that they could give the alternative to the Buddha who had already become popular among the majority of Indian people. They could not make Indra as their Supreme God because of the dying *Vedic* observances and they found Kṛṣṇa, the dark hero of the non-Aryans, as only alternative because he was identified not with Brahma or Indra but with the minor *Vedic* god Vishnu. Kṛṣṇa was quite obscure as well as popular among the common people to write a new philosophy making him Supreme God (Kosambi "Early Brāhmaṇism" 46). This is the reason why the great Epic mentions only one incarnation of Vishnu-Narayana, i.e., Kṛṣṇa and it was the innovation of the priests who pioneered the Vaisnava movement and whose hands gave the *Mahābhārata* its final shape (K. Mishra "Social" 371). The post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism*, therefore, wrote a new philosophy the *Gītā*, especially the interpolated part of the *Gītā*, and put it into the mouth of Kṛṣṇa, making him Supreme God. Contrary to the reference of the *Chāndogya Upanishad* III: 17.6, as a human pupil of the seer Ghora Angirasa, Kṛṣṇa, in the *Gītā*, appears as the divine exponent of a complete and rather intricate philosophico-religious doctrine (Kosambi "Towards" 206-07). The *Gītā*, in X.3, exalts Kṛṣṇa to the position of the Supreme all-God: "*yo māmajamanādiñca vetti lokamaheśvaram / asaṁmūḍhaḥ sa martyeṣu sarvapāpaiḥ pramucyate* (He who knows Me – the birthless, the beginningless, and the great Lord of the worlds, he, the undeluded one among mortals, becomes freed

from all sins.)" (401). Kṛṣṇa, as the verse argues, is birthless (*ajam*), the beginningless (*anādim*) and the great Lord of the worlds (*lokamaheśvaram*) (401). The verse portrays Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme God of all gods and the only ruler over the universe. Kṛṣṇa claims himself as the great Lord of all the worlds (*sarva- lokamaheśvaram*) in V.29 and the great Lord of all beings (*bhūta-maheśvaram*) in IX.11 (268-69, 378). In chapter eleven, the *Gītā* exhibits the divine form (*viśva-rūpa*) of Kṛṣṇa (Gambhirananda's translation 428-72). The divine manifestation of Kṛṣṇa in chapter eleven is mainly designed to project him as the Supreme God of the Universe and all the *Rgvedic* gods, the gods belonging to other different cults and religions and each and every living and non-living things of the universe are described here only as the parts of the Supreme God, Kṛṣṇa. It is clear that these verses, which project Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme all-God, could not be the ideological production of pre-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* when Kṛṣṇa was only considered as either pre-Aryan tribal god or Aryan demigod or the human pupil of the seer Ghora Angirasa. The pre-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* had not promoted Kṛṣṇa to the level of the Supreme God. Therefore, these verses of the *Gītā* are the ideological production of the post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* when they created the supreme Godhood in Kṛṣṇa for giving counter to Buddhism.

It was the phase when *Brāhmaṇic* religion moved to the direction of monotheism minimizing the importance of the *Vedic* tradition of polytheism. As the verses of the *Gītā* have minimized the importance of *Vedic* ritual sacrifices, advocated the hereditary based caste-system and vindicated the monotheistic religion, the interpolated part of the *Gītā* is taken as the production of the post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism*. It was the time when *Brāhmaṇism* became victorious in the struggle against Buddhism and they gained power and modified and strengthened the

Brāhmaṇic religion in the light of the rapidly changing time. It was the time when the productive forces had developed to such an extent that the slavery was dwindling and the feudalism was rising in India.

The *Bhagavad Gītā*, like the *Mahābhārata*, is found to be a developing text. The text comes to the present form through different additions and alterations. The small portion of the *Gītā*, altogether eighty-five verses, i.e., the verses up to II.38, are the original part of the heroic story of the *Mahābhārata*. The major portions of the *Gītā*, all the verses after II.38, are the later interpolations into the *Mahābhārata*. These verses of the *Gītā* are diverted from the major concern of the war and are engaged in the discussion of the different contemporary schools of philosophies. This indicates that the *Gītā* divides into two *Gītās*: the original and the interpolated ones. The original *Gītā* is the genuine part of the *Mahābhārata* and the interpolated *Gītā* is the later additions to the epic. These two *Gītās* carry the ideologies of the two different historical epochs of Indian history.

The original *Gītā*, being the genuine part of the epic, carries the ideology of the early phase of Indian slavery. The original *Gītā* exhibits the conflict between the ideologies of the dying primitive *Gaṇa-Saṁghas* and the rising slave states and announces the ideology of the slave states as victor. Arjuna speaks for the morality and social values of the classless primitive *Gaṇa-Saṁghas* but he is defensive and intent to learn from Kṛṣṇa the new morality and social values of the new society. Kṛṣṇa, an ideologue of the rising slave states, teaches Arjuna about the morality and social values of the rising slavery, based on private property and classes. Kṛṣṇa, in the original *Gītā*, teaches Arjuna about the greed for wealth, power and prosperity as the

ethics and morality of the new age and incites Arjuna to fight with his own relatives, violating the principles of *kuladharmā* of the primitive Aryan *Gaṇa-Saṃghas*.

The interpolated *Gītā* is the creation of the post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* and it carries the ideology of the later phase of slavery and the early Indian feudalism. The post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* renovated the *Vedic Brāhmaṇism* in the light of the broad religious movement of Buddhism and Jainism. The interpolated *Gītā* discloses us about the features of the renovated post-*Vedic Brāhmaṇic* religion. The interpolated *Gītā* gives less importance to the *Vedic* ritual observances, the *yajñas* and non-killing *Brāhmins* are given preference to the *Vedic* killing *Brāhmins*. In other words, the interpolated *Gītā* transforms the bloody *Vedic yajñas* into the bloodless *yajñas* of knowledge (*jñānayajñah*). The interpolated *Gītā* makes the *Vedic Varṇa*-system, based on the division of labor, hereditary and converts it into the discriminatory caste system. The caste system, the product of the early Indian feudalism, begets the varieties of social inequalities and injustices. The interpolated *Gītā* develops the concept of monotheism, minimizing the *Vedic* concept of polytheism. The interpolated *Gītā* exalts Kṛṣṇa, the incarnation of the minor *Vedic* god Visnu, into the monotheistic Supreme God. The post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* promotes Kṛṣṇa to the monotheistic tangible human God so that they could give counter to the Buddha, the popular deity among the majority of Indian people at the time. The interpolated *Gītā*'s concept of monotheism and its *bhakti* concept suit to the temperament of Indian feudalism. This shows that the *Bhagavad Gītā*, in the present form, cannot be treated as the single text in terms of its production. The content analysis of the two *Gītās*, the original and the interpolated ones, reveals that they are produced into two different historical contexts.

Chapter Four

The *Bhagavad Gītā*: A Review Synthesis of the Contemporary Schools of Thought

The dialectical and historical approach to literature regards any literary text as an ideological reflection of the time when it is produced. Marx and Engels illustrate: "Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behavior. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc., of a people" ("Feuerbach" 25). The mental activity of the author of any literary text is affected by his material behavior and at the same time, the dominant ideologies of the time expressed in other literary productions also affect the author of the text.

The authors of the *Bhagavad Gītā* are influenced by the contemporary systems of philosophy while composing the text. Damodaran holds the view that the *Gītā* does not enunciate any new doctrine but it rather attempts to synthesize the different contradictory views prevailed at the time into a single philosophical testament ("Bhagavad" 189). In IV.1, the *Gītā* admits that the text is not propounding any new theory, instead, it revivifies the dead past: "I proclaimed this imperishable yoga to Vivasvan; Vivasvan told it to Manu and Manu spoke it to Ikshvaku" (Radhakrishnan's translation 174). This indicates that the philosophy of the *Gītā* is not new but the text only works as a medium in conveying "the ancient wisdom" (Radhakrishnan "Theism" 448).

The *Gītā* discusses both the ancient and the new philosophies of the time. While discussing the different schools of philosophy, Kosambi argues, the *Gītā* tries to "reconcile the irreconcilable" ("Towards Feudalism" 207) different schools of

thought and it makes the text self-contradictory. This also provides the ground for the different scholars to interpret the text differently from its parts that brings forth the varied interpretations and guidance from the same text and it ultimately raises the question about its basic validity. Kosambi claims: “Any moral philosophy which managed to receive so many variant interpretations from minds developed in widely different types of society must be highly equivocal. No question remains of its basic validity if the meaning be so flexible” (17). The question of the basic validity of the text makes the *Gītā* not as an independent treatise but Kosambi takes it only as “a brilliant (if plagiarist) review-synthesis of many schools of thought which were in many respects mutually incompatible” (“Social” 20). The *Gītā* has a few of its own and contains many of others and whatever things are discussed in the text; they are mutually incompatible and irreconcilable to each other. This justifies Kosambi's proposition that the *Gītā* is only a review synthesis of the many contemporary schools of philosophy. This chapter gives the dialectical and historical materialistic interpretation of the relation of the text with other different contemporary schools of philosophy.

4.1 The *Vedas* and the *Bhagavad Gītā*

The *Bhagavad Gītā* gives the prominent place to the philosophy of *Vedas* in the text. The *Gītā* discusses about *Vedas* and *Vedic* ritual *yajñas* in many verses scattered in different chapters of the text. Out of them, most of the verses praise the knowledge of *Vedas* and give importance to the *yajñas*. Kṛṣṇa, in XV.15, proclaims himself as “the *veda-vit*, knower of the *Vedas*, the knower of the teachings of the *Vedas*” (Gambhirananda “Supreme” 609). It shows how much importance the *Gītā* has attributed to the *Vedas*. The *Gītā* considers *Vedic* knowledge as a vast storehouse

that cannot be easily perceptible by ordinary people except Kṛṣṇa, the God himself. The *Gītā* mystifies the knowledge of the *Vedas*, literary creation of the *Vedic* Aryans. But, some of the verses of the *Gītā* criticize the *Vedic* texts and condemn the *yajñas*. They criticize the *Vedic* texts on the ground that the *Vedas* advocate *Vedic yajñas*, performed for the fruits of action. The text expresses the self-contradictory views in relation to the *Vedas* and the *Vedic yajñas*.

A general survey is required to be done on the origin and the later developments of the *Vedas* and the *Vedic yajñas* in order to analyze the standpoint of the *Gītā* on them. *Veda* literally means knowledge and to the orthodox, it means the sacred or revealed knowledge (Chattopadhyaya “Veda” 32). But, while interpreting the meaning of *Veda* through historical materialism, Dange claims that *Veda* connotes the knowledge of procuring, producing, obtaining ‘*Prajā Pashvadih*’ – progeny and animals (“Yajña, Brahman” 55). *Veda* conveys the knowledge of increasing the human labor power (*Prajā*) and wealth (*Dhanam*) in ancient Aryan societies because *Vedas* are the orally composed songs, poems and eulogies by pre-literate pastoral Aryans and orally handed down to the later generations. Hence, they are called ‘hearsay’ or ‘*śruti*’, ‘that which is heard’ (Chattopadhyaya “Veda” 32; “Varuna” 545; Dange “Yajña, Brahman” 56). These songs and poems are traditionally called *mantras* and they are collected later in four compilations or *Samhitās* called the *Ṛgveda-Samhitā*, *Sāmaveda-Samhitā*, *Atharvaveda-Samhitā* and *Yajurveda-Samhitā*, which are generally known as *Ṛgveda*, *Sāmaveda*, *Atharvaveda* and *Yajurveda* (Chattopadhyaya “Veda” 32). While keeping them in a chronological order, *Ṛgveda* comes first, followed by the *Yajurveda* (in two branches, the White and the Black), the *Sāmaveda* and the *Atharvaveda* comes at last (Kosambi “Aryans” 73). Of these, the *Sāmaveda* is a collection of hymns mostly taken from the *Ṛgveda* for being sung

at sacrificial ceremonies, *Yajurveda* is a collection of sacrificial formulas used in ritual sacrifices and *Atharvaveda* is collection of spells, charms and incantations (Damodaran “Beginnings” 40).

The *Rgveda*, among the four *Vedas*, is the most important one and it is also the largest one consisting of 1,028 songs or hymns (*sūktas*). Each hymn consists of 10 stanzas (*rk*) on an average that amounts to 10,552 stanzas in total and, in total bulk; it is calculated to be equal to the surviving poems of Homer (“Veda” 32). The *Vedic* literature is vast and it took many centuries for the pastoral *Vedic* poets to compose the whole of the *Rgveda* itself. The *Rgveda*, as a whole, represents the literature of a long transitional period from pre-class to the class-divided society (“Gauri” 244; “Varuna” 556). As a result, the *Rgveda* alone carries the ideologies of the different *Vedic* people, representing the different stages of development. Chattopadhyaya states: “There is no basis to think that during these hundreds of years the life and thought of Vedic people remained unchanged. Therefore, it is only natural that the *Rigveda* should contain different strata of the thought of the Vedic people passing through different stages of development” (“Varuna” 539). Different Scholars give the different dates of the composition of the *Rgvedic* hymns. Max Muller dates the *Rgveda* between 1200 B.C. to 800 B.C. (qtd. in Damodaran “Beginnings” 40), Kosambi between 1500 B.C. to 1200 B.C. (“Aryans” 73), and Meghnad Desai between 1500 B.C. to 900 B.C. (“Introduction” 1).

Vedic literature is the production of the social and economic base of the *Vedic* time and they carry the ideologies of the time. They are mainly concerned for the fulfillment of the basic necessities, i.e., the means of subsistence of the *Vedic* people. The two questions are important for *Vedic* literature; the question of *Dhanam*,

instruments of production or economic productive activities and the question of *Prajā*, the human labor power (Dange “Yajña: The Collective” 39). The hymns of the *Vedas*, therefore, are the simple expressions of the everyday desire of the *Vedic* people – the desire for cattle, food, rain, safety, victory, health and progeny (Chattopadhyaya “Veda” 33). The early *Vedic* people were backward (112) and those hungry savages were mainly frightened with starvation, death and extinction (107). Thus, the hymns of the older stratum of the *Ṛgveda* are materialistic (Chattopadhyaya “Chanting” 111), and they are in no way otherworldly which express the desire for liberation or *mokṣa* (545). Chattopadhyaya argues: “The Vedic poets did not know of any song that was not a showerer of desire and they did not know of any desire that was not positively material. And if their desires were so thoroughly this-worldly, it would be wrong to attribute to them any other-worldly or spiritualistic world-outlook. . .” (550). Analysis of the hymns of the *Ṛgveda* reveal its materialistic content and proves wrong to the orthodox interpreters of the text who find its philosophy other-worldly or spiritualistic. The meanings of the words change rapidly than the words, and, in course of time, the meanings of the *Ṛgvedic* words, that possessed materialistic content were changed into their opposite, implanting in them the spiritualistic content. For example, the word *bhagavan*, which is now commonly used for God, is made with *bhāga* which simply meant material wealth or a share thereof in the *Ṛgveda* and it gives the meaning ‘one with material wealth’ or ‘one entitled to a share’ (Chattopadhyaya “Varuna” 553-54). This gives us a clear indication how the *Ṛgveda*, once a materialistic document, is changed now into a sacred text of the spiritualists and a theological document.

The *Ṛgveda* is made otherworldly or spiritualist document based on the bare mention of numerous gods and goddesses in the text but they are not described as

supernatural beings and they are not divine (“Varuna” 551). The gods of the *Ṛgveda* are merely the personifications of inanimate objects like the hill (*parvata*), the herb (*osadhi*), the tree (*vanaspati*), the forests (*aranyāni*), and the weapons (*ayudha*) like the bow and arrows. They are also described as the embodiments of purely this-worldly desires like ‘the protection against abortion’, ‘the protection against consumptive diseases’, and ‘the protection against the nightmare’ (Chattopadhyaya “Veda” 34). *Pitu Sūkta* of the *Ṛgveda* is a eulogy of an important god of this kind, ‘*Pitu*’ i.e., food or *Annam*:

Now will I glorify Food (*pitu*) that upholds great strength,

By whose invigorating power Trita rent Vritra limb from limb.

O pleasant Food, O Food of meath, thee have we chosen for our own,

So be our kind protector thou.

Come hitherward to us, O Food, auspicious with auspicious help,

Health-bringing, not unkind, a dear and guileless friend. (I/187. 1-3, Griffith’s translation 119)

In this *Sūkta*, Food is personified as a god and glorified it as a life sustainer. The Food is described here as a source of health and strength. The Food, to which the *Sūkta* praises, represents the material object and the material desire of human beings and we cannot find here any trace of spirituality or divinity in the description of Food god.

The early *Ṛgvedic* people lived a hard life due to the backwardness of the implements of production. In order to survive, they had to struggle hard with wild animals and the incomprehensible forces of nature. It was beyond their power to

comprehend the phenomena of nature or to exploit them in their service. This led them to see the divinity in the forces of nature. So, Sun, Moon, Stars, the seasons, trees, stones, rivers, earth — all are personified into gods and goddesses. The dead, though buried, still live with them and have their feed (Damodaran “Beginnings” 30; Dange “Yajña: The collective” 37). Therefore, the *Rgvedic* gods and the religion born with them are only the reflections in men’s mind the external forces that dominate their life. Engels points out:

Now all religion is nothing but the fantastic reflection in men’s minds of those external forces which dominate their daily life, a reflection in which terrestrial forces assume the form of supernatural ones. In the beginnings of history it was the forces of nature which were first so reflected . . . Comparative mythology has traced back this first process, at least in the case of the Indo-European peoples, to its origin in the Indian Vedas . . .” (“State” 410)

The early *Vedic* Aryans, because of their ignorance, formed the superstitious, unscientific and mythological concepts on reality and they made the external terrestrial forces, which dominated their life, to the supernatural ones.

Early *Vedic* poets personify the forces of nature into gods and goddesses but they have not made the gods as independent forces separate from nature and capable of creating and influencing the course of nature, as the later idealists understand the God. The *Vedic* poets believe in the principle of *rita*, the order of nature, but not on any hypothetical will of the *Vedic* gods. The *Vedic* poets and their kinsmen understand the *rita*, not the gods, as the most potent force assuring them of their means of subsistence. For them, it is not the will of God or of the gods but the principle of the *rita* that determines the order of the universe (Chattopadhyaya

“Varuna” 631, 628, 629). Among the *Vedic* gods, Mitra and Varuna – particularly the latter – are mentioned as the gods of *rita*. However, they are described only as observers or guardians or upholders of the *rita*: “Varuna, along with Mitra, was the guardian of the *rita* – *ritasya gopa* – and only in this capacity were they the rulers of the rivers and the bestowers of food and rain. They were the revealers of the *rita* and the increasers (or upholders) of the *rita*, but all these significantly enough, were accomplished by the aid of the *rita*” (*Rig.* vii.64.2/ i. 23.5, qtd. in Chattopadhyaya “Varuna” 629). This reveals that the *rita*, the course of nature, does not depend on gods, on the contrary, the gods depend on the *rita* because Varuna upholds the *rita* only with the help of the *rita*. The concept of the *rita* of the *Rgveda* carries a crude materialistic philosophy because the god Varuna only stands as a symbol of the *rita*.

Human relations and the social forces were not complicated to understand and they were explicable at the early stage of human development. People found only the forces of nature as mysterious and inexplicable. However, in course of time, the social forces also became inexplicable and mysterious like the forces of nature. Engels argues:

But side by side with the forces of nature, it is not long before social forces begin to be active, forces which confront man as equally alien and at first equally inexplicable, dominating him with the same apparent natural necessity as the very forces of nature. The fantastic figures [personifications], which at first only reflected the mysterious forces of nature, at this point acquire social attributes, become representatives of the forces of history. (“State” 410)

The personifications of the social forces to gods and goddesses begin after the social forces attribute the characteristics of the natural forces. Some persons, with the

increase of population, gain more power and prestige in society and the common people attribute them divinity and make them god and goddesses.

The *Vedic* poets personify some of the influential persons of Aryan tribes to gods and goddesses. Among many other human gods, Indra, for example, is depicted in the *Rgveda* as a principal war god who is praised in many verses for his valor in war and his capacity to provide the captured food and materials to the fellow Aryans for their subsistence. In *Rig.VI. 80.3*, Indra is praised thus:

Indra, give us immortality and joy,

Give us tempered strength to destroy enemies!

Make us prosperous and protect us!

Protect the learned! Bestow good progeny

And plentiful food on us! (qtd. in Damodaran “Beginnings” 31)

The development of the pastoral economy in the ancient Aryan Community intensified the rubber wars. This creates the condition for the supremacy of a war-god. Indra, the god of war and plunder, finally usurped the ancient glory of Varuna, the moral governor (Chattopadhyaya “Varuna” 635). Indra is eulogized for plundering the wealth of *Anaryas*, *Dāsyus* and *Āsuras*, destroying their hundreds of villages and killing *lakhs* of them (Ambedkar “Reformers” 23). These references of war in the *Rgveda* have a relationship of some sort with some pre-historical conflicts between the *Vedic* Aryans and their enemies of various kinds named as *Āsuras*, *Dāsa* and *Dāsyus* (K.Mishra “Races” 232). This gives us an indication that Indra was only “the culture-hero of some Vedic tribe” (Chattopadhyaya “Varuna” 535) before he was promoted to war god.

The discovery of fire and the domestication of animals brought revolution in the life of primitive Aryans. Hunting and fishing alone could not provide enough food for the primitive population and because of the uncertainty with regard to sources of foodstuffs; man had to resort to cannibalism (Dange “Yajña” The collective 41).

The discovery of fire made the digestive process of meat easier and the domestication of animals provided the regular sources of food, making the meat more copious and supplying a new kind of food, i.e., milk and its products (Engels “*Part Played*” 9).

Fire certainly had been observed in the forests as a terrible destructive force of Nature, burning down everything with great fury. However, the point was to produce it at the will of men and to make a non- living force of nature into men’s service.

Engels acknowledges:

The practical discovery of the conversion of mechanical motion into heat is so very ancient that it can be taken as marking the beginning of human history.

Whatever discoveries, in the way of tools and domestication of animals, may have preceded it, the making of fire by friction was the first instance of men pressing a non-living force of nature into their service. (“Heat” 11)

After men began to produce fire by friction and make it use in their services, the fire or *Agni* became the source of creation, existence, growth, wealth, happiness and everything for the primitive Aryans (41). The productive forces developed on a new level with fire and cattle. This new productive forces brought men “. . . from savagery to barbarism, from the *Krita* age to the *Treta* age, from wanderings to settlements, from starvation and occasional cannibalism to assured supply of food, shelter and defence, from nakedness to covering, from helplessness before Nature to strength and growth” (Dange “Yajña: the collective” 42). *Vedic* poets, therefore, considered *Agni*

or fire as the principal god and more hymns in the *Rgveda* are dedicated to him than to any other gods (Kosambi “Aryans” 78). The hymns of the *Rgveda* praise the god *Agni* calling him *Vishpati*, the leader and protector of the settlements of man because the fire alone made households possible for the primitive Aryans (Dange “Yajña: The collective” 41). This justifies that the *Vedic* gods are no other than the personifications of those forces, either natural or social, which affect the life of people.

The discovery of fire and taming of animals brought forth the concept of *Yajña* which “. . . led to wealth, prosperity and growth of the Aryan commune and saved it from extinction” (“Yajña, Brahman” 53). Everything in Aryan community centered round the twin concepts of Aryans: *Brahman* and *yajña*, which are regarded as the beginning of everything, the end and be all of existence for them (“Where” 28). Dange defines *Brahman* as the primitive Aryan Commune, *yajña*, its collective mode of production and *Vedas*, the knowledge of this mode of production (“Yajña: The collective” 43). The word ‘*yajña*’ is not a word but a sentence which derivates from *ya*, *ja* and *na*. The root *ya* mean 'to go, to gather'; *ja* means to beget; *na* means third- person- plural form of the verb and the sentence means 'they gather together and beget'. What did they beget? In primitive commune, Aryans gathered together and beget things, means of subsistence and children, the human labor power (“Yajña, Brahman” 50). In primitive Aryan communities, the extreme backwardness of the productive forces does not allow private production, private consumption and private households and if anything is to be produced, it is possible only by collective labor (“Yajña: The collective” 43). This shows that there is truth behind Dange’s definition of the word *Brahman* as primitive Aryan commune and *yajña* as its collective mode of production.

The literary evidences of *Vedas* corroborate Dange's definition of *yajña*.

Dange has investigated the characteristics of the original forms of *yajnas*, i.e., *Satras* and *Kratu* mentioned in the *Vedas*. The *Vedas* define *Satras* and *Kratu* as the *yajñas* performed by gods, the Aryan's ancestors. Dange explains several features of *Satras*, which resemble the collective mode of production of the primitive Aryans. The first feature of the *Satras* is that all its participants are taken as *Yajamanas*, while in later *yajñas* the priests are not included in the rank of *Yajamanas*. The second feature of the *Satras* is that the *Yajñaphal*, the collective products are distributed and consumed collectively. Thirdly, all the participants in the *Satras* are of the same *Gotra*, i.e., blood relations, which is not found in later *yajñas*. Fourthly, all the participants are elected to temporary functional roles and it dissolves after the work is over. The fifth feature of the *Satras* is that, unlike the later *yajñas*, both men and women participated in the *Satra yajña* or labor. Similarly, Dange explains the characteristics of *Kratu yajña* which also exhibits the collective labor in relation to cattle production, rearing and consumption of the primitive Aryans ("Yajña: The collective" 44-7). This shows that the *yajña*, in its original form, was the sum total of the day-to-day activities of the primitive Aryan Commune which were conducted for the sustenance and development of Aryan life. Originally, the *yajña*, as Dange claims, was the Aryan's primitive collective mode of production that was essential for the maintenance and prosperity of the *Brahman*, the commune.

The process of distribution of the collective products among the commune members also justifies the *yajña* as being the collective mode of production of primitive Aryan Commune. All products were brought to the *Mahavedi* for direct use and consumption. The gods and *pitras* (ancestors) were given their share first and the remaining product or food, which was called the *Hutashesha*, was consumed

collectively. It was the daily *Havana* which Dange defines as the mode of distribution of food, collectively produced, to the whole commune and it was regarded as an integral part of the *yajña* (“Yajña: The collective” 49). In the old system of *Havana*, there was no distinction among the commune members, who received equal share of food. There was no question of a private householder cooking ‘his own food’ for himself separately because he and his ‘own’ did not exist at that time (Dange “Organization” 95). Based on this ideal state of the primitive Aryan Commune, the *Bhagavad Gītā* formulates the moral code in the verse III.13 for the people living in class society where people cook food only for their own sake:

yajñāśiṣṭāśinaḥ santo mucyante sarvakilbiṣaiḥ

bhuñjate te tvaghaṁ pāpā ye pacantyātmakāraṇāt

(The good people who eat what is left from the sacrifice are released from all sins but those wicked people who prepare food for their own sake – verily they eat sin.). (Radhakrishnan’s translation 155)

In the above verse, the author of the *Gītā* expects people would follow the morality of the ancient time when people enjoyed with the leftovers after giving the shares of gods and *pitras* and they cooked not only for their own sake but for the all Commune members. This moral code was not necessary at that time when the people enjoyed the food collectively and this verse of the *Gītā* denounced the people of class society as ‘eaters of sin’ who cooked only for themselves without a thought of the others. This reveals that the verse upholds the morality of the *Satra yajña* of the primitive Aryan Commune and not of the *yajña* of the later times. In III.10, the *Gītā* mentions *sahayajñāḥ*, the combined *yajña* of three castes people (*Prajāḥ*), performed for the multiplication of wealth and people (144), which upholds the characteristics of the

Satra yajña of the primitive Aryan Commune. In IX.16, the *Gītā* praises *Kratuḥ yajña* (Gambhirananda's translation 382) though the text does not elaborate its features.

The *yajñas*, the collective mode of production of the primitive Aryan Commune, are slowly converted into ritual with the passage of time. The *Satra* and *Kratu yajñas* transform into *Ashwa Medha*, *Puruṣa Medha* and *Brahma Medha yajñas* at the later stage of Aryan history. The small economy of the primitive Aryan Commune could not sustain the increasing number of population and the Aryan *Gaṇa-Gotra* began to split and spread over the whole continent of Asia in search of new spaces for settlement. In the search for space and wealth, disease and death or enemies sometimes annihilated the Aryan *Gaṇa*. In this process, the migrating Aryans had to engage in wars with hostile tribes. The *Ṛgveda* is full of the descriptions of such wars. The wars of the *Deva-Gaṇas* with the *Āsuras*, *Daituas*, *Rakshasas* and such other forces are the examples of this. When the Aryan *Gaṇa* fought and annihilated the enemy, it captured its cattle, other wealth, the men, women and children and brought them to its *Gaṇa* home. The war loot is not considered as private property and it is the property of the *Gaṇa-Commune*. They are distributed among the *Gaṇa* members, but before their distribution they perform *Ashwa Medha*, *Puruṣa Medha* and *Brahma Medha yajña* rituals (Dange “Organization” 83- 90).

The three-*yajña* rituals are performed with the participation of all the commune members in the leadership of the *Gaṇapati*. It is a celebration and a celebration for the victory of war. In the *Ashwa Medha yajña*, the horse, which first entered the enemy territory, is killed to prepare the sacred food for the god *Agni* fire and the commune. Before killing the horse, the whole *Gaṇa* members enjoy with meat, wine, and sex dance, i.e., the group mating, the Aryan custom prevalent at the

time. The captured women are also included in such a group mating and the *Gaṇa* adopts them as their own members. Some male prisoners are also adopted in the commune for their strength, beauty and skill in medicinal knowledge but the rest of them are offered to the great fire god *Agni*. It is known as the *Puruṣa Medha yajña*. This *Medha* is not considered a remnant of cannibalism because there is no mention even some symbolic eating of the victims. They were slaughtered simply because the poor economy of the commune could not feed more mouths and such a killings of the male prisoners stopped at a later stage when the productive forces developed and the victors could give them jobs making them slaves. The *Gaṇa* members enjoy only with the meat of different kinds of animals beside the horse slaughtered in the *yajña*. After the disposal of the male prisoners in the *Puruṣa Medha*, they still have one more job and it is the disposal of their kins killed in the war. The group disposal of those kins killed in the war is named as *Brahma Medha yajña*. Those killed in the war are the integral part of the *Gaṇa* Commune, the *Brahman* and as the name suggests, their disposal is regarded as a partial death of the *Brahman*, the commune itself (Dange “Organization” 90-2).

The whole process of *yajña* ends only after the distribution of war booty among the commune members. The different kinds of captured wealth in the war like cattle, pots, ornaments and dresses are distributed among the *Gaṇa* members through the act of *Dānam*, which was the integral part of the *yajña* in those days. The word *Dānam* is wrongly translated as a gift or charity by later *Vedic* scholars but in the *Ṛgveda* the word gives the meaning ‘division’ because *Dānam* is formed from root ‘*da*’ means ‘divide’. The daily distribution of the collective products among the *Gaṇa* members in the peacetime economy is characterized as *Havana* and *Dānam* includes the occasional distribution of goods acquired in war or of durable goods such as

weapons, clothing, pottery etc. *Dānam* like *Havana* is a social function and it is not the private function of the tribal chief or *Gaṇapati*, depending upon his will, because the conquered wealth in the war belongs to the whole commune. In the primitive Aryan Commune system, *Dānam* was a protection, as of right, against starvation for the sick, the aged, the maimed and the weak who usually had the first claim on social property. There was a guarantee of protection against starvation and of equitable distribution for all people in the primitive Aryan Commune, based on collectivism (Dange “Organization” 92-6).

The introduction of private property and classes in society converted the basic features of *yajña* into their opposite. The *yajña*, the collective mode of production of the primitive Aryan Commune, turned into "purely a ritual, a form of worship, a social memory" (“Yajña, Brahman” 50). The *yajña* ritual, in class society, was made an ideological weapon by the two upper castes, *Brāhma-Kṣatriya* in keeping down *Vaiśhyas* and *Sūdras*, the primary producers, and in fighting against other tribes (Kosambi “Aryans” 87; “State” 143). The *Brāhma-Kṣatriya* rulers used the *yajñas* to expropriate the cattle and wealth of the masses and to grab the vast lands brought into cultivation by the *Vaiśhya-Sūdra* toilers (Dange “Sanguinary” 149). The sacred books mention that increase of cattle, food and prosperity was the main purpose of the sacrifice and they could also be obtained through aggression. The sacrifice was considered indispensable for victory in war, particularly the success of war chief. The highest ranking sacrificial “beasts” were taken man, bull and stallion (“Aryans” 87), but the human sacrifice became sporadic and it was only considered necessary to make impregnable such strong points as bastions and city gates and to prevent dams from being swept away by flood waters. The slaughtered victim had to be buried in the foundations of the new construction in such cases (“From Tribe” 102). Human

sacrifice was only a ritual and different from the ancient *Puruṣa Medha* in which the poor economy compelled the *Gaṇa* commune to slaughter the male war-prisoners. The horse sacrifice was not only connected with killing and eating it. The chief queen had to couple with the slaughtered horse as a revolting fertility rite and it might have been considered as substitute for some earlier sacrifice of the king or his surrogate. The horse, before killing, was allowed to wander at will for a year and any obstruction to its free movement by another tribe was taken as a challenge to battle. This led the constant fighting and war with the enemy tribes and these wars along with round of sacrifices only benefitted *Kṣatriya* rulers and the *Brāhmaṇas* (Kosambi “Aryans” 87). The *Kṣatriya* rulers increased their wealth and power and expanded their empire with the use of sacrifices and the increased sacrificial fees benefited the *Brāhmaṇas*. The ritualism of the *yajñas* brought superstition and the ritual *yajñas* conducted by the ruling class were based on aggression, loot and plunder. The beauty and attraction of the ancient *yajñas*, conducted by the *Brahman*, the Aryan commune, vanished and the ancient *yajñas*, which protected the toiling masses, now turned into their enemies.

The private property and classes also brought changes in the meanings of the words: *Dānam* and *Havana*. The war became the function of the king and his class of *Kṣatriyas* and they could accumulate the wealth in their private households. This made the captured war-booty the property of the king and the ruling class. Then, *Dānam*, formerly the compulsory distribution of the conquered wealth among the *Gaṇa* members, became a private duty of the king and the ruling class. They could distribute the wealth or not, it depended on their private will. If the king distributed the wealth, he was considered good king; otherwise, he was a bad king. *Dānam* became now a voluntary virtue and a gift or charity of the kings or *Kṣatriyas*. *Dānam* was converted from an instrument of social insurance to the enrichment of the ruling

class, *Kṣatriyas* and *Brāhmaṇas*. The social duty of the war chief or *Gaṇa* chief to distribute *Dānam* attached to the king and *Kṣatriya* class and the right of the *Brahman*, the Commune in receiving the war-booty transformed itself to another section of the ruling class, *Brāhmaṇas*. The *Brāhmaṇas*, as conductors of the *yajña* process, the *Vedas* and possessors of intellectual inheritance, alone were considered the real successors of the *Brahman*, the Commune and they alone became the receivers of all *Dānam* and *Havana* (Dange “Organization” 93-6). The majority of the producing population was excluded from their share of *Dānam* and *Havana* and the old ideology and moral values connected with *Dānam* and *Havana* were seized and wielded by the new classes in their own class interests and in their own way. The king and *Kṣatriya* class, the possessors of the social wealth, did not distribute the wealth among the people and whatever wealth they distributed, only the *Brāhmaṇas* received them. The wealth and property collected in the name of *yajñas* became only the wealth and property of the ruling class, *Kṣatriyas* and *Brāhmaṇas* in the new class society. The *yajñas*, thus, became the weapons of the ruling class for plundering the wealth and property of the aliens as well as of the majority of their own producing sections of the people, the *Vaiśyas* and *Sūdras*.

The *yajña* lost its ancient prestige but the new forms of *yajña* degraded by class society was idealized later by the *Brāhmaṇic* philosophy called *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā*. The *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* is based on the orthodoxy of *Vedas*. At the later stages of Aryan history, the *Vedas* were labeled as the sacred scriptures of *Brāhmaṇism* and the veneration attached to *Vedas* was evidently needed for the ruling class to control and keep the majority of toiling masses law-abiding (“Hangover”13). The orthodox, even at the present time, considers the *Vedas* as the repository of absolute wisdom and some *Brāhmaṇical* codes of law restrict to study the *Vedas* by the low-castes and

women in India (Chattopadhyaya “Veda” 33). But, for the early Aryans, who lived in the *yajña* mode of production, there was no such thing as a sacred *Veda*. They created the *Richas* or *Mantras* of the *Vedas* through their own creative actions and words based on their life experiences and as the songs were their own creation, there was nothing mystical about these verses as such. The simple creations of the pre-literate Aryans, the *Vedas* were made so orthodox at a later time that adding to or changing the existing verses of the *Vedas* was considered the greatest blasphemy (Dange “Yajña, Brahman” 54-5). The *Vedas* ultimately transformed into the text of orthodoxy and this orthodoxy of *Vedas* gives birth to the philosophy of *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā*.

The *Mīmāṃsā-sūtra* is the source book of the philosophy of *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* and it is a compilation of 2500 aphorisms attributed to a certain Jaimini. Although it is impossible to give the exact date, it could have been compiled between 200 B.C. to A.D. 200 (Chattopadhyaya “Mimamsa” 51). The word *Mīmāṃsā* means systematic investigation and the *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* philosophy aims at a systematic inquiry into rituals and sacrifices of the *Brāhmaṇas*, known as the *Karmakānda*. Jaimini’s *Mīmāṃsā-sūtra* forms a work on rituals prescribing injunctions and prohibitions. Jaimini’s *Dharma* is based on *Vedic Karma* i.e., the performance of the ritual observances, *yajñas*, accompanied by the promise of reward in future life. The *Mīmāṃsakas* consider *Karma* or *yajñas* as the basis of human life and everything for the fulfillment of human objectives. They give more importance to *Vedas* than the *Vedic* gods because, according to them, the *yajñas* are performed not for pleasing the gods, not for purification of the soul but they are performed as the *Vedas* and *Brāhmaṇas* prescribed them. They give a mysterious sanctity to the *Vedas*. Jaimini considers the *Vedas* as eternal and self-revealed, not composed by men or even by the gods (Damodaran “Mimamsa” 172-3).

The *Mīmāṃsakas* reject the existence of God (Chattopadhyaya “Mimamsa” 55-6) and Chattopadhyaya finds the reason behind their rejection of God on the principle of magic which holds the belief that “. . . by creating the illusion that we control reality, we can actually control it” (“Tantra” 272). Like the magical belief, as Chattopadhyaya observes, the *Mīmāṃsakas* also believe that the *yajña* rituals by themselves, mechanically or with the help of their own inherent potency or their intrinsic laws, produce their results. They do not believe in the grace of God for the positive outcome of the *yajñas*. Besides, they view the *Vedic* deities as mere names or sound necessary for the ritual spells (Chattopadhyaya “Mimamsa” 56).

The *Mīmāṃsakas* appear materialists as they do not believe in supernatural agent, the God, but they give undue value to *yajñas*, ritual blood sacrifices and make them superstitious and obscure. They give divinity to the *yajñas* themselves.

The philosophy of *Mīmāṃsakas*, therefore, makes the *yajñas*, the ideological tool of the ruling class, stronger and with the help of the *yajñas*, the *Brāhma-Kṣatriya* class increase their wealth and power and make the majority of toiling masses, the *Vaiśyas* and *Sūdras*, submissive to them.

The *Bhagavad Gītā*, in III.9-15, upholds the philosophy of the *Mīmāṃsakas* (143-48). In these verses, the *Gītā*, like the *Mīmāṃsakas*, gives undue value to the *yajñas* and make them obscure and superstitious. These verses carry the philosophic essence of the *Mīmāṃsakas* as they elevate the *yajñas* as being capable of producing their results by themselves. In III.9, the *Gītā* suggests us to perform every action (*karmanah*) for *yajña* (*yajñārtham*) and here *yajña* stands for God himself (143). The performance of *yajñas* provides the performers the progeny and wealth (*prasaviṣyadhvam*) (III.10, 144) and makes them free from all sins (*mucyante sarva-kilbiṣaiḥ*) (III.13, 146). The *Gītā* describes the gods as the nourishers of men

(*devāḥ bhāvayantu vaḥ*) (III.11) and the distributors of human's coveted enjoyments (*devāḥ dāsyante hi vaḥ iṣṭān bhogān*) (III.12), but the gods are described in the verses as being capable of doing so only after they are nourished by the *yajñas* (*yajña-bhāvitāḥ*) (III.12, Gambhirananda's translation 145). This implies that the power of gods itself depend on the *yajñas* themselves. This is the essence of the philosophy of the *Mīmāṃsakas*, the elevation of the *yajñas* over the gods.

The philosophy of the *Mīmāṃsakas* is more evident in the verse III.14. The *Gītā*, in the verse, makes the *yajñas* more obscure and superstitious: "*annād bhavanti bhūtāni parjanyaād annasambhavaḥ / yajñād bhavati parjanyo yajñaḥ karmasamudbhavaḥ*. (From food are born the creatures; the origin of food is from rainfall; rainfall originates from sacrifice; sacrifice has action as its origin)" (147). The verse attributes the *yajñas* as being the origin of rainfall (*yajñād bhavati parjanyo*). It is true, as the verse says, rainfall is the origin of food (*parjanyaād annasambhavaḥ*), the life force of the living beings (*annād bhavanti bhūtāni*) (Gambhirananda's translation 147), but how the *yajñas* produce rainfall, is obscure. This verse matches with the *Manusmṛiti* III.76: "An oblation duly thrown into the fire, reaches the sun; from the sun comes rain, from rain food, therefrom the living creatures" (Buhler's translation 14). This verse of the *Manusmṛiti* tries to establish the connection between the *yajñas* and the rain. The oblation thrown into the fire transforms into smoke, the smoke goes up to the sky and is converted into the rain. This is not the scientific fact. It is a general scientific fact that the vapor with water particle made from the water resources goes up to the sky, becomes cold and is converted into the rain. The smoke comes out of the sacrificial fire does not contain water particle and consequently, it cannot be converted into water. Besides, such smoke produces the harmful gases and pollutes the environment. This justifies the

unscientificity of the claim of the verse and this only implants the superstitious belief in people's mind. This is only the expression of the philosophy of the *Mīmāṃsakas*, the unreasonable projection of the strength of the *yajñas*.

In III.15, the *Gītā* argues that *karma* originates from the *Vedas* (*karma brahmodbhavam*), the *Vedas* from the imperishable (*Brahma akṣara samudbhavam*) and hence, the all-pervading *Veda* is ever centred in *yajña* (*tasmāt sarvagatam brahma nityam yajñe pratiṣṭhitam*) (Ranganathananda's translation vol. 1, 275). Here, *karma* stands for the *yajñas* and *Brahma* for the *Vedas*. The essence of the verse is that ". . . the Vedas have sprung from the eternal Brahman, its eternal and omnipresent character is transmitted to the sacrifices also" (Dasgupta "Philosophy" 474). This mystifies the creation of the *Vedas*, which, as mentioned earlier, was composed by the ancient Aryan poets. The verse follows the notion of the *Mīmāṃsakas*, who mystify the creation of the *Vedas* and thereby sanctifies the *yajñas*. In all the above verses, the *Gītā* follows the *Mīmāṃsakas* in characterizing the *yajñas* as performed for the rewards of action. The philosophy of *Mīmāṃsakas* is reiterated in XVII.11 and 13 in which the sacrifices are categorized as good (*sāttvik*) and bad (*tāmasic*) (642-43) based on the *Mīmāṃsakas'* theory of *vidhi*, whether they are performed according to the prescribed injunctions and prohibitions of the *Vedas* or not. Kṛṣṇa's announcement of himself as being *Sāmaveda*, the musical hymns to be sung at sacrificial ceremonies, in X.22 (Gambhirananda's translation 414) also tells us about the *Gītā's* high priority to the *Vedic* ritualism of the *Mīmāṃsakas*.

The *Bhagavad Gītā*, in IV.23-33, defines the *Vedic* theory of *yajñas* in the light of the *Upanisadic* Philosophy (Gambhirananda's translation 207-22).

The *Upanisadas* define the word "*Brahman*" as "an ultimate differenceless

principle” (474) and “an ultimate superior state of realization” (Dasgupta “Philosophy” 475). The *Upanisadas* consider the *Brahman* as the ultimate essence of God and this proposition makes the position of the *Vedic* gods; Indra, Agni, Varuna and others inferior. The *Gītā* makes a distinction between two different *yajñas*; the *daiva-yajña*, in which oblations are offered to the *Vedic* gods and the *brahma-yajña*, in which one dedicates oneself to *Brahman*, where *Brahman* is the offerer, offering and the fire of oblations, and in which, by dedicating oneself to *Brahman*, one is lost in *Brahman* (IV.24-5, Gambhirananda's translation 208,213). The *Vedic vidhis* are applied to *daiva-yajña*, but the *brahma-yajña* is only the concept, which is applied to different human endeavors. The endeavor of a person to attain *Brahman* is defined here as the *brahma-yajña*. The *Gītā* also describes sense-control as being a kind of *yajña*. For the *Gītā*, “. . . the true sacrifice is the sacrifice of the sense delights” (Radhakrishnan "Theism" 489). The sense-objects are offered as libations in the fire of senses and the senses themselves are offered as libations in the fire of sense-control (IV.26, 215). All the sense functions and vital functions are also offered as libations in the fire of sense-control lighted up by knowledge (IV.27, 215). The *Gītā* describes the various kinds of *yajñas* (*bahu-vidhā yajñāḥ*) (IV. 32, 220). Five kinds of *yajñas* are differentiated, viz. the *yajña* with material objects as libation, called *dravya-yajña*, the *yajña* of asceticism or self-control, called *tapo-yajña*, the *yajña* of union or communion, called *yoga-yajña*, the *yajña* of scriptural studies, called *svādhyāya-yajña* and the *yajña* of knowledge or wisdom, called *jñāna-yajña* (IV. 28, 216-17). Hence, the *Gītā* extends the application of the term *yajña* from the original *Vedic* meaning of *daiva/dravya yajña* to the varieties of *yajñas* conducted for self-advancement or the attainment of the ultimate realization, the *Upanisadic Brahman*. The *Gītā* defines the *yajñas* as the most essential things for

the human beings (IV.31, 219) and takes the *jñāna-yajña* as being greater (*śreyān*) than the *dravya-yajña* (IV.33, Gambhirananda's translation 221-22). It is because of the *Upanisadic* influence, the *Gītā* gives the *jñāna-yajña* a high priority. The *Gītā*, in the above verses, reconciles the *Vedic* theory of *yajñas* with the *Upanisadic* spiritual knowledge. It explains the *Upanisadic* theory of knowledge based on the *Vedic* theory of *yajñas*.

The *Gītā*, as mentioned above, mystifies the creation of the *Vedas* in the verse III.15 and hence, it accepts the authority of the *Vedas*. In XVI.23, the *Gītā* suggests human beings to perform every action not under the impulsion of passion (*kama-karatah*) but according to the percept of the *Vedas* (*śāstra-vidhim*) for attaining perfection (*siddhim*), happiness in this world (*sukham*) and the ultimate salvation (*parām gatim*) (632-33). In XVI.24, the *Gītā* elaborates the concept:

tasmācchāstram pramāṇam te kāryākāryavyavasthitau

jñātvā śāstravidhānoktam karma kartumihārhasi

[Therefore, the scripture is your authority as regards the determination of what is to be done and what is not to be done. After understanding (your) duty as presented by scriptural injunction, you ought to perform (your duty) here.].

(Gambhirananda's translation 633)

The verse attributes the ultimate authority to the *Vedas* for determining the right and wrong of every human action. This is the concept of the *Mīmāṃsakas* who describe virtue (*dharma*) as the obedience to *Vedic* injunctions. According to the *Mīmāṃsā* schools, everything that is enjoined by the *Vedas* is considered virtue and whatever is prohibited by the *Vedas* is evil and sin. Those things, which are neither enjoined nor

prohibited by the *Vedas*, are taken as neutral (Dasgupta "Philosophy" 483).

This makes the *Vedas* as a scale to differentiate the good action from the bad one.

The *dharma* is limited to actions enjoined by the *Vedas* even though such actions may in some cases be associated with evil consequences. Hence, the *Gītā*, in XVI.23-4, adopts the similar concept of the *Mīmāṃsakas* on the question of the authority of the *Vedas*.

The *Gītā*, however, does not praise the *Vedas* and the *Vedic* observances in all the verses. In IX.20-1, the *Gītā* delimits the utility of the performance of the *Vedic* observances. The knower of the three *Vedas* (*trai-vidyāḥ*), the drinkers of Soma (*somapāḥ*) and the performers of sacrifices (*yajñaiḥ*) only manage to reach the world of gods (*surendralokam*) (IX.20, 386) and they again return to the human world (*martyalokam*) after the exhaustion of their merit (*kṣīṇe puṇye*) (IX. 21, 387). This implies that the *Vedic* observances do not lead a person to his ultimate salvation, the freedom from the cycles of rebirth. This is the minimization of the *Vedas* and the *Vedic* observances. Besides, the *Gītā*, in II.42-3, even condemns the *Vedic* texts and the *Vedic* rites and duties:

yāmimām puṣpitām vācam pravadantyavipaścitaḥ

vedavādaratāḥ pārtha nānyadastitivādinaḥ

kāmātmānaḥ svargaparā janmakarmaphalapradām

kriyāviśeṣabahulām bhogaiśvaryagatim prati

(O son of Prtha, those undiscerning people who utter this flowery talk – which promises birth as a result of rites and duties, and is full of various special rites meant for the attainment of enjoyment and affluence –, they remain engrossed

in the utterances of the Vedas and declare that nothing else exists; their minds are full of desires and they have heaven as the goal.). (88)

The verses denounce those persons who are engrossed in the utterances of the *Vedas* (*veda-vāda-ratāḥ*), who have their minds full of desire (*kāmātmānaḥ*) and have heaven as the goal (*svarga-parāḥ*) and who are engaged in the performance of various special rites (*kriya-visesa-bahulam*) for the enjoyment and affluence (*bhoga-aiśvarya-gatiṃ-prati*) (88-9). The *Gītā* compares the *Vedic* rites and duties (*vedesu*) with the water of a small well (*udapāne*) (II.46, 92) and suggests everyone to be unshaken by the bewilderment of the *Vedic* texts (*śruti-vi-pratipannā*) (II.53, Gambhirananda's translation 99-100). The *Gītā* gives high prestige to the *Vedas* by mystifying their creation and accepting their authority for distinguishing the good action from the bad one but it again criticizes them and makes us aware from their flowery talk and bewilderment. The *Gītā* condemns the *Vedas* and the *Vedic* observances because they are under the influence of mundane hankerings and desires. This concept goes against the *Mīmāṃsakas'* theory of sacrifice, based on the future reward, which the *Gītā* itself upholds in the verses III.9-15. This demonstrates the incompatibility of the *Gītā* while dealing with the *Vedas* and the *Vedic* observances, the *yajñas*.

The *Bhagavad Gītā* appears a self-contradictory text while dealing with the *Vedas* and the *Vedic yajñas*. The *Vedas* are the simple creation of the ancient Aryan poets and there is nothing sacred about them. The early portions of the *Rgveda* are materialist in content and the earliest *yajñas* possessed the progressive value when they were performed as the collective mode of production in the primitive Aryan commune. In course of time, the *Vedas* are made sacred and the *Vedic yajñas* are converted into ritual. With the emergence of private property and classes,

the *Brāhmaṇas* and *Kṣatriyas*, the ruling class people, made the *Vedas* and the *Vedic* ritual *yajñas* as their ideological weapons to accumulate private property and oppress the working class people, the *Vaiśyas* and *Sūdras*. The *Brāhmaṇas* converted the early materialistic *Vedas* into the text of ritualism and the ritualistic portions of the *Vedas* are systematized by the *Pūrvamīmāṃsā* school of philosophy. The *Mīmāṃsakas* mystify the creation of the *Vedas* and make the *yajñas* as the ultimate tools for the fulfillment of human desire. The *Gītā* upholds the philosophy of the *Mīmāṃsakas* in dealing with the *Vedas* and the *Vedic* ritual *yajñas*. But, the *Gītā* appears inconsistent in its views towards the *Vedas* and the *Vedic* *yajñas* when it, in some verses, goes against the *Mīmāṃsakas* in an attempt to reconcile the *Vedic* theories of *yajña* into the *Upanisadic* knowledge, transforming the goal-oriented *Vedic* *yajñas* into the desireless one.

4.2 The *Upanisads* and the *Bhagavad Gītā*

The *Bhagavad Gītā* discusses about the different schools of philosophy, but it takes its standpoint on the *Upanisads*. The *Gītā* has taken its philosophic background from the *Upanisads* and the main spirit of the text is that of the *Upanisads* (Radhakrishnan “Theism” 445, 447). The *Gītā* is also considered as a summing up of the *Upanisads* (Gambhirananda “Introduction” xviii). The traditional account of the relation between the *Gītā* and the *Upanisads* is well expressed by a commonly known verse, which says: “The *Upanisads* are the cows, Kṛṣṇa is the milker, Arjuna the calf, and the nectar-like *Gītā* is the excellent milk” (Radhakrishnan “Theism” 448). The above verse shows the dependence of the *Gītā*’s composition on the *Upanisads*. The *Gītā* extracts the idealist trends from the *Upanisads* and propounds a coherent idealistic philosophy. The *Gītā*’s idealism, which has an affinity with the *Vedānta*

philosophy, depends on the exposition of the *Upanisadic* concepts of soul (*ātmā*), *Brahman* and illusion (*māyā*).

The essence of the *Upanisadic* philosophy is required to know in order to find out the dependency of the *Gītā* on the *Upanisads* for its compilation. The word “*Upanisad*” is derived from *upa* (near), *ni* (down), and *sad* (to sit), i.e., “. . . to sit down near someone” which indicates some kind of confidential communication. It tells us the system of education of the ancient Aryans when the groups of pupils sat near the teacher to learn from him the truth of the world. The word '*Upanisad*' is generally taken to mean 'secret knowledge' and it contrasts with the *Vedas*, which simply means 'knowledge' (Chattopadhyaya “*Brāhmaṇas*” 41; “*Chanting*” 100; Damodaran “*Upanishads*”44). The *Upanisads*, composed by the ancient Aryan seers, also belong to the *Vedic* literature. From the point of view of the subject matter, *Vedic* literature falls into two categories; literature that deals with *Karma* or the manual operation of the rites and rituals called *Karma-Kānda* and literature that deals with *jñāna* or pure knowledge acquired the name *Jñāna-Kānda*. The *Vedas* and the *Brāhmaṇas* fall under the *Karma-Kānda*, while the *Āraṇyakas* and the *Upanisads* fall under the *Jñāna-Kānda* branch of literature (Ambedkar “*Literature*” 85; Chattopadhyaya “*Varuna*” 655). It is believed that more than 200 *Upanisads* exist, but traditionally, they count only 108. Out of them, only 13 texts survive for us and they only possess the philosophical significance. They are *Aitareya*, *Kauṣītaki*, *Chāndogya*, *Kena*, *Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka*, *Īśā*, *Taittirīya*, *Kaṭha*, *Maitri*, *Svetāśvatara*, *Praśna*, *Muṇḍaka* and *Māṇḍūkya* (Damodaran “*Upanishads*” 44-5; Chattopadhyaya “*Brāhmaṇas*”42-3). Of these principal *Upanisads*, some are in prose and they greatly vary in terms of the length of the texts. They also differ in terms of the period of their composition. Modern Scholars assign the date of these principal *Upanisads* as pre-

Buddha, i.e., earlier than the sixth century B.C. and they assign only the *Maitri* and the *Māṇḍūkya* as being the post-Buddha (Chattopadhyaya “Brāhmaṇas” 43-4). Robert N. Minor suggests the dates of composition of the *Upanisads* between 800-200 BCE (77-8). The early prose *Upanisads* are taken pre-Buddhistic as suggested by the dates given by Radhakrishnan: 800-600 BCE (“*Principal*” 22), Patrick Olivelle: 700-400 BCE (12), Valerie J. Roebuck: 700-400 BCE (xxvi) and Gerald James Larson: 900-500 BCE (241).

The *Upanisads* are the products of the teachers or *gurus* of a variety of schools of thought (Minor “Kṛṣṇa” 78). The inner structure of the *Upanisads* reveals that they are heterogeneous in their material (Hume “Outline” 20) and that in the texts “. . . the various strands of thought are almost inextricably interwoven, and the teaching presented is with difficulty reduced to self-consistency” (qtd. in Chattopadhyaya “Emancipation” 46). Different *Upanisads* are attributed to the different thinkers as they were not written and compiled in the same period and, in some cases, the different sections of the same *Upanisad* are assigned to different thinkers (Damodaran “Upanishads” 45). The *Upanisads* have recorded the thoughts and ideas of different thinkers who have the different level of philosophical abstraction (Chattopadhyaya “Varuna” 646) and hence, we often find “. . . varying and sometimes contradictory ideas in them, which cannot be reconciled into one logical, coherent and integrated system of philosophy” (Damodaran “Upanishads” 45). This shows the multi-faceted nature of the *Upanisads* and we have to encounter the divergent ideas while going through all the *Upanisadic* texts.

The *Upanisads* are interpreted as “an abrupt break with the past or an open revolt against ritualism” (Chattopadhyaya “Emancipation” 45) and it is viewed that

“... with the emergence of the Upanishads, the era of the Brāhmaṇas and yajñas came to an end” (Damodaran “Upanishads” 45). Harendra Prasad Sinha argues:

“Upanishads are the reaction against the Karma-Kānda of the Vedas. This is because it makes a great difference between the ideas of the Vedas and the Upanishads” (My translation “Upanishado” 56). However, this is not proved by the nature of the *Upanisads*. We find the rich patrons of the philosophers – the great *Upanisadic* philosopher-kings like Janaka – employing priests to perform *Vedic yajñas*.

(Chattopadhyaya “Emancipation” 45; Damodaran “Upanishads” 45). There are textual evidences in the *Upanisads* that emphasize the necessity of performing *yajñas* for attaining material prosperity, emancipation and immortality. *Muṇḍaka Upanisad* I. 2.3, for example, outlines the importance of the *yajñas*: “If one’s Agnihotra sacrifice is not followed by the sacrifice of the new moon and of the full moon, by the four-months sacrifice, by the harvest sacrifice, if it is unattended by guests, or not offered at all, or without the ceremony to all the gods, or not according to rule, it destroys his seven worlds” (Hume’s translation 320). Here, the *Muṇḍaka Upanisad* gives high importance to the *yajñas* for the survival of the human existence. But, the many *Upanisadic* thinkers consider the knowledge of rituals and sacrifices as inferior to philosophical speculations. Most of the *Upanisadic* philosophers were genuine seekers of truth and they pondered deeply over the human problems, the relation of man to his environment, the origin of the world and its mysterious phenomena (Damodaran “Upanishads” 45-6). Many verses of the *Upanisads* are dedicated to the intellectual enquiry and speculations on such issues. *Svetāśvatara Upanishad* I.1, for example, ponders on the human existence: “. . . Whence are we born? / Whereby do we live? And on what are we established? / Overruled by whom, in pains and pleasures. . .” (Hume’s translation 350). The *Upanisadic* answers to such questions

vary. The *Upanisadic* answers regarding the universe, human life and the relations between the two fall into two categories: the materialists and the idealists.

Some *Upanisadic* thinkers see the materialistic cause behind every phenomenon of the world. The *Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka* and *Chāndogya Upanishads*, for example, contain passages, which assert that ether (*ākāśa*), fire, and air are eternal and they are the original cause of the universe. The *Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka Upanisad* V: 5.1 outlines: “In the beginning this world was just water. That water emitted the Real – Brahma [being] the Real –; Brahma, Prajāpati; Prajāpati, the gods. Those gods revered the Real (*satyam*)” (121). The passage takes the water as the original cause of the universe because, according to the passage, *Brahma*, the cause of other creations, itself originates from the water. Similarly, the *Chāndogya Upanishad* VI: 2. 1-2 asserts: “In the beginning, my dear, this world was just Being (*sat*), one only, without a second. . . . How from Non-being could Being be produced? On the contrary, my dear, in the beginning this world was just being, one only, without a second” (181). The above passage accepts the being or the matter as eternal and the cause of other creations including the human consciousness, a non-being. The *Praśna Upanishad* I: 5 believes in matter as being the original cause of the universe: “The sun, verily, is life; matter, indeed, is the moon. Matter identified with every form of existence” (Hume’s translation 332). The passage takes the matter as the cause of all creations. These thinkers of the *Upanisads* do not see creation as an act of *Brahman* or any gods or God, a supreme creator. They consider the matter as the basis and the original cause of every creation of the universe.

These manifestations of materialistic thinking, however, are very rare in the *Upanisads* and they too express the materialistic ideas in a vague, nebulous way.

Most of the *Upanisadic* philosophers, in an attempt to unravel the secrets of the universe and to discover the prime cause of creation, ultimately returned to idealism (Damodaran “Upanishads” 49). There was an objective base for their inclination to idealism because the *Upanisadic* age possessed the different characteristics than the *Rgvedic* age. The *Upanisadic* age was the age of Indian Slavery. It was a class-divided society. With the development of productive forces, the ancient Aryan Society, based on collectivism, had already split into hostile classes. Surplus production, result of the development of productive forces, created the objective possibility for the few to live on the labor of the many. This led to the emergence of the leisured class. The people of this class, living on the surplus produced by another, ran away from the responsibility of direct manual labor and this barred them from acknowledging the reality of the material world because the process of labor alone made them realize the importance of the objective reality over the subjective one. This created the material ground for the *Upanisadic* philosophers, belonging to the leisured class, to adopt the idealistic method in philosophical enquiry taking free flight into the realm of ‘pure reason’ or ‘pure knowledge’, i.e., knowledge divorced from action (Chattopadhyaya “Varuna” 603; “Sources” 86). Idealism, therefore, is the result of the separation between the mental and manual labor and the separation of theory from practice and the exaltation of the former along with the degradation of the latter. Marx and Engels write:

Division of labor only becomes truly such from the moment when a division of a material and mental labor appears. From this moment onwards consciousness *can* really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice, that it *really* represents something without representing something real; from now on consciousness is in a position to

emancipate itself from the world and to proceed to the formation of “pure” theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc. (“Feuerbach” 33)

This shows that the *Upanisadic* philosophers formulated “pure” theory, theology, philosophy, and ethics when they were divorced from the manual labor as this made them feel the material world as insignificant and invaluable in comparison with the isolated consciousness separated from the existing practice.

The question arises about the identification of the leisured class people of the *Upanisadic* age. The *Brāhmiṇs* and *Kṣatriyas* are the leisured class people of the *Upanisadic* age and they create the *Upanisads* because in the *Upanisadic* age, the *Kṣatriyas* or nobles belonged to the ruling class or became kings and the *Brāhmiṇs* lived under their direct patronage. The *Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka Upanisad* I: 4.11 explains the position of *Brāhmiṇs* and *Kṣatriyas*:

Verily, in the beginning this world was Brahma, one only. Being one, he was not developed. He created still further a superior form, the Kshatrahood, even those who are Kshatras (rulers) among the gods: Indra, Varuṇa, Soma, Rudra, Parjanya, Yama, Mrityu, Īśāna. Therefore there is nothing higher than Kshatra. Therefore at the Rājasūya ceremony the Brahman sits below the Kṣatriya. Upon Kshatrahood alone does he confer this honor. This same thing, namely, Brahmanhood (*brahma*), is the source of Kshatrahood. Therefore, even if the king attains supremacy, he rests finally upon Brahmanhood as his own source. (Hume’s translation 72)

The above passage makes us clear about the higher position of both of these castes. They are the leisured class people who created the *Upanisadic* philosophy for protecting their own rights. The manual labor is considered slavish and there is the

feeling of disdain for the higher castes towards the labor of production. This is because they consider the *Vaiśyas* and *Sūdras*, who involve in the labor of production, as the lower caste people and treat them with contempt (Chattopadhyaya “Sources” 87). Damodaran holds the view that between the two higher castes, the *Kṣatriyas* played a prominent role in the creation of the *Upanishads* (“Upanishads” 44), but in Chattopadhyaya's view, both castes had an equal role in propounding the idealist philosophy of the *Upanishads* as both were equally aloof from the labor of production. Plunder was the profession of the *Kṣatriyas* and the *Brāhmiṇs* survived with the gifts received from the *Kṣatriyas* (Chattopadhyaya “Sources” 92). Both of these leisured class people did not have any interest in admitting the primacy of matter to consciousness because the primacy of the consciousness suited the temperament of both. The philosophy that advocates the primacy of consciousness over matter provides the leisured class people the moral ground to survive by the surplus production, escaping them away from the labor of production.

The idealism, as mentioned above, is a world-denying philosophy because it sees no intrinsic reality in the material world and it regards pure consciousness as the ultimate reality (Chattopadhyaya “Upanisadic” 75). This expression is found in the *Upanisadic* idealism. Chattopadhyaya explains the core of the *Upanisadic* idealism:

. . . the culmination of the Upanisadic philosophy was the doctrine of the identity of *ātmā* and *brahman*, along with its logical corollary, the doctrine of *māyā*. A self-shining pure consciousness was the ultimate reality and the world of experience, along with the individual selves enjoying or experiencing it, was, in the ultimate analysis, the product of an indescribable illusion – *māyā*. (647)

The *Upanisadic* idealism is explained by the three terms: *brahman*, “the universal self”, *ātmā*, “the individual self” (“Varuna” 647), and *māyā*, the “cosmic illusion” (“Sources” 88). These three terms are complementary to each other, because, in the *Upanisads*, the *brahman*, the self-shining pure consciousness, is identified with the *ātmā* and the doctrine of the *brahman*, which considers pure consciousness as the ultimate reality, depends upon the doctrine of *māyā* that defines the felt material world as an illusion (“Varuna” 645). Paul Deussen finds *Upanisadic māyā* being equivalent with Plato’s shadows and Immanuel Kant’s apparitions, which also regard the felt material world as being shadows or apparitions of pure consciousness, the ultimate reality (“Fundamental” 42).

The idealist philosophy of the *Upanisads*, thus, depends on the exposition of these three terms: *ātmā*, *brahman* and *māyā*. Of all the *Upanisads*, the *Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka* and *Chāndogya* are considered most authoritative and philosophically most significant (Chattopadhyaya “Upanisadic”75). Yajñavalkya, the theoretician of the *Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka Upanisad*, explains all-pervading nature of *ātmā* in II: 4.5: “Lo, verily, it is the soul (*Ātmā*) that should be seen, that should be hearkened to, that should be thought on, that should be pondered on, O Maitreyi, and with the understanding of the soul, this world-all is known” (83). In a similar way, *Chāndogya Upanisad* VII: 26 explains the *ātmā* as being the original cause of everything:

Verily, for him who sees this, who thinks this, who understands this, Vital Breath (*prāṇa*) arises from the soul (*Ātman*); Hope, from the soul; Memory, from the soul; Space (*ākāśa*), from the soul; Heat, from the soul; Water, from the soul; Appearance and Disappearance, from the soul; Food, from the soul;

Strength, from the soul; Understanding, from the soul; . . . indeed this whole world, from the soul. (Hume's translation 200)

The above passages of the two *Upanisads* establish the concept of the primacy of consciousness over the matter as they discuss about the soul (*ātmā*) as being the ultimate reality behind everything and suggest that a real understanding of anything is derived through the understanding of the soul alone.

The *Upanisadic* thinkers establish that there is no difference between the *ātmā* and *brahman*. The soul that dwells in man and the life-force that exists throughout the universe, both are regarded as the same-*brahman*. The *Chāndogya Upanisad* III: 14 elaborates: “Verily, this whole world is Brahma. Tranquil, let one worship It as that from which he came forth, as that into which he will be dissolved, as that in which he breaths” (157). This defines *Brahma* as the source as well as the ultimate goal of everyone and everything. *Brahman* is defined here as all-powerful and all pervading like *ātmā* and hence, it is no different from *ātmā*. The *Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka Upanisad* I: 4.10 identifies *Brahman* with *ātmā*: “Whoever thus knows 'I am Brahma!' becomes this All; even the gods have not power to prevent his becoming thus, for he becomes their self (*ātmā*)” (Hume's translation 72). This holds the view that every person is regarded as *Brahman* because the soul (*ātmā*) dwells inside everyone. *Brahman* stands as “an abstract unifying presence” (Meghnad Desai “Authorship” 112) in the *Upanisadic* philosophy as the diverse phenomenon and the process of nature are regarded as the manifestations of *Brahman* in the *Upanisads*.

The concept that regards the material world as the manifestations of *Brahman* coincides with the concept of *māyā* that takes the entire objective world as “a sheer deceit, illusion” (Deussen “Fundamental” 42). The term *māyā* comes for the first time

in *Svetāśvatara Upanisad* IV: 10 that explains: "Now, one should know that Nature (*Prakṛiti*) is illusion (*māyā*), And that the Mighty Lord (*maheśvara*) is the illusion-maker (*māyin*)" (Hume's translation 361). It describes *Prakṛiti*, the material world, as *māyā*, an illusion and *maheśvara*, the mighty Lord as *māyin*, the illusion-maker. Here, *maheśvara* stands for *Brahman* but it represents a kind of tangible God, a quite different concept than the concept of *Brahman* of the *Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka* and *Chāndogya Upanisads*. This concept of tangible God represents the later developments in the *Upanisadic* philosophy as *Svetāśvatara Upanisad* is considered as a later production than the *Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka* and *Chāndogya Upanisads* (Chattopadhyaya "Brāhmaṇas" 44).

The terms *Brahman* and *māyā*, however, are not the new inventions of the *Upanisadic* philosophers. The *Upanisadic* philosophers have only given the new meanings to the terms in order to convey their idealistic philosophy through them. The word *Brahman* is used constantly in the *yajña* process, in the stories of creation and social growth. However, the *Brahman* of the *Vedic* Aryans is quite different from the *Brahman* of the *Upanisadic* philosophers. There were no social contradictions, class struggles and exploitation in primitive Aryan Commune and as a result, the *Vedic* barbarians did not give the idealistic meaning to the word *Brahman*. The *Upanisadic Brahman* is without qualities (*Nirguṇa*) while the *Vedic* one is objectively real, with qualities (*Saguṇa*). The *Vedic Brahman* enjoys life, eats, drinks, dances, is happy and growing. The *Vedic* Aryans had no use for a non-existent, subjective, senseless, miserable, 'Udaseen' *Brahman*. To the *Vedic* Aryans, *Brahman* lived in the collective commune and in the world and he himself was a part of it. To them, the *Brahman* was the commune itself and the later developments of class war and class state, emerged out of the birth of agriculture, handicrafts, exchange, private

property and *Varṇas*, killed that *Brahman* forever (Dange "Yajña, Brahman" 51-2; "Rise of Varṇas" 108). *Nighantu*, a traditional collection of words grouped into thematic categories, gives the etymological meaning of the word *Brahman* as food or wealth (Chattopadhyaya "Varuna" 656). This suggests the material origin of the word *Brahman* contrary to the meaning given by the *Upanisadic* philosophers. The word *māyā*, likewise, carried the different meaning for the earlier *Vedic* Aryans.

The *Nighantu* suggests *māyā* as a synonym for *prajña*, means wisdom or knowledge. The *Nighantu* further suggests another synonym for *prajña* is *dhi* and the word *dhi* gives the meaning of action or *karma*. Another synonym for *Karma* or action is *kratu* and the word *kratu* gives the meaning of *prajña* or wisdom. This suggests that there was no wisdom without action to the early *Vedic* poets or the only wisdom they knew was the wisdom of practical activity. Therefore, originally, the word *māyā*, the cosmic illusion for the *Upanisadic* philosophers, stands for the wisdom or knowledge of practical activity (Chattopadhyaya "Varuna" 648; "Sources" 88). This makes us clear that the materialistic implication of the word *māyā* was completely twisted by the *Upanisadic* philosophers and they made the word a vehicle for conveying their world-denying idealistic philosophy.

The *Upanisadic* philosophers evolved the concept of idealism giving preference to the pure consciousness over the matter. However, as mentioned already, the *Upanisads* also contain the materialistic views. This makes the philosophy of the *Upanisads* inconsistent and self-contradictory. Badarayana solved this difficulty. He composed *Vedānta Sūtras* or *Brahma Sūtras* bringing together a harmonious and unified system of idealist philosophy out of the maze of thoughts in the *Upanisads*. He collected the scattered idealistic trends, omitting materialistic ones, from the *Upanisads* and evolved a coherent idealistic philosophy out of them (Damodaran

“Early Vedānta” 180). Nothing historical is known of Badarayana. Some scholars identify him with Vedavyasa, legendary compiler of the *Vedas* and the *Mahābhārata* in their present forms (Damodaran “Early Vedānta” 180; Ambedkar “Literature” 86). Dasgupta assigns the date of Badarayana's *Brahma Sūtras* to the second century B.C., Jacobi between A.D. 200 and 500 (qtd. in Chattopadhyaya “Vedānta” 68) and Damodaran between 400 B.C.-200 A.D. (“Early Vedānta” 180). Badarayana’s *Brahma Sūtras* contains 555 aphorisms (Sivananda “*Brahma*” 13) and it is also called *Vedānta*, i.e., the 'Veda-end' because it is based on the *Upanisads* which are regarded as the grand finale of the *Vedas* (Damodaran “Early Vedānta” 180; Chattopadhyaya “Vedānta” 68). It is also called the *Uttara-Mīmāṃsā* because it deals with the later portions or *Gnanakānda* portions of the *Vedic* literature namely, the *Āraṇyakas* and *Upanisads* (Ambedkar “Literature” 85).

The *Bhagavad Gītā*, like Badarayana’s *Brahma Sūtras*, only extracts the idealistic trend from the *Upanisads*. In this sense, the essence of the *Gītā* philosophy is no different from the philosophy of *Brahma Sūtras* or *Vedānta*. Kṛṣṇa, the mouthpiece of the *Gītā* philosophy, announces himself as the originator of the *Vedānta* (*Vedānta-kṛt*) (XV. 15, Gambhirananda’s translation 608) and the *Gītā* specifically refers to the *brahmasūtra* in the verse XIII.4:

ṛṣibhirbahudhā Gītaṁ chandobhirvividhaiḥ pṛthak

brahmasūtrapadaīścaiva hetumadbhirviniścitaiḥ

[This has been sung by sages in many ways and distinctly, in various hymns and also in well-reasoned and conclusive expressions of the aphorisms of the Absolute (*brahmasūtra*).]. (Radhakrishnan’s translation 358)

The verse suggests that the *Gītā* is expounding the truths already contained in the *Vedic* texts (*chandobhiḥ*) but it finds the suggestion of the aphorisms of the *brahmasūtra* (*brahma-sūtra-padaiḥ eva*) more rational (*hetumadbhiḥ*) and convincing (*viniścitaiḥ*) (Gambhirananda's translation 517). The *Gītā* discusses about the different schools of philosophy, but it acknowledges the truths encoded in the aphorisms of the *Brahma Sūtras*. The *Gītā* does not mention the word *Upanisad*, but by mentioning 'brahmasūtra' in the text, gives special importance to the idealistic trends of the *Upanisads*, which are collected in *Brahma Sūtras*. The inclusion of the word 'brahmasūtra' in the verse also gives the conclusive evidence about the verse's later production than Badarayana's *Brahma Sūtras*.

The *Gītā* upholds the *Upanisadic* concepts of soul (*ātmā*), *Brahman* and illusion (*māyā*). These *Upanisadic* concepts are found in different verses scattered over several chapters of the *Gītā*. The *Gītā* is not linear because the ideas inside it are not arranged in a linear pattern and many ideas are repeated as well (Pattanaik "Why" 3). The *Upanisads*, as mentioned already, represent the literary productions of the long span of time that marks the beginning of Indian Slavery to Feudalism. Therefore, the Original *Gītā* is also highly influenced by the *Upanisadic* philosophy. The *Gītā*, in II.21, elaborates the *Upanisadic* concept of the immortality of the soul (*ātmā*) in order to avert fear of the vacillating Arjuna to kill: "*vedāvināśinam nityam ya enamajamavyayam / katham sa puruṣaḥ pārtha kam ghātayati hanti kam.*" (O Partha, he who knows this one as indestructible, eternal, birthless and undecaying, how and whom does that person kill, or whom does he cause to be killed!) (62). The verse describes the soul (*ātmā*) as indestructible (*āvināśinam*), eternal (*nityam*), birthless (*ajam*) and undecaying (*avyayam*) (Gambhirananda's translation 63), and thus, nobody can kill the soul of a person and be killed. This is the concept of the

Upanisadic soul (*ātmā*) which the verse reiterates here. Kṛṣṇa ". . . reduces all human beings to an abstraction called the *Ātmā* (soul)" (Dange "Mahābhārata" 165) so that he could make Arjuna feel of having no effects of killing his kinsmen. Kṛṣṇa finds no other effective weapons than the *Upanisadic* concept of the immortality of the soul to convince Arjuna in killing his kinsmen in the bloody war of the *Mahābhārata*.

The *Kaṭha Upanisad* is the main source of the *Gītā* philosophy because the *Gītā* has raised many issues of this *Upanisad*. This *Upanisad* deals mainly about the life after death and discusses about the concept of the immortality of the soul. The *Gītā* borrows this concept mainly from the *Kaṭha Upanisad* though the concept is discussed in other *Upanisads* too. The *Gītā*, in II.11-30, raises the issue of the immortality of the soul (Gambhirananda's translation 45-78). The *Gītā* borrows the concept as well as the exact copy (Plagiarism!) of some verses from the *Kaṭha Upanisad*. For example, *BG* II.19 almost resembles with *KU* II.19:

ya enam vetti hantāraṃ yaścainaṃ manyate hatam

ubhau tau na vijānīto nāyaṃ hanti na hanyate. (*BG* II.19, qtd. in Radhakrishnan 121)

One who thinks the soul is a slayer, and

the one who thinks the soul is slain –

both of them are wrong in knowing,

for soul slays not, nor is it slain. (*BG* II.19, Baidya's translation 210)

hanta cenmanyate hantum hatascenmanyate hatam

ubhau tau na vijānīto nāyam hanti na hanyate. (KU II.19, qtd. in Rajamani 66)

'So, if a killer thinks "I kill",

or if a victim thinks "I'm killed",

they neither of them think quite right.

'Self does not kill, nor is it killed. (KU II.19, Wood's translation 14)

The above examples show how much the *Gītā* depends upon the *Kaṭha Upanisad* for its composition. The last two lines of *BG* II.19 and *KU* II.19 and the last two lines:

“*ajo nityaḥ śāśvato 'yam purāṇo / nā hanyate hanyamāne śarīre* (Unborn, constant, eternal, primeval, this one / Is not slain when the body is slain.)” (Hume's

translation 295) of *BG* II.20 and *KU* II.18 are same word for word. Beside these two verses, some other verses of the *Gītā* are also common to the *Upanisads*.

BG II.29 (77) and *KU* II.7 (292), *BG* VIII.11 (349-50) and *KU* II.15 (294-95), *BG* III.42 (172) and *KU* III.10 (298-99), *BG* VI.11 (286) and *Svet. Up.* II.10 (355) and *BG* VI.13 (Gambhirananda's translation 287-88) and *Svet. Up.* II.8 (Hume's translation 354-55) are the common verses of the *Gītā* and the *Upanisads*.

Kṛṣṇa, in the *Gītā*, finds the *Upanisadic* concept of the immortality of the soul as an easy ideological weapon or the argument for convincing Arjuna to kill his kith and kins, but the argument sounds illogical and childish. The *Upanisadic* concept of the soul holds the belief that the human body is transient and the soul is immortal. This concept does not give importance to the transient body and it only values the immortal soul. According to this concept, what Arjuna kills in the war are the insignificant human bodies of his kinsmen but not of their souls because human soul

neither kills nor is killed. This implies that there are no consequences of any human actions. Ambedkar, being a lawyer, is unconvinced in this argument:

To say that killing is no killing because what is killed is the body and not the soul is an unheard of defence of murder. . . . If Kṛṣṇan were to appear as a lawyer acting for a client who is being tried for murder and pleaded the defence set out by him in the Bhagavat Gītā there is not the slightest doubt that he would be sent to the lunatic asylum. (“Essays” 185)

If we follow the logic of the immortality of the soul, we do not find any cases of murder because no murderer can kill the human souls. The doctrine of the soul makes the murderers exempt from their accusation of murder. It is believed that millions of people were killed in the *Mahābhārata* war, surviving only ten people at the end. To say the truth, this doctrine made their deaths insignificant. But, the deaths of those people killed in the war had lasting effects to the surviving ones (Meghnad Desai “Arjuna” 65-6). The soul is unseen and, it is difficult to prove its existence but the human body is tangible that can be seen and adored. People worry and are concerned for the human body and not for the unseen soul. The positive sciences admit that there is a conscious element, i.e., soul inside human body but that functions with the guidance of the body, particularly of the human brain (Chattopadhyaya “Upanisadic” 84). Therefore, the controversy between the materialist and the idealist schools of philosophy is not on the question whether the soul exists or not but whether it exists independently of the body. The materialists regard the existence of the soul depends on the existence of the body and the soul’s existence ends with the body’s existence. The idealists, on the other hand, believe that the existence of the body depends on the existence of the soul and the soul’s existence does not end even after

the body's existence (Damodaran "Early Materialists" 95). The idealist philosophy, born with the emergence of the leisured class people, accepts the independent existence of soul and keeps the body or matter to the secondary position. Although the argument sounds illogical and childish, Kṛṣṇa, as a war commander, fully exploits the *Upanisadic* concept of independent and immortal soul for the encouragement of Arjuna, a warrior, to participate in the bloody war of the *Mahābhārata*.

The *Gītā*, in III.42, the borrowed verse from the *Kaṭha Up.*III.10, establishes the superior position of the soul (*ātmā*) over the body. The verse argues that the five organs (*indriyāṇi*) are superior (*param*) to the gross body, the mind (*manaḥ*) is superior to the organs (*indriyebhyaḥ*), the intellect (*buddhiḥ*) is the superior to the mind and the soul (*yaḥ*), the one who is innermost as compared with all the objects of perception, is superior to the intellect (172-73). The verse holds the view that the human soul, the ultimate energy, guides the human body because it transcends the human body and is immortal. The *Gītā* interprets the physical bodies (*śarīrāṇi*) as being the clothes (*vāsāṃsi*) of the soul (*dehī*) that should be changed when they become worn out (*jīrṇāni*) (II.22, 71). The weapons (*śastrāṇi*) do not cut (*na chindanti*), fire (*pāvakaḥ*) does not burn (*na dahati*), water (*āpaḥ*) does not moisten (*na enam kledayanti*) and air (*mārutaḥ*) does not dry (*na śoṣayati*) it (*enam*), the soul (II.23, 72) and it is changeless (*sanātanaḥ*) and omnipresent (*sarva-gataḥ*) (II.24, Gambhirananda' translation 73). In all the above verses, the *Gītā* exalts the superior position of the soul (*ātmā*) over the body.

In VIII.3, the *Gītā* identifies the soul (*ātmā*) with another *Upanisadic* concept of *Brahman*. The *Brahman* is the supreme reality (*brahma paramam*) and it is imperishable (*akṣaram*). That very supreme *Brahman* exists in each individual body

as the indwelling self (*svabhāvaḥ*) and it is called *adhyātmam*, the *ātmā* or self that dwells inside us (Ranganathananda's translation vol.II, 276). The verse identifies the *ātmā* with *Brahman* because, in ultimate analysis, the *ātmā* is no other than the supreme *Brahman* himself. The *Brahman*, who dwells inside us, is called the *ātmā* or soul. This explains the meaning of the phrase 'I am Brahma!' of the *Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka Upanisad* I: 4.10 (72). We all are *Brahman* because the *Brahman* dwells inside us. This implies that the *Brahman* is imperishable and all pervasive and the individual *ātmā* or self is only the manifestation of the *Brahman* himself. The verse VIII.3 also upholds the essence of the 'Imperishable' *Brahman* of the *Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka Upanisad* III: 8.9, which is described as the prime mover of the whole Universe (Hume's translation 98). The *Brahman* dwells inside everyone and pervades everywhere and the world functions only with the power of the *Brahman*.

The *Gītā* uses the term 'Brahman' in at least three different senses. The term, in the text, connotes the *Vedas*, the *Upanisadic Brahman* and a part of the super-personality of God. The word 'brahman' in *brahmodbhavam* of III.15 (148) and *brahmaṇaḥ mukhe* of IV.32 (220) is used to denote the *Vedas*. In IV.24 and 25, the *Gītā* defines *Brahman* as being everything of the *yajña* process; the offerer, offering, the fire of oblations and the ultimate goal of the *yajña* (208, 213). Here, the verses uphold the *Upanisadic Brahman* as differenceless ultimate principle. The *Gītā* in VIII.3 and X.12 also upholds this *Upanisadic* principle of *Brahman*. The verse VIII.3 defines *Brahman* as imperishable (*akṣaram*) (342) and X.12 as supreme *Brahman* (*param brahma*) (Gambhirananda's translation 408). The *Gītā* uses the word 'Brahman', by appropriating it from the *Upanisads*, to denote an ultimate superior state of realization (Dasgupta "Philosophy" 475). In XIII.12, the *Gītā* describes the *Brahman* as beginningless and the ultimate object of knowledge:

jñeyam yattat pravakṣyāmi yaj jñātvā 'mṛtamaśnute

anādimat param brahmā na sat tannāsaducyate

(I shall speak of that which is to be known, by realizing which one attains Immortality. The supreme Brahman is without any beginning. That is called neither being nor non-being.). (527)

The verse describes the supreme nature of *Brahman* (*param brahma*). He is beginningless (*anādimat*) and cannot be said to be either existent or non-existent (*na sat tan nāsad ucyate*). One should attain this knowledge of the *Brahman* and attaining this knowledge (*jñātvā*), he achieves immortality (*śnute amṛtam*) (527-28). It is said that this *Brahman* has his hands, feet, eyes, head, mouth and ears everywhere in the world (*sarvataḥ-pāni-pādam*) and he pervades all (*sarvamāvṛtya tiṣṭhati*) (XIII.13, 532-33). *Brahman* does not possess senses but he illuminates all sense-qualities. He is unattached but upholds all and he is without quality but perceives qualities (XIII.14, 533-34). He is both inside and outside of all living beings, of all that is moving and unmoved. He is both near and far but is incomprehensible due to his subtle nature (XIII.15, 535-36). Being one in many, the sustainer of all beings, the devourer and the originator, he is the light of all lights and he is both knowledge and the object of knowledge, residing in the heart of all (XIII.16-7, Gambhirananda's translation 536-37). The whole concept of *Brahman* stated above is the direct borrowings from the *Upanisads*. The *Brahman* stated in the above verses is no other than the immutable, imperishable, all-pervading abstract *Upanisadic Brahman*.

The *Gītā*, in many verses, defines the attainment of *Brahman* as the ultimate goal of human beings. The *Gītā* interprets *Brahman* as the faultless state of

equilibrium (*nirdoṣam hi samam brahma*) (V.19, 258-60) and suggests us to attain brahmahood through a complete detachment from all worldly passions.

The meditative man (*muniḥ*) equipped with yoga (*yoga-yuktaḥ*) attains *Brahman* immediately (*na cireṇa*) (V.6, 245-46). A person, who dedicates all his actions to *Brahman* and becomes unattached, does not get polluted (*na lipyate*) even by sin (*pāpena*) (V.10, 249). A knower of *Brahman* (*brahmavit*) is free from delusion (*asammūḍhaḥ*) and does not get delighted (*na prahr̥syet*) by getting what is desirable and become dejected (*na ca udvijet*) by getting what is undesirable (V.20, 261).

A person, who is absorbed in the meditation of *Brahman* (*brahma-yoga-yukta-ātmā*), acquires undecaying Bliss (*akṣayam sukham*) (V.21, 262). The *Gītā* conveys the importance of the attainment of *Brahman* for the human beings with the terms *brahma-bhūta*, *brahma-bhūya* and *brahma-nirvāṇa*. The *brahma-bhūta* in V.24, VI.27, XVIII.54 (265, 298, 727) and *brahma-bhūya* in XIV.26 (589) refer the attainment of Brahmahood and the *brahma-nirvāṇa* in II.72, V.24, 25, 26 (Gambhirananda's translation 120, 265-66) suggest the attainment of the ultimate bliss of *Brahman*. This implies that the *Gītā* has given the high priority to the *Upanisadic Brahman* as being the ultimate differenceless principle and the ultimate state of realization.

The *Gītā*, in some verses, defines *Brahman* as being only a part of the super-personality of God. The *Gītā*, in XIV.27 interprets the personal God, Kṛṣṇa, as the upholder of the immortal and imperishable *Brahman* and in XI.15, *Brahman* is shown sitting inside the divine body of Kṛṣṇa with other gods (Gambhirananda's translation 589,437). This exalts the position of the personal God and makes the *Upanisadic Brahman* inferior. Dasgupta examines:

. . . according to the *Gītā* the personal God as *Isvara* is the supreme principle, and *Brahman*, in the sense of a qualityless, undifferentiated ultimate principle as taught in the *Upanisads*, is a principle which, though great in itself and representing the ultimate essence of God, is nevertheless upheld by the personal God or *Isvara*. ("Philosophy" 474)

The *Gītā* puts the contradictory claims while dealing with the *Brahman* and the personal God, *Isvara*. The *Gītā*, in some verses, upholds the *Upanisadic Brahman* as being the ultimate principle, while, in other verses, exalts the personal God to the supreme position and reduces the *Upanisadic Brahman* only to a part of it. The *Gītā* converts the earlier *Upanisadic Brahman* into the Mighty Lord (*maheśvara*), the concept borrowed from the *Svetāśvatara Upanishad* IV.10 (Hume's translation 361). This concept was developed in the later phase of the *Upanisadic* age. In the early phase of the *Upanisadic* age, the *Brahman* was all-powerful and in the later phase, the *Brahman* became weak and the Mighty Lord became all-powerful. This shows that the *Gītā*'s elaboration of *Brahman* does not carry the same meaning and the meaning differs from one verse to another.

The *Gītā* also upholds the *Upanisadic* concept of *māyā*, which takes the *prakṛiti*, the felt material world as *māyā* or illusion and the *Brahman* or the Mighty Lord as *māyīn* or illusion maker. The material world is an illusion and this obstructs our vision to see the reality exists beyond it. The people do not acknowledge the existence of the *Brahman* or the Mighty Lord because it is difficult to cross over (*duratyayā*) the divine *māyā* (*daivī māyā*) constituted by the *guṇas* (*guṇa-mayī*) and see him (VII.14, 326). The foolish (*mūḍhāḥ*), evildoers (*duṣkṛtinaḥ*) and the most depraved people (*nara-adhamāḥ*) adopt the demonical ways (*āsuram bhāvam āśritāḥ*)

and are deprived of wisdom (*apa-hṛta-jñānāḥ*) because of *māyā* (*māyayā*) (VII.15, 327). The God (*aham*) does not become manifest (*na prakāśaḥ*) to all, to the world (*sarvasya*) because he is enveloped by *yoga-māyā* (*yoga-māyā-samāvṛtaḥ*) (VII.25, 334-35). All the above verses give an idea that there is an obstruction between the God and us and this obstruction is taken here as *māyā* or illusion created by the God himself. This obstruction is the visible material world, which blocks us from seeing the ultimate reality the *Brahman* or the Mighty Lord. In XVIII.61, the *Gītā* claims that the God resides in the heart of all creatures (*sarva-bhūtānām*) and moves them by *māyā*, like dolls on a machine (*yantra-ārūḍhāni*) (735-36). This implies that all the visible entities are regarded here as puppets tied with a string and moved by the God seated beyond this *māyā* or illusory world. In VII.6, the *Gītā*, without using the word *māyā*, brings out the clear conception of *māyā*. The verse says that the God (*aham*) is the source (*yoni*) of all things (*sarvāṇi bhūtāni*) and he is the origin (*prabhavaḥ*) and the end (*pralayaḥ*) of the whole Universe (*kṛtsnasya jagataḥ*) (Gambhirananda's translation 320). The verse holds the view that the whole material universe is a *māyā* or illusion because its creation and termination depend on the *māyīn* or the illusion maker, the *Brahman* or the Almighty God. The *māyīn* stands for *Brahman* in earlier *Upanisads*, for the Almighty God in later *Upanisads* and for the personal God in the *Gītā*. If the existence of the material universe depends on *Brahman* or God, then, the *Brahman* or God alone is real and the cosmic universe is unreal, a *māyā* or an illusion.

The *Gītā* exploits the three *Upanisadic* terms: soul (*ātmanā*), *Brahman* and illusion (*māyā*) and develops a coherent idealistic philosophy. The *Upanisads* contain both trends of philosophies; the materialist and the idealist, but the *Gītā*, like the *Brahma Sūtras*, only extracts the idealist trends of the *Upanisadic* philosophy.

The idealist trends predominate over the materialist ones in the *Upanisads*.

The *Upanisads* express their idealism through the exposition of the three terms: *ātmā*, *Brahman* and *māyā*. The gist of the *Gītā*'s idealism also depends on the explanation of these three terms. The *Gītā* borrows the concept of *ātmā* and even some verses from the *Upanisads*. The *Gītā* upholds the *Upanisadic* concept of *Brahman* but in some verses, the text makes the *Brahman* inferior to the personal God or *Isvara*. The text borrows the *Upanisadic* concept of *māyā* and defines the visible material world as being a *māyā* or an illusion. The *Gītā* philosophy, overall, does not contradict with the *Upanisadic* idealism. In essence, the *Gītā*, as the well-known verse argues, is the milk or the gist of the *Upanisadic* idealism.

4.3 The *Sāṅkhya* System and the *Bhagavad Gītā*

The *Bhagavad Gītā* synthesizes the different contradictory schools of philosophy. The text expounds the *Upanisadic* idealism and it also bases its philosophy on the materialistic *Sāṅkhya* system. The *Sāṅkhya* is given a prominent place in more than one chapter of the *Gītā* and the text honors its founder Kapila (Damodaran “Bhagavad” 191). In X.26, Kṛṣṇa proclaims himself as the sage Kapila (*kapilo munih*) (417). The text mentions the system by its name. The *Gītā*, in II.39 and III.3, refers to the term *Sāṅkhya* and identifies it with *buddhi-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* respectively (Gambhirananda’s translation 85, 134-35). Likewise, the text uses the different terminologies of the system and conveys its own peculiar concepts through them. The following statement of Garbe points out the abundant references to the *Sāṅkhya* system in the *Gītā*: “The teachings of the *Sāṅkhya* -Yoga constitute almost entirely the foundation of the philosophical observations of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. In comparison with them, the *Vedānta* takes a second place. *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga* are

often mentioned by name, while the Vedānta appears only once (in XV.15). . .” (qtd. in Damodaran “Bhagavad” 191). This statement exemplifies that the *Gītā* presents mainly a materialist philosophy. However, far from expounding the materialism of *Sāṅkhya* system in the text, the *Gītā* compilers modify the materialistic *Sāṅkhya* in the framework of the *Upanisadic* idealism.

The *Sāṅkhya* school of thought is one of the oldest philosophical systems of India and its influence is quite extensive (Damodaran “Samkhya” 130; Chattopadhyaya “Samkhya System” 106). The antiquity of the *Sāṅkhya* system is evidenced by the fact that the name *Sāṅkhya* and its certain terminologies are found in certain *Upanisads*, particularly the *Kaṭha*, the *Maitri*, the *Svetāśvatara* and the *Praśna*. The *Mahābhārata* describes the *Sāṅkhya* and the *Yoga* as two eternal systems like all the *Vedas*. Kautilya’s *Arthaśāstra* elucidates only three systems, namely, the *Sāṅkhya*, *Yoga* and the *Lokāyata*. Garbe, based on evidences like these, concludes that the *Sāṅkhya* was pre-Buddhistic and the source of Buddhism (qtd. in Chattopadhyaya “Sankhya” 368- 69). The *Sāṅkhya* system stands against the *Vedic* precepts and attempts to give the rationalistic answer to the mysteries of the world. John Davies points out: “It is the earliest attempt on record to give an answer, from reason alone, to the mysterious questions which arise in every thoughtful mind about the origin of the world, the nature and relations of man, and his future destiny” (“Preface” v). The literal meaning of the word “*Sāṅkhya*” justifies this proposition. The term “*Sāṅkhya*” denotes number and calculation or reasoning. A statement of the *Mahābhārata* supports this: “They (the *Sāṅkhyans*) exercise reason (*Sāṅkhya*) and discuss Nature and the twenty-four principles and are therefore called *Sāṅkhya*” (qtd. in Davies “Kapila” 9). This suggests that the *Sāṅkhya*, originally, possesses the anti-*Upanisadic* materialistic philosophy.

Kapila is regarded as the father of the *Sāṅkhya* system and he is believed to have lived in the seventh or sixth century B.C. (Damodaran “Samkhya” 130).

Kapila was born in northern India sometime before the Buddha. It was near the Himalaya mountains [modern Nepal] and was the birthplace of the Buddha, Kapilavastu, the city of Kapila (Davies “Kapila” 6). The original works of the *Sāṅkhya* system are not available to us. The *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā* (Exposition of the *Sāṅkhya*) by Iswara Kṛṣṇa is taken as the oldest work of high authority on the subject and it cannot be dated earlier than the second century A.D. It is extremely short, containing only 72 couplets (Damodaran “Samkhya” 132; Davies “Kapila” 10; Chattopadhyaya “Samkhya system” 106). The *Sāṅkhya-Pravachana* (Exposition of the *Sāṅkhya*) or *Sāṅkhya-sūtra* is another work of *Sāṅkhya* philosophy. It is wrongly attributed to Kapila himself because it appears comparatively modern and the actual date of this work is considered to be somewhat near A.D. 1400 (Davies “Kapila” 9; Chattopadhyaya “Samkhya System” 106). In addition to these two works, the *Mahābhārata*, the *Caraka Saṁhitā* (78 A.D.) and the younger *Upanisads* are also taken as the source of *Sāṅkhya* philosophy (372). It is known something about the *Sāṅkhya* system from *Kārikā*, *Sūtra* and other different sources, but all of them are incapable of giving the essence of original *Sāṅkhya*. It cannot be uncritically relied on them for our knowledge of the original *Sāṅkhya* (368). It is necessary to go beyond these works and analyze the refutation of the *Sāṅkhya* system by its rival systems in order to understand the nature of the original *Sāṅkhya*. The refutation of the *Sāṅkhya* system by *Brahma Sūtras* and its major commentators Sankara and Ramanuja give us real indications about the nature of the original *Sāṅkhya*. *Brahma Sūtras* has taken the *Sāṅkhya* philosophy as the major challenge to the *Vedānta* system and at least 60 *Sūtras* of the text are designed to refute the doctrine of the *pradhāna* of the *Sāṅkhya*

system. The writings of Sankara, Ramanuja and other *Vedantists* are also designed to refute their major challenge, the *Sāṅkhya* system (Chattopadhyaya “Sankhya” 370-73).

The *Sāṅkhya* system has its own fundamental doctrines. The *Brahma Sūtras* understands the *Sāṅkhya* philosophy as the doctrine of *pradhāna*. This doctrine relates to the question of the origin of the world. The *Sāṅkhya* philosophy holds the view that the world is essentially material and, its cause, too, must have been so. The *Sāṅkhya*'s doctrine of *pradhāna* considers *pradhāna* or *prakṛiti*, the primeval matter, which is non-intelligent or non-sentient, as the first cause of the world. This doctrine of *Sāṅkhya* defines the two states of matter: *vyakta*, manifest and *avyakta*, unmanifest. The matter in its gross or explicit form is called *vyakta*. It is the visible material world. In the *avyakta* state, the matter was subtle and because of its subtlety, it could not be directly perceived. The *vyakta* evolved through *avyakta* and before its evolution the *avyakta* was formless, undifferentiated, limitless and ubiquitous (“Sankhya” 372; “Samkhya System” 109). The doctrine of *pradhāna* of the *Sāṅkhya* system directly contradicts with the *Brahma vāda* or *Brahma Kārana vāda* of the *Vedānta* philosophy. The *Brahma vāda* of the *Vedantists* considers the abstract *Brahman* as the ultimate reality or the first cause of the world. Sankara asserts: “It is impossible to find room in the *Vedānta* texts for the non-intelligent *pradhāna*, the fiction of the *Sāṅkhyas*; because it is not founded on scripture. How so? Because the quality of seeing, i.e., thinking, is in the scripture ascribed to the cause” (qtd. in Chattopadhyaya “Sankhya” 376). The above passage makes it clear that the *Sāṅkhya* philosophy considers the non-intelligent *pradhāna* as the first cause of the world, and the *Vedānta* philosophy takes the intelligent principle or 'thinking' as the first cause. The question of the relation of thinking to being is the fundamental

question of any philosophy. The philosophers who assert the thinking as the first cause of the world form the camp of idealism and those who regard the being or the matter as the first cause belong to the various schools of materialism (Engels “*Ludwig*” 17). Thus, the controversy between the *Sāṅkhya* and *Vedānta* philosophies is the controversy between materialism and idealism.

The *Sāṅkhya*'s doctrine of *pradhāna* is based on another doctrine of *svabhāva* (*svabhāva vāda*) because the former is logically incomplete without the latter (Chattopadhyaya “*Sankhya*” 394). In *Sāṅkhya* terminology, the doctrine of *svabhāva* is also known as the theory of causation called the *Satkāryavāda*. The *Satkāryavāda* signifies two things: i) the causality is a process and ii) that the causal process is real. It recognizes the *vyakta*, the visible world, as an effect of *avyakta*, the primeval matter, a cause. This is a beginningless and endless process of cause-effect chain, as *Sāṅkhya* says *Vyaktavyakta*. This is a dynamic order (Mukerji “*Theory*” 9-10). The *Sāṅkhya*'s theory of causation accepts the natural laws (*Svabhāvenaeva*) rather than any spiritual principle behind every modification of *prakṛiti*. Sankara, in his refutation of the *Sāṅkhya* philosophy, reveals the position of the *Sāṅkhya* :

As non-sentient milk flows forth from its own nature (*svabhāvenaeva*) merely for the nourishment of the young animal, and as non-sentient water, from its own nature (*svabhāvenaeva*), flows along for the benefit of mankind; so the *pradhāna* also, although non-intelligent, may be supposed to move from its own nature (*svabhāvenaeva*) merely for the purpose of effecting the highest end of man (*purusartha siddhaye*). (qtd. in Chattopadhyaya “*Sankhya*” 393)

The passage makes it clear about the *Sāṅkhya*'s position of the material cause behind every phenomena of the material world. The non-intelligent *pradhāna*, because of its

inherent nature, modified itself into the visible world. The *Sāṅkhya* does not recognize the role of any intelligent principle for the natural flow of milk for the calf and the water for human kind.

The doctrine of *svabhāva* or the natural law of the *Sāṅkhya* philosophy is further proved by the following refutation of the *Brahma Sūtras* II. 2.5: “And (it can) not (be said that the Pradhāna modifies itself spontaneously) like grass, etc., (which turn into milk), because of its absence elsewhere (than in the female animals)” (Sivananda “*Brahma Sūtras*” 192). The above *Sūtra* indicates about the *svabhāva vāda* of the *Sāṅkhya* philosophy, which considers the transformation of the green grass into white milk as natural when the grass is eaten by the cow. It does not pre-suppose the role of any intelligent principle or the supreme Lord for this transformation. The *Sūtra* refutes this proposition of the *Sāṅkhya* with the argument that the grass cannot be changed itself into milk when it is not eaten or eaten by a bull or other male animals. This argument cannot be justified because the *svabhāva vāda* of the *Sāṅkhya* does not consider the grass only the cause of the milk but it considers the cause as “the entire natural complex, viz. grass-as-eaten-by-the cow” (Chattopadhyaya “*Sankhya*” 395).

The *Sāṅkhya*'s doctrine of *svabhāva* or the law of nature pre-supposes the theory of matter in motion. The rejection of the role of the intelligent principle or the supreme Lord for the modifications of matter justifies this theory or the dialectical outlook in *Sāṅkhya* philosophy. Engels elaborates the essence of the dialectics of nature: “. . . the view that the whole of nature, from the smallest element to the greatest, from grains of sand to suns, from Protista to man, has its existence in eternal coming into being and passing away, in ceaseless flux, in unresting motion and

change” (“Introduction” 30-1). The *Sāṅkhya*’s *Satkāryavāda* or the cause-effect chain for the modifications of matter carries the above-mentioned essence of the dialectics of nature. The *Sāṅkhya*’s theory of *Satkāryavāda* would remain incomplete if it does not recognize the eternal motion of matter. TH. Stcherbatsky acknowledges: “. . . the idea of an eternal Matter which is never at rest, always evolving from one form into another, is a very strong point of the [Sāṅkhya] system, and it does credit to the philosophers of that school, that they at so early a date in the history of human thought so clearly formulated the idea of an eternal Matter which is never at rest” (“Sankhya” 18). This explains the idea of eternal motion of matter or the dialectical outlook of the original *Sāṅkhya* system.

The doctrine of *pradhāna* of the *Sāṅkhya* makes the original *Sāṅkhya* a materialistic philosophy because it recognizes the primacy of matter over consciousness. The doctrine of *svabhāva* makes the original *Sāṅkhya* “a philosophy of perpetual flux – of coming into being and passing away – a philosophy of becoming, contesting the view of pure being or changeless absolute” (Chattopadhyaya “Change” 502). Thus, the original *Sāṅkhya*, though in its crude form, carries the essence of dialectical materialism.

The matter contains its constituent elements or the movers to enable its eternal motion. In the *Sāṅkhya* view, the matter is composed of three constituents or the three kinds of substances, technically called the *guṇas*. The thirteenth couplet of *Sāṅkhya - Kārikā* states them and they are: (i) *Sattva*, exhibiting qualities of *laghu prakasakam* i.e., buoyancy, lightness, illumination and joy, (ii) *rajas*, exhibiting qualities of *upastambhakam calam* i.e., excitation, stimulation and movement and (iii) *tamas*, exhibiting qualities of *Guru Varanakam* i.e., heaviness, sloth and obstruction

(Virupakshananda 45). These three *guṇas*, being the constituents of matter or *prakṛiti*, are essentially material. The undeveloped state of *prakṛiti*, i.e., the primeval matter, too, is accordingly, conceived as composed of these three constituents. These three *guṇas* possess the contradictions and unity at the same time. In the undeveloped state of *prakṛiti*, these formed a state of equilibrium. As long as these *guṇas* were in a state of equilibrium, there was no visible world. This pre-evolving stage of *prakṛiti* or *pradhāna* is called *avyakta* or the unmanifest. A loss of equilibrium of these three *guṇas* is conceived as the starting point of the evolution of the world from the *avyakta* state of matter but the cause of the loss of the equilibrium is undefined. From the disturbed equilibrium of the *avyakta*, first evolved *mahat*, ‘the great’ or *buddhi*, ‘intelligence’. From *Buddhi* arose *ahaṁkāra*, the sense of the ego. From *ahaṁkāra* arose: (i) the *manas* or ‘mind’, (ii) five sense-organs or *jñānendriyas*, (iii) five organs of action or *karmendriyas*, (iv) five subtle elements or *tanmātras*, and, in the *Sāṅkhya* view, they ultimately gave rise to the five gross elements or *mahābhūtas*, namely earth, water, fire, air and *ākāśa*, or the empty space (Chattopadhyaya “Samkhya System” 110; “Matter” 414). It is difficult to grasp the *Sāṅkhya*’s conception of the successive stages of its categories for the evolution of the world. It looks odd why *ahaṁkāra*, the sense of the ego, is given the prime importance in its scheme of the evolutionary process. However, the *Sāṅkhya* system pre-supposes the evolutionary process of the world through the inner contradictions of the three constituents of the *pradhāna* or *prakṛiti* i.e., *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. The *Sāṅkhya* system “. . . does not recognize any Avidyā or Māyā or Vāsanā as the cause of the world” (Mukerji “Theory” 15). Instead, it considers the three material constituents or *guṇas* of matter as its driving force that bring the inert matter into motion and cause the evolution and the development of the world.

The original *Sāṅkhya* explains only the above-mentioned twenty-four categories of the system. Dasgupta finds evidence of this view in *Caraka Samhitā*, which was much older than the *Sāṅkhya Kārikā*:

According to Caraka . . . the categories may be said to be twenty-four only. . . Caraka identifies the avyakta part of prakṛti with puruṣa as forming one category. The vikara or evolutionary products of prakṛti are called Kṣetra, whereas the avyakta part of prakṛti is regarded as the Kṣetra jna. This avyakta and cetana are one and the same entity. (“Kapila” 213- 14)

The *Caraka Samhitā* identifies the *cetana* or *puruṣa* with the *avyakta* part of *prakṛiti* and if this interpretation were correct, the *puruṣa* becomes only a part of the *prakṛiti* or the principle of consciousness potentially contained in the primeval matter.

Dasgupta also gives the evidence of this view from the certain passage of the *Mahābhārata*:

In *Mahābhārata* XII. 318 three schools of Sāṅkhya are mentioned, viz. those who admitted twenty-four categories (the school I have sketched above), those who admitted twenty-five (the well-known orthodox Sāṅkhya system) and those who admitted twenty-six categories. This last school admitted a supreme being in addition to puruṣa and this was the twenty-sixth principle. (“Kapila” 217)

The *Caraka Samhitā* and certain passages of the *Mahābhārata* indicate that there was a version of the *Sāṅkhya* older than the one discussed in the *Sāṅkhya Kārikā*, in which the principle of the *puruṣa* was understood in a materialistic sense. Thus, the *Kārikā*'s understanding of the *puruṣa*, as pure consciousness, was not a feature of early *Sāṅkhya*.

Isvara Kṛṣṇa's *Sāṅkhya Kārikā*, which gives us comparatively later version of the philosophy, introduces the *puruṣa* being the twenty-fifth category as the eternally detached pure consciousness. Isvara Kṛṣṇa might have been influenced by the growing prestige of the *Upanisadic* idealism that treats the *puruṣa* as pure consciousness and identifies it with the immortal, abstract *Brahman*. *Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka Upanisad* II: 5.2 explains the position of the *puruṣa* in *Upanisadic* thought: "These waters are honey for all things, and all things are honey for these waters. This shining, immortal person [*puruṣa*] who is in these waters, and, with reference to oneself, this shining, immortal Person [*puruṣa*] who is made of semen – he is just this Soul, this Immortal, this Brahma, this All" (Hume's translation 84). The *Upanisadic puruṣa* described in the above passage is the abstract *Brahman* itself and it is alien to and eternally aloof from matter. This *Upanisadic* concept of *puruṣa* was eventually introduced into the *Sāṅkhya* from the *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* onwards. By introducing such a conception into the system, the *Sāṅkhya* became only a bundle of inconsistencies. Chattopadhyaya argues: "He [the author of the *Kārikā*] was trying in many ways to make room within the doctrine of the *pradhāna* for the principle of the *puruṣa* in the sense of pure consciousness and thus made the *Sāṅkhya* system grossly inconsistent" ("Sankhya" 415). The materialistic principle of *svabhāva* of the original *Sāṅkhya* is incompatible with the *Upanisadic* principle of *puruṣa* inserted in the later *Sāṅkhya* system.

The *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* wants to make the *puruṣa* responsible for the superintendence of the modification of the *prakṛiti*. However, it was difficult for the author of the *Kārikā* to give the role of active superintendence for *puruṣa* within the materialistic position of the *Sāṅkhya* philosophy. Therefore, the conception of a passive superintendence is invented and the *Kārikā*, based on the analogy of the lame

and the blind, does this. The lame, the *puruṣa*, sitting on the shoulder of the blind, though passive, can direct the movement of the blind, the *prakṛiti* (Chattopadhyaya “Matter” 419). But, Sankara does not consider the superintendence of the lame over the blind is purely passive and besides, he argues: “This, your new position involves an abandonment of your old position, according to which the *pradhāna* is moving of itself and the (indifferent and inactive) soul possesses no moving power”

(qtd. in Chattopadhyaya “Sankhya system” 116). Likewise, the *Kārikā* makes another inconsistent claim, according to which all the modifications of the *prakṛiti* are meant to serve the purpose of the *puruṣa*. The fifty ninth couplet of *Kārikā* outlines: “Just as a dancing girl ceases to dance after having exhibited herself to the spectators, so also, the Prakṛti ceases to operate after having exhibited herself to Puruṣa”

(Virupakshananda 115). A dancing girl dances not for her own sake but for the enjoyment of the spectators and, according to *Kārikā*, the *prakṛiti* also evolves and modifies itself not for its own sake but for the enjoyment of the *puruṣa*. The *Kārikā* also holds the view that the activities of the *prakṛiti* are for the liberation of the *puruṣa* and this conception, which was evidently borrowed from the *Upanisads*, makes the *Sāṅkhya* more inconsistent. If *pradhāna* or the primeval matter is the original cause of the visible world, there will be no logical status in the system for the principle of pure consciousness as either being the superintendent or the enjoyer of the evolutionary process. In addition, if, on the other hand, the system sticks on the principle of pure consciousness, the doctrine of *pradhāna* and *svabhāva* should be abandoned and looked the whole evolutionary process as unreal or illusion (Chattopadhyaya “Sankhya” 415-17). Thus, by introducing the *puruṣa* as a pure consciousness in the system, Isvara Kṛṣṇa converted the *Sāṅkhya* into a sort of disguised *Vedānta*.

The *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* raises the philosophical status of the *puruṣa* to the level of *Upanisadic* pure consciousness, but “. . . the fact is that whatever might have been the form of original *Sāṅkhya*, there was in it the principle of the *puruṣa*, because we do not come across any version of the system which did not mention this principle” (Chttopadhyaya “Sankhya” 403). If the principle of the *puruṣa* was alien to original *Sāṅkhya*, there could not have been much difference between it and the materialistic philosophy attributed to the *Lokāyatikas*. The *Sāṅkhya*'s concept of *puruṣa* makes the *Sāṅkhya* system distinct from the *Lokāyata* philosophy. However, the Jaina commentator Silanka finds the admission of separate *puruṣas* in the system nominal. The *puruṣas* are incapable of doing any work and all the work is done by *prakṛiti*, the gross elements. The body and the mind are taken as the combination of the gross elements and therefore, the soul or the *puruṣa* is of no use in the system (Dasgupta “Lokāyata” 527). This shows that the concept of *puruṣa* was there in the original *Sāṅkhya* system but it was nominal and regarded only as the part of the *prakṛiti* itself. The earlier nominal or *udāsina puruṣa* of the *Sāṅkhya* system underwent its own course of development through the different stages of Indian history.

The status of the *puruṣa* of the *Sāṅkhya* system underwent its qualitative change when the ancient matriarchal society transformed into the patriarchal society in India. The word 'puruṣa' literally means the male human body and the authors of the earlier *Upanisads* also understood the word in this sense ("Asura-view" 61). The different versions of the *Sāṅkhya* including the *Caraka Saṁhitā*, and Gaudapada's commentary on the *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* interpreted the *Sāṅkhya* system in relation to human birth and death. According to them, the basic philosophical categories of the *Sāṅkhya* were rooted in human analogy. The original *Sāṅkhya* might have interpreted the cosmic process of creation resulted from the union of the *prakṛiti* and the *puruṣa*

like the birth of a child proceeds from the union of the male and female (403-04). This indicates that the *prakṛiti* and the *puruṣa* in the *Sāṅkhya* system denote the female and the male principles. The nominal or anomalous position of the *puruṣa* in early *Sāṅkhya* can be interpreted with the anomalous position of the *puruṣa* in matriarchal society. In the ancient matriarchal society, the father has no kinship with his children and he is considered an alien and a mere visitor. The male had to visit the female to ensure human reproduction but he had no claim to real paternity and his position was utterly unimportant. This anomalous position of the *puruṣa* in mother-right is reflected in the early *Sāṅkhya*'s concept of *puruṣa* in the cosmic process of creation. This anomalous position of the *puruṣa* in original *Sāṅkhya* appeared as its greatest weakness because it provided an easy access to the later thinkers to introduce alien ideas into the system. The status of the *puruṣa* in the system was reversed and upgraded with the introduction of the father-right and the status of the *prakṛiti* was delegated to the secondary position. The author of the *Kārikā* and more importantly, the later commentators of the *Sāṅkhya* as Gaudapada, Aniruddha and Vijñāna Bhikṣu made the *puruṣa* the distinctly idealistic principle of self as pure consciousness and virtually, they made the system a *Vedānta* (Chattopadhyaya "Sankhya" 407-08).

The atheistic and materialistic original *Sāṅkhya* was spiritualized in such a manner that the essence of the original *Sāṅkhya* passed into its opposite (Chattopadhyaya "Asura-view" 62). The *Upanisadic* idealists deliberately contaminated the genuine *Sāṅkhya* ideas and they endeavored to transform the *Sāṅkhya* system into the idealist document in the subsequent writings. Garbe points out: "The original *Sāṅkhya* came indeed to be perverted in the *Svetāśvatara*, the Epic, and the *Bhagvat Gītā* and, later still, in the theistic Yoga and the several sectarian and Vedānta-coloured *Purāṇas*" (qtd. in Chattopadhyaya "Sankhya" 429). These writings,

which are influenced by the *Vedānta* philosophy, have used certain concepts and terminologies of the *Sāṅkhya* and interpreted them in their own idealistic way. Of these writings, the *Bhagavad Gītā* is the important one that borrows the different concepts and terminologies from the *Sāṅkhya* system and interprets them in its own theistic and idealistic way, violating the essence of the original *Sāṅkhya* philosophy.

The idealism that entered in the *Sāṅkhya* system through its concept of *puruṣa* after *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* onwards is more strengthened by the new concept of *puruṣa* of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. The *Gītā* upholds the earlier idealistic interpretations of the *puruṣa* and gives its own peculiar interpretations of the word by introducing the different types of *puruṣas*. The *Gītā* identifies the two major types of *puruṣas*: the lower and the higher. The lower *puruṣa* is defined in the text as an equivalent with the individual soul that is different in different bodies and they are associated with the *prakṛiti* and its *guṇas*. They enjoy the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* and are continually affected by the operations of the *guṇas*. The higher *puruṣa*, on the other hand, is taken as the all-pervading fundamental life-principle that illuminates the *prakṛiti* and at the same time, unaffected and untouched by the effects of the *guṇas*. The *Gītā* equates the higher *puruṣa* with *paramātmān*, the passive perceiver, thinker, upholder, enjoyer and the great Lord. In XIII.21, 22, the *Gītā* elaborates this concept as follows:

puruṣaḥ prakṛtistho hi bhūṅkte prakṛtijān guṇān

kāraṇaṁ guṇasaṅgo 'sya sadasadyonijanmasu

upadraṣṭānumantā ca bhartā bhoktā maheśvaraḥ

paramātmēti cāpyukto dehe 'smin puruṣaḥ paraḥ

(The soul in nature enjoys the modes born of nature. Attachment to the modes is the cause of its births in good and evil wombs. The Supreme Spirit in the body is said to be the Witness, the Permitter, the Supporter, the Experiencer, the Great Lord and the Supreme Self.). (365-66)

The individual soul or the lower *puruṣa* that meets *prakṛiti* and is affected by the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*, takes its rebirth in good or bad bodies (*sadasadyonijanmasu*). The higher *puruṣa* (*paraḥ puruṣaḥ*), who is only a witness (*upadraṣṭā*) and unaffected by the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*, is the supreme self (*paramātmā*) or the great God (*maheśvaraḥ*) (Radhakrishnan's translation 365-66). The above verses state the two *puruṣas*: the lower and the higher, which signify the individual soul and the Supreme self, the God. This shows that the *Sāṅkhya* of the *Gītā* represents the last school that ". . . admitted a Supreme being in addition to *puruṣa* and this was the twenty-sixth principle [of the *Sāṅkhya* philosophy]" (Dasgupta "Kapila" 217).

The author of the *Gītā* borrowed the concept of two *puruṣas* from the *Upanisadic* simile of the two birds seated in the same tree, of which the one eats tasteful fruits while other remains contented without them. The common verse of *Muṇḍaka* III: 1.1. and *Svetāśvatara* IV.6 illustrates:

Two birds, fast-bound companions,

Clasp close the self-same tree.

Of these two, the one eats sweet fruit;

The other looks on without eating. (Hume's translation 326-27, 360)

The lower and the higher *puruṣas* both dwell inside human body or operate and affect *prakṛiti*, but the former enjoy and suffer, while the latter remains unchanged and

unperturbed amidst all the experiences of the joy and sorrow on the part of the lower *puruṣa*. This *Upanisadic* simile of the two birds provides ground for the *Gītā* to insert the newly developed concept of Supreme God inside the *Sāṅkhya* system. Here, the Supreme God is taken as the higher *puruṣa*, the twenty-sixth category of the *Sāṅkhya* system. The *Gītā* discusses the concept of the Supreme God or *Puruṣottama* in the verses VIII.1 (341), X.15 (409), XI.3 (429), XI.18 (439), XI.38 (456-7), XV.15, 18 and 19 (608, 611, 612). The *Gītā* expounds the *puruṣa* as of the individual soul in II.15 (50), II.21 (62), II.60 (107), and III.4 (137). The *Gītā* also speaks of the two other *puruṣas* as *kṣara* (changeable) and *akṣara* (unchangeable) in XV.16 and 17 (609-10). The *kṣara* is equated with all living beings and *akṣara* is the higher self (*uttamaḥ puruṣaḥ*) different from the other *puruṣas* and is also called the *paramātmān*. He pervades the three worlds and upholds them as their deathless God. In XV.18, the *Gītā*, however, characterizes the Supreme God who transcends both *kṣara* and the *akṣara puruṣas*. Hence, the Supreme God is called *puruṣottamaḥ*, the supreme *puruṣa* among all the *puruṣas* (Gambhirananda's translation 611). The above explanation of the different types of *puruṣas* shows that the *Gītā* borrows the word 'puruṣa' from the *Sāṅkhya* system, and uses it for conveying its own peculiar idealistic concepts, distorting its original meaning. The *Gītā* has reversed the early *Sāṅkhya*'s nominal or anomalous position of the *puruṣa* and upgraded its position to the level of the Supreme God, the creator and the destroyer of the whole Universe.

The *Gītā* uses the term *avyakta* of the *Sāṅkhya* system. However, the *Gītā*'s concept of *avyakta* distorts the essence of the *Sāṅkhya*'s doctrine of *pradhāna*. According to the *Sāṅkhya*'s doctrine of *pradhāna*, the *avyakta* or the primeval matter, the first cause of the world, is non-intelligent or non-sentient, while the *avyakta* of the *Gītā* signifies the intelligent or sentient principle or the Supreme God, the first cause

of the world. The *Gītā*, in IX.4, declares: "*mayā tatamidaṁ sarvaṁ jagadavyaktamūrtinā / matsthāni sarvabhūtāni na cāhaṁ teṣvavasthiṭaḥ* (By me all this universe is pervaded through My unmanifested form. All beings abide in Me but I do not abide in them.)" (Radhakrishnan's translation 282). Here, the '*avyakta mūrtinā*' or 'unmanifested form' of the verse denotes the intelligent principle, the Supreme God (*mayā*), as the first cause of the world. In VIII.20, the *Gītā* explains: "*Paraḥ tasmāttu bhāvaḥ anyaḥ avyaktaḥ avyaktāt sanātanaḥ* (There is another *avyakta* superior to this *avyakta*; that *avyakta* is *sanātanaḥ*, 'eternal'; *paraḥ*, 'supreme')" (318). The superior *avyakta* of this verse is eternal and supreme and it is identified with the Supreme God. The verse VIII.21 defines the superior *avyakta* as the imperishable (*akṣara*) and the last abode (*dhāma*) or the supreme goal (*paramām gatim*) of all beings (Ranganathananda's translation vol.2, 321-22). In II.25, the self is equated with the *avyakta* (74). In all the above verses, the *Gītā* modifies the *avyakta*, the primeval matter, of the *Sāṅkhya* system into the intelligent principle, the self or the Supreme God. The word *avyakta* is also used in the sense of "unknowability" or "disappearance" in II.28 (76). The verse VIII.20 mentions the inferior *avyakta* as a perishable entity (Gambhirananda's translation 358-59). However, no *avyakta* mentioned in the *Gītā* represents the *avyakta*, the primeval matter of the *Sāṅkhya* system.

The *Gītā* borrows the word *prakṛiti* from the *Sāṅkhya* system to denote the visible material world. However, the *Gītā's prakṛiti* does not function on its own as the *prakṛiti* of the original *Sāṅkhya* philosophy. The *Gītā's prakṛiti* is identified with the *prakṛiti* of the *Kārikā* version of the *Sāṅkhya* system. In IX.10, the *Gītā* upholds that the *prakṛiti* produces (*sūyate*) the moving and the non-moving things (*sa-cara-acaram*) of the world in the superintendence (*adhyakṣeṇa*) of the Supreme

Being (376-77). This is the borrowing concept of the *Sāṅkhya Kārikā*, which makes the *puruṣa* responsible for the superintendence of the modification of the *prakṛiti*. The *Gītā's* concept of the superintendence of God to the functions of *prakṛiti* dismisses the doctrine of *svabhāva* or the *Satkāryavāda* of the original *Sāṅkhya*. The doctrine of *svabhāva* or the *Satkāryavāda* attributes the evolution and the development of the world to the inherent qualities of *prakṛiti* or the natural laws. The *Gītā*, on the other hand, recognizes the Supreme God as the ultimate source of the creation as well as the dissolution of the whole universe: "*etadyonīni bhūtāni sarvāṅītyupadhāraya / ahaṁ kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayastathā* [Understand thus that all things (sentient and insentient) have these as their source. I am the origin as also the end of the whole Universe]" (VII.6, 320). The verse negates the *Satkāryavāda* of the original *Sāṅkhya* by attributing the Supreme God, the intelligent principle, for the origin (*prabhavaḥ*) and the end (*pralayaḥ*) of the whole Universe (*kṛtsnasya jagataḥ*) (320). In spite of this claim, the *Gītā* also recognizes the laws of nature in the verses III.33 and V.14. *Prakṛtim yānti bhūtāni* (beings follow their nature) of III.33 (164) and *svabhāvaḥ pravartate* (nature that acts) of V.14 (254) uphold the doctrine of *svabhāva* or the laws of nature. However, this faint admission of the role of *svabhāva* for the modification of *prakṛiti* creates only the inconsistencies in the theistic *Gītā* philosophy. The verses III.5 and III.27 recognize the inner contradictions of matter or the contradictions of the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* for every activity of the living beings and the modifications of the matter or *prakṛiti* (140, 159). However, in VII.12, the *Gītā* claims that those things (*ye bhāvāḥ*) that are made of *sattva* (*sāttvikāḥ eva*), that are made of *rajas* (*ye rājasāḥ*) and that are made of *tamas* (*tāmasāḥ*) all have sprung from the Supreme God alone (*mattaḥ eva iti*) (Gambhirananda's translation 324-25). In the verse, the *Gītā* asserts that everything

constituted by the three *guṇas* is in no sense a self-dependent essence independent of God, but springs from Him alone. The things develop through its inner contradictions of *guṇas* but the *guṇas* themselves are created and operated by the Supreme God. The *Gītā* does not treat the *prakṛiti* or its *guṇas* as a self-dependent entity and therefore, the *Gītā's prakṛiti* in no way represents the *prakṛiti* of the original *Sāṅkhya* system.

The *Gītā* does not mention the categories of the *Sāṅkhya* system as being the products of *avyakta* part of *prakṛiti*. In XIII.5, the *Gītā*, though it does not follow the *Sāṅkhya's* order of evolution, enumerates the twenty-four categories of the *Sāṅkhya* system (517). The *Gītā*, in VII.4, describes the five gross elements (earth, water, fire, air and space), mind (*manaḥ*), egoism (*ahaṅkāraḥ*) and intellect (*buddhiḥ*) as being the eight-fold nature (*prakṛiti*) of God (318). In VII.5, the *Gītā* again classifies the God's nature (*prakṛiti*) into two types: a lower and a higher. The eight-fold *prakṛiti* referred in VII.4 represents the lower *prakṛiti* of God and the individual soul (*jīva-bhūtām*) is described as the God's higher *prakṛiti* (319). The *Gītā*, in III.42 and 43, establishes the superiority of the soul (*ātmānam param*) than all other categories of *Sāṅkhya* system (172-74). The higher *prakṛiti* of God described in these verses of the *Gītā* is equivalent with the lower *puruṣa*, the twenty-fifth principle of *Sāṅkhya*, mentioned in the verse XIII.21 (Gambhirananda's translation 544). This shows that the *Gītā* even makes *prakṛiti* immaterial, a complete distortion of the meaning of the *Sāṅkhya's prakṛiti*.

The *Gītā* explains the distinction between *prakṛiti* and *puruṣa* by the terms *kṣetra* and *kṣetra-jñā*, i.e., the field and the knower of the field. In XIII.1, the *Gītā* states that the body (*śarīram*) is known as *kṣetra* (*Kṣetram iti abhidhīyate*) and one who knows this (*etat yo vetti*) is called *kṣetra-jñā* (Ranganathananda's translation

vol.III, 36). The body is called the field because all events happen in it. All growth, decline and death take place in the body. The conscious principle, which lies behind all active states as witness, is called the knower of the field (Radhakrishnan "Body" 356). This implies that the *kṣetra* stands for *prakṛiti* and the *kṣetra-jñā* for *puruṣa*. The word *kṣetra* in the *Gītā* is a broader term that signifies not only the body, but also the entire mental functions, powers, capabilities and also the undifferentiated sub-conscious element. The term *kṣetra* denotes the whole body-mind complex, exclusive of the living principle of the self, which is called the *kṣetra-jñā* (Dasgupta "Philosophy" 463-64). In XIII.6, the *Gītā* even describes *cetanā*, which probably means consciousness, as being a part of the changeable *kṣetra* and not the *kṣetra-jñā* (Gambhirananda's translation 519-20). The *Gītā* borrowed the term *kṣetra-jñā* from the *Upanisads*. The term *kṣetra-jñā* appears in *Svetāśvatara*, VI.16 (368) and *Maitri*, II.5 (Hume's translation 375) in the sense of *puruṣa* as in the *Gītā*. The *Gītā* interprets *kṣetra-jñā* as a conscious or an all-pervading principle and it is equivalent with the higher *puruṣa* or the Supreme God, the twenty-sixth principle of the *Gītā's Sāṅkhya*. The *Gītā*, in XIII.33, compares *kṣetra-jñā* with sun. The verse argues that just as the sun illuminates this whole world, so does the *kṣetra-jñā* or the *kṣetrin* illuminates the whole *kṣetra* (Gambhirananda's translation 565). The *Gītā's* above explanation of the terms *kṣetra* and *kṣetra-jñā* gives light on the meaning of the *Gītā's prakṛiti* and *puruṣa*.

The *Gītā's Sāṅkhya* is also rooted in human analogy in its explanation of the evolutionary process. The *Gītā*, in the XIII.26, claims that all animate and inanimate beings have sprung up from the union of *kṣetra* and *kṣetra-jñā* (*kṣetra-kṣetra jñā-samyogāt*) (367). The cosmic process of creation from the union of the *prakṛiti* and the *puruṣa* is further explained in XIV.3-4. The *Gītā*, in XIV.3, states: "*mama*

yonirmahadbrahma tasmin garbham dadhāmyaham / sambhavaḥ sarvabhūtānām tato bhavati bhārata [Great Brahma (prakṛti) is My womb: in that I cast the seed and from it is the birth of all beings, O Bharata (Arjuna).]" (372). In the verse, *prakṛiti* is called *mahad brahma* as being the female part or the womb of all creation and in that the Supreme God, as the father, places the seed (*dadhāmi garbham*). The birth of all beings (*sambhavaḥ sarvabhūtānām*) follows from this combination of *prakṛiti* and *puruṣa*. In XIV.4, the *Gītā* equates all wombs (*sarva-yoniṣu*) with *mahad brahma*, the womb of all creation and all fathers with the Supreme God (Radhakrishnan's translation 373). The *Gītā*, however, does not describe *prakṛiti* as an independent entity. The *Gītā* takes *prakṛiti* only as the part of God and in this sense; the God is taken as both the father and mother of the universe. He is both the seed and the womb of the universe (Radhakrishnan "Mystical" 373). This concept of the *Gītā* is a complete departure of the original *Sāṅkhya*'s concept of human analogy of birth in cosmic evolution. In *Gītā*'s conception, there is no distinction between *prakṛiti* and *puruṣa* in their essence and they both represent as parts of God, the super-person (*puruṣottama*). The *prakṛiti*, from which the *guṇas* are produced, is described as the power of God because the *prakṛiti* produces its *guṇas* through the fertilizing energy of God (Dasgupta "philosophy" 476-77). This implies that the *Gītā* takes the *prakṛiti*, the visible material world, as a *māyā*, an illusion. The *Gītā* borrows the concept of *māyā* from the *Svetāśvatara Up.* IV.10, in which *prakṛiti* is described as an illusion (*māyā*) and the Mighty Lord (*maheśvara*) as the illusion-maker (*māyīn*) (Hume's translation 361). In XIV.20, the *Gītā* suggests us to transcend the three *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*, the illusion or *māyā* created by the God to become free from birth, death, old age and sorrow (*janma-mṛtyu-jarā-duḥkhaiḥ*) and achieve Immortality (Gambhirananda's translation 583). Thus, the *Gītā*'s account of *Sāṅkhya* differs

materially from all the old versions of *Sāṅkhya* system including the *Vedānta* coloured *Sāṅkhya Kārikā*. The original *Sāṅkhya* defines *prakṛiti* as material and primary, *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* defines *prakṛiti* as material but it puts the *prakṛiti* in secondary position exalting *puruṣa*, a pure consciousness and the *Gītā* defines *prakṛiti* as *māyā* or illusion and treats both *prakṛiti* and *puruṣa* as the parts of the Supreme God.

The *Gītā* borrows the concept of the three *guṇas* of the *Sāṅkhya* system. However, the three *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* are treated here as subjectivistic or psychical and not cosmical (Dasgupta "Philosophy" 477). The *Gītā* uses the *Sāṅkhya*'s three terms: *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*, for the classifications of different mental tendencies, actions and things. In XVII.2, the *Gītā* classifies the faith of people into three distinct divisions according to the people's distinct *guṇas* or the psychic conditions: "*Trividhā bhavati śraddhā dehinām sā svabhāvajā; / sāttvikī rājasī caiva tāmasī ceti tām śṛṇu* [Threefold is the *śraddhā* of the embodied, which is inherent in their nature – the *sāttvikī*, the *rājasī*, and the *tāmasī*. Listen about it (from Me).]" (208). A human being is described in the verse using a technical word – *dehi*, one who dwells in a *deha* or body. All human beings (*dehinām*) are categorized here as the possessor of *sāttvikī*, *rājasī* and *tāmasī* nature or qualities in relation to their faith (*śraddhā*). The people, according to the verse, do not acquire these qualities by their effort. These qualities are described here as *svabhāvajā*, which means they are in-born or "an innate disposition in every human being" (Ranganathananda's translation vol.III, 209). Gambhirananda describes *svabhāva* of *svabhāvajā* of this verse as "latent impression of virtuous acts etc. acquired in the past lives" ("Three" 636). This shows that the *Gītā*'s division of people's faith into three classes depends on *karma*-doctrine – the doctrine that defines the acquired social

status of people according to the *karma* of their previous life (Chattopadhyaya "Lokāyata" 193). This reveals that the *Gītā's* classification of people's faith into *sāttvik*, *rājasi* and *tāmasi* represents the faith of higher, middle and the lower class people respectively. The *Gītā* defines the faith of the ruling class people, the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Kṣatriyas* as *sāttvik*, of the middle class people, the *Vaiśyas* as *rājasi* and of the lower class people, the *Sūdras* as *tāmasi*. The natural duties of the *Brāhmaṇas*, *Kṣatriyas*, *Vaiśyas* and *Sūdras* defined by the *Gītā* in the verses XVIII.42, 43 and 44 (704-06) prove this proposition. The divine status given to the twice born (*dvija*), the *Brahmanas* and the *Kṣatriyas* in XVII.14 (644) and the deplorable position given to the *Vaiśyas* and the *Sūdras* in IX.32 (Gambhirananda's translation 396) justify this.

The *Gītā* classifies other different mental tendencies according to the three *guṇas* of nature. The religious inclinations are defined as being of a threefold nature. According to the verse XVII.4, *sāttvik* people worship gods, *rājasi* worship the *yakṣas* and the *rakṣas* and *tāmasi* worship ghosts and demons (637). The gods, *yakṣas*, *rakṣas*, demons and ghosts represent the different icons of the different classes of people of the ancient time. In XVIII.20, 21 and 22, the *Gītā* defines three types of knowledge. *Sāttvika* knowledge recognizes an immutable entity behind all diversified things, *rājasi* knowledge apprehends the diversity in things and *tāmasi* knowledge consists in narrow and untrue beliefs (686-88). The threefold *buddhi* or intellect is described in the verses XVIII.30, 31 and 32. *Sāttvika* intellect understands the vice, virtue correctly, *rājasi* intellect wrongly grasps the nature of virtue and vice, and *tāmasi* intellect takes vice as virtue out of ignorance (694-96). The verses XVIII.33, 34 and 35 and XVIII.37, 38 and 39 describe threefold firmness (*dhṛtyā*) and joy (*sukham*) respectively. The firmness originated from concentration is *sāttvika*,

originated from the righteousness, covetable things, wealth (*dharmā-kāma-arthān*) is *rājasic*, and originated from the corrupt intellect, sleep, fear, sorrow, despondency and sensuality is *tāmasic* (696-98). The joy, which in the beginning appears to be painful, but turns in the end as sweet as nectar and resulted from the purity of one's intellect is *sāttvika*. The joy arises out of sense-object contact and in the beginning appears attractive but in the end turns into painful and poisonous is *rājasic*. The joy, which arises out of sleep, idleness and errors and blinds one in the beginning and in the end, is called *tāmasic* (Gambhirananda's translation 699-700).

The *Gītā* defines the threefold action in the verses XVIII.23, 24 and 25. The daily obligatory action is called *sāttvika* when it is performed without attachment and without any desire for a reward. The action performed out of pride, vanity for the satisfaction of one's desires is called *rājasic*, and *tāmasa* action is undertaken out of ignorance and without consideration of its consequence, loss, harm and injury (688-90). The *Gītā* describes three types of sacrifices and *tapas* in XVII.11, 12 and 13 and XVII.17, 18 and 19 respectively. The sacrifices performed out of reverence for the scriptural injunctions and from a pure sense of duty are *sāttvika*, the sacrifices performed for some benefits are *rājasic* and the sacrifices performed without proper faith and with improper ceremonials are *tāmasa* (642-43). The *tapas* undertaken with supreme faith by people who do not hanker after results are *sāttvika*, the *tapas* undertaken for earning a name are *rājasic* and the *tapas* undertaken with a foolish intent or for the destruction of others are *tāmasa* (646-48). The *Gītā*, in XVIII.26, 27 and 28 elaborates the three types of agent (*kartā*). An agent is called *sāttvika* when he is free from attachment and unperturbed by success and failure. A *rājasa* agent acts out of motives and self-interest and a *tāmasa* agent is careless, haughty, deceptive and procrastinating (Gambhirananda's translation 691-92).

The *Gītā* also classifies the different things according to the three *guṇas* of nature. The three types of food for the three types of people are described in the verses XVII.8, 9 and 10. The *sāttvika* people like nourishing food that facilitates mind-function, increases power and makes one healthy and strong. *Rājasa* people like the food that is hot, sour, salty, and dry and that causes pain and diseases. *Tāmasa* people like the food that is not properly cooked, tasteless, rotten and stale (640-41). In XVII.20, 21 and 22, the *Gītā* discusses the threefold gift (*dānam*). *Sāttvika* gifts are made to proper persons (holy *Brāhmiṇs*) on auspicious occasions, and in holy places, out of sense of duty. *Rājasa* gifts are made as a return for the good done to the performer, for gaining future rewards or made unwillingly and *tāmasa* gifts are made to improper persons in unholy time and ordinary places (Gambhirananda's translation 648-50).

The mental tendencies, actions and things classified by the *Gītā* into *sāttvika*, *rājasa* and *tāmasa* correspond in one way or the other, with the mental tendencies, actions and things of the higher, middle and lower class people respectively. For example, the three classifications of the religious inclinations and food, in one way or the other, correspond with the mental tendencies and things of the people belonging to the three different classes. Besides, most of these classifications are influenced by *Upanisadic* and *Brāhmaṇical* ideologies because goodness or badness and morality or immorality are not eternal and independent entities but, in class society, they are determined by the ideologies of certain class people, particularly the ruling class people (Engels "Morals" 118-19). The *Gītā's* classifications of knowledge, intellect, firmness, sacrifices, gifts, actions, agents justify this proposition.

The *Gītā* distorts the essence of the original *Sāṅkhya* system by giving the idealist interpretations of the system. The *Gītā* gives the *Vedāntic* interpretations of the different terminologies of the *Sāṅkhya* system. The *Gītā* reverses the anomalous position of *puruṣa* of the original *Sāṅkhya* and upgrades it to the level of the Supreme God. The *Gītā* interprets the *Sāṅkhya's* *avyakta*, the primeval matter, as being an intelligent principle, the Supreme God. The *Gītā* makes the *Sāṅkhya's* material *prakṛiti* into immaterial and interprets it as a *māyā* power of God. The *Gītā* treats both *prakṛiti* and *puruṣa* as the parts of the Supreme God. The *Gītā's* this concept rejects the *Sāṅkhya's* doctrine of *pradhāna*, the doctrine of *svabhāva* and the concept of eternal motion of matter. The *Gītā* borrows the cosmical three *guṇas* of the *Sāṅkhya* system and makes them subjectivistic and psychical. The *Gītā* classifies the mental tendencies, actions and things according to these three *guṇas* and this classification carries the *Upanisadic* and *Brāhmaṇical* ideologies. Therefore, the *Gītā's* *Sāṅkhya* represents the complete surrenderings of the basic principles of the original *Sāṅkhya* system. The *Gītā's* *Sāṅkhya*, in essence, is a disguised *Vedānta* and it, ultimately, imparts the knowledge of the *Vedānta* philosophy.

4.4 *Yoga* Philosophy and the *Bhagavad Gītā*

The *Bhagavad Gītā* gives equal importance to *yoga* philosophy like *Sāṅkhya* system. The *Gītā* itself is called the *yogaśāstra* as indicated by the colophon at the end of each chapter that claims: "'*brahmavidyānām yogaśāstre*' (the philosophy of Brahman)" (*Srimad* 25; Radhakrishnan "Theism" 454). The *Yoga* is given a prominent place in more than one chapter and almost the whole sixth chapter is devoted in the elaboration of *Dhyāna-yoga*. The term *yoga* is used in the text and the *Gītā* has made some compound words with the word *yoga* such as *karma-yoga*, *buddhi-yoga* and

bhakti-yoga. The following statement of Garbe points out the abundant references to the *Yoga* philosophy in the *Gītā*: “The teachings of the Sāṅkhya -*Yoga* constitute almost entirely the foundation of the philosophical observations of the *Bhagavad Gītā*” (qtd. in Damodaran “*Bhagavad*” 191). However, the concept of the *Gītā's yoga* differs from the materialistic concept of the ancient *yoga* practices. The *Gītā's Yoga* is influenced by Patanjali's *Yoga* philosophy. “The *yoga śāstra* of the *Gītā*”, Radhakrishnan points out, “is rooted in brahmavidyā or knowledge of the spirit” (“Theism” 454). The *Gītā* defines the *yoga* practices as a means to achieve God.

The term *yoga*, originally, signifies ‘yoking’ or ‘harnessing’ and it implies the control of human senses or concentration of thought within, diverting the senses from the external world (Garbe “*Yoga*” 831). In the sense of ‘yoking’ or ‘harnessing’ the term *yoga* is used in many places in the *Ṛgveda*, the *Brāhmaṇas*, *Upanisads* and in the later Sanskrit literature (Dasgupta “*Yoga*” 42). This shows that certain practices of *yoga* originated from a hoary antiquity. *Yogīc* postures depicted on the 'seals' and stone-statutes found among the material relics of the Indus valley civilization indicate that *yogīc* practices were prevalent in India as early as the third millennium B.C. or before the advent of the Aryans (Chattopadhyaya “*yoga*” 117-18; Damodaran “*Yoga*” 166). Therefore, the term *yoga*, at first, referred to certain ancient practices rather than any specific philosophy. Garbe states: “The conditions of ascetic contemplation practised in the *Yoga* are the final result of a long development, which takes us back to primitive times, to the ecstatic rites of savage peoples, of which we find traces also in the *Veda*” (“*yoga*” 833). The modern concept of *yoga* as the withdrawal of consciousness from the material world develops from the ecstatic rites and rituals of savage people performed for gaining certain supernatural powers.

The connection of the original *yoga* practices with the ecstatic rites of savage people gives us a clue about the primitive or original significance of the *yoga* practices. The primitive *yogīc* practices were considered as an integral part of the magical performance because primitive people believed the *yogīc Sāadhanā* or practices could produce certain magical powers (Radhakrishnan “Yoga” 337). The survival of the primitive people depended on the success of the magical performance. The magic was an illusory technique to aid the real one. George Thomson argues: “Magic rests on the principle that by creating the illusion that you control reality you can actually control it” (qtd. in Damodaran “Totem” 24). The magician felt a super-normal power within himself and this feeling made the primitive magicians psychologically strong to struggle against the forces of nature. The primitive *yogīc* practices were taken as synonymous with magic because the primitive people believed the practice of *yoga* has “therapeutic effects” and it “. . . procures for a man the miraculous powers” (832). Garbe enumerates some of these miraculous powers produced by the *yogīc* practices:

Among them was the ability to become infinitely small or invisible; to swell to an immense size, so as to reach even to the most distant objects – e.g., to the moon with the tip of the finger – or to be transported anywhere by the simple act of will. . . . Other faculties obtainable are the knowledge of the past and future, especially of the hour of one’s own death; or the ability to make the dead appear, and to hold converse with them. (832-33)

The above-mentioned results of the *yogīc* practices are magical and, in this sense, the *yogīc* practices are no different from magical performance. The magical *yogīc* practices or asceticism were called *tapas* in ancient India. The term *tapas* signifies

‘warmth’, ‘heat’, ‘fervour’, ‘the sweet generated by self-mortification’ and ‘the condition of internal heat thus caused’, i.e. ‘ecstasy’. The word *tapas* is found in the later hymns of the *R̥gveda* and it is frequently mentioned in the *Yajurvedas*, *Atharvavedas*, *Brāhmaṇas* and *Upanisads*. In all these literature, the ascetics (the performers of *tapas*) are described as all-powerful magicians. The process of asceticism or *tapas* includes fasting, other self-mortifications, meditation and absorption. It is, therefore, concluded that the conception of *yoga* was developed out of that of ancient *tapas* (Garbe “Yoga” 833).

Yoga as a system of thought or discipline cannot be traced before the *Svetāśvatara Upanisad* (“Germs” 37). The word *yoga*, which was originally applied to control the horses, applied later to control the uncontrollable human passions like that of spirited horses (Dasgupta “Yoga” 44). The comparison of human senses with uncontrollable horses is found in the *Kaṭha Upanisad* III.4, which mentions: “The senses (*indriya*), they say, are the horses” (298). There is an elaborate injunction about the *yoga* in *Svetāśvatara Upanisad* II.8, which begins with the verse: “Holding his body steady with the three [upper parts] erect . . .” (354) and we find *yoga* defined in *Kaṭha Upanisad* VI.11 as “This they consider as *Yoga* – / The firm holding back of the senses” (Hume’s translation 307). Kautilya in his *Arthaśāstra* mentioned *Yoga* along with *Sāṅkhya* and *Lokāyata* as the names of the philosophic sciences of study. The oldest Buddhist *Sūtras* (e.g. the *Satipatthana Sūtta*) and Jaina sources reveal that *Yoga* was quite familiar among the philosophers of the sixth century B.C. Both Mahavira and Buddha devoted themselves for years to *yogīc* practices before they became enlightened (Dasgupta “Kapila” 227; Radhakrishnan “Yoga System” 311; Damodaran “Yoga” 166). In spite of their main concerns with the epistemological problems, *Nyāya-sūtra* and *Vaiśeṣika-sūtra* discuss about the *yogīc* practices. The

importance of *Yoga* in the *Vedānta* is evident when the *Brahma-Sūtra* discusses about the components of *Yoga* like *Dhyāna*, *āsana*, etc. in its third chapter entitled *Sādhanā* (Chattopadhyaya “Yoga” 119). The *Vedantists* take the *Yoga* as a means to the realization of the self. *Brahma-Sūtras* III: 2.5 defines *Yoga* as the meditation of the supreme Lord or supreme self (Sivananda “*Brahma Sūtras*” 336). In other words, for *Vedantists*, *yoga* means the realization of “I am Brahman” through the constant mediation, and this leads an individual to his ultimate goal of salvation.

Yoga gained recognition as a particular school of philosophy after the diverse traditions of the ancient *yogīc* practices and their affiliated ideologies were systematized for the first time in a treatise called the *Yoga-Sūtra* attributed to a certain Patanjali. There is some controversy regarding Patanjali's period, some believed that he lived in the fourth century B.C., while others placed him in the second century B.C. or a still later date. However, all agreed that his contributions lay in compiling the treatise consisting 194 *Sūtras* or aphorisms from the already existing *yoga* doctrines (Damodaran “Yoga” 166). In Chip Hartranft's translation, *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patanjali*, contains 196 *Sūtras*. Patanjali was an editor of the *Yoga* system but not an innovator. Dasgupta argues:

Vacaspati and Vijñāna Bhikṣhu, the two great commentators on the *Vyasa Bhashya*, agree in holding that Patanjali was not the founder of the *Yoga* but rather its editor. An analytic study of the sutras also brings conviction that they do not show any original attempt but are a masterly and systematic compilation, supplemented with certain original contributions. (“Yoga” 51)

In Dasgupta's observation, the original *yoga* practices must have been immeasurably older than the *Yoga* found in the *Yoga-Sūtra*. This indicates that the *Yoga* of the *Yoga-*

Sūtra is very much different from the original *yoga* practices. It must have gone through certain modifications from the original one.

The modifications of the *Yoga* of the *Yoga-Sūtra* can be analyzed with the modifications of the later *Sāṅkhya* system because “Sāṅkhya and *Yoga* represent two schools of philosophy which evolved through the modifications of the original *Sāṅkhya* school” (Dasgupta “Introduction” 2). Chattopadhyaya connects the original *Sāṅkhya-Yoga* with a non-*vedic* ideology called Tantrism. Tantrism is characterized by primitive magical practices and it reminds us the root of original *Yoga*. Tantrism is also based upon the principles of the *prakṛiti* and the *puruṣa* and it reminds us of the *Sāṅkhya*. In this sense, both *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga* are connected with Tantrism signifying the theory and practice of the same entity. There was originally a primordial complex of theory and practice between them (“Sankhya” 445). In *Yoga-Sūtra*, Patanjali collected the different forms of the *yoga* practices and ideas associated with them and grafted them with the *Sāṅkhya* metaphysics (Dasgupta “Yoga” 51), but the connection between the *Sāṅkhya* and the *Yoga* was not the innovation of Patanjali. He did not arbitrarily graft the *yoga* practices on the *Sāṅkhya* metaphysics, but what he did was to reassert the old relation between such practices and the theoretical concepts of the *prakṛiti* and the *puruṣa* (Chattopadhyaya “Sankhya” 438). If it is the case the *Yoga* philosophy also had the materialistic origin like the original *Sāṅkhya*, and the *Yoga* of the *Yoga-Sūtra*, too, must have been modified on idealistic lines like the later *Sāṅkhya*.

Such idealistic modifications of original *Yoga* in Patanjali's *Yoga-Sūtra* are both theoretical and practical. On the theoretical side, Patanjali inserted arbitrarily the concept of God into the *Yoga* system and endeavored to convert the original atheistic

Yoga into the theistic one. However, the concept of God appears artificial in the overall skim of the *Yoga* system. Garbe asserts:

The idea of God, far from being organically interwoven in the *Yoga* system, is only loosely inserted. In the *Yogasūtras* the passages that treat of God stand disconnected, and are, indeed, in direct contradiction to the contents and aim of the system. God neither creates the universe, nor does He rule it. He does not reward or punish the actions of men, and the latter do not regard union with Him (at least according to the older doctrine of the *Yoga*) as the supreme object of their endeavor. (“*Yoga*” 831-32)

Garbe points out the irrelevancy of the concept of God in the *Yoga-Sūtra* and according to him, Patanjali introduced God in the system only to satisfy the theoreticians of idealist thought and to facilitate the propagation of later *Sāṅkhya*'s theory of creation of the Universe. Radhakrishnan also gives the similar line of argument in relation to the insertion of God into the *Yoga* system: “The personal God of *Yoga* philosophy is very loosely connected with the rest of the system. The goal of human aspiration is not union with God, but the absolute separation of *puruṣa* from *prakṛiti*” (“*Yoga*” 342). This indicates that the arbitrary introduction of the concept of God into the system was the result of a deliberate effort to modify it on idealistic or spiritualistic lines.

Similar modifications are found in practical processes of the *Yoga* as conceived in the *Yoga-Sūtra*. *Yoga-Sūtra* 1.2 defines *Yoga* as *citta-vṛtti-nirodhah* (Hartranft 4). This definition of *Yoga* is the result of the concept of modified *Sāṅkhya*. *Citta* or mind stuff is supposed to be the product of *prakṛiti* and it is made up of three elements – *Sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, i.e., illumination, activity and inertia respectively.

The *citta* undergoes modifications (i.e. *citta-vṛtti*) when it meets external objects. Since the objects are most varied, the *citta-vṛttis*, too are various and they give the false identification of the soul. The aim of the *Yoga* is the cessation (i.e. *nirodhah*) of these modifications to stop the possibility of the false identifications of the soul with the manifold objects (Chattopadhyaya “Yoga” 120; Damodaran “Yoga” 167). This suggests that the goal of Patanjali's *Yoga* is no different from the goal of the *Vedānta*. Patanjali's *Yoga*, like *Vedānta*, considers the external world as fetters or *māyā* and it lays down the course by which a man can free himself from these fetters and he overcomes the pain of the world and escape from *Samsāra* (Radhakrishnan “Yoga” 316). Such an understanding of *Yoga* of Patanjali is evident from his further discussions of the methods and stages of the real *yogīc* practices. The *Yoga-Sūtra* II.29 mentions the eight steps of the *Yoga* practice and they are *yama* (external discipline), *niyama* (internal discipline), *āsana* (posture), *prāṇāyāma* (breath regulation), *pratyāhāra* (withdrawal of the senses), *dhāraṇā* (concentration), *Dhyāna* (meditative absorption) and *samādhyaḥ* (oneness, integration) (Hartranft 30). Patanjali, by regulating and controlling the body, the senses and the mind through the eight steps, intends to lead a man to a complete bliss. The final step of Patanjali's *Yoga* '*samādhiḥ*' is ". . . the ecstatic condition in which the connection with the outer world is broken. It is the goal of the *Yoga* discipline, since it lifts the soul from its temporal, conditioned, changing existence into a simple, eternal and perfect life" (Radhakrishnan “Yoga” 329-30). This justifies the *Vedāntic* otherworldly conception of Patanjali's *Yoga*. The ancient *Yoga*, practiced in order to gain the magical power for fighting against the hostile forces of nature, is ultimately transformed by the *Yoga-Sūtra* into the means of realizing the eternal supreme self or God.

This idealistic conception of the *Yoga* is evident in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. In the *Yoga* of the *Gītā*, God occupies a central place because union with God is mentioned here as the ultimate aim of the *yoga* practices. *Samādhi*, the last step of Patanjali's *Yoga*, is described in the *Gītā* as *nirvāṇa* in which the soul sees and possesses God. The *Gītā*, in VI.15, elaborates: "*yuñjannevaṁ sadātmānaṁ yogī niyatamānasah / śāntim nirvāṇaparamāṁ matsamsthāmadhigacchati* (Concentrating the mind thus for ever, the yogī of controlled mind achieves the Peace which culminates in Liberation and which abides in Me.)" (289). The verse explains the ultimate goal of the *yogī* of controlled mind and it is the peace (*śāntim*). That peace leads the *yogī* to *nirvāṇa* (*nirvāṇa-paramāṁ*), the complete spiritual realization. The *yogī* unites himself with God (*mat-samsthām*) in that state (Gambhirananda's translation 290). This explains the conception of God in the *Gītā's Yoga*. It is similar with Patanjali's *Yoga* because both explain the attainment of God as the ultimate aim of *yoga* practices.

The *Gītā* also explains some of the preliminary stages of the *yoga* practices that lead to the final one. In VI.13, the *Gītā* advises steadiness of posture for the *yogīn*, who practices meditation. The verse instructs that the *yogīn* should hold his body, head and shoulders straight, and, being unmoved and fixed in his posture, he should avoid looking to either side and fix his eyes on the tip of his nose (288). The *Gītā*, in V1.10-11, discusses about the appropriate place for the meditation and in V1.12, suggests the *yogīn* to control the senses to be communion with God. A *yogī* should select a solitary and clean place for the mediation. The place (*āsana*) should be neither too high nor too low, it is made of cloth, a deerskin, and *kuśa*-grass placed successively one below the other (285-86). The *yogī* should make his mind one-pointed in God (*tatra*) by controlling his thought, senses and movements. The purpose is described here as "to purify oneself (*ātma-viśuddhaye*)" in order to feel the presence

of God within (287). The *Gītā*, unlike Patanjali, suggests a *yogī* to lead the middle course of life and avoid extremes. The verse VI.16 instructs that the *yogīn* should eat neither too much nor too little, should neither sleep too much, nor dispense with sleep (290-91). The *Gītā* does not mention about *prāṇāyāma*, the process of breath-control, in its sixth chapter on *Dhyāna-yoga*. Almost the whole sixth chapter is devoted to explain about the *yoga* practices and the conducts of *yogīns*. However, the *Gītā* discusses about *prāṇāyāma* as an integral part of meditation in the verses V.27-28. These two verses, which work as an introduction of the sixth chapter of *Dhyāna-yoga*, compress the whole subject of meditation (Gambhirananda's translation 267). This implies that the *Gītā* also adopts the process of Patanjali's *yoga* practice with slight variations.

In the *Gītā*, the word *yoga*, unlike in Patanjali's *Yoga-Sūtra*, is not used in any definite technical sense and, as a result, it carries different meanings. The one meaning of *yoga* that suits in different contexts seems to be “association” (451). For example, we find the word *buddhi-yoga*, in the text, “. . . which simply means that one has intimately to associate oneself with a particular type of wisdom or mental outlook” (Dasgupta “Philosophy” 444). The word *buddhi-yoga* is used at least three times in II.49, X.10 and XVIII.57 (95, 406, 733) and the *bhakti-yoga* is used at least once, in XIV.26 (589). The *karma-yoga* is used in III.3 and 7, V.1 and 2, and XIII.24 (134, 141, 240-41, 552). In IX.22, the word *yoga* is used in a very different sense and it means, “Making available what one does not have” (Gambhirananda's translation 388).

The *Gītā* uses the word *karma-yoga* in the sense of the duty of performance of action. In II.50, the *Gītā* defines *yoga* as the art of performing one's duties (*yogaḥ*

karmasu kauśalam) (96). The *Gītā* defines the *karma-yoga* as the obligatoriness of the performance of duties but such duties should be performed without keeping any motives of self-interest, gain or pleasure. According to the *Gītā*, in addition to the meditation or *Dhyāna yoga*, the art of performing one's duties i.e., the selfless performance or *karma-yoga* also leads the performers of action to the highest goal of *yoga* i.e., the communion with God. The *Gītā* equates the selfless performance of action or *karma-yoga* with the *Dhyāna yoga*. The *Gītā*, in VI.1 and 2 enunciates this contradictory proposition as follows:

anāśritaḥ karmaphalaṁ kāryaṁ karma karoti yaḥ;

sa samnyāsī ca yogī ca na niragnirna cākriyaḥ

yam samnyāsamiti prāhur yogaṁ taṁ viddhi Pāṇḍava

na hyasamnyastasaṁkalpo yogī bhavati kaścana

[He who performs an action which is his duty, without depending on the result of action, he is a monk and a yogī; (but) not (so is) he who does not keep a fire and is actionless. That which they call monasticism, know that to be Yoga, O Pāṇḍava. For, nobody who has not given up expectations can be a yogī.]. (274- 76)

The above verses make no difference between the renunciation of action (*sannyāsa*) or the monasticism (*samnyāsamiti*) and the performance of action without depending on its fruits (*anāśritaḥ karmaphalaṁ kāryaṁ karma*). The selfless performance is taken here as the meditative *yoga* self. The verse VI.1 even states that the true *yogīn* is one who performs work and not one who renounces it. The cessation of *karma* is not taken here as renunciation (*sannyāsa*), instead, the verse argues the selfless performer

of action is a true renouncer (*saṁnyāsīn*). The verse VI.2 equates *sannyāsa* or monasticism with *karma-yoga* (Gambhirananda's translation 274-78). This concept of *yoga* is the diversion from Patanjali's concept of *yoga*, which is based on the complete cessation of *karma*. This is also different from the original concept of *yoga* practices based on the magical performance performed for the fruits of action. In the above two verses, the *Gītā* defines *yoga* as the self-less performance of action.

The *Gītā*, however, does not remain constant in its previous stand in other verses. In VI.3, the *Gītā* distinguishes the *yoga* as the self-less performance of action from the *yoga* as the meditation or renouncing action. The verse defines the selfless performance as the means to ascend *Dhyāna yoga* or meditation and for that person who has ascended to *Dhyāna yoga*, inaction is the only means to reach to the supreme goal (278). The verse defines the two steps for the *yogīns* to achieve the ultimate goal or communion with God. The verse VI.4 elaborates the importance of the initial stage of *yoga* i.e., the selfless performance of action. This is the stage in which one succeeds in conquering all attachments to sense-objects and prepares for the higher stage of *yoga* i.e., *Dhyāna yoga* (279-80). The *Gītā*, in VI.5 and 6, mentions about a person's inner conflict between the lower and higher self or rather between the false and the real self (Gambhirananda's translation 281-82). The *Gītā* has taken the *yoga* as selfless performance of action only as a means of conquering the selfish motives of the lower self and leading the *yogīn* to the second stage of *Dhyāna yoga*. This implies that, according to the *Gītā*, the *Dhyāna yoga* alone can lead the *yogīn* to the ultimate salvation or the communion with God. In *Dhyāna yoga*, the *yogīn* renounces all worldly actions. This justifies that the *Gītā* ultimately advocates Patanjali's *yoga* practices for the *yogīns* to achieve their final goal of the communion with God. The

Gītā's *yoga* as the selfless performance of action elaborated in the verses VI.1-2 alone does not become capable to lead a person to his final goal of salvation.

The *Gītā* explains some of the characteristics of the *yogīns* who succeed to reach to the final stage of *yoga*, i.e., the stage of *samādhi* or *nirvāṇa*. The *Gītā* claims that it is the stage when a person succeeds in conquering the selfish motives and the worldly desires of the lower self and is at peace within him. In this state, he meets the Supreme self or *paramātmān*. It is the stage of complete *sannyāsa* when a person renounces all his duties of the material world. The *Gītā* recognizes such a person only as a true philosopher because he not only knows the truths, but also is happy from within in the realization of such truths (Dasgupta "Philosophy" 446). Such a person gives equal value to gold and to stones, to friends and to enemies, and to the virtuous and to the sinful. The *Gītā*, in VI.8, elaborates this concept as follows:

Jñāna vijñāna tṛptātmā kūṭastho vijitendriyaḥ

Yukta ityucyate yogī samaloṣṭāśmakāñcanaḥ

(Whose heart is filled with satisfaction through knowledge and wisdom, and is steady, whose senses are conquered, and to whom a lump of earth, stone, and gold are the same, that *yogī* is called steadfast.). (125)

The above verse explains the state of *yogī* who becomes "well established in yoga" (*yuktaḥ*), conquering his senses (*vijitendriyaḥ*) and being satisfied with the knowledge and wisdom (*Jñāna vijñāna tṛpta ātmā*) that he acquires. Such a *yogī* sees no difference between mud, stone and gold (*sama loṣṭāśma kāñcanaḥ*) (Ranganathananda's translation vol. II, 125-26). The *Gītā* upholds such an ideal state

of *yogī*, the state in which a person becomes a complete *samnyāsīn* and transcends the miseries of this material world.

A person achieves the state of *yogī* described in VI.8 only after he renounces his all worldly duties and lives aloof from the activities of the material world. The *yogī* described in the verse is a person who runs away from the labor of production. He belongs to the leisured class people. The knowledge and wisdom (*jñāna vijñāna*) described in the verse do not represent the knowledge and wisdom of this material world but they represent "the knowledge and experience of the Reality behind the appearances" (Radhakrishnan "True" 224). The verse reflects the lofty contempt for the material world and it is the result of philosophical enquiry taking free flight into realm of 'pure reason' or 'pure knowledge' i.e., knowledge divorced from action. This is idealism. The division of manual and mental labor provides the ground for the birth of idealism that flatters the human consciousness making it an independent entity and emancipates it from the external material world (Marx and Engels "Feuerbach" 33). Thus, when interpreting through historical materialism, the *yogīns*, who achieve the final stage of *Yoga* are idealists and escapists. They are the leisured class people who survive on the surplus production produced by others. As they do not participate in the labor of production, they do not gain the knowledge of the external world and they hate it. Such persons live alone and are unaware of the different contradictions of the material world and consequently, they see everything equal and cannot make a difference between mud, stone and gold. In VI.19, the *Gītā* compares the *yogī* with the motionless flame of a lamp in a windless place (*dīpaḥ nivāta-sthaḥ na ṅgate*) (293) and it signifies that the *yogīns*, who are engaged in concentration on the supreme self, are unmoved by any external affairs. The *yogīns* are ever satisfied by the illusory happiness provided by the belief in God and as they keep no concern on

the miseries and inequalities of the world, they see happiness and equalities everywhere. The verse II.48, as a result, defines *yoga* as the outlook of equality (*samatvam yogaḥ ucyate*) (95) and the verse VI.23 defines *yoga* as the negation of the possibility of all association with sorrows (*duḥkha- samyoga- viyogam yoga- sanjñitam*) (Gambhirananda's translation 296). These characteristics of *yoga* and *yogīns* elaborated in the *Gītā* resemble with Patanjali's *yoga* of *Yoga-Sūtra*. However, the *Gītā's* goal of *yoga* is in no way identical with the goal of the original *yoga* practices performed to have magical effects for fighting against the hostile forces of nature. The original *yoga* practices depended on the material gain, while Patanjali's and *Gītā's* *yoga* are concerned for the individual salvation or communion with God.

The *Gītā* makes the *yoga* practices as a ladder to climb up to the supreme God. The *yogī*, who attains the highest state of union with God, is filled with ecstatic joy. The *Gītā*, in VI.29 and 30, depict the highest state of the *yogī* when he unites with God. The *yogī*, being in union with God, gains the vision of sameness everywhere and perceives God in all things and all things in God (Gambhirananda's translation 300-01). It is the expression of pantheism and goes contrary to the main tenets of the *Gītā*. It is a mystical state, in which the *yogīn* identifies himself with God as well as with the beings of the world (451). The material world is no longer considered here as an illusion but it is regarded as the part of the God himself. The vision of the sameness shatters the barrier between the God and the beings of the world. In this sense, the *Gītā* defines *yoga* as the “Superior realization of universal equality” (Dasgupta “Philosophy” 453). The *Gītā* defines *yoga* as the means to acquire God and the verses IX.5 and XI.8 define God himself as the Lord of *yoga* (*yogamaisvaram*) (372, 432). In XVIII 75 and 78, the *Gītā* defines Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme God, as the Master of *yoga* (*yogeshvarāḥ Kṛṣṇa*) (769-71). The verse X.7 defines *yoga* as a wondrous power of

God (Gambhirananda's translation 404). In the *Gītā*, “. . . the deistic *Yoga* is replaced by theistic bhakti” (Radhakrishnan “Yoga” 343). The verse VI.47 justifies this proposition of Radhakrishnan because the *Gītā*, in the verse, categorizes the *yogīs* and says the devotees of Kṛṣṇa, the supreme God, as the best of the *yogīs* (*yukta-tamaḥ*) (Gambhirananda's translation 314). This indicates that the word *yoga* or *yogīs* in the *Gītā* carries different meanings but, in essence, all the meanings of the terms express the idealistic vision of the world because the ultimate aim of the *yoga* or *yogīs* is defined in the text as the communion with the Supreme God.

In the *Gītā*, *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga* are sometimes treated as two different paths, and sometimes they are identified. The *Gītā* gives the *Vedāntic* interpretation of *Sāṅkhya*. The *Sāṅkhya* is used in the text in the sense of the path of knowledge or philosophic wisdom. But, the *Gītā's Sāṅkhya*, instead of conveying the knowledge of the original *Sāṅkhya* system, conveys the *Vedāntic* knowledge. The verse II.39 distinguishes *Sāṅkhya* as *buddhi-yoga*, the path of knowledge from the *Yoga* as *karma-yoga*, the path of performance of action. Kṛṣṇa argues in the verse that he has just described the wisdom of *Sāṅkhya* and he is going to describe the wisdom of *Yoga* (85). The *Gītā*, in previous verses, discusses about the *Vedāntic* knowledge of the doctrine of the immortality of soul and the doctrine of rebirth. The *Gītā*, in II.39, calls this *Vedāntic* knowledge as the *Sāṅkhya* knowledge. The *Yoga*, as the verse says, connotes the performance of action and is a different entity than *Sāṅkhya*. The *Gītā*, in III.3, reiterates this proposition (134-35). These two verses, II.39 and III.3, indicate *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga* as being the two different entities. However, the *Gītā*, in V.4 and 5, defines *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga* as being identical to each other. They are defined as identical in the sense that the followers of both paths reach the same destination (Gambhirananda's translation 242-45). The word *Sāṅkhya* that is primarily defined as

the knowledge or wisdom also used to mean 'renunciation' and since *karma-yoga* signifies the performance of one's duties in a spirit of renunciation, both *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga* mean practically the same thing (Dasgupta "Philosophy" 457). Dasgupta tries to establish *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga* as being the same entity as explained by the verses V.4 and 5. This reminds us about the relation of *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga* of their origin. However, the *Gītā's* *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga* do not represent the primordial complex of theory and practice rooted in the non-*vedic* ideology Tantrism.

The *Gītā* defines the ancient atheistic and materialistic *yoga* practices as the means to achieve the highest state of spiritual realization. The *Gītā's* concept of *yoga* is influenced by Patanjali's *yoga* philosophy and the *Gītā* advocates Patanjali's steps of *yoga* practices with slight variations. The *Gītā* suggests the selfless performance of action as the preliminary step of *Dhyāna yoga*, the stage of complete *sannyāsa*, which leads a *yogīn* to the state of *nirvāṇa* i.e., the communion with God. The *Gītā* gives the term *yoga* varieties of definitions but all the definitions of the term express the idealist world outlook. The *Gītā*, the *yogaśāstra*, explains the term *yoga* in terms of the knowledge of the *Brahman* (*brahmavidyā*), and as a result, the *Gītā's* *yoga*, in essence, upholds not the concept of ancient *yoga* practices but the philosophy of *Vedānta*.

4.5 Buddhism and the *Bhagavad Gītā*

Buddhism influences on the composition of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. The *Gītā* is a religious literature of *Brāhmaṇism*. The *Brāhmaṇism* and Buddhism represent the two rival religious thought in the religious history of India as Damodaran claims: "Buddhism appeared on the scene mainly as a revolt against Brāhmaṇism" ("Feudalism" 204). There was centuries' long battle between *Brāhmaṇism* and

Buddhism until *Brāhmaṇism* exiled Buddhism from India ("Preface" xiii). In this battle, the historical role was assigned to the *Gītā* and the text was used as a weapon of *Brāhmaṇism* against Buddhism and Jainism (Meghnad Desai "Mahābhārata" 42). However, without mentioning the name Buddhism, the *Gītā* borrows the Buddhist doctrine of *nirvāṇa* and ". . . adopts the ethical principles of Buddhism" (Radhakrishnan "Theism" 449). Kosambi and Ambedkar observe the abundant instances of Buddhist thought in the *Gītā*. Kosambi argues: ". . . the *Gītā* summarises a good deal of Buddhism quite efficiently in the mouth of Vishnu incarnate" ("Towards" 208). Kṛṣṇa, while giving moral instructions to Arjuna, expounds many Buddhist ideas as his own. Ambedkar agrees with Kosambi: "For if it is true to say that *Gītā* is saturated with Sāṅkhya philosophy it is far more true to say that the *Gītā* is full of Buddhist ideas. The similarity between the two is not merely in ideas but also in language" ("Essays" 189). The *Gītā* borrows some concepts, some terminologies and some ethical principles from Buddhism and these borrowings are noticed in many verses scattered in different chapters of the text.

Buddhism, from its very beginning, represented "the biggest socio-religious movement in Indian history" (Chattopadhyaya "Samgha" 466). It was a revolution and as a great revolution as the French Revolution (Ambedkar "Ancient Regime" 4). Engels verifies Buddhism as one of the three religious movements that marked the great historical turning points: "Great historical turning points have been *accompanied* by religious changes only in so far as the three world religions which have existed up to the present – Buddhism, Christianity and Islam – are concerned" ("*Ludwig*" 30). Buddhism arose in the sixth century B.C. when the large slave states became a historical necessity. The newly developed productive forces demanded the new production relations. The intellectual, social and economic

domination of the priestly class became an obstacle for the further development of society. In these circumstances, Buddhism appeared as an anti-priest in its outlook and it challenged the hegemony of *Brāhmins* as well as the necessity of ritual performance. Buddhism rejected *Varṇa* distinctions and challenged the infallibility and authority of *Vedas*. Buddha advised his followers not to believe in anything, which was irrational. Early Buddhism rejected the existence of God and of the soul (Damodaran "Early Buddhism" 108, 116; Meghnad Desai "Authorship" 133).

This shows that the early Buddhist movement gave a deathblow to the *Vedic Brāhmaṇism* that survived on the performance of the *yajñas*, *Varṇa* distinctions, and on the belief of the *Vedic* gods and the authority of *Vedas*.

Siddhartha or Gautama Buddha, the propounder of Buddhist philosophy, ". . . was born in the Lumbini forest on the borders of present-day Nepal in 567 B.C." (Damodaran "Early Buddhism" 108) and ". . . died at about the age of 80 in 483 B.C." (Chattopadhyaya "Buddha" 122). Buddha did not himself write anything and his oral instructions to his disciples were not collected until a few centuries after his death (Dasgupta "Buddhist" 112). Almost the whole of the oldest Buddhist literature, consisting of speeches, sayings, poems, tales or rules of conduct are collected in three *piṭakas*, called the *Tri-piṭakas* or the 'three baskets'. These Buddhist literature written in Pali language are (i) *Vinaya-piṭaka*, 'the basket of discipline' (ii) *Sutta-piṭaka*, 'the basket of tales' and (iii) *Abhidhamma-piṭaka*, 'the basket of doctrine'. The *Vinaya-piṭaka* supplies the disciplinary regulations for the monks. The *Sutta-piṭaka*, written in both prose and verse, consists of the most important Buddhist literature and it has five minor divisions called *Nikāyas*. The *Abhidhamma-piṭaka* contains the same subjects as the *Sutta-piṭaka*, but it deals in a more scholastic manner. Of all the Buddhist literature, *Dhammapada* contains the gist of the essential principles of Buddha's

doctrine and it belongs to *Khuddaka Nikāya* of the *Sutta-piṭaka*. All the literature of *Tri-piṭakas* are considered to be canonical (Chattopadhyaya "Buddha" 122-23; Radhakrishnan "Ethical" 288-89). The Buddhist scholars of modern times ". . . have failed as yet to fix any definite dates for the collection or composition of the different parts of the aforesaid canonical literature of the Buddhists" (Dasgupta "Buddhist" 82).

The earlier philosophical systems have their contributions in the formation of Buddhist ideas. Buddhism drew much of its inspiration from the *Sāṅkhya* and the *Yoga*, which represent the earliest systematic speculations of India (Dasgupta "Buddhist" 78). Max Weber even thinks that ". . . the Kapila of the Sāṅkhya system and Gautama Buddha were one and the same person, and in support of this guess he mentions the fact of Buddha's birth in Kapilavastu" (qtd. in Radhakrishnan "Ethical" 399). In addition to the *Sāṅkhya* and the *Yoga*, the different schools of *Lokāyatikas* also influenced Buddhism (Dasgupta "Buddhist" 78-80). Buddhism borrowed the concept of materialism from the original *Sāṅkhya* theory, early *yoga* practices and the philosophy of *Lokāyatikas*. Stcherbatsky asserts: ". . . the first main feature of early Buddhism [is] its soul-denial. The No-Soul theory is another name of Buddhism" ("First" 4). This is materialism. This justifies that Buddhism accepts *Sāṅkhya*'s doctrine of *pradhāna* as the original cause of the world.

Early Buddhism recognizes the matter in motion. It is called the doctrine of momentariness or the doctrine of universal impermanence. It is the second important feature of Buddhism. Buddhism does not believe anything to be permanent because things appear at one moment and the next moment they are destroyed (Dasgupta "Buddhist" 161). This concept of Buddhism appears ". . . as reactions against the *Upanisadic* thought according to which the soul was a pure substance that

transcended all changes" (Chattopadhyaya "Buddha" 129). Buddhism considers the world as being a chain of momentary, instantaneous flashes, coming into being and passing away. Stcherbatsky points out:

. . . the physical elements became just as changing, impermanent and flowing, as the mental were found to be. This constitutes the second characteristic feature of early Buddhism: no Matter, no Substance, only separate elements, momentary flashes of efficient energy without any substance in them, perpetual becoming, a flow of existential moments. ("First" 4-5)

According to Buddhism, everything is changing but regular and ceaseless flow of motion and change create an impression of uninterrupted continuity and changelessness. There is a continuous supply of new water in a river but the flow produces an impression that the river remains motionless and changeless. Every moment there is another and not the same flame when the flame of a lamp is burning, but to the observer, the flame appears to be the same, unchanging (Radhakrishnan "Ethical" 310; Damodaran "Early Buddhism" 112). This justifies that whatever things appear as static this is also changing and there is nothing in the world that is immortal and eternal. Buddhism propounded the scientific fact about the impermanence of things so early in Indian Philosophy.

The concept of matter in an eternal flux is the most significant contribution of early Buddhism. This concept of Buddhism, along with the same illustration of the fire, was proclaimed by Heraclitus in ancient Greece a couple of generations later and, in more developed form, it is reinstated by modern science (Chattopadhyaya "Buddha" 130). The ancient Greeks recognized the existence of the whole of nature in eternal coming into being and passing away, in ceaseless flux, in unresting motion

and change and the modern science developed the same concept more precisely based on scientific research and experience (Engels "Introduction" 30-1). Buddhism did the same thing for the early Indian Philosophy what Heraclitus did for Greek philosophy. The conception of eternal motion and change arose in Buddhism out of the Buddha's following words: "This world generally proceeds on a duality, of the 'it is' and the 'it is not'" (qtd. in Chattopadhyaya "Buddha" 130-31). The moment we perceive the presence of things we say 'it is' and the moment, we perceive the passing away of things we feel 'it is not'. Though rudimentary, perhaps it is the first instance of dialectical thinking in Indian philosophy.

Buddhism does not define the process of becoming and passing away as a haphazard one. Causal laws govern the process of becoming or passing away or the motion of the matter, according to Buddhism. Buddhism upholds the doctrine of *svabhāva* for the modifications of a matter. This doctrine sees an internal cause of an entity behind its change and development. Buddhism recognizes the chain of cause and effect relationship behind the change and development of all phenomena and objects. A tree grows out of a seed and therefore, the seed is the cause of the tree. The Buddha believed that every new object arises out of the destruction of the old one. The world emerges without a creator, without a known beginning and it would remain forever under the influence of cause and effect chain. Early Buddhism defines this chain of cause and effect relationship as "*Prateetya Samutpāda* or dependent origination". It is a theory of causation and regarded as the third characteristic feature of early Buddhism (Damodaran "Early Buddhism" 110-11; Stcherbatsky "First" 5).

The basic teachings of the Buddha are this worldly because the Buddha discusses about the pain and suffering of this world. He found the pain and suffering

as the basic fact of life and his major teachings are also concentrated on the human sufferings itself. In his famous Sermon at Banaras, the Buddha explains the four noble truths (*ārya-satya*) – the reality of suffering, the cause of suffering, the possibility of ending suffering and the way of ending suffering. The eightfold path of ending suffering are outlined as – right views, right intentions, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindedness and right concentration (Damodaran "Early Buddhism" 109-10; Chattopadhyaya "Buddha" 124). The Buddhist four noble truths and the eightfold path are related to this worldly human suffering and the solutions of this suffering.

The Buddhist four noble truths are based on the doctrine of *Prateetya Samutpāda* because the four noble truths themselves are explained in a chain of cause-effect relations. It is explained that there is a cause behind human suffering and the suffering can be ended by removing its cause. What is the cause of human suffering? The Buddha teaches us that human desire is the root cause of all human sufferings. The *Dhammapada* 24.9 records this view of the Buddha as follows:

Those who are subject to craving

Crawl around like a trapped hare.

Bound by fetters and bonds, for a long time

They undergo suffering again and again. (67)

The above verse explains craving or the strong desire as the root cause of human suffering. The *Dhammapada* 24.3 gives the way out of human suffering and says that anyone who overcomes his cravings, he will be free from the fetter of human sufferings (Roebuck's translation 66). The above two verses of the *Dhammapada*

suggest that Buddhism explains the psychological cause and the psychological remedy of human sufferings. Buddhism does not point out the other causes of human sufferings and thereby, does not give other solutions than doing mental struggle to release oneself from human cravings for coming out of human sufferings.

The Buddha's teachings are concentrated on human sufferings and they are this worldly problems, but the causes and the way out of those sufferings that the Buddha suggests are not factual and this worldly. The real causes of the human sufferings lie in social, economic, environmental and psychological factors but the Buddha neglects the former three and only concentrates on the psychological one. The real solution of human sufferings lies in the struggles against those forces but the Buddha only concentrates on the mental striving. Damodaran states: "The Buddha called upon his followers to put an end to earthly sorrows and sufferings, not through struggles to remove their material causes in the real world, but through mental striving" ("Early Buddhism" 115). Thus, the Buddha's prescribed causes and the way out of human sufferings ultimately make the Buddhism otherworldly.

The Buddha's concept of the causes and the remedy of human sufferings lead him to formulate the otherworldly *Nirvāṇa* theory. The Buddha recommends us to end human desires to end the human sufferings. The Buddha suggests us to adopt the *yogīc* practices to end the human desires. The path of the Buddha for the complete cessation of human desires is asceticism (365). In Buddhist terminology, the highest state of asceticism is *nirvāṇa* and "*Nirvāṇa* is the goal of Buddhism" (361). The literal meaning of *nirvāṇa* is 'blowing out' or 'cooling'. Blowing out suggests extinction and cooling suggests the dying out of hot passion (Radhakrishnan "Ethical" 377). The term *nirvāṇa* does not carry the single meaning. *Nirvāṇa* is basically conceived as the

state in which the suffering is completely overcome, and the mental intoxicants completely subsided (Chattopadhyaya "Buddha" 128). How does a person overcome his sufferings in a state of *nirvāṇa*? Though early Buddhism denied the existence of God, its theory of *nirvāṇa* contains an element of idealism. This Buddhist theory of *nirvāṇa* is rooted in early Indian mysticism. The main idea of mysticism lies in the belief that through the concentrated meditation, the meditator gains extraordinary powers and manages to convert himself into a superman. Buddhism believes that the *nirvāṇa* or the state of absolute Quiescence, based on the principles of mysticism, also makes an ordinary man to superman, the *Yogī* and then the Saint. The Buddhist theory of *nirvāṇa*, therefore, shares its feature with the doctrine of salvation of most of the Indian philosophic systems (Stcherbatsky "First" 6). Kosambi explains *nirvāṇa* as the freedom from the cycle of rebirth ("From Tribe" 107) and this is the essence of the doctrine of salvation. This indicates that Buddhist *nirvāṇa* is otherworldly and it presupposes the life after death and the sorrow less state of the other world. In other words, Buddhism maintains that the complete cessation of human sufferings is not possible in this world and it is possible only after death in the other world.

The Buddhist concept of the otherworld is evident in its doctrines of rebirth and *karma*. The Buddha recognized the life process that transcends human body though he denied the concept of God and soul as the first cause of the Universe. He held that individual consciousness or thought forms continued even after death. He regarded death only as a break-up of a given combination of *dharmas* (elements) after which a new combination was formed. In this sense, Buddhism believed in reincarnation of all living beings and considered spirit higher than matter. This shows that Buddha's world outlook was idealistic. The Buddha and his followers propounded a philosophy that included the several features of advanced materialism but they were

not completely materialists. They adopted the middle path in all matters and ultimately, this middle path led to idealism (Damodaran "Early Buddhism" 114-15). Buddhist transmigration or the continuous process of life and death is predetermined by *karma*, man's action throughout his life (Kosambi "From Tribe" 107-8). Buddhist doctrine of *karma* depends on the Buddha's one simple tenet of faith: "Out of good arises good; out of evil arises evil" (qtd. in Damodaran "Early Buddhism" 116). Buddhists hold the view that nobody can escape from the effects of their *karma* and every living creature gains a suitable body in their rebirth according to the *karma* they performed in their previous life. The Buddhist rotating wheel symbolizes the series of lives determined by the principles of *karma* (Kosambi "From Tribe" 108; Radhakrishnan "Ethical" 372, 374). Therefore, the early Buddhist's doctrine of *nirvāṇa*, rebirth and *karma* provided the ground for the later schools of Buddhism to develop the full-fledged idealism. The idealistic world outlook is fully and finally vindicated by two schools of later Buddhism known as the Madhyamika and the Yogacara, the offshoots of a broad theological movement called the Mahayana (Chattopadhyaya "Later" 150). Although no-soul theory, theory of momentariness and doctrine of *Prateetya Samutpāda* of the early Buddhism are essentially progressive, the Buddhist's doctrines of *nirvāṇa*, rebirth and *karma* planted the seed of idealism and they inspired the later idealists belonging to the different sects and religions.

The *Bhagavad Gītā* enriches its concept of rebirth and transmigration of soul by the Buddhist doctrines of rebirth and *karma*. The *Gītā* borrows the concept of rebirth or transmigration of soul from the *Upanisads* but the Buddhist doctrine of rebirth based on *karma* opened up a new avenue for the *Gītā* in propounding the theory of transmigration of soul in a good or bad body based on the *karma* of previous life. Primarily, *karma* meant the ritual or *yajña* (Chattopadhyaya "Advaita" 93), but

Buddhism gives a new meaning of *karma* which signifies the sum total of the man's action throughout his life (Kosambi "From Tribe" 107-8). There is an influence of Buddhism when the *Gītā* denounces *Vedic* ritualistic *karma* (II. 43, 88-9), and praises the non-ritualistic *karma* based on the disinterestedness on its fruits (II. 47, Gambhirananda's translation 93). The *Gītā's* dismissive of *Vedic* ritualistic *karma* is also regarded as a response of *Brāhmaṇism* to the challenge of Buddhism (Meghnad Desai "Nationalist" 34-5). The influence of Buddhism can be noticed, when the *Gītā*, in VI.43, explains the transmigration of wisdom acquired in the previous body (*paurva-dehikam*) (Gambhirananda's translation 310-11).

Buddhism has a partial contribution for the development of the *Gītā's* concept of rebirth and *karma* but the doctrine of *nirvāṇa* is the Buddhist innovation and the *Gītā's* *nirvāṇa* theory fully depends on Buddhism. The word *nirvāṇa* is found five times in the *Gītā* (II.72, V.24, 25, 26 and VI.15). The *Gītā's* borrowing of the concept of *nirvāṇa* from Buddhism is justified by the fact that *nirvāṇa* is not a *Brāhmaṇical* concept found either in the *Vedas* or in the *Upanisads* (Meghnad Desai "Authorship" 99; Ambedkar "Essays" 189). The word *nirvāṇa* comes in the *Gītā* compounded either with *brahma* as *brahma-nirvāṇam* – meaning identified with *Brahman* –, or with *paramām* as *nirvāṇa-paramām*, which gives the meaning of culminating in liberation (Gambhirananda "Introduction" xiv). The *Gītā* discusses *brahma-nirvāṇa* as the highest state of a person in which one identifies him with *Brahman*. In II.72, the *Gītā* elaborates:

Eṣā brāhmī sthitiḥ pārtha nainām prāpya vimuhyati

Sthitvā syāmantakāle pi brahmanirvāṇamṛcchati

[This (*sthitaprajña* state) is having one's being in Brahman, *brāhmī sthitih*, none, O son of Prtha, attaining to this, becomes deluded. Being established therein, even at the end of one's life, one attains to oneness with Brahman.]

In the above verse, *brahma-nirvāṇa* is used in the sense of oneness with *Brahman* and it is achieved when a person gains a *sthitaprajña* state or the divine state (*brāhmī sthitih*) (Ranganathananda's translation vol.I, 247). In V.24, 25 and 26, the *Gītā* describes about the characteristics of the *Yogīns* who attain the state of *brahma nirvāṇa* (265-66). In VI.15, the *Gītā* interprets *nirvāṇa* as the ultimate state of liberation (*nirvāṇa-paramām*) of the *yogī* of controlled mind (*niyata-mānasah*) (Gambhirananda's translation 289-90). In all these verses, the *Gītā* interprets the *nirvāṇa* as the goal or the ultimate state of *yogīns* when they unify with *Brahman* or God. It is the state, as the verses describe, in which the *yogīns* get freedom from the cycle of rebirth. The *Gītā's* this interpretation of *nirvāṇa* appears no different from the Buddhist *nirvāṇa*, as the ultimate goal of human beings for the cessation of human sufferings. The *Dhammapada* 15.7-8 states: "Nibbana [Nirvāṇa] is the greatest happiness" (Roebuck's translation 41). This Buddhist greatest happiness signifies a state that one achieves beyond life and death because in 'four noble truths' the Buddha explains as: "Birth is suffering, decay is suffering, sickness is suffering, death is suffering" (qtd. in Damodaran "Early Buddhism" 109). This implies that as long as a man does not become free from the cycle of rebirth, he cannot attain this greatest happiness or *nirvāṇa*. Therefore, both in the *Gītā* and the Buddhist philosophy, the term *nirvāṇa* signifies a state of eternal happiness one achieves in after life when he unifies with God or when he does not return to this world of sufferings through rebirth.

The *Gītā* and Buddhism outline the same path to reach to the state of *nirvāṇa*. Both of them consider the desires and attachments as the main causes of human sufferings and the obstacles to attain this state. They prescribe us for the cessation of human desires and attachments by controlling the uncontrollable human senses to reach to the ultimate goal of *nirvāṇa*. The *Gītā* emphasizes that it is difficult to control the human mind when it is led on by fleeting sense attractions. In spite of his efforts to keep himself steady, the turbulent senses snatch away even the mind of an intelligent person (II.60, 107). A person becomes attached to objects if he dwells on them, out of attachments there arises desires, out of desires there arises anger, from anger follows delusion or blindness of passions, from blindness there is lapse of memory, from lapse of memory a man's intelligence is destroyed and as a result of that he himself is destroyed (II.62-63, 109). The human senses naturally lead a man towards the downward path. Each particular sense has its own specific attraction and repulsion and a man should not come under the sway of these two because they are his enemies (III.34, 165). The *Gītā* proclaims passion (*kāmaḥ*), anger (*krodhaḥ*) and greed (*lobhaḥ*) as the three gates of Hell (XVI.21, 631) and born of the quality of *rajas*, they veil wisdom as smoke veils fire, the dirt veils a mirror or as the foetus is covered by the womb (III.37-39, 168-69). In VI.34, Arjuna raises the question on the difficulty of controlling human senses: "For, O Kṛṣṇa, the mind is unsteady, turbulent, strong and obstinate. I consider its control to be as greatly difficult as of the wind" (304). Kṛṣṇa, in VI.35, admits on the difficulty of controlling the untraceable (*durnigrahaṃ*) and restless (*calaṃ*) human senses, but he suggests Arjuna to control them through practice (*abhyāsaṇa*) and detachment (*vairāgyeṇa*) (Gambhirananda's translation 305).

The Buddhist work *Dhammapada* is also filled with similar ideas regarding the control of human passions and attachments. The *Dhammapada* argues that the hostilities or hatred does not cease by hating, but hatred ceases by love and it is an interminable truth (I.5, 4). As the wind brings down a weak tree, so Mara (personification of death) overcomes such a person who lives looking for pleasures, has his senses uncontrolled or is immoderate in his food, indolent and idle (I.7, 4). The verse I.13 exposes the harmful effect of human passion. It says that as rain breaks through a poorly roofed house, so passion will break through an uncultivated mind (5). Again speaking of mind, the *Dhammapada* emphasizes that as an arrow-maker makes straight his arrow, so a man of wisdom makes straight his trembling unsteady mind, which it is difficult to guard and hold back (III.1, 10). The verse III.4 asks the wise man to guard his mind, though it is difficult to perceive and exceedingly subtle (10). The verse X.13 says that neither nakedness, nor matted hair, nor mud, nor fasting, nor lying on the ground, nor ashes, nor ascetic postures, none of these things purify a man who is not free from doubt or desires (Wallis's translation 31). In XVI.4-8, the *Dhammapada* mentions the causes of grief and fear and their way out. From dearness (*piyato*) comes grief and fear and he who is free from dearness knows neither grief nor fear (XVI.4). From affection (*pemato*) comes grief and fear and he who is free from affection knows neither grief nor fear (XVI.5). From pleasure (*rati*) comes grief and fear and he who is free from pleasure knows neither grief nor fear (XVI.6). From sexual desire or lust (*kāma*) comes grief and fear and he who is free from lust knows neither grief nor fear (XVI.7). From craving (*tanha*) comes grief and fear and he who is free from craving knows neither grief nor fear (XVI.8, Roebuck's translation 42-3).

Above examples clarify that both the *Gītā* and the *Dhammapada* praise sense control and consider desire, attachment, anger, fear and grief as great enemies. However, there is a question whether the *Gītā* borrowed these concepts related to sense-control from Buddhism or the *Upanisads*. The uncontrollability of the senses is realized in the *Kaṭha Upanisad*. In *Kaṭha*, III.4, the senses are compared with horses (298). In *Kaṭha*, VI.11, the sense-control is referred to as *yoga* (307) and in *Muṇḍaka*, III: 2.2, it is said that a perfected soul (*kṛtātman*) can be free from desire through self-satisfaction (Hume's translation 328). Although we find such ideas in a few *Upanisads*, they mainly occupy with mystic meditations and with the philosophic wisdom of self-knowledge. They are engaged in the search after the highest and the ultimate truth, and the reality of *Brahman* as the ultimate essence of man and the manifold appearance of the world (Dasgupta "Philosophy" 494-95). In the *Upanisads*, we do not find such an urgency of controlling desires like in Buddhism. However, the *Gītā*, like in Buddhism, repeatedly emphasizes the necessity of uprooting attachments from the sense objects and of controlling desires. This shows that in the matter of sense-control, the *Gītā* is more influenced by Buddhism than the *Upanisads*. Kosambi asserts: "Without Buddhism, G.2.55-72 (recited daily as prayers at Mahatma Gandhi's asrama) would be impossible. The brahma-nirvāṇa of G.2.72 and 5.25 is the Buddhist ideal state of escape from the effect of karma" ("Social" 20). Kosambi has no doubt on the influence of Buddhism, especially for the composition of II.55-72 verses of the *Gītā*.

In II.55-72, the *Gītā* explains the way for a person to achieve the highest state or the divine state when he unites with *Brahman* or attains *brahma-nirvāṇa*. The *Gītā* names this state *sthitaprajña*. The word *prajña* is used in the *Gītā* in the sense of thought or wisdom or mental inclinations in general. *Prajña* does not mean here *jñāna*

or ordinary knowledge, or *vijñāna* as higher wisdom. It is not the moral discipline of *yama, niyama*, etc., of the *Panca-ratra* work *Jayakhyā-Samhitā*. It means an intellectual outlook that determines the mental bent or inclination (Dasgupta "Philosophy" 491). The human senses are continually changing and fleeting and along with them, the mind, like a boat at sea before a strong wind, is driven back and forth and steadiness of thought and wisdom (*prajñā*) are destroyed (II.67, 113). The human mind cannot work smoothly unless the *prajñā* is fixed. So, the main goal of controlling senses is regarded as the securing of the steadiness of this *prajñā* (II. 57, 104). *Prajñā* and *dhih* are the synonymous words in the *Gītā* and they both mean mental inclination. The *Gītā* explains those persons as *sthita-prajñā* (II.55, 101) and *sthita-dhih* (II.56, 103) who have their mental inclination or thought fixed and steady. He is a *sthita-prajñā* who fully withdraws the senses from the sense-objects as a tortoise collects within itself all its limbs (II.58, 104-05). The person who has his *prajñā* fixed is unperturbed in sorrow and is not eager to gain pleasure; he has no attachment, no fear and no anger (II.56, 103). He does not welcome and does not reject anything whatever good or bad he comes across it (II.57, 104). He alone can attain peace who absorbs all his desires within himself like the sea that remains unchanged receiving all the rivers in it (II.70, 119). The self-controlled man attains serenity (*prasādam*) (II.64, 111) and when the serenity is attained, all sorrows vanish and his mind becomes fixed (*buddhiḥ paryavatiṣṭhate*) (II.65, 111-12). The man, who has given up all his desires and becomes free from attachments, is not bound to anything, has no vanity and attains true peace (II.71, 120). In II.72, the *Gītā* calls such a highest state of a person as *brāhmī sthitiḥ* or *sthitaprajñā* state and in this state; a person attains *brama-nirvāṇa* (Gambhirananda's translation 120-21). The way the *Gītā* suggests to attain the *brama-nirvāṇa* is no different from the way Buddhism

suggests to attain *nirvāṇa* in order to put an end to earthly sorrows and sufferings.

Both of them suggest the path of sense-control or asceticism for attaining the ultimate goal of *brama-nirvāṇa* in the *Gītā* and the *nirvāṇa* in Buddhism.

The *Gītā* borrows some ethical principles from Buddhism and Jainism. There are few moral precepts in the *Upanisads* and the whole subject of moral conflict and moral endeavors is almost dropped or passes unemphasized (Dasgupta "Philosophy" 494). The *Chāndogya Upanisad* V: 10.9 has prohibited the four human vices: stealing gold, drinking liquors, dishonoring one's teacher's bed and killing a *Brāhmiṇ* (Hume's translation 174). However, the Buddha prohibited not only the killing of *Brāhmiṇs* but also taking the life of any living being (Dasgupta "Philosophy" 498). In the noble (*ārya*) eightfold path, Buddhism outlines the moral codes. The Buddha speaks against uncontrolled human desire, greed, cupidity, enjoyment of the senses, luxury, misuse of the tongue, violence and killing, theft, adultery, the sale of liquor, dealing in animals for butchery, and evil thoughts. He speaks for friendship (*maitri*), kindness (*dayā, karuṇā*), purity, honesty and meditation (Kosambi "From Tribe" 106). Jainism, born with Buddhism in the same economic and social conditions (Damodaran "Jainism" 122), propagates the similar ethical principles like Buddhism. The Jain Mahavira followed the four rules of his predecessor Parsva: taking no life (*ahimsā*), taking no property from others, possessing no property of one's own, and truthfulness (Kosambi "From Tribe" 105). The special feature of the Jaina lies in its great stress on the practices of non-injury or *ahimsā* (Chattopadhyaya "Jainism" 137) and the followers of Mahavira were careful enough even to save the life of an insect. They even used to filter the in-breath through a piece of cloth, not for hygiene but to save any life floating in the air (Kosambi "From Tribe" 105). These ethical principles of Buddhism and Jainism

influence a lot in the formation of the ethical principles of the *Gītā*. The *Gītā's* ethical principles resemble more to Buddhism and Jainism than to the *Upanisads*.

The *Gītā* bases its ethics mainly on the necessity of getting rid of attachments and desires, the source of all evils. The *Gītā* calls for non-attachment with regard to objects of senses (*indriya-artheṣu*) and absence of pride (*anahaṅkāraḥ*) because there is evil in birth, death, old age, diseases and miseries (*janma-mṛtyu-jarā-vyādhi-duḥkha-doṣa-anudarśanam*) (XIII.8, Gambhirananda's translation 522). The evil in birth, death, old age, diseases and miseries, i.e., *janma-mṛtyu-jarā-vyādhi-duḥkha-doṣa* of the verse appears as the reiteration of the Buddha's first noble truth which elaborates "Birth is suffering, decay is suffering, sickness is suffering, death is suffering" (qtd. in Damodaran "Early Buddhism" 109). In XIII.9, the *Gītā* urges to adopt a kind of Buddhist monastic life calling for non-attachment and absence of fondness with regard to sons, wives, homes etc (*putra-dāra-grhādiṣu*) (523). In XIII.7, the *Gītā* praises the Buddhist virtues such as humility (*amānitvam*), unpretentiousness (*adambhitvam*), non-injury (*ahiṃsā*), forbearance (*kṣāntiḥ*), sincerity (*ārjavam*), service of the teacher (*ācārya-upāsanam*), cleanliness (*śaucam*), steadiness (*sthairyam*), control of body and organs (*ātma-vinigrahaḥ*) (521). In XVI.1-3, the *Gītā* reiterates the Buddhist virtues calling them the divine nature (*daivīm sampadam*) of a man such as fearlessness (*abhayam*), purity of mind (*sattva-saṃśuddhiḥ*), non-injury (*ahiṃsā*), truthfulness (*satyam*), absence of anger (*akrodhaḥ*), monasticism (*tyāgaḥ*), kindness (*dayā*), non-covetousness (*aloluptvam*), forgiveness (*kṣamā*), purity (*śaucam*), freedom from malice (*adrohaḥ*) and absence of haughtiness (*na-atimānitā*) (Gambhirananda's translation 615-18).

The *Gītā's* ethical principles based on the Buddhist virtues uphold the principles of non-retaliation or non-violence (*ahimsā*). The *Gītā* uses the terms *maitraḥ* (friendliness) and *karuṇā* (compassion) in XII.13 (Gambhirananda's translation 486) which ". . . naturally suggest the Buddhist virtues so named, since they do not occur in the Upanisads" (Dasgupta "Philosophy" 511). In XII.13-19, the *Gītā* upholds the Buddhist virtues while describing the best qualities of a devotee of the supreme God, Kṛṣṇa. He is described as Kṛṣṇa's best devotee who does not hurt any living beings, is friendly and sympathetic towards them, has no idea of 'mine' and the idea of egoism, is ever content, has self control and firm conviction, be the same in sorrows and pleasures and full of forgiveness for all. He is described as Kṛṣṇa's chosen one who is firm, impartial, unattached, the same to friends and enemies, in honor and dishonor, in heat and cold, pleasure and pain, the same in praise and blame, homeless and always satisfied with anything and everything (486-90). The *Gītā* upholds all these Buddhist virtues as his own without mentioning the name Buddhism but all these virtues contradict with the main objective of the text. For example, non-injury to living beings (*ahimsā*) is described here as one of the best virtues, while Kṛṣṇa suggests his best devotee Arjuna to participate in the bloody war of the *Mahābhārata* so that Arjuna could enjoy the luxury either of heaven or of this world (II.37, 83). Kṛṣṇa, the great upholder of *ahimsā*, is described in XI.26-34 as the demonical God, who in reality crushes and devours all the warriors of both sides of the *Mahābhārata* war (Gambhirananda's translation 446-52). This shows that the *Gītā* preaches violence (*himsā*), though it elaborates the aforementioned Buddhist virtues that are based on the principles of non-retaliation or non-violence (*ahimsā*).

Later schools of Buddhism attributed Godhood to the Buddha (Chattopadhyaya "Later" 141), and the later Buddhists made a slogan which says:

"I surrender to Buddha [*Buddham Śaraṇam Gachchāmi*], to Dhamma and to Sangha" (qtd. in Ambedkar "Essays" 190). This slogan became popular among Buddhists and the general masses of people. The *Gītā*, as a result, borrowed '*Śaraṇam Gachchāmi*' from '*Buddham Śaraṇam Gachchāmi*' and installed Kṛṣṇa in the place of Buddha (Sardesai "Riddle" 21). The popularity of '*Buddham Śaraṇam Gachchāmi*' inspires the author of the *Gītā* to develop the concept of *bhakti* to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa repeatedly says: "Surrender to Me alone" in different verses dedicated to *bhakti* and among them in XVIII.66, Kṛṣṇa emphasizes: "Relinquishing all *dharmas* take refuge in Me alone" (Ranganathananda's translation, vol.III, 351). The *Gītā*, through this slogan, wants to transfer the people's *bhakti* from Buddha to Kṛṣṇa, a monotheistic all God. In order to combat with Buddhism, the *Gītā* has created the monotheistic personal God Kṛṣṇa as an alternative of the Buddha. Buddhism denounced hierarchical caste system and offered salvation to women and *Sūdras* and the *Gītā*, as a response to Buddhism, comes forward to offer salvation to women and *Sūdras* (Ambedkar "Essays" 190). This shows that the popularity of Buddhism among people led the authors of the *Gītā* to borrow many things from Buddhism. The *Gītā*, though borrowed many things from Buddhism, does not mention the name Buddhism in the text because the *Gītā* borrowed them in order to fight against Buddhism.

The *Gītā* contains full of Buddhist ideas though the text does not mention the name Buddhism. The *Gītā* borrows the Buddhist concept of *nirvāṇa* and expounds the theory of *brahma-nirvāṇa*. The *Gītā*, like in Buddhism, suggests sense-control or asceticism as a way to achieve the state of *brahma-nirvāṇa*. The *Gītā*'s theory of transmigration of soul borrowed from *Upanisads* is more strengthened by the Buddhist doctrine of rebirth and *karma*. The *Gītā* borrows Buddhist terminologies such as *nirvāṇa*, *maitra* and *karuna*. The *Gītā* borrows the Buddhist virtues such as

non-injury (*ahimsā*), non-attachment, humility, forbearance and sincerity and interprets them as its own. The *Gītā*'s ethical principles are based on these Buddhist virtues. Later Buddhism influences the *Gītā* in developing its *bhakti*-based monotheism. The *Gītā* borrows many things from Buddhism and the post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* uses them effectively in the struggle against Buddhism itself.

4.6 *Lokāyata* and the *Bhagavad Gītā*

The *Bhagavad Gītā* classifies the people into two antagonistic groups; *devas* and *āsuras* (XVI. 6, 620). The *Gītā* outlines the characteristics of these two groups of people in the sixteenth chapter. The first three verses of the chapter are engaged in the description of *devas* (615-17). The characteristics explained by these verses about *devas* resemble the qualities of the two upper castes, i.e, *Brāhmins* and *Kṣatriyas* described by the *Gītā* in XVIII.42- 43 (Gambhirananda's translation 704-05). This shows that *Brāhmins* and *Kṣatriyas* belong to the groups of *devas* and their natural qualities are defined as *daivīc* qualities. The *Gītā*'s description of *āsuras* indicates the people belonging to pre-Aryan *Āsura* tribe. However, the *Gītā*'s elaboration of the *āsurā*-views does not suggest only the views of *Āsuras*, the people of the particular ethnic groups. The *āsurīc* views of the *Gītā* represent the ancient materialistic views of the majority of the common people including the *Vaiśyas* and *Sūdras* of the Aryan tribe themselves. They represent the ancient materialism or *Lokāyata* views, which contradict with the *daivīc* views of the *Brāhmins* and *Kṣatriyas* or the idealistic views of the *Gītā*. The *Gītā* refutes the ancient materialistic *Lokāyata* views, calling them as the *Āsura* views.

In ancient India, the *Devas* and *Āsuras* represented two particular branches of people, having their own different cults and cultures (K. Mishra "Races" 231).

The heroic exploits of the invading Aryans mentioned in the *Ṛgveda* often reveal that *Devas* were the Aryans themselves and the *Āsuras* or the *Dāsyus* were the pre-Aryans, the people of the Indus valley (Damodaran “Ancient” 14). Before the Aryans invasion in India, there was a considerable urban civilization, comparable to the early Sumerian, in the Indus valley. The Indus society was based on without class divisions, without a large, surplus-producing, agrarian population (“Marxist” 33). The *Ṛgvedic* Aryans destroyed this Indus culture down to its foundations about 1500 B.C. (Kosambi “Stages” 36). *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* defines *Āsuras* as fierce enemies of the Aryans: “. . . the Aryans, in their invasion of what is now called India, were obstructed by that fierce and savage-like people whom they called *Āsura*, or demons, and whom they expelled and partly annihilated” (Hastings 157). This indicates that the *Āsuras*, *Rākshsas*, *Dānavas*, *Pisāca*, *Nāgas* represented the “most primitive tribes of prehistoric period” (242). In many respects, their civilization was much more superior to the *Ṛgvedic* Aryans and the invaders learned a lot from them (K. Mishra “Races” 218). The *Ṛgveda* is full of the *Deva-Āsura* wars (“Organization” 87) and such wars tell us that the *Devas* were always behind the *Āsuras* in war technique and the *Devas* learned to develop a stable, skilled military technique and leadership from *Āsuras* in order to defeat them (“Gana-Samghas” 136). This shows that the Aryans had an age-old enmity with *Āsuras* since the time of Aryan invasion into Indus valley. Ever since their invasion, the Aryans were in constant war with *Āsuras*, *Daityas*, *Rākshsas*, *Dāsas* and other non-Aryan tribes for holding power over the means of subsistence such as cattle, water and pastureland (Dange “Organization” 87).

The age-old enmity of Aryans with *Āsuras* is portrayed in many *Brāhmaṇical* literature. The *Gītā* expresses a sheer contempt to *Āsuras* with a heap of abuses and

slanders. According to the *Gītā*, ostentation (*dambhaḥ*), excessive pride (*darpaḥ*), haughtiness (*atimānaḥ*), anger (*krodhaḥ*), harshness (*pāruṣyam*) and ignorance (*ajñānam*) belong to *Āsuras* (XVI. 4, 618-19). The *Āsuras* could not differentiate between what to do and what to refrain from; they have no notion of purity, morality, truthfulness, and so on (XVI.7, Gambhirananda's translation 621). The *Gītā* does not see any redeeming feature in *Āsuras* and goes on denouncing them for their many vices in verse after verse in the sixteenth chapter. The question arises why the *Gītā* turns abusive to *Āsuras* and find no redeeming feature in them. The Aryan's age-old enmity to *Āsuras* is not its only cause. The *Gītā* becomes abusive not to *Āsuras* as such but to *Āsura* views. The *Brāhmaṇical* literature, in order to express their contempt, assign the ancient materialistic views to *Āsuras* and calls them *Āsura*-views. In a myth of *Chāndogya Upanisad* outlined in VIII 7-15, Virochana, the representative of the *Āsuras*, is interpreted as being a materialist because he accepts the self being identified with the body (Hume 205-11). The *Maitrayani Upanisad* and the *Visnu Purāṇa* also attribute the *Lokāyata*-views to the *āsuras* (Chattopadhyaya "Asura-view" 49). The ablest of the commentators on the *Gītā*, Sridharasvami said that the views ascribed by the *Gītā* to *āsuras* were nothing but the *Lokāyata* views (qtd. in Chattopadhyaya "Asura-view" 42). This shows that the *Gītā* criticizes the ancient materialistic views labeling them as *Āsura* views, which contradict with the idealistic views of the *Gītā* philosophy.

The term '*Lokāyata*' is made with *Lokesu* and *āyatah*. The *Lokāyata* views denote the views of the people because it was prevalent (*āyatah*) among the people (*lokesu*) (Chattopadhyaya "Asura-view" 1). This philosophy is called *Lokāyata* because it is based on *loka* (this world) and it does not recognize the concepts of heaven or hell or salvation (Damodaran "Lokāyata" 96). The term *Lokāyata* denotes

both the philosophy of the people and the materialistic philosophy. “Lokāyata”, Radhakrishnan argues “directed to the world of sense, is the Sanskrit word for materialism” (“Materialism” 229). The *Lokāyata* philosophy is also known as *Cārvāka Darsana*. Gunaratna, the Jaina commentator of the 14th century A.D., attached the term *Cārvāka* (*cārva*, meaning the act of eating) with the *Āsuras* who offer food in their own mouths in ritual offerings. This indicates that the rituals of the *Āsuras* were not based on the concept of other-worldliness. They were essentially materialistic (qtd. in Chattopadhyaya “Asura-view” 60). Damodaran defines the word *Chārvāka* having a quite different origin. According to him, the word *Chārvāka* is made with the two words *chāru* (beautiful or attractive) and *vāk* (word). This suggests that *Chārvākas* allured innocent people by their skillful arguments and made them materialists (“Lokāyata” 96). In both cases, the word *Cārvāka* or *Chārvāka* carries the philosophic essence of materialism. Therefore, there is a connection between the words; *Lokāyata* and *Cārvāka*. Dasgupta claims: “Lokāyata (literally, that which is found among people in general) seems to have been the name by which all *Cārvāka* doctrines were generally known” (“Buddhist” 78). Dasgupta identifies all *Cārvāka* doctrines as being *Lokāyata* doctrines. The *Lokāyata* or *Cārvāka* philosophy is also called *Barhaspatya* because the sage Brihaspati originally propounded this materialistic doctrine (Damodaran “Lokāyata” 96; Chattopadhyaya “Asura-view” 8).

The materialistic tradition in Indian philosophy is found since the *Ṛgvedic* period. *Ṛgvedic* hymn of creation X: 129.6 accepts matter as being the first cause of the world as it says the Gods came later than this world's production (Griffith's translation 18). *Kaṭha Upanisad* I.20 and II.6 put doubt on having the other world (290, 292). *Svetāśvatara Upanisad* I.2 mentions the material elements such as time (*kāla*), inherent nature (*sva-bhāva*), necessity (*niyati*), chance (*yadrucchā*),

elements (*bhūta*), female womb (*yoni*) and male person (*puruṣa*) as being the first cause of the world (Hume's translation 350). As mentioned earlier, the *Chāndogya Upanisad*, *Maitrayani Upanisad* and *Visnu Purāṇa* also give references of the materialistic views attributing them to *Āsura* views. From these stray evidences, it is concluded that the materialistic philosophy, which is also known as the *Āsura* views, is very old and it later came to be known as *Lokāyata* ("Idealism" 102). The Buddhist *Piṭakas* include the term *Lokāyata* and the *Arthaśāstra* (c. 4th century B.C.), along with the *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga*, mentions about the *Lokāyata* philosophy ("Lokāyata" 185). The deep concern felt by the early Buddhist authors for the *Lokāyatikas* and their materialistic view make us infer that the original *Lokāyata* was flourishing as far back as the pre-Buddhist times (Chattopadhyaya "Asura-view" 20). A number of materialist philosophers, according to Buddhist and Jaina texts, lived at the time of the Buddha and Mahavira and even earlier. These texts mention sixty-two such heterodox thinkers and among them, most important are Purana Kassapa, Makkhali Gosala, Ajita Kesa Kambali, Pakidha Kaccayana, Nigantha Nataputta and Sanjaya Velathi Putta ("Early Materialists" 86). These many materialist philosophers propounded a variety of materialist views in India between the eighth and sixth century B.C. On the foundation of these materialist views, the *Lokāyata* or *Cārvāka Darsana* came into existence (Damodaran "Lokāyata" 96).

Modern research has not discovered yet any of the original works on the *Lokāyata* philosophy but at some time in Indian history, some of these works were in vogue and had influence among the people (Damodaran "Lokāyata" 96). Candrakirti's *Prajña Śāstra* has quoted a *Lokāyata śāstra*. Aryadeva's *Sataśāstra* contains an actual quotation from *Brihaspati Sūtra* (Chattopadhyaya "Asura-view" 6). Dasgupta refers to the Buddhist text *Divyavadana* in which the *Lokāyata* is ". . . regarded as a special

branch of study which had a *bhāṣya* and a *pravacana* (commentaries and annotations on it)" ("Lokāyata" 514). Although these texts were once in existence, are lost to us. The bitter hostility expressed to *Lokāyata* views in so many places makes us conjecture that the *Lokāyata* texts might have been deliberately destroyed and it must have been done before the beginning of the Christian era (Chattopadhyaya "Asura-view" 7). As a result, we are destined to know the *Lokāyata* philosophy only through the versions of its opponents. Jayanta Bhatta (c. 9th century CE) points out in his *Nyāya-manjari* that the *Lokāyata* system was based on views expressed in the passages, which represent only the opponent's view (*Pūrva-pakṣa*) (qtd. in Dasgupta "Lokāyata" 519). Many evidences suggest that the influence of the *Lokāyata* views was deep and widespread in ancient India. The name *Lokāyata* is itself a proof of its widespread influence because the *Lokāyata* means that which is spread among the people (Chattopadhyaya "Asura-view" 31). Because of the popularity of *Lokāyata* philosophy, ". . . many idealist thinkers have quoted extensively from the older *Lokāyata* works and have tried to refute them. Even in the fifteenth century A.D., Madhavacharya, an idealist philosopher of the Vedānta school, in his *Sarvadarsana Samgraha* took pains to present the *Lokāyata* theories in a distorted manner" (Damodaran "Lokāyata" 97). Although Madhava's version of the *Lokāyata* is doubtful and unreliable, the modern investigators directly or indirectly consider Madhava's *Sarva Darsana Samgraha* to be the only reliable source for purposes of reconstructing the lost *Lokāyata* (Chattopadhyaya "Asura-view" 4). This gives the false and distorted picture of the essence of the original *Lokāyata* philosophy.

The author of the *Brahma-Sūtras* has designed two aphorisms (III: 3.53-54) especially to represent and refute the *Lokāyata* philosophy. The *Brahma-Sūtras* has referred to the views of the *Lokāyatikas* in III: 3.53: "'Eka ātmanah sarire bhavat',

which means: ‘some (maintain the non-existence) of a separate self (besides the body) on account of the existence (of the self) where a body is (only)’ (Sivananda’s translation 418). This *Sūtra* exposes the view of the *Lokāyatikas* who deny the existence of *ātmā* (soul) different from the body. As mentioned above, it holds the view of Virocana who identifies the self with the body in the myth of *Chāndogya Upanisad*. If there is no soul apart from the body, the conception of liberation taught by the scripture is at best a deception. Sankara explains the above *Sūtra* of *Brahma-Sūtras* as follows:

Here now some materialists (*Lokāyatikas*) who see the self in the body only, are of opinion that a Self separate from the body does not exist; assume that consciousness (*caitanya*), although not observed in earth and other external elements – either single or combined – may yet appear in them when transformed into the shape of a body, so that consciousness springs from them; and thus maintain that knowledge is analogous to intoxicating quality (which arises when certain materials are mixed in certain proportions), and that man is only a body qualified by consciousness. (qtd. in Chattopadhyaya “Asura-view” 45)

In the above passage, Sankara elaborates the *Lokāyatikas*' conception of self, mentioned in the *Brahma-Sūtras*. Just as rice, argued the *Lokāyatikas*, and other ingredients of producing wine do not by themselves possess any intoxicating quality, yet when combined in a particular way, these materials produce the intoxicating quality, so do the material elements that constitute the human body, though themselves without consciousness, produce consciousness when combined in a particular way to form the human body.

The main thesis in the *Lokāyata* argument, outlined in *Brahma-Sūtras* III: 3.53, is that the human body possesses consciousness or soul but it must be a product of the body. The human soul exists when the body exists and there is no external life of the soul beyond human body. The death is taken as the ultimate point of human life. In other words, for *Lokāyatikas*, the human life ends with death. In XVI.11, the *Gītā* elaborates this concept of the *Lokāyatikas* as follows: "*cintāmaparimeyāñca pralayāntāmupāśritāḥ / kāmopabhogaparamā etāvaditi niścītāḥ* [Beset with innumerable cares which end (only) with death, holding that the enjoyment of desirable objects is the highest goal, feeling sure that this is all]" (624). The *Lokāyatikas* are obsessed with (*upāśritāḥ*) innumerable (*aparimeyām*) cares (*cintām*) because, in their views, the life ends, with death (*pralayāntām*). The *Lokāyatikas'* horizon is limited and they take the fulfillment of desirable objects as the highest goal (*kāma-upabhoga-paramāḥ*) with the conclusion that this alone is correct and nothing else (*etāvad iti niścītāḥ*) (Gambhirananda's translation 624). The *Gītā's* this verse reiterates the *Lokāyatikas'* conception of non-existent of separate soul mentioned in *Brahma-Sūtras* III: 3.53.

The *Gītā*, in XVI.11, discloses the *Lokāyatikas'* conception of non-existent of separate soul from body and the verse also blames *Āsuras* or the *Lokāyatikas* as being the pleasure seekers (Gambhirananda's translation 624). This indicates that the *Gītā* blames *Lokāyata* as being the philosophy of pleasure. The *Gītā's* this notion of *Lokāyata* philosophy is corroborated by Madhava's portrayal of this philosophy in his *Sarva Darsana Samgraha*:

While life is yours, live joyously;

None can escape Death's searching eye:

When once this frame of ours they burn,

How shall it e'er again return? (6)

Madhava attributes the above verse to the *Lokāyatikas* and the verse urges human beings to enjoy life because life is short and it does not return after death. The verse holds the view of non-existence of separate soul from the body and it is the essence of materialism but it blames the *Lokāyatikas* as being the pleasure seekers and the *Lokāyata* philosophy as being the philosophy based on the pleasure principle. The *Gītā*, in XVI 12-16, blames the *Lokāyatikas* in a similar vein. The *Lokāyatikas* (in *Gītā* "*Āsuras*"), under the influence of passion and anger, endeavor to accumulate wealth through foul means for the gratification of their sense desires (XVI.12, 625). They are not satisfied with the property and power they have and are ever intent to have more (XVI.13-4, 625-26). They consider themselves superior and being deluded, they are ever engrossed in the enjoyment of desirable objects (XVI.15-6, Gambhirananda's translation 626-27). These verses further justify the *Gītā's* interpretation of the *Lokāyata* philosophy as being the philosophy of pleasure.

The *Gītā* along with Madhava's *Sarva Darsana Samgraha* have distorted the ethical views of the *Lokāyata* or *Cārvāka* philosophy to which they are pleased to call hedonism. The opponents of materialism are usually inclined to interpret the materialistic morals as hedonist. "By materialism", says Engels: "the philistine understands gluttony, drunkenness, lust of the eye, carnal desire and ostentatious living, avarice, cupidity, covetousness, profit-hunting and stock-exchange swindling – in short, all the sordid vices in which he himself secretly indulges" ("*Ludwig*" 27). The *Brāhmaṇical* literature attributes the similar ethical outlook to the *Lokāyatikas* or *Cārvākas*. A verse of Madhava's *Sarva Darsana Samgraha*, attributed to the

Lokāyatikas, characterizes them in a similar line: “While life remains let a man live happily, let him feed on ghee even though he runs in debt” (9). However, such a representation of the *Lokāyata* ethics is only a vilification. If *Lokāyata* outlined such a superficial proposal as to making merry even on debts, it could not have a deep and widespread influence among people and all the schools of ancient Indian philosophy would not have taken it seriously and tried to distort, disparage and refute it (Chattopadhyaya “Asura-view” 31-2). The popularity of the *Lokāyata* philosophy itself is a proof against its charge of hedonism.

There is an indirect indication in the *Mahābhārata* that *Lokāyatikas* or *Cārvākas* do not hold such ethical views as outlined by the *Gītā* and Madhava's *Sarva Darsana Samgraha*. In the *Santiparva* of the *Mahābhārata*, a *Brāhmiṇ* named Cārvāka cursed the king Yudhisthira for killing his own kins in the battlefield. But, the other *Brāhmiṇs*, in the assembly of the *Brāhmiṇs*, assured the king that the real *Brāhmaṇas* had only admiration for his great deeds. They told the king that Cārvāka was only a demon in disguise and a friend of the King's enemy, Duryodhana. Then, they burnt Cārvāka to ashes (qtd. in Chattopadhyaya “Lokāyata” 191- 92; “Asura-view” 33-4). The myth of Cārvāka being a demon in disguise or a friend of Duryodhana cannot be accepted seriously. Yet the point is that the *Lokāyata* philosophy is connected with the name Cārvāka and it may not be wrong to assume here – what Cārvāka says in the *Mahābhārata* gives some clues to the real *Lokāyata* ethics. Cārvāka was against the ethics of the *Mahābhārata* war, which was fought among kins people not for the genuine reason other than gaining earthy power and pleasure. The real motive of the *Mahābhārata* war is outlined by the *Gītā* II. 37. In the verse, Kṛṣṇa explains Arjuna the prospect of pleasure in either alternatives – the pleasure of heaven if he is killed and the pleasure of this earth if he wins the war

(Gambhirananda's translation 82-3). This is pleasure philosophy. Marx clarifies: "The philosophy of pleasure was never anything else but the clever language of certain pleasure-privileged social classes" (qtd. in Chattopadhyaya "Asura-view" 30). The *Lokāyata*, being the philosophy of people in general, cannot be the philosophy of pleasure. It does not support hedonism. Instead, the world-denying idealist philosophy, the outcome of the leisured class people, carries the essence of the philosophy of pleasure. The idealism, the philosophy of certain pleasure-privileged social classes, allures people with the prospect of heaven, the symbol of ultimate human pleasure both in this world and beyond.

Madhava, in his *Sarva Darsana Samgraha*, interprets the *Lokāyata* as a philosophy that denies the validity of any source of knowledge other than immediate sense perception. The *Lokāyatikas* deny extra-terrestrial things and believe only those things, which they perceive by the senses. According to them, there is no God, no soul and no survival after death: "There is no heaven, no final liberation, nor any soul in another world, / Nor do the actions of the four castes, orders, &c., produce any real effect. / The Agnihotra, the three Vedas, the ascetic's three staves, and smearing one's self with ashes" (9). Madhava put these materialistic views in an unsympathetic way as if they represent the views of those crude people who little understand the higher values of human existence. Though the presentation is unsympathetic, Madhava's above verse reveals the materialist views of the *Lokāyatikas*.

The *Gītā*, like Madhava's *Sarva Darsana Samgraha*, exposes the materialist views of the *Lokāyatikas* in a similar way. In XVI.8, the text portrays the *Lokāyatikas* or the demonical persons thus: "*asatyamapraṭiṣṭhaṁ te jagadāhuranīśvaram / aparasparasambhūtaṁ kimanyat kāmahaitukam* [They say that the world is unreal, it

has no basis, it is without a God. It is born of mutual union brought about by passion! What other (cause can there be)?" (622). They (*te*) or the demonical persons think that the world (*jagat*) is false (*asatyam*) and, without any basis (*apraṭiṣṭham*), deny the existence of God (*anīśvaram*) and hold that there is no other deeper cause of the origin of life than the mutual union between the male and the female (*aparaspara-sambhūtam*) impelled by passion (*kāma-haitukam*) (Gambhirananda's translation 622). The verse explains the materialism of the *Lokāyatikas* who deny the existence of God, the reality beyond sense perceptions. It defines a definite cosmogony of the *Lokāyatikas*, which explains the origin of the world that came into existence from the union of the male and the female and that it could not have any other cause than *kāma* or the sexual urge. Though the verse is designed to refute *Lokāyatikas*, it presents the materialistic theory of knowledge of the *Lokāyata* philosophy.

The most significant contribution of the *Lokāyata* philosophy is its theory of knowledge, which contradicts with idealism. The idealists hold that there are three sources of knowledge, viz. perception, inference and sacred utterance of the *Vedas*. The *Lokāyatikas* reject the validity of the *Vedas* as being the source of knowledge. They regard the direct perception or evidence of the senses as the only means of valid knowledge. As far as the inferences are concerned, the *Lokāyatikas* consider them valid when they are related with certain manifestations of nature and invalid when applied to certain other phenomena. Inferences may be correct when they are related to past and may prove to be wrong when related to future. According to the *Lokāyatikas*, the inferences are not always a reliable source of knowledge (Damodaran "Lokāyata" 105). It is generally assumed that the *Lokāyatikas* deny the validity of inferences. However, they do not object to the validity of inferences in all

cases, except ". . . in the special sense in which it claimed to prove the reality of God, soul and the other world" (Chattopadhyaya "Asura-view" 27). The ancient *Lokāyata* philosophy, analyzing through the standpoint of modern scientific materialism, has many shortcomings. It is only a form of spontaneous or naïve materialism. Lenin writes: "The naïve realism [materialism]' . . . consists in the view that things, the environment, the world, exist *independently* of our sensation, of our consciousness, of our *self* and of man in general" ("Principal" 68-9). In spite of its crude materialism, the *Lokāyata* philosophy, at one time, constituted a tremendous force in social life. It played a significant role in shaking up the centuries old superstitions like the priestly conceptions of soul, God, transmigration and salvation, sacrifices and rituals (Damodaran "Lokāyata" 106). The *Cārvāka* philosophy appeared as a fanatical effort to rid the age of the weight of the past that was oppressing it. It helped to remove dogmatism and taught ancient people to believe in evidential things and reject all that is external and foreign (Radhakrishnan "Materialism" 234). The *Lokāyata* philosophy attacked on the heart of the ancient *Vedic Brāhmanical* ideology and this is the reason why the *Gītā's* attitude towards *Lokāyatikas* appears as biased. Because of its bias judgement, the *Gītā* only presents a distorted picture of the ancient *Lokāyata* or *Cārvāka* philosophy.

The *Lokāyatikas'* view of causality or *svabhāva-vāda* is another cause behind the bitter criticism of the *Gītā* to *Lokāyata* philosophy. The *Lokāyata* philosophy believes in *svabhāva-vāda*, which takes *svabhāva* or nature as the cause of everything. The *svabhāva-vāda* believes that everything originates and develops because of the natural power inherent in things themselves. In his *Sarva Darsana Samgraha*, Madhava has attributed the *svabhāva-vāda* to the *Lokāyata* standpoint: "The fire is hot, the water cold, refreshing cool the breeze of morn; / By whom came this variety?"

From their own nature was it born" ("Charvaka" 9). Its own law governs the world and there is no external principle governing it. The variety of the world is born of itself. The *Lokāyatikas'* concept of *svabhāva-vāda* goes against the *Gītā's* concept of *adrstā-vāda* or the belief in the supernatural power behind the creation and the function of the world. The *Gītā*, contrary to the *Lokāyatikas'* *svabhāva-vāda*, believes in God, the external power, behind all the creation and the destruction of the universe (*aham kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayastathā*) (VII.6, Radhakrishnan's translation 252). The *Lokāyatikas'* *svabhāva-vāda* and the concept of non-existent of separate soul also reject the idealist concept of law of *Karma*. The most important contribution of the *Lokāyatikas*, from the ethical and practical point of view, appears to be their revolt against the doctrine of *Karma* because, in addition to all the theistic philosophies, even the pronounced atheists like the Buddhists and the Jainas have laid supreme stress on this doctrine. This doctrine of *Karma* leans on the conception of a transmigratory soul and believes that every living creature receives the reward or punishment at present according to his or her good or bad action or *Karma* of previous life (Chattopadhyaya "Lokāyata" 192-93). The rejection of *Karma* doctrine alone is sufficient to enrage the author of the *Gītā* against *Lokāyata* philosophy.

The *Lokāyatikas*, as mentioned above, do not consider the inferential knowledge as valid one if the inferences are not connected with certain natural phenomena. They judge the validity of all actions and occurrences by reason. The *Lokāyatikas*, when judging by reason, do not find any usefulness of the *Vedic* rituals. In his *Sarva Darsana Samgraha*, Madhava writes the *Lokāyatikas'* attitude on the *Vedic* rituals as follows:

If a beast slain in the Jyotishtoma rite will itself go to heaven,

Why then does not the sacrificer forthwith offer his own father?

.....

If beings in heaven are gratified by our offering the Sradha here,

Then why not give the food down below to those who are standing on the
housetop? ("Charvaka" 9)

In the above couplets, *Lokāyatikas* question the validity and usefulness of the *Vedic* blood sacrifices and the ceremonies for the dead. It was the bitter criticism for the *Vedic Brāhmaṇism* in ancient time when the people were being oppressed by *Vedic* "dogmatism" (Radhakrishnan "Materialism" 234). In addition to the *Vedic* rituals, the *Lokāyatikas* also give a bitter reaction to the sacred *Vedas*: "The three authors of the *Vedas* were buffoons, knaves, and demons" ("Charvaka" 9). The *Lokāyatikas'* reaction is directed against the *Brāhmaṇical Vedas* and the *Vedic* rituals but not against all forms of rituals. The *Gītā* XVI.17 suggests that the *Lokāyatikas* (in *Gītā's* term *Āsuras*), in spite of their denial of God and the next world, had some distinct forms of ritual practices of their own: "They (*te*) perform sacrifices (*yajante*); which are so in name only (*nāma-yajñaiḥ*)" (628). They performed some kind of *yajñas* (rituals) after all, but the *Gītā* defines these rituals to be as bad as no rituals. The *Gītā* denounces *Lokāyatikas'* rituals because they were performed without subsidiary rites and proper methods of performance (*avidhi-pūrva-kam*) instructed by the *Vedas* (628). In XVI 23- 4, the *Gītā* highlights the importance of *Vedic* injunctions (*śāstra-vidhim*) to be followed while performing the *Vedic* rituals (Gambhirananda's translation 632-33). The *Gītā's* emphasis on the *Vedic* injunctions in these verses

indicates that *Lokāyatikas* did not have any objections on the rituals as periodical ceremonial performances but their main objections were directed against *Brāhmaṇical* ostentatious *Vedic* rituals performed for obtaining salvation in the other world.

The *Gītā* refutes the ancient *Lokāyata* philosophy. It interprets the ancient materialistic *Lokāyata* views as being the views of *Āsuras*, the age-old enemies of the Aryans. The *Gītā* labels the majority of common people, who hold the materialistic views, as *Āsuras*. In many verses, the *Gītā* expresses contempt to them with a heap of abuses and slanders. However, in course of refutation, some verses of the *Gītā* reveal the main tenets of the *Lokāyata* philosophy such as the concept of non-existence of soul separate from body, the materialist theory of knowledge, the *svabhāva-vāda*, the rejection of *Karma* doctrine and the acceptance of reason behind the judgment of everything. The *Gītā* appears inimical to the *Lokāyata* philosophy because the essence of this philosophy goes contrary to the essence of the idealistic *Gītā* philosophy.

The essence of the *Bhagavad Gītā* depends on the reviews of the aforementioned divergent schools of philosophies prevailed at the time of its composition. The *Gītā* gives a review to the *Vedas*, which advocate the ritual blood sacrifices, to Buddhism, the philosophy based on non-violence (*ahimsā*). It reviews the idealism of the *Upanisads* to the materialism of the ancient *Lokāyata* philosophy. The *Gītā* gives a high priority in its review to the *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga*, originally the materialist philosophies later transformed into idealism. The *Gītā* reviews all these different schools of philosophies, taking its standpoint on the *Upanisadic* idealism (*Vedānta*). Although the main spirit of the text is that of the *Vedānta*, the *Gītā* derives the best from each of these systems of thought except the materialist *Lokāyata*

philosophy. The *Gītā* refutes the *Lokāyata* views naming it as the *Āsura*-views, but it does not criticize the remaining schools of philosophy.

The *Gītā* puts forward self-contradictory views while reviewing the *Vedas* and *Vedic* ritual sacrifices (*yajñas*). In some verses, the *Gītā* gives high esteem to the *Vedas* and acknowledges the importance of ritual sacrifices, but in others, it condemns the *Vedic* texts and *yajñas*. The *Gītā* tries to squeeze the *Vedic* and the other philosophical theories into *Vedānta*. The *Gītā* interprets the original materialistic *Sāṅkhya* system from the standpoint of the *Vedāntic* idealism and rejects the *Sāṅkhya*'s doctrine of *pradhāna*, the doctrine of *svabhāva* and the doctrine of eternal motion of matter. The *Gītā* modifies the original atheistic and materialistic *Yoga* practices into the theistic one. The *Gītā* tries to reconcile the irreconcilable doctrines of *Sāṅkhya* -*Yoga* with the *Vedānta* philosophy. This gives birth to the incompatibility between the different concepts and ideas found in the *Gītā*. The incompatibility of the *Gītā* is evident when the text borrows the Buddhist virtues of non-killing (*ahiṃsā*), friendliness (*maītri*), kindness (*karuṇā*), non-attachment, humility, forbearance, sincerity and interprets them as its own. The *Gītā* repeatedly emphasizes the great virtue of non-killing (*ahiṃsā*), yet the entire discourse is an incentive to war. Such a slippery opportunism is noticed all over the text. The *Gītā* contains the different contradictory ideas and as a result, the different interpreters find different meanings interpreting the text in their own peculiar way. This is the nature of the text. The *Gītā*, in fact, does not propound its own new philosophy, instead, it only gives its review to these divergent schools of philosophies and tries to synthesize them.

Chapter Five

Social Impact of the *Bhagavad Gītā*

The dialectical and historical approach to literature believes in the influence of social, philosophical and economic base of a particular time of the society for the production of any literature and art. It also holds the belief that any literature and art, being the elements of superstructure, play a significant role in bringing change in the social, philosophical and economic base of a particular society as well. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure such as political forms, juridical forms, philosophical theories, religious views also play a role in influencing the course of the historical struggles and in determining their form (Engels "Engels to J. Bloch" 682). There is a dialectical relationship between the base and the superstructure. No literary and philosophical works go beyond this principle of Marxism.

The *Bhagavad Gītā* has played different roles in the different historical struggles of the different stages of Indian history. The original *Gītā* was used at first by the slave-owners in strengthening their ideology of the expanding slave states against the ideology of the class-less society of primitive communistic *Gaṇa-Saṃghas*. The post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* used the *Gītā* in the struggle against the rationalistic, materialistic and democratic broad movement of early Buddhism and Jainism. The Indian Patriots of the nineteenth century gave patriotic interpretation of the *Gītā* and used it effectively in the struggle against the British colonialism. These nineteenth century nationalists rejected "the utterly reactionary interpretation of the bigoted Sanatanists, and the anti-national interpretation of the British rulers" (Sardesai "Riddle" 36) and tried to find out some positive messages from the *Gītā*.

They interpreted Kṛṣṇa's urge to Arjuna for fighting against Kauravas as the urge to Indian people for fighting against the British colonialists. They interpreted the *Gītā's* call for violence as the just violence against the evil forces Kauravas and they used this call in the violent struggle against the evil forces, the British Colonialists.

The interpretation of the Indian nationalists including the innumerable and diverse interpretations put on the *Gītā* through the centuries, however, cannot deny the three basic framework of the text: the *Vedāntic* idealism, the theory of *Cāturvarṇāh* and its treatment to women. In the long course of human history, ". . . idealism had been, *dominantly*, a weapon of the exploiters against the exploited, of the oppressors against the oppressed, of ignorance and darkness against science, knowledge and human progress" (34-5). The *Gītā's* theory of *Cāturvarṇāh* is ". . . built in endogamous inequality by birth" (Sardesai "Riddle" 35) and the *Gītā* gives the women, the half population of the world, an inferior position defining them as born of sin (*pāpa-yonayaḥ syuḥ*) (IX.32, Gambhirananda's translation 397). The *Gītā*, with these three basic positions, plays a counter-productive role in the modern time against social progress, democracy and socialism. The modern world is based on science and freedom. The modern production depends on the accurate cognition of material reality (science) and recognition of necessity (freedom). The religion might have had some value when people had not learned to probe nature's secret or to discover the endless properties of matter. People have some inclinations to the ethical principles of religion, but there is no need of the ethical system of the *Gītā* or of the *Bible* sandwiched with pure superstition (Kosambi "Social" 44). No theological texts, whether they belong to Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism or Muslims, manage to give the proper solutions to the present day social evils; rather they increase the social evils, break social harmony, create caste and gender inequalities, and even beget the

religious conflicts among people. The *Gītā* plays not other than these social roles in the modern scientific world. This chapter gives the dialectical and historical materialistic analysis of the social implications of the *Gītā's* theories of knowledge (*jñāna-mārga*), action (*karma-mārga*) and devotion (*bhakti-mārga*) and the social roles of its theory of *Cāturvarṇāh* and its treatment to women.

5.1 Theory of Knowledge (*Jñāna-mārga*) of the *Bhagavad Gītā*

The *Bhagavad Gītā* is known for its exposition of the theory of knowledge. It is also known as the *Jñāna-mārga* or the path of knowledge, one of the three paths, i.e., *Jñāna*, *Karma* and *Bhakti*, outlined by the *Gītā* to achieve spiritual salvation. The different verses of the *Gītā* highlight one of these three different paths. In II.49, Kṛṣṇa asks Arjuna to seek a shelter in wisdom (*buddhau śaraṇam anviccha*) and Kṛṣṇa's emphasis on the "*buddhi-yoga*" (95) in this verse along with some other verses of the second chapter creates confusion to Arjuna for his allotted job of action for the participation in the horrible war. In III.1, Arjuna asks about his curiosity regarding the superiority of wisdom over action (131-32). In VII.17, Kṛṣṇa emphasizes that the man of knowledge (*jñāninaḥ*) is a very much dear (*atyartham priyaḥ*) to him (Gambhirananda's translation 328-29). Kṛṣṇa, according to the verse, loves the man of knowledge because he manages to identify One Self in all the living creatures as being the *Brahman* or the Supreme God, the ultimate reality. Kṛṣṇa loves the man of knowledge and here, the knowledge stands for an idealistic world outlook. This indicates that the *Gītā's* theory of knowledge is based on idealism.

The *Gītā's* theory of knowledge goes contrary to the materialist theory of knowledge. The materialist theory of knowledge recognizes the external world as being real and eternal. Lenin points out: "The earth is a reality existing outside

us . . . the earth existed at a time when there were no men, no sense-organs, no matter organized in that superior form in which its property of sensation is in any way clearly perceptible" ("Transcendence" 125). This shows the primacy of nature over mind because the material earth existed prior to the human existence. The earth is eternal and God does not create it. No intelligent principle guides the world. The *Rgvedic* hymn of Creation (X: 129.6) supports this proposition of Lenin: "The Gods are later than this world's Production" (Griffith's translation 18). It is clear that the material earth exists eternally and there is no role of any intelligent principle or God in its creation, operation and destruction. The *Kaṭha Upanisad* I.20 and II.6 express the doubt on having the existence of the other world (290, 292). The *Svetāśvatara Upanisad* I.2 mentions the material elements as being the first cause of the world's creation. It defines inherent nature (*sva-bhāva*) of matter as the cause of everything (Hume's translation 350). This implies that the material world exists, functions and ends not by the external power or God, but by its own *sva-bhāva* or inherent laws of nature.

The *Gītā* has a principal contradiction with the materialist theory of knowledge and explains the role of the divine power behind the creation, operation and the destruction of the whole Universe. The verse VII.6 asserts: "*etadyonīni bhūtāni sarvāṅītyupadhāraya / aham kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayastathā* (Understand thus that all things (sentient and insentient) have these as their source. I am the origin as also the end of the whole Universe.)" (320). The verse goes against the materialist understanding of the Universe. It presupposes the primacy of the intelligent principle behind the creation of the material world. Besides, it holds the view that the whole material Universe is a flimsy thing whose existence fully depends on the hands of God. God creates and destroys it easily. In the verse, I (*aham*) stands

for the Supreme God who is defined here as the origin (*prabhavaḥ*) and the end (*pralayaḥ*) of the whole Universe (*kṛtsnasya jagataḥ*) (Gambhirananda's translation 320). The verse expounds the concept of *māyā* explained by the *Svetāśvatara Upanisad* IV.10 which defines Nature (*Prakṛiti*) as being an illusion (*māyā*) and the Mighty Lord (*maheśvara*) as the illusion maker (*māyin*) (Hume's translation 361). This clarifies that the *Gītā* takes the visible material world only as an illusion or *māyā* created by the *māyin*, the Supreme God. In VII.15, the *Gītā* argues that we are deprived of the knowledge of the divine being (*apa-hṛta-jñānāḥ*) because of the obstruction of *māyā* (*māyayā*) or the material world. The people hold the materialist or demonical views (*āsuram bhāvam*) because they cannot see the divine being that exists beyond *māyā* or the material world (Gambhirananda's translation 327). This shows that the *Gītā's* theory of knowledge rests on the *Upanisadic māyā-vāda*.

Sankara and his followers explain the *Upanisadic māyā-vāda* in terms of an analogy of the sense-illusion. It is only because of ignorance that one sees a snake where there is just a piece of rope. The *Advaita Vedantists* define ignorance as *avidyā* or *māyā*. The rope is a real object but because of the sense-illusion, it projects an imaginary snake. The snake cannot be *sat* or truth because when the illusion is dispelled the snake is no longer there. In terms of this analysis of the sense-illusion, the *Advaita Vedantists* explain the felt reality of the material world as *māyā* or illusion. Just as, because of *avidyā* or *māyā*, one perceives the snake in the rope, so does one perceive the world in the *Brahman*. The ignorance or *avidyā* projects the false world, concealing the real nature of the *Brahman*. This world is the creation of divine *māyā* and utterly unreal because we perceive it as we perceive the snake in the

rope (Chattopadhyaya "Advaita" 97-8). Therefore, *Upanisadic māyā-vāda* takes the intelligent principle or Self or *Brahman* as being the ultimate reality.

The *Gītā's* theory of knowledge, as it depends on the *Upanisadic māyā-vāda*, describes the self or *Brahman* as being the ultimate object of knowledge. The text regards the knowledge of the Self or *Brahman* as the real knowledge. The verse XIII.11 concludes:

adhyātma-jñānanyatvaṁ tattvajñānārthadarśanam

etaḥ jñānamiti proktam ajñānam yadato 'nyathā

(Steadfastness in the knowledge of the self, contemplation on the Goal of the knowledge of Reality – this is spoken of as Knowledge. Ignorance is that which is other than this.). (525)

The verse identifies the knowledge of the self (*adhyātma-jñānam*) with the knowledge of reality (*tattva-jñānam*) and this is only considered (*proktam*) as knowledge (*jñānam*). The knowledge other than this (*anyathā*) is considered ignorance (*ajñānam*) (526). This is the expression of *Upanisadic* idealism, which denies the empirical world and names *Brahman* as the ultimate reality. In XIII.12, the *Gītā* defines *Brahman*, which is beginningless (*anādimat*) and abstract, as the object to be known (*jñeyam*) (527). The *Gītā* considers all knowledge other than the knowledge of the self or *Brahman* as false knowledge. The text rejects all empirical knowledge. In XVIII.22, the *Gītā* claims the empirical knowledge as bad knowledge or born of *tamas*. The verse criticizes this knowledge as bad knowledge which is confined (*saktam*) to one (*ekasmin*) form, to one body or to an external image (*kārye*) considering as if it were all (*kṛtsnavat*) and it does not recognize the existence of any

self or God beyond it (Gambhirananda's translation 688). This is the materialistic knowledge and the *Gītā* criticizes it as being the bad knowledge or the knowledge born of *tamas*.

The dialectical materialist theory of knowledge regards the empirical knowledge as the real knowledge and it rejects any idea about absolute, eternal, ultimate and immutable truths. Engels explains: "Dialectical philosophy dissolves all conceptions of final, absolute truth and of absolute states of humanity corresponding to it. Nothing final, absolute or sacred can endure in its presence" ("*Ludwig*" 8). This theory considers all knowledge and truths are relative according to particular time and place. The dialectical materialist theory of knowledge believes in the mutability of everything of this Universe and it rejects the existence of any immutable and absolute entity beyond this material Universe.

The philosophy of *Gītā* is fundamentally different from this concept of the dialectical materialist theory of knowledge. The *Gītā* believes in absolute and eternal truth. It considers the material world as transitory and flimsy, but it takes the *Brahman* as being absolute, eternal, ultimate and immutable truth. The material world, according to the text, changes but the *Brahman* remains unchanged. Therefore, the *Gītā* regards that knowledge as good knowledge or the knowledge born of *sattva*, which accepts the *Brahman* as being the ultimate reality. In XVIII.20, the *Gītā* states: "*sarvabhūteṣu yenaikam bhāvamavyayamīkṣate / avibhaktam vibhakteṣu taj jñānam viddhi sāttvikam* (Know that knowledge to be originating from *sattva* through which one sees a single, undecaying, undivided Entity in all the diversified things.)" (686). The knowledge that acknowledges the existence of single (*ekam*), undecaying (*avyayam*) and undivided (*avibhaktam*) entity or the self (*bhāvam*) presented in all

diversified things (*vibhakteṣu*) is regarded here as good knowledge born from *sattva* (686-87). The verse recognizes the eternity and immutability of the self or *Brahman* and considers it as the best knowledge. In XVIII.21, the *Gītā* classifies that knowledge as being the knowledge born from *rajas* which apprehends (*vetti*) the different entities (*nānā-bhāvān*) of various kinds (*prthagvidhān*) amidst all things (*sarveṣu bhūteṣu*) and they are distinct (*prthakrvena*) from each other (Gambhirananda's translation 687). The knowledge, which acknowledges the diversified things of the world, is the scientific knowledge, but the *Gītā* does not find it correct and defines it as being originated from the *raja guṇas*. This suggests that the *Gītā's* theory of knowledge goes against the dialectical materialist or the scientific theory of knowledge.

The procedure of acquiring knowledge is an important aspect of any theory of knowledge. The dialectical materialist theory of knowledge considers "social practice" ("Where do" 502) as the ultimate source of knowledge. The theory regards the sense perception as the first stage of cognition in the process of acquiring knowledge and then the sense perception is purified and developed with the judgment and inference in order to draw logical conclusions. Mao explains:

It can be seen that the first step in the process of cognition is contact with the objects of the external world; this belongs to the stage of perception.

The second step is to synthesize the data of perception by arranging and reconstructing them; this belongs to the stage of conception, judgment and inference. It is only when the data of perception are very rich (not fragmentary) and correspond to reality (are not illusory) that they can be the basis for forming correct concepts and theories. ("Practice" 74)

This is the scientific method of acquiring knowledge. According to this theory, any valid knowledge is formed through the dialectical interaction between the perceptual and rational knowledge. However, there is a problem to the idealist philosophers in the process of gaining knowledge because they regard the material base of any knowledge; the visible material world itself as unreal. Chattopadhyaya highlights the sources of knowledge for the idealist philosophers: "True to the spirit of the idealist philosophers of the Upanisads, the Advaita Vedantists, after denying all possible sources of normal knowledge, had only dreams and sense-illusions to fall back upon" ("Advaita" 95). With the rejection of the visible material world, no idealist philosophers including the *Upanisadic* idealists and the *Advaita Vedantists* have any other sources of knowledge other than the analysis of dreams and sense-illusions. Idealism is a mystical philosophy because the idealist philosophers have to depend on some mystical experience to justify the principle of consciousness as being the ultimate reality, calling the felt world as unreal and illusion (Chattopadhyaya "Later schools" 155-56). The idealist philosophers do not have any valid sources of knowledge and they do not adopt any scientific approach while dealing with the phenomena of this world in order to draw logical conclusions.

The *Gītā* has three suggestions as the sources of attaining knowledge but they are not based on reason and are quite mystical. In IV.39, the *Gītā* outlines the sources of knowledge: "*śraddhāvān labhate jñānam tatparaḥ samyatendriyaḥ* (The man who has faith, is diligent and has control over the organs, attains knowledge.)" (227). The *Gītā* suggests the faith (*śraddhā*), diligent in the service of the teacher (*tatparaḥ*) and the control over the senses (*samyata-indriyaḥ*) as the three major sources of knowledge (227-28). The faith, as the source of knowledge, signifies the faith to the intelligent principle, the self or *Brahman* or the Supreme God. However, the existence

of the Supernatural being, the God is not empirically verified and thus, the *Gītā's* suggestion of faith in God is mystical and it cannot be a logical source of knowledge. The faith on the God does not provide this worldly knowledge and this works only as the source of mysticism and superstition. Besides, the *Gītā's* injunction of faith on the God indirectly suggests the faith on the ruling class people. The *Gītā's* emphasis on faith in IV.40 supports this proposition:

ajñāścāśraddadhānaśca samśayātmā vinaśyati

nāyaṃ loko 'sti na paro na sukhaṃ samśayātmanaḥ

(One who is ignorant and faithless, and has a doubting mind perishes. Neither this world nor the next nor happiness exists for one who has a doubting mind.). (228)

A person perishes (*vinaśyati*) who is faithless (*āśradda-dhānaḥ*) and has a doubting mind (*samśaya-ātmā*). He does not get a place in this world (*na-ayam lokaḥ*) and to the next world (*na-parah*) and he does not get the happiness (*na-sukhaṃ*) as well (Gambhirananda's translation 229). The verse evokes the urgency in people's mind on the importance of faith on the God and it outlines the severe outcomes for those people who are faithless and have a doubting mind. The faithless person is portrayed in the verse as a heinous criminal who is supposed to get his punishment in both worlds. Nobody is liable to get such a punishment for being a faithless one to the empirically non-existent Supernatural power. It is no doubt that the verse intends to uproot the rational personality of the toiling masses and convert it into blind loyalty to the ruling class. Therefore, the *Gītā's* suggestion of faith as a means of acquiring knowledge provides only the mystical and superstitious knowledge and it only makes the majority of toiling masses submissive to the ruling class people.

The *Gītā's* second source of knowledge is the service of the teacher. A teacher is a source of knowledge for the students but the teacher can only impart that knowledge which he himself is enlightened in. However, the *Gītā* does not give any reasonable clues how the teacher himself gets the knowledge of the Supreme Being. Besides, the *Gītā* suggests a pupil to serve his teacher in such a manner as a slave serves his slave-master. In IV.34, the *Gītā* recommends: "*tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā / upadekṣyanti te jñānam jñāninastattvadarśinaḥ* (Know that through prostration, inquiry and service. The wise ones who have realized the Truth will impart the knowledge to you.)" (222-23). In order to gain knowledge, the verse suggests a pupil to serve the wise ones or the teachers (*jñāninaḥ*) through prostration, lying fully stretched on the ground with face downward, with prolonged salutation (*praṇipātena*), through inquiry or making questions (*paripraśnena*) and through the service (*sevayā*) in their household works (223). A pupil should respect the wise ones or the teachers for their contribution to imparting the gained knowledge but it is not justifiable for any wise ones or the teachers to demand such a service from a pupil as suggested by the *Gītā's* above verse. Moreover, there is no use of the knowledge of the wise ones or the teachers if they do not impart their knowledge to the learners or the students. A wise one or a teacher need not keep knowledge within him/her. A wise one or a teacher needs a learner or a student to impart his/her knowledge as a learner or a student needs a wise one or a teacher to gain knowledge. There is a dialectical relationship between the wise one or the teacher and the learner and the student. Therefore, the *Gītā's* suggestion of the service to the teacher has no different implications other than its first suggestion of faith to the Supreme Being. The wise ones or the teachers stand here for the ruling class people and the learners and the students stand for the majority of toiling masses. The *Gītā's* suggestion of the

service to the teacher is a way to train the toiling masses to be submissive to the ruling class people.

The *Gītā* defines the control over the senses or the *yoga* practice as the third source of knowledge. In IV.38, the *Gītā* explains this concept. According to the verse, there is nothing (*na vidyate*) purifying and sanctifying (*pavitram*) here comparable (*sadr̥śam*) to knowledge (*jñānena*) which is attained (*vindati*) after a long time (*kālena*) by one who has become perfected through *yoga* (*yoga-saṁsiddhaḥ*) (Gambhirananda's translation 226-27). A long *yoga* practice, according to the verse, is needed in order to attain the purifying knowledge. It means to say that a long *yoga* practice makes a man capable to withdraw his consciousness from the illusory material world and thereby he manages to gain knowledge of the Supreme Being. This is the idealistic concept of a separation of theory from practice. One attains an idealistic knowledge when he separates himself from the activities of this practical world. Sankara frankly admits this necessary condition, the divorce of the theory from practice, for the exposition of the idealistic philosophy. He considers *karma* or action as opposite to *jñāna* or knowledge. *Brahman* or the ultimate reality, according to him, is nothing but the Self in the sense of pure consciousness and any sense of duality is bound to be false. However, *karma* or action presupposes duality in many ways – the body, the world and many more. The involvement in *karma* creates the false sense of reality to the illusory body, the world and other material objects. As a result, Sankara argues that *karma*, far from being helpful, becomes a decisive obstacle to *jñāna* and he depends on pure knowledge or *jñāna* alone, rejecting all forms of *karma* (qtd. in Chattopadhyaya "Advaita" 93). The *Gītā's* notion of *yoga* practice of the verse in a sense of meditation or *Dhyāna-yoga* and Sankara's rejection of all forms of *karma* both suggest adopting the path of renunciation of action or the *sannyāsa mārga* for the

attainment of knowledge. Therefore, the *Gītā's jñāna mārga* is also called the *sannyāsa mārga*, the withdrawal of consciousness from the material world. The *Gītā's sannyāsa mārga* ultimately makes a man a monk or a *sannyāsi*. This is the privileges of the leisured class people because a person belonging to the toiling masses cannot be a *sannyāsi*. The toiling masses should participate in the labor of production to produce the material values for the human survival. The leisured class people, who survive with the surplus production produced by the toiling masses, alone can be a *sannyāsi*. Thus, the *Gītā's* third source of knowledge as *yoga* practice, as the other two, also serves the interest of the ruling class people.

The *Gītā*, unlike Sankara, finds usefulness of *karma* as a precondition for attaining the state of renunciation or *sannyāsa*. In V.6, the *Gītā* does not use the term *yoga* in the sense of *Dhyāna-yoga* but it uses the term in the sense of action and regards it as the pre-condition for attaining the renunciation of action. The renunciation of action (*sannyāsa*), as the verse says, is difficult to achieve (*duḥkham āptum*) without the *yoga* of action (*ayogataḥ*) (Ranganathananda's translation vol.2, 29). The verse is contradictory within itself because it urges the people to involve in action in order to attain the renunciation of action or *sannyāsa*. The *Gītā* makes it clear about its implication in VI.1. The verse explains him as a monk (*sannyāsi*) and a *yogī* who performs (*karoti*) his duty (*kāryam*) without depending on (*anāśritaḥ*) the result of action (*karma-phalam*), but not to the one who is actionless (*akriyaḥ*) (275-76). The verse gives the meaning of *sannyāsa* only in the sense of renouncing the result of action. If a person renounces his desire of achieving the result of action, he will be considered a *yogī* and a *sannyāsi*. There is no need for him to renounce this material world as a whole and to sit in *Dhyāna-yoga* for the attainment of knowledge. The *Gītā's* this concept contradicts with the concept of *yoga* practice

expressed in IV.38 (226). Does the *Gītā* take *karma* or action as the source of knowledge? No, the *Gītā* cannot depend on *karma* or action, the practice of this illusory material world, for gaining the world-denying spiritual knowledge. The contradictory position of the verse V.6 is not fully explained by VI.1, but it is well explained by VI.3. According to the verse VI.3, one who wishes to ascend to *Dhyāna-yoga* (*ārurukṣoḥ muneh yogam*), action is said to be the means (*karma kāraṇam ucyate*), but who has already ascended to *Dhyāna-yoga* (*yoga ārūḍhasya tasyaiva*), inaction alone is said to be the means (*śamaḥ kāraṇam ucyate*) (Gambhirananda's translation 278-79). Both verses V.6 and VI.3 define the *karma yoga* as a preliminary step to climb to the *Dhyāna-yoga*. In the first step, as explained by VI.1, one practices to obtain self-control through selfless performance of action and after he becomes perfect in self-control, he sits in *Dhyāna-yoga* renouncing all actions of this world in order to get the knowledge of the Self or *Brahman*. The *Gītā* ultimately accepts idealistic position of the separation of theory from practice in order to attain the spiritual knowledge. This is the position of the leisured class people who do not involve themselves in the labor of production and survive by appropriating the surplus production produced by others. The people with their leisured mind can only think about such mystical conception of pure consciousness or *Brahman* and propound the idealist philosophy. Therefore, the *Gītā*, instead of depending on *karma* or action, depends on the meditation or *Dhyāna-yoga* for propounding the spiritual knowledge.

The objective or goal of acquiring knowledge is another important aspect of any theories of knowledge. The dialectical materialist theory of knowledge gives special emphasis to this aspect of knowledge because it holds the view that any knowledge will be useless if it is not applied actively to change the world.

Marx concludes: “The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways;

the point, however, is to *change* it” (“Theses” 32). This clarifies the goal of the dialectical materialist theory of knowledge and its goal is oriented in the transformation of the existing society. It regards the knowledge as the production of social practice and it finds its utility when it is applied again into the social practice in order to change the society.

The *Gītā's* theory of knowledge has its goal too and it corresponds with its spiritual knowledge or the knowledge of the self or *Brahman*. The *Gītā* defines knowledge (*jñānam*) as being like the sun (*ādityavat*) which reveals (*prakāśayati*) the supreme Reality (*tat-param*) (V.16, 255-56). The attainment (*adhigacchati*) of this Supreme Reality or *brahma* (V.6, 245-46) or supreme Peace (*parām śāntim*) (IV.39, 227-28) is described as the goal of the *Gītā's* theory of knowledge. Those persons who remove their dirt or ignorance by knowledge (*jñāna-nirdhūta-kalmaṣāḥ*) and define the attainment of *Brahman* as their Supreme Goal (*tat-parā-yañāḥ*), they would attain (*gacchanti*) the state of non-returning, non-association again with a body (*apunarāvṛttim*) (V.17, 256-57). Therefore, the goal of the *Gītā's* theory of knowledge has a direct contradiction with the goal of the dialectical materialist theory of knowledge. The goal of the dialectical materialist theory of knowledge is this worldly, social, and directed to the welfare of others. However, the goal of the *Gītā's* theory of knowledge is otherworldly, asocial and selfish. The *Gītā's* theory of knowledge defines its goal as to attain the other worldly supreme reality or *Brahman*. In order to attain this goal, the text suggests to be asocial or *sannyasi* and advocates to achieve the individual liberation or the state of non-returning to this material world after death. The *Gītā's* theory of knowledge does not rest on the responsibility to family, society, nation, and of this material world. In IV.36, the *Gītā* argues that even the worst sinner (*pāpa-kṛt-tamaḥ*) among all (*sarvebhyaḥ*) the sinners (*pāpebhyaḥ*) will

cross over (*santariṣyasi*) from all wickedness of sin (*sarvam vṛjinam*) with the raft of knowledge (*jñāna-plavena-eva*) (Gambhirananda's translation 224-25). According to the verse, if anyone gains knowledge of the Self or *Brahman*, a heinous criminal is also pardoned for his crimes and this has a negative implication. This inspires the criminals in doing more serious crimes as they think there is an easy way out for their unpardonable crimes. This expresses a sheer hollowness of the *Gītā's* theory of knowledge for the cosmic operation of this visible material world.

The *Gītā's* theory of knowledge elaborates the *Upanisadic* idealism. It rests on the *Upanisadic māyā-vāda*, which describes the Self or *Brahman* as being the ultimate object of knowledge. The *Upanisadic māyā-vāda* considers the visible material world as *māyā* or illusion and the Self or *Brahman* as being eternal and immutable truth. This makes the *Gītā's* theory of knowledge mystical. It does not suggest any valid and scientific sources of knowledge. It suggests faith, the service of the teacher and the *Dhyāna-yoga* as the three sources of knowledge. However, these sources of knowledge, far from expounding any knowledge, only work as the effective tools of the ruling class people to make the majority of toiling masses submissive to them. The *Gītā's* theory of knowledge defines its goal as the attainment of mystical Supreme Reality, *Brahman* and the achievement of individual liberation after death. The mysticism of the *Gītā's* theory of knowledge makes it otherworldly, asocial and selfish because it only concentrates on the post-death individual liberation, ignoring the social duties of this visible material world.

5.2 Theory of Action (*Karma-mārga*) of the *Bhagavad Gītā*

The *Bhagavad Gītā* is also taken as a text that upholds action or *karma* as a way to achieve the spiritual liberation. In V.2, the *Gītā* accepts both renunciation of

action (*sannyāsaḥ*) and their performance (*karma-yogaḥ*) as a path of spiritual liberation but out of these two, it regards *karma-yoga* as being excellent (*viśiṣyate*) (241). In III.8, Kṛṣṇa urges Arjuna to perform his obligatory duties (*niyatam karma*) because, in the verse, the *Gītā* claims that action (*karma*) is superior (*vyāyāḥ*) to inaction (*akarmaṇaḥ*) (Gambhirananda's translation 142-43). Besides, the overall discussion of the *Gītā* is oriented to encourage the hesitating Arjuna for the involvement in the horrible action of war (Radhakrishnan "Introductory" 71). This justifies the *Gītā's* emphasis on *Karma*. However, it is not easy for the *Gītā* to define *karma* as a path of the spiritual liberation. The *Gītā* does not clearly define the two opposite entities, i.e., *sannyāsaḥ* and *karma-yoga* as being identical to lead a person to the ultimate state of salvation. In order to achieve this state, the *Gītā* ultimately advocates the *Jñāna-mārga* or the path of renunciation. Moreover, the *Gītā's* exposition of *karma-yoga* in the text does not carry the positive social implications. The *Gītā's* theory of *karma* carries the ideology of the class society and it serves the ruling class people in order to maintain the oppressive social order.

Karma or action is defined as "act or deed" (Radhakrishnan "Theism" 484), which is performed in this material world. Originally, *karma* indicated the biological development of a seed into its fruit and it was used to denote physical motion and development (Damodaran "Chatur-Varnya" 69). *Karma* is this-worldly because it indicates the activities of human beings performed to survive. *Karma* is a human labor power, one of the instruments of production. *Karma* plays a significant role for the human survival. Stalin points out: "In order to live, people must have food, clothing, footwear, shelter, fuel, etc.; in order to have these material values, people must produce them . . ." ("Dialectical" 15). *Karma* or the human activities play the major role in producing the material values required for human survival. People give *karma*

a prime value because there is nothing more important than survival for human beings. Dange argues: “Before man can think and do any other activity, he must do the prime activity of struggling with Nature in order to live, i.e., to produce food, housing, clothing, etc.” (“Prehistoric” 30). People do not involve in any other activities like forming the mystical ideas before they involve in *karma* or such activities oriented to the material production for the human survival. Because of the necessity and obligatoriness of *karma* or action for human survival, no theories can ignore its importance. The *Gītā* also gives high priority to *karma* or the performance of action. However, the *Gītā* does not use *karma* only in an ordinary sense as described above, and it uses the term in more than one sense.

The word *karma* is used in different senses in Hindu literature. *Karma* is primarily used to mean "the ritual or the *yajña*" (Chattopadhyaya “Advaita” 93). By *karma-mārga*, the *Gītā* also means the performance of the *Vedic* rituals, such as *yajñas* as a way to salvation. The *Gītā's karma-yoga* or action carries the dogmas contained in Jaimini’s *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* philosophy (Ambedkar “Essays” 183-84). The *Mīmāṃsakas* assign the *Vedic Karmakānda* as the basis of human life because they hold the view that the performers are able to get their future rewards through the performance of the *Vedic* observances or *yajñas* (Damodaran “Mīmamsa” 172-73). In III.9-15, the *Gītā* upholds the views of the *Mīmāṃsakas* while describing the importance of *Vedic* ritual sacrifices (*yajñas*) for the fulfillment of human desires (143-48). The *Gītā* claims that the performers get multiplied (*prasaviṣyadhvam*) (III. 10), gain the coveted enjoyments (*iṣṭān bhogān*) (III. 12) and even get rainfall (*parjanyaḥ*) required for food to produce (III. 14), if they perform *yajñas* (Gambhirananda’s translation 144-47). This is the mere elaboration of the *Mīmāṃsakas* conception of *Vedic* ritual sacrifices performed for their rewards.

In III.8, XVIII.7 and 23, the *Gītā* defines the *karma* as the daily obligatory duties (*nitya-karmas*) (142, 666, 688-89) to be performed. The daily obligatory duties also signify here the *Vedic* ritual *karmas*. The *Gītā* gives two reasons for defining *Vedic* ritual *karmas* as the daily obligatory duties of people. The text explains the first reason in III.21 in which it says that an ordinary person (*lokaḥ*) should do that very action (*tat tat eva*) which is done by a superior person (*śreṣṭhaḥ*) (154-55).

The *Gītā* suggests the ordinary people to perform the *Vedic* ritual *karmas* considering them as their obligatory duties because in the ancient time the learned *Kṣatriya* king of Mithila, Janak and others (*janakādayaḥ*) also attained liberation (*sāmsiddhim*) through the performance of *Vedic Karmakānda* itself (*karmaṇā eva*) (III.20, Gambhirananda's translation 153). The *Gītā* argues that the ordinary persons should perform *Vedic* ritual *karmas* for their salvation because these superior persons like king Janak did not adopt the rigorous ascetic practices of *jñāna-mārga* to attain the spiritual liberation but they got it only through the performance of *Vedic* ritual sacrifices. The *Gītā*, in other words, suggests the toiling masses to follow the footsteps of the ruling class people.

In III.20 and 25, the *Gītā* mentions the prevention of humankind from going astray (*loka-saṅgraham*) as the second reason of the performance of *Vedic* ritual *karmas* (Gambhirananda's translation 153-54, 157-58). The composer of the *Gītā* was well aware about the Buddhist influence among people and he expressed his fear in the verse that people would go out of *Vedic* tradition. The *Gītā* had its mission, and it was to stop people joining Buddhism. Buddha preached non-violence and large number of people – except the *Brāhmiṇs* – accepted the Buddhist way of life (Ambedkar "Essays" 184). It was a challenging job for the *Brāhmiṇs* to save the *Vedic yajñas* based on violence from the attack of Buddhism. Therefore, the *Gītā*

focuses on protecting the *Vedic* religion through the *Vedic* ritual *karmas* and defines them as the daily obligatory duties of people.

The *Gītā*, in IV.23-33, reconciles the *Vedic* theory of *yajñas* into the *Upanisadic* knowledge (207-22) to respond the challenge of Buddhism. The *Gītā* also converts the *Vedic* ritual *karmas* based on their rewards into *niskāma-karmas* i.e., the desireless actions. The *Gītā*, in II.42-43, denounces the *Vedic* ritual *karmas* for their desire oriented (*kāmātmānaḥ*) and heaven oriented (*svarga-parāḥ*) (88-9) goal and in III.19 and XVIII.6, suggests performing them by giving up (*tyaktvā*) attachment (*saṅgam*) and their results (*phalam*) (152-53, 664). The *Gītā* calls him an enlightened person (*vidvān*) who performs duties (*kuryāt*) without attachment (*asaktaḥ*) (III.25, Gambhirananda's translation 157). The *Gītā*, by converting the reward based *Vedic* ritual *karmas* into *niskām-karma*, tries to renovate and strengthen Jaimini's *karmakānda* (Ambedkar "Essays" 184). In III.26, the *Gītā* suggests that the enlightened man (*vidvān*) should not create (*na-janayet*) disturbance in the beliefs (*buddhi-bhedam*) of the ignorants (*ajñānām*), who perform actions for their results (*karma-saṅginām*) (Gambhirananda's translation 158). The ignorant people of the verse stand for the followers of Jaimini's *karmakānda*. The *Gītā*, in the verse, aims to prevent people from going into ". . . rebellion against the theory of Karma kānda and all that it includes" (Ambedkar "Essays" 186). This shows that the *Gītā*, in many verses, uses the word *karma* to mean the *Vedic* ritual *karmas* and it upholds and strengthens the *Mīmāṃsakas'* orthodoxy.

The *Gītā* uses the word *karma* also "in a generic sense" ("Authorship" 97) as a non-ritualistic action. One of the main teachings of the *Gītā* lies in its use of the term in this sense. Many readers of the *Gītā* and even those who have not read it consider

the message of *niskāma-karma* as the essence of the *Gītā* (Meghnad Desai “Contemporary” 157). The *niskāma-karma* signifies the *karma* done without hankering for the results. The *Gītā's karma-yoga* is defined here, as the obligatoriness of the performance of non-ritualistic actions but those actions should be performed without keeping any motive of gain or pleasure. This message of *niskāma-karma* of the *Gītā* is found in the much-cited verse II.47: "*karmaṇyevādhikāraṣṭe mā phaleṣu kadācana / mā karmaphalāheturbhūr mā te saṅgo 'stvakarmaṇi* (Your right is for action alone, never for the results. Do not become the agent of the results of action. May you not have any inclination for inaction.)" (93). The verse suggests that anyone should claim the right (*adhikāraḥ*) for action alone (*karmaṇi eva*) but not for the results of action (*phaleṣu*) and he should not think about inaction (*akarmaṇi*) even if he does not get results (93-4). The use of the word *karma* in this verse denotes the abrupt break from *Vedic* notion of *karma* outlined in II.42-46 (88-92). In these verses, the *Gītā* criticizes the *Vedic karmas* because they are attached with the worldly fruits. The *niskāma-karma* of II.47 attacks all those *Vedic karmas* and it also downplays all the ordinary actions based on the desired fruits. The verse II.48 elaborates the conception of II.47 and emphasizes that anybody should undertake actions (*karmāṇi*) renouncing (*tyaktvā*) attachment (*saṅgam*) and remaining (*bhūtvā*) equipoised (*samaḥ*) in success and failure (*siddhi-asiddhyoḥ*) (94). The theme changes from II.49 (95) and there is no more discussion of *niskāma-karma* in the second chapter. In III.7, the *Gītā* again recommends that those persons are the excellent ones (*viśisyate*) who involve in *karma-yoga* with the organs of action (*karma-indriyaiḥ*), controlling (*niyamyā*) the sense organs (*indriyāṇi*) and becoming unattached (*asaktaḥ*) to the fruits of action (Gambhirananda's translation 141-42). The *Gītā*, as mentioned earlier, urges people to perform even the desire oriented *Vedic* ritual *karmas* without being

attached to their fruits. Thus, the *niskāma* or desirelessness becomes the basic principle of the *Gītā's* theory of *karma*, both in generic and specific sense.

The *niskāma-karma* of the *Gītā* carries the essence of the philosophy of class society which cannot guarantee the results of action according to plan in social life. In ancient communistic *Gaṇa* society, the producers had control over their products because they consumed what they produced collectively. The collective did not let their products go to alien hands and they knew the fate of their products. With commodity production and exchange, the collectivism of the *Gaṇa*-society destroyed and the producers lost control over their products. A new element – money, new class – the merchants and a new force – the unknown market came between the producer and the product. The producer and his product became the subject of market, money, demand and chance. The producer could not realize the fruits of his labor through the direct use of the product. New, alien, unseen, unknown and uncontrolled powers seized hold of his life, his labor-power and he had to depend on fate for the results of his action. The class society, by its nature, became entangled in contradictions, anarchy, crises and chance. Private property and anarchy of production, divorce of the producer from control over his product, made the religious slogan of *niskāma-karma* of the class state essential for the ruling class because through this slogan alone they could hold the producer to his slavery and poverty and justify their job of suppression and exploitation (Dange “Mahābhārata” 165; “Falling” 111). The *Gītā's* theory of *niskāma-karma*, born in this historical situation, is the panacea for the ruling class people in order to make the toiling masses submissive to them. The principle of *Gītā's* *niskāma-karma* makes the toiling masses satisfy in their downgraded conditions, pacifies their anger and disarms them of their feelings of protest against their exploiters, the ruling class people. Therefore, the *Gītā's* theory of *niskāma-karma*

ultimately works as an ideological tool of the ruling class people in order to suppress and exploit the toiling masses.

The *Gītā's* theory of *niskāma-karma* is egocentric and asocial. The theory advises the actor to be unattached to the consequences of action, but it does not envisage what would be the consequences of his actions to others. It releases the actor from worrying about the consequences of his action. One may advise to be unattached to the consequences of action if the results are concerned to oneself, but we cannot be disinterested to the consequences of our actions if they harm others. The consequence of a bet on a horse race does not harm others. It only affects the actor. However, one should think on the consequences of the actor if he is going to kill someone.

A pregnant woman cannot be disinterested on her smoking if there is a foetus in her womb. One cannot be disinterested on his driving while drunk. What if he kills someone? The person, who takes bribes for allowing illegal mining and the seizure of properties of farmers or tribals, cannot be disinterested on the results of his action. If a person sees injustices around him, he should be attached to his action in righting them (Meghnad Desai “Contemporary” 160-61). A person should be attached to his action and should take the responsibility of the consequences of his action. However, the guidelines of *niskāma-karma* make a person irresponsible to the consequences of his actions. Its guidelines allow anybody to do any immoral, illegal and inhuman actions being unattached to their consequences. Even a criminal can be relieved himself from his criminal charge by claiming that he did it becoming unattached to the consequences of his action. The *Gītā's* theory of *niskāma-karma* relieves anybody from his sins. In IV.20, the *Gītā* argues that if a person does action renouncing its fruits (*tyaktvā karma-phala-āsaṅgam*), it is considered he does not do anything (*naiva kiñcit karoti saḥ*) even though he engaged in action (*karmaṇi abhi-pravṛttaḥ*

api) (200-01). If a person is free from egoism (*na ahaṅkṛtaḥ bhāvaḥ*) and whose intellect is not tainted (*buddhiḥ yasya na lipyate*), it is considered, he has not killed (*na hanti*) and not become bound (*na nibadhyate*) even though he killed (*hatvāpi*) these creatures (*imān lokān*) (XVIII.17, 679-80). This suggests that the unattached or non-egoistic action releases the actor from the consequences of his actions. In V.10, the *Gītā* claims that if a person acts (*karoti*) dedicating (*ādhāya*) all actions (*karmāṇi*) to *Brahman* and renouncing (*tyaktvā*) attachment (*saṅgam*), then sinfulness in his actions cannot cleave to him (*lipyate na sa pāpena*), just as water cannot cleave to the leaves of a lotus plant (*padma-patram iva ambhasā*) (Gambhirananda's translation 248-49). This verse also clarifies that an actor would be free from his sinful deeds if he becomes unattached to the fruits of action. Therefore, whatever ethics the author wants to convey through the *niskāma-karma* exhortation, the *Gītā's* this theory appears egocentric, amoral and asocial in a broad social context.

The *Gītā's* theory of *niskāma-karma*, though considered as the essence of the text, is not oriented for the people of all classes. The *Gītā's* *niskāma-karma* theory is applied only to the majority of laboring masses of people to disarm them of their feeling of protest against the ruling class people. The ruling class people have used this as a weapon to maintain the existing social order (Damodaran "Bhagavad" 188). The *Gītā* outlines the different ethics for the ruling class people. The ethics of the *Gītā's* verses II.47 and II.37 are contradictory to each other. The verse II.47, as mentioned above, outlines the ethic of *niskāma-karma*, while in the verse II.37, Kṛṣṇa urges Arjuna to fight in the battle, offering him the allurements of heaven (*prāpsyasi svargam*) if he is killed and the enjoyment of the earth (*bhokṣyase mahīm*) if he becomes victorious (83). In II.37, Kṛṣṇa urges Arjuna to involve not to the desireless (*niskāma*) but to the goal-oriented action. The *Gītā* has a different theory of action for

Arjuna, a *Kṣatriya* warrior or for the ruling class people. Kṛṣṇa urges Arjuna to fight in the battle in order to open the gate to heaven (*svarga-dvāram-apāvṛtam*) (II.32, 79-80), and save his earned fame (*kīrtim*) (II.33-36, Gambhirananda's translation 80-02). This is not a *niskāma-karma* but it is a purposeful action. Kṛṣṇa lays an objective to Arjuna behind his involvement in the *Mahābhārata* war and it is a victory of Pāṇḍavas so that they could enjoy the throne of Hastināpur. In order to achieve victory, Kṛṣṇa suggests Arjuna to go beyond the moral code of *kuladharmā*. Kosambi sums up the ostensible moral of the *Gītā* as: "Kill your brother, if duty calls, without passion; as long as you have faith in Me, all sins are forgiven" ("Social" 22). The *Gītā* designs this moral code for the *Kṣatriyas*, the ruling class people, and it is an anti-*niskāma-karma* exhortation. According to this moral code, there is no sin for the ruling class people who can go against the theory of *niskāma-karma* and perform actions in order to pluck their fruits. It does not incur sin to them whatever methods they adopt in order to fulfill their objectives. Kṛṣṇa suggests adopting the noble methods if the victory is possible and if their methods fail to defeat a more powerful and deceitful enemy, any other methods are allowed to adopt to gain victory. This is the Kṛṣṇified ideal of *dharma-yuddha* outlined in the *Mahābhārata* (K.Mishra "Government" 287). Therefore, the *Gītā* has a double stand in laying the moral code in relation to the performance of actions. It exhorts *niskāma-karma* for the working class people and the purposeful action for the ruling class people.

The *Gītā* uses the word *karma* in the sense of caste duty or *sva-dharma*. Dasgupta points out: "The fundamental idea of the *Gītā* is that a man should always follow his own caste-duties, which are his own proper duties, or *sva-dharma*" (Philosophy" 502). The caste duties of *Brāhmiṇs*, *Kṣatriyas*, *Vaiśyas* and *Sūdras* are fixed according to their inborn qualities (*svabhāva-prabhavaiḥ -guṇaḥ*)

(XVIII.41, 702-03). A man can attain (*vindati*) success (*siddhim*) only by performing the specific duties of his own caste (*sva-karma-nirataḥ*) (XVIII.45, 707). God pervades this world and it is He who moves all beings to work. A man can achieve success (*siddhim vindati*) worshipping God and he can worship God only through the adoration (*abhyarcya*) of his own caste duties (*sva-karmaṇā*) (XVIII.46, 707-08). In XVIII.47, the *Gītā* suggests people to do actions by limiting their activities only within the boundary prescribed by own caste duties:

śreyān svadharmo viguṇaḥ paradhārmāt svanuṣṭhitāt

svabhāvaniyatam karma kurvannāpnoti kilbiṣam

[One's own duty, (though) defective, is superior to another's duty well performed. By performing a duty as dictated by one's own nature, one does not incur sin.]. (708)

Even if his own caste duties (*svadharmāḥ*), the verse argues, are of an inferior type (*viguṇaḥ*), it is praiseworthy (*śreyān*) for him to perform them than to turn to the duties of other caste people (*paradhārmāt*) which he could well perform (*svanuṣṭhitāt*). Besides, the *Gītā*, in the verse, emphasizes that one does not incur sin (*na āpnoti kilbiṣam*) whatever action he does as dictated by his own nature or caste *dharma* (*svabhāvaniyatam*) (708-09). This theme is repeated again in XVIII.48, in which the *Gītā* claims that one should not give up (*na tyajet*) the duty (*karma*) to which one is born (*sahajam*) even though the duty is sinful and wrong (*sadoṣam*); for as there is smoke in every fire (*dhūmena agniḥ*), so there is some wrong thing (*doṣeṇa*) in all our actions (Gambhirananda's translation 709-10). The *Gītā* upholds non-injury to living beings as a common duty but when it comes to caste duties, the text allows killing of animals in sacrifices as being the caste duty of *Brāhmiṇs* and

taking of an immense number of human lives in war as being the caste duty of *Kṣatriyas* (Dasgupta "Philosophy" 506). The *Gītā* has a contradictory stand in relation to common duty and caste duty. The *Gītā* preaches non-violence (*ahimsā*) (XVI.2, 616) and at the same time, it inspires Arjuna to involve in the battle (*yuddhāt*) calling it as *Kṣatriya dharma* (II.31, Gambhirananda's translation 79). But, when caste duties and common duties come into conflict with regard to the special duties of non-injury (*ahimsā*), the *Gītā* keeps the caste duties in preference (Dasgupta "Philosophy" 514). This shows the *Gītā's* emphasis on caste duties and the text finds there is no sin even if the immense number of living beings, including animals and human beings, are killed by someone according to his caste duties.

The *Gītā's* theory of *karma* is based on the doctrine of *karma* or the ancient *karma* theory – "the pivot of Indian reaction" (Chattopadhyaya "Lokāyata" 192). The doctrine of *karma* originates from the superstitious animistic belief, which considers the soul as distinct from the body and holds the view that at the death of man his soul would transmigrate to another body (Damodaran "Chatur-Varnya" 69). This doctrine believes in the immortality and the transmigration of soul. According to this doctrine, *karma* of a person also transmigrates along with the soul in many coming lives and the people are destined to prosper or suffer according to the results of *karma* of their previous life (Chattopadhyaya" Lokāyata" 193). In II.27, the *Gītā* argues that just as the death of anyone is certain (*dhruvaḥ*), so the (re-) birth (*janmaḥ*) is also a certainty (*dhruvam*) (75). The *Gītā*, in II.22, compares the human body with clothes and says that as a man rejects worn out clothes (*jīrṇāni vāsāmsi*) and takes up (*grhṇāti*) other new ones (*aparāṇi navāni*), so the embodied one or soul (*dehī*) rejects the worn out bodies (*jīrṇāni śarīrāni*) and unites with (*saṁyāti*) other new ones (*anyāni navāni*) (71). In the above verses, the *Gītā* explains the concept of the

transmigration of soul of the *karma* doctrine. The text further elaborates the principles of this doctrine by explaining the transmigration of *karma* and its fruits to many lives after death. The *Gītā* explains about the transmigration of a person's wisdom (*buddhi*) acquired in the previous body (*paurva-dehikam*) (VI.43, 310-11) and the transmigration of the powerful habit of a person formed in the past life (*pūrva-abhyāsenā hriyate*) (VI.44, 311). The *Gītā* also explains the highest goal (*parām gatim*) of a person achieved through the sum total of perfection he attains in many births (*aneka-janma-samsiddhaḥ*) (VI.45, Gambhirananda's translation 312-13). This explains the *Gītā's* belief in the transmigration of people's *karma* of previous life to the coming many lives.

The *karma* doctrine holds the view that every living creature takes rebirth in a suitable body according to the *karma*, he/she performed in the previous life. One takes ". . . a better body if the *karma* were good, a mean and vile one, say of an insect or animal, if the *karma* were evil" (Kosambi "From Tribe" 108). The *Gītā* upholds this principle of *karma* doctrine. The soul takes birth in good and evil wombs (*sad-asadyoni-janmasu*) according to its contact with qualities (*guṇasaṅgaḥ*) in previous life (XIII.21, 544-45). In XIV.14-5, the *Gītā* describes the rebirths of a person either in taintless, stainless (*amalān*) worlds (*lokān*) or among people attached to activity (*karma-saṅgiṣu*) or in the wombs of the stupid species (*mūḍha-yoniṣu*), such as animals according to the quality of *sattva*, *rajas* or *tamas* that predominates him to his previous life (Gambhirananda's translation 578-79). The *Gītā* accepts both the existence of rebirth and the determining role of *karma* of the previous life for a person's destiny in his rebirth. This is the acceptance and the elaboration of the doctrine of *karma* or the ancient *karma* theory.

The doctrine of *karma* goes against *svabhāva-vāda*, which explains the entire manifold world by natural causes. The *svabhāva-vāda* does not consider the world in which we live as a lawless and it believes the world is governed by its *svabhāva* or the natural power inherent in different things. It does not believe in external principle for its governance and it rejects the idea of otherworld and its influence on this world's operation (Chattopadhyaya "Idealism" 102-03; "Lokāyata" 194). The law of *karma*, however, explains every phenomenon of this world not by natural laws but by the actions of the living creatures performed in their some past existence. According to its law, man's happiness and sorrow are to be traced to his past action in this life or in a previous life. A virtuous past action results in something good and a vicious one in something bad. A man's enjoyment or suffering is determined by his past actions and his present actions determine the future. This explains the reason behind the sufferings of a virtuous man and the prosperity of a vicious one. A virtuous man suffers because of his bad past works and a vicious one prospers because of his good works in the past. The doctrine implies that our own past looms over us like a dark unalterable force. It justifies the observed inequalities of this world and suggests there is no use of fighting against or grumbling about oppression, cruelty and injustice. It justifies the inequalities of the caste system by the simple argument that some are born in a higher caste and others in a lower one in consequence of their actions of the previous birth. The doctrine of *karma* diverts the people's attention from the social and economic causes of human sufferings and inequalities and inculcates in them passivity and meek resignation to their fate (Damodaran "Feudalism" 209: Chattopadhyaya "Lokāyata" 193). Thus, the *Gītā*, with its acceptance of the doctrine of *karma*, also diverts people's attention from the social and economic causes of human sufferings and justifies the inequalities of the caste system and other observed

inequalities of this world. The *Gītā's* different types of *karmas*, i.e., *Vedic karma*, *niskāma-karma* and caste duty are based on the doctrine of *karma* or the ancient *karma* theory because the *Gītā* suggests us to perform them in order to reap their fruits in the next life. The *Gītā's* such a suggestion regarding the performance of different types of actions based on the doctrine of *karma* makes the producing section of people superstitious and submissive to the power and luxury of the ruling class people.

The doctrine of *karma* explains about how a person reaps the fruits in his rebirth from the *karma* tree that he planted in the previous life. The *Gītā* instructs people in reaping the fruits in their rebirth, and at the same time, the text defines the freedom from the cycle of rebirth as being an ultimate aim of a person. According to the text, the rebirth (*punarjanma*) is considered as an abode of sorrows (*duḥkhālayam*) and an impermanent entity (*aśāśvatam*) (VIII.15, 354). The *Gītā* also explains the way out for achieving the freedom from the cycle of rebirth. The person who knows Kṛṣṇa's divine birth (*divyam janma*) and his actions (*karma*), he attains Kṛṣṇa and gets freedom from the cycle of rebirth (*na eti punarjanma*) (IV.9, 181). The persons, who go to all the worlds together with the world of *Brahman* (*ābrahma-bhuvanāt-lokāḥ*), are subject to return (*punaḥ āvartinaḥ*) but there is no rebirth (*punarjanma na vidyate*) for those who go to Kṛṣṇa's world (*mām upetya*) (VIII.16, 355). This reveals that rebirth is not good for the people and they should achieve not only *Brahman* but also Kṛṣṇa himself to attain freedom from the cycle of rebirth. How does a person achieve Kṛṣṇa and the freedom from the cycle of rebirth? The *Gītā* does not suggest *karma* as being the ultimate means to achieve this goal. The text describes *karma* only for being essential to maintain the body (*kevalam śārīram karma*) (IV.21, 202-03) and the *Gītā* expresses the fear of being tainted

(*limpanti*) (IV.14, V.7, 187, 246-47) and bound (*badhnanti*) (IV.41, 229-30) by *karma*. In IV.19 and 37, the *Gītā* suggests burning away all the actions by the fire of knowledge (198, 225) and it implies that *karma*, far from leading a person to the world of Kṛṣṇa, works as an obstacle and bondage for the purpose. Although the *Gītā* mentions *karma-yoga* as being the means of salvation in V.2 and explains the action as being superior to inaction in V.2 and III.8 (241, 142), the text does not express such a view in all the verses. In VI.3, the *Gītā* defines *karma* as being the preliminary stage to climb to *Dhyāna yoga*, the state of complete renunciation of action performed in order to attain knowledge that leads one to liberation (Gambhirananda's translation 278). Thus, the *Gītā* suggests not *karma-mārga* but the *jñāna-mārga* or the path of renunciation of action as being the ultimate means to reach to the world of Kṛṣṇa and achieve freedom from the cycle of rebirth. It is no wonder that the *karma* performed in this existent material world does not enable one to lead to the empirically non-existent Kṛṣṇa's world.

The *Gītā* uses the word *karma* in different senses. In most of the verses, the text uses the term to mean the *Vedic* ritual *karma*. It uses the word *karma* in a generic sense too. The *Gītā* develops the theory of *niskāma-karma* or the desireless action and asks people do *Vedic* or general *karma* renouncing its fruits. The *Gītā's* *niskāma-karma* theory carries the ideology of the ruling class people of the class society. The ruling class people, with the use of the *niskāma-karma* theory, disarm the toiling masses from their feelings of protest against them. This theory is also egocentric and asocial because it makes the actor socially irresponsible, releasing him free from the responsibility of the consequences of his action. The *Gītā*, however, does not suggest the ruling class people to be *niskāma* on their *karma* and lays for them the goal-oriented, purposeful action. The *Gītā* also uses the term *karma* in the sense of caste

duty or *sva-dharma* and keeps the caste duty in preference to the common duties. The *Gītā's* Vedic *karma*, *niskāma-karma* and caste duty – all of these three – are based on the doctrine of *karma* or the ancient *karma* theory, which believes the transmigration of soul and the transformation of the results of *karma* in coming many lives. The *Gītā* defines the freedom from the cycle of rebirth as the ultimate goal of human beings. According to the text, a person achieves this goal attaining Kṛṣṇa and he attains Kṛṣṇa not through the *karma-mārga* but through the *jñāna-mārga*, adopting the path of renunciation of action of this material world. Although the *Gītā* gives high priority to *karma* while Kṛṣṇa motivates Arjuna to involve in the bloody war, it ultimately suggests people to return to the path of renunciation (*sannyāsa*) to achieve the final goal of spiritual salvation.

5.3 Theory of Devotion (*Bhakti-mārga*) of the *Bhagavad Gītā*

The *Bhagavad Gītā* recommends people the *bhakti-mārga* for attaining salvation. The *bhakti-mārga* indicates the law of the right activity of the emotional side of man and the *bhakti* is emotional attachment distinct from knowledge or action (Radhakrishnan “Theism” 478). The *Gītā* discusses about knowledge, action and devotion as being the three paths for man’s spiritual salvation but it gives preference to the path of devotion and faith to God (Kiran “Prachin” My translation 45). The path of *bhakti* is praised in the *Gītā* as being the best (Dasgupta “Philosophy” 531). The *Gītā* claims one-pointed devotion as being excellent (*eka-bhaktiḥ viśiṣyate*) (VII.17, 328-29) and those who worship God with devotion, they exist in God and the God too exist in them (*ye bhajanti tu mām bhaktyā mayi te teṣu cāpyaham*) (IX. 29, 394-95). He becomes *Brahman* (*brahma-bhūyāya*) or gets salvation who serves God (*yah sevate mām*) through the unswerving (*avyabhicāreṇa*) *yoga* of

devotion (*bhakti-yogena*) (XIV.26, Gambhirananda's translation 589).

The text highlights the concept of *bhakti* to God in other many verses scattered in different chapters.

The *Gītā's bhakti mārga* is its newly invented concept (Kosambi "Social" 20), and it is the ideological production of the later phase of slavery and early feudalism (Dange "Slavery" 172-73). The rise of the territorial states gives birth to the concept of monotheism, the acceptance of the single supreme God and this gives birth to the concept of *bhakti*. Sardesai argues: ". . . *bhakti* towards God strengthened *bhakti* towards the king, *bhakti* towards the King strengthened *bhakti* towards God" ("Riddle" 23). This shows that the *Gītā's bhakti* theory originates with the emergence of the territorial state power and it carries the ideology of the ruling class people. The *Gītā's bhakti* theory serves and strengthens the hegemony of the ruling class by consolidating their temporal and spiritual power over the working class people. It secures the political power of the ruling class people by disarming the working class of their feelings of protest against state born social oppressions and injustices.

The *Gītā* borrows its basic philosophical ideas from the *Upanisads* but there is no direct connection of its *bhakti* concept with the *Upanisads*. In spite of its faint traces, the doctrine of *bhakti* can hardly be found in the *Upanisads* (534) and thus, the *Gītā's* path of *bhakti* is new and introduced in the text for the first time (Dasgupta "Philosophy" 532). Radhakrishnan gives credit to "the upasana of the Upanisads" ("Theism" 447) for the development of the *Gītā's bhakti* theory. But, Pattanaik finds the conception of God (*bhagavān*) and devotion (*bhakti*) as being the specialties of the *Gītā* ("Before" 12). The *Gītā* differs from the *Upanisads* in its conception of the personal God and the faith and devotion to him. The *Vedas* and the *Upanisads* have

no personal God and the *Upanisadic Brahman* is defined as an abstract being and it does not have persona (Meghnad Desai “Authorship” 112). The *Gītā* opens up the room for love, faith, prayer and devotion to personal God, transforming the metaphysical idealism of the *Upanisads* into a theistic religion (Radhakrishnan “Theism” 459). The *Gītā* defines a twofold nature of God. One is *avyakta brahman* as the ultimate substance and source of all manifestation and appearance. Another is the tangible personal God with whom a person can cling to him and keep a personal relation of intimacy and friendship. Of these two, the *Gītā* prefers latter and considers it as being easier to attain. In XII.5-8, the *Gītā* explains how a person attains these two natures of God (478-81). The struggle (*kleśaḥ*) to attain the unmanifest (*avyakta*) is greater (*adhika-taraḥ*) (XII.5, 478), but those who fix (*ādhatva*) their mind (*manaḥ*) on personal God (*mayi*), there is no doubt (*na saṁśayaḥ*) that they will easily attain Him (*nivasiṣyasi mayi*) (XII. 8, Gambhirananda's translation 480-81). The path of austere self-discipline for attaining the *Upanisadic Brahman* is described here as being more difficult than the attainment of personal God through the path of devotion. This reveals the *Gītā's* preference to the *bhakti-mārga* for the personal God and it makes the *Gītā* different from the *Upanisads*.

The *Gītā's* personal God unlike the *Upanisadic Brahman*, takes birth on earth as man. The *Gītā* claims that whenever there is a disturbance of *dharma* and the rise of *adharma*, God manifests (*srjāmi*) himself in the world (IV.7, 180). Though he is birthless (*api san ajaḥ*), undecaying (*avyaya-ātmā*) and the lord of all beings (*īśvarah bhūtānām*), by virtue of his own nature (*prakṛiti*), the God takes birth (*sambhavāmi*) through his own *māyā* (*ātma-māyayā*) (IV. 6, Gambhirananda's translation 179-80). This is the doctrine of incarnation of God and it is the new concept of the *Gītā* because it is not dealt by any previous *Brāhmaṇical* literature. The *Gītā* borrows this

conception from later Buddhism, which makes the Buddha a personal deity and an incarnation of God. The latter Buddhists believed that the Buddha had to pass through many lives before he attained Buddhahood. As a personal God, the Buddha had many devotees and they chanted the slogan *Buddham Śaraṇam Gachchāmi*. It was the slogan of devotion to the Buddha and this inspired the author of the *Gītā* to propound the *bhakti* concept to the incarnated, personal God Kṛṣṇa. The *Gītā* borrowed *Śaraṇam Gachchāmi* from *Buddham Śaraṇam Gachchāmi* and installed Kṛṣṇa in the place of Buddha (Sardesai “Riddle” 20-01). Thus, the *Gītā* converts the abstract *Brahman* of the *Upanisads* into a palpable, tangible and personalized human God, Kṛṣṇa. The *Gītā* makes Kṛṣṇa as an alternative of the Buddha and urges people to be the devotees of Kṛṣṇa for their ultimate salvation. This shows that the *Gītā's bhakti* theory is based not on the *Upanisads* but on the later concepts of Buddhism.

The *Gītā* develops the monotheistic concept by creating one all-powerful Supreme God. It exalts Kṛṣṇa, the personal human God, to the supreme position and suggests the *bhakti-mārga* as the best path to attain him. In order to uplift Kṛṣṇa to the Supreme position, the *Gītā* repeatedly, in various ways emphasizes the all-pervasive nature of him. In VII.7-11, the *Gītā* describes Kṛṣṇa as being everything of this world (320-24). All things are held in him like pearls in the thread of a pearl garland (*maṇigaṇāḥ sutre*) (VII.7, 321). He is the taste (*rasaḥ*) of the water, the light of the sun and the moon (*prabhā śaśi-sūryayoḥ*) (VII.8, 321-22), sweet (*puṇyah*) fragrance (*gandhaḥ*) in the earth (*pṛthivyām*) and the heat (*tejaḥ*) of the fire (*vibhāvasau*) (VII.9, 322). He is the intellect (*buddhiḥ*) of the intelligent (*buddhimatām*), courage (*tejaḥ*) of the courageous (*tejasvinām*) (VII.10, 323), the strength (*balam*) of the strong (*balavatām*) and he is the desire (*kāmaḥ*) which is not contrary to righteousness (*dharma-aviruddhaḥ*) (VII.11, 323-24). In IX.17-19, the *Gītā* further elaborates

Kṛṣṇa's transcendence nature as being the father, mother and supporter of the universe (383-85). Kṛṣṇa is the father (*pitā*), mother (*mātā*), upholder and grandfather (*dhātā pitāmahaḥ*) of this world. He is the syllable *Om*, and the three *Vedas*, *Ṛk*, *Sāma* and *Yajus* (IX. 17, 383). He is the fruit of actions (*gatiḥ*), nourisher (*bhartā*), Lord (*prabhuḥ*), witness (*sākṣī*), abode (*nivāsaḥ*), refuge (*śaraṇam*), friend (*suhṛt*), the origin (*prabhavaḥ*), the final dissolution (*pralayaḥ*), the place (*sthānam*) and the imperishable seed (*bījam avyayam*) (IX.18, 384). He produces heat (*tapāmi*) and rain (*varṣam*) and he is the nectar (*amṛtam*), death (*mṛtyuḥ*), existence (*sat*) and non-existence (*asat*) (IX.19, 385). In XV.12-15, the *Gītā* describes Kṛṣṇa as being the controlling agent of all operations in this world (604-09). The sun and moon illumine the whole world with the light of Kṛṣṇa (*tejaḥ māmakam*) (XV.12, 605). Kṛṣṇa sustains (*dhārayāmi*) all living beings (*bhūtāni*) of the world and fills all crops with their specific juices (*puṣṇāmi sarvāḥ oṣadhiḥ*) (XV.13, 606). He digests (*pacāmi*) the four kinds of food (*caturvidham annam*) (XV.14, 607), resides (*san-niviṣṭaḥ*) in the hearts of all and memory (*smṛtiḥ*), knowledge (*jñānam*) and forgetfulness (*apohanam*) all come from him (XV.15, Gambhirananda's translation 608). The above examples explain Kṛṣṇa's transcendence nature and show that there is nothing except Kṛṣṇa, the God, in this universe. All living beings and things of the world are described here as mere phantoms of Kṛṣṇa and they are operated and controlled by his power alone. The verses recognize no role of the laws of nature for its operation and they overlook the existence of other supernatural powers and gods too. In these verses, the *Gītā* advocates the all-pervasive nature of the single Supreme God, Kṛṣṇa.

The *Gītā* uplifts Kṛṣṇa to the Supreme position by stating his superiority among all living beings and things of the world. In this regard, the *Gītā* repeats that whatever is highest, best or even worst in things is Kṛṣṇa or his manifestation. The

Gītā uses almost all the verses of chapter ten to describe the superiority of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is the radiant sun (*amśumān raviḥ*) among the luminaries (*jyotiṣām*), the moon (*śaśī*) among the stars (*nakṣatrāṇām*) (X.21, 413-14), Meru among the peaked mountains (*śikharinām*) (X.23, 415) and the sea (*sāgaraḥ*) among the large expanses of water (*sarasām*) (X.24, 415-16). He is the Himalaya of the immovables (*sthāvarāṇām*) (X.25, 416), the sage Kapila among the perfected ones (*siddhānām*) (X.26, 416-17) and the monarch (*narādhipam*) among men (*narāṇām*) (X.27, 417-18). He is the time (*kālaḥ*) among reckoners of time (*kalayatām*), the lion (*mṛgendraḥ*) among animals (X.30, 419), shark (*makaraḥ*) among fishes (*jhaṣāṇām*) and Ganga (*jāhnavī*) among rivers (*srotasām*) (X 31, 419- 20). He is the letter *a* (*akāraḥ*) among the letters (*akṣarāṇām*) (X. 33, 421), *Mārga-śīrṣa* of the months (*māsānām*), the spring (*kusumākaraḥ*) of the seasons (*ṛtūnām*) (X.35, 423) and the gambling of dice (*dyūtam*) of the fraudulent action (*chalayātām*) (X. 36, Gambhirananda’s translation 423). These examples explain Kṛṣṇa’s superiority among all living beings and things of the world. The examples show that Kṛṣṇa stands not for the majority but for the minority of the highest and the best living beings and things of the world. Kṛṣṇa stands for the moon but not for the countless stars and he stands for the monarch but not for the ordinary people. The *Gītā*, with such a portrayal of Kṛṣṇa, aims to exalt him to the supreme position, and it exhibits the ruling class affiliation of Kṛṣṇa too.

The *Gītā*, in chapter eleven, describes Kṛṣṇa’s magnificent divine form (*viśva-rūpa*) (XI.16, 437-8) in order to establish him as the God of gods or the Supreme God. Kṛṣṇa gives Arjuna the divine eye of wisdom and Arjuna sees the entire manifold Universe in Kṛṣṇa’s brightly colored divine form. Kṛṣṇa demonstrates his divine forms in hundreds (*śataśaḥ*) and in thousands (*sahasraśaḥ*) and they are of different

kinds (*nānā-vidhāni*) celestial (*divyāni*) and of various colors and shapes (*nānā-varṇa-ākṛtīni*) (XI.5, 430-31). In his divine form, Kṛṣṇa shines with the radiant of thousands of suns burning together (*sūrya-sahasrasya utthitā bhavet*) (XI.12, 435). Kṛṣṇa, with numerous arms, bellies, mouths and eyes (*aneka-bāhu-udara-vaktra-netram*), pervades the heavens and the earth having neither beginning (*na ādim*), nor the middle (*na madhyam*) and nor the end (*na antam*) (XI.16, 437-38). In XI.13, the *Gītā* exalts Kṛṣṇa as being the God of gods (*devadevasya*) in whose body Arjuna sees the whole diversely differentiated universe united in the one (*ekastham*) (435-36). Although the *Gītā* repeatedly refers to the *Upanisadic Brahman* as being the highest abode, the ultimate realization and the absolute essence, Kṛṣṇa, in his super-personality, transcends even *Brahman*. Inside Kṛṣṇa's divine body, Arjuna sees all the gods (*sarvān devān*) and even Brahmā (*Brahman*) sitting on a lotus seat (*kamalāsana-stham*) (XI.15, 436-7). This shows that the *Gītā* recognizes *Brahman* only as part of Kṛṣṇa and takes Kṛṣṇa as the God of gods or the Supreme God. The *Gītā* describes Kṛṣṇa as an upholder of the Universe and as the great destroyer of the world too. The *Gītā* depicts him as the world destroying time (*loka-kṣaya-kṛt-kālah*) (XI.32, 450) and Kṛṣṇa claims of killing all the warriors of Kuruksetra earlier by him than the real battle starts (*māyāivaite nihatāḥ pūrvam eva*) (XI.33, 451). Arjuna sees all the great warriors (*nara-loka-vīrah*) of the Kuruksetra war entering into the blazing mouths (*abhi-vijvalanti vaktrāṇi*) of Kṛṣṇa as rivers enter into the ocean (XI.28, Gambhirananda's translation 447). Such a representation of the divine manifestation of Kṛṣṇa explains the *Gītā's* newly developed concept of monotheism. The text explains Kṛṣṇa as being all-pervasive, superior and all-powerful monotheistic Supreme God, the God of all gods.

The *Gītā* suggests the *bhakti-mārga* as the best and easier path for attaining the monotheistic Supreme God, Kṛṣṇa. The *Gītā* recognizes the *Vedic* path of worshipping God but portrays it as a path that becomes incapable of leading a person to his ultimate salvation. In IX.20-21, the *Gītā* argues that those who worship God through *Vedic* paths of sacrifices (*yajñaiḥ*), they reach to heavenly world (*surendralokam*), and return to the human world (*martyalokam*) after the exhaustion (*kṣīṇe*) of their merit (*puṇye*) earned by the performances of rites and duties prescribed in the three *Vedas* (*traī-dharmyam*) (386-87). The worshippers of gods (*deva-yajāḥ / deva-vratāḥ*) go (*yānti*) to the gods (*devān*) alone (VII.23, 333; IX.25, Gambhirananda's translation 391). This means that the worshippers of *Vedic* gods cannot reach to the world of Kṛṣṇa and as a result, they cannot achieve freedom from the cycle of rebirth.

The *Gītā* recognizes the *Upanisadic Brahman* as a part of the essence of God and suggests adopting the *Upanisadic* path of asceticism for attaining *Brahman*. But, this is only a compromise of the *Gītā* with the *Upanisadic* notion of God and its adopted path because the *Gītā* emphasizes the necessity of a personal relation with God, whom we can love and adore (Dasgupta "Philosophy" 530). The *Gītā* does not discard the *Vedic* and *Upanisadic* notions of God and their adopted paths but its focus is on the path of devotion to the monotheistic personal human God, Kṛṣṇa.

In XVIII.66, the *Gītā* asks us to abandon (*parityajya*) all forms of rites and duties (*sarva-dharman*) and surrender (*śaraṇam vraja*) to Kṛṣṇa alone (*māmekam*) as Kṛṣṇa himself is capable to make a person free (*mokṣayiṣyāmi*) from all his sins (*sarva-pāpēbhyo*) (739-40). The text, in the verse, suggests people to abandon the *Vedic* and *Upanisadic* notions of religion and adopt the new religion, which is the religion of *bhakti-mārga* to the personal God, Kṛṣṇa. This is the *Gītā's* exaltation of *bhakti-mārga*. The *Gītā's* suggestion of the *bhakti-mārga* makes a person free from all the

pains he has to take while performing *Vedic yajñas* and conducting the *Upanisadic* severe austerities for attaining salvation from the cycle of birth and death. Through devotion (*bhaktiyā*) a person manages to know (*abhijānāti*) the reality of Kṛṣṇa (*tattvataḥ mām*) (XVIII.55, 728-29) and Kṛṣṇa's grace (*tat-prasādāt*) provides him the supreme peace (*parām śāntim*) and the eternal abode (*śāśvatam sthānam*) (XVIII.62, 736). Arjuna manages to see the divine manifestation of Kṛṣṇa as he is described as the true devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Such an opportunity of beholding Kṛṣṇa's divine form cannot be attained by the study of *Vedas* and *yajñas* (*na vedayajña-adhyayanaiḥ*), by gifts (*na dānaiḥ*) and rituals (*na kriyābhiḥ*) and even by severe austerities (*ugraiḥ tapobhiḥ*) (XI.48, 466-67). In XI.54, the *Gītā* suggests that only that person, who keeps the single-minded devotion (*ananyayā bhaktiyā*) to Kṛṣṇa, can attain the supreme personality of him (*aham śakyah evamvidhaḥ*) (Gambhirananda's translation 470). The *bhakti-mārga*, according to the *Gītā*, appears best and easier for a person to attain salvation in comparison with the earlier *Vedic* and *Upanisadic* paths.

The development of Aryan social history explains the development of the monotheism and the *bhakti* concept of the *Gītā*. All the world religions are the fantastic reflection in men's minds of those external forces, which influence their daily life. In religion, the terrestrial forces assume the form of supernatural ones. In the beginnings of human history, the forces of nature were alien, menacing and dominating and they were personified as supernatural beings. Side by side with the natural forces, social forces begin to be active and they confront man as equally alien, inexplicable and dominating as the very forces of nature. The fantastic supernatural beings, which at first only reflected the mysterious forces of nature, begin to reflect the social forces, acquire social attributes and become representatives of the forces of

history. At a still further stage of development, all the natural and social characteristics of the numerous gods are transferred to one almighty God and it, in reality, reflects the abstract man. Such is the origin of monotheism (Engels “State” 410-11). The rise of the territorial state under a single king gives birth to the concept of monotheism or belief in single God to Aryan thought and it is reflected in the *Gītā*. Kṛṣṇa, in the *Gītā*, is the champion of the territorial principle as against Arjuna who upholds the principles of ancient communistic tribal kingdoms (Sardesai “Riddle” 25). The social organization of the primitive communistic stage of development was based on *Gaṇas* and *gotras* – the clans and tribes. There were multiple gods and these gods reflected the mysterious forces of nature and acquired less social attributes. The early gods like Agni, Mitra and Varuna made the ancient Aryans to feel themselves at home and commune with the forces of nature. The ancient social structure underwent many changes later on and with the emergence of the territorial state, social groupings with many classes began to unite within definite territorial boundaries. This gave birth to the new consciousness of unity and it reflected in matters of faith as well. As the ancient small tribal states merged into the large territorial states, the excessive numbers of ancient gods united into an all-powerful single God. Along with the centralization in social and state structure, the gods were also united. The single Supreme Being, the God of all gods stood for the earthly emperor, the king of kings (Damodaran “Beginnings” 34-5). Thus, the monotheism of the *Gītā* is the social product of the development of the territorial kingdoms and empires in Aryan history.

The *Gītā's* concept of *bhakti* develops along with its concept of monotheism. The emperors of the territorial states needed the *bhakti* concept as a principal ideological spiritual weapon to hold the large numbers of people into their grip and

make them loyal to the state power. Every political power requires an ideological-spiritual basis for earning the loyalty of its citizens. The force is the ultimate weapon of political power, but that alone does not become sufficient for maintaining the state's law and order. In the tribal kingdoms, the blood relation between the clans of the tribe provides the bond of unity and loyalty to the king. In the territorial kingdoms, the concepts of the king as the representative of God (in Europe) and as an element of Godhood (In India) become the new basis of loyalty and obedience to the state power (Sardesai "Riddle" 22-3). In order to implant the feelings of loyalty and devotion in people's mind towards king, "The status of king was exalted to make him a manifestation of divinity" (K. Mishra "Government" 257) in the territorial kingdoms. As there were no blood ties between the king and the people like in tribal kingdoms, the conception of king's divinity alone could generate people's feelings of loyalty and *bhakti* to the king of the territorial states. Hence, the *Gītā's* concept of *bhakti* to the monotheistic God was born in this social background, and it strengthens the people's *bhakti* towards the king or the ruling class people.

The issue of tribal versus territorial state power dogged Indian history for centuries. By the time of the Guptas, the territorial principle achieved its prominence. Samudra Gupta, who is known as the "Napoleon" of India, is famous for the destruction of a large number of tribal kingdoms in Punjab and Rajputana, where tribalism continued much longer than in the Gangetic valley (Sardesai "Riddle" 24-5). This indicates that the concept of *bhakti* originated in India in the later part of slavery and early feudalism.

The concept of *bhakti* became the ideological-spiritual tool of the emperors of the territorial kingdoms. This concept of *bhakti* came as a compromise of the slave-

owners with new social forces, who were heading towards serfdom and the feudal order. Because of the development of productive forces, the new classes emerged from within the womb of the slavery. The emergence of the serf in the countryside, the artisan in the town and the new class – the merchants weakened the slavery. Agriculture had grown on a vast scale and the question of the private ownership of land began to be considered a serious aspect. This material condition of the time demanded the mitigation of slavery and it made a room for ripening the feudalism. The slavery, in such a condition, adopted the policy of compromise with the working class people and this called forth a new attitude to slavery among the lawgivers and the philosophers of the exploiting class. As a result, the author of the *Gītā* proclaims salvation to the working class people through *bhakti* (Dange “Slavery Weakens” 170-73). The large number of *Sūdras* and women are not granted salvation by *Vedic* ritual sacrifices and the *Upanisadic* austerities (Dasgupta “Philosophy” 514) but, as a way of compromise, the *Gītā* granted salvation to them through the path of *bhakti*. In IX 32, the *Gītā* proclaims:

mām hi pārtha vyapāśritya ye 'pi syuḥ pāpayonayaḥ

striyo vaiśyāstathā sūdrās te 'pi yānti parām gatim

(For, O son of Prtha, even those who are born of sin – women, Vaiśhyas, as also Sūdras –, even they reach the highest Goal by taking shelter under Me.). (396)

The *Gītā* provides the highest goal or salvation (*param gatim*) to the lowly born (*pāpayonayaḥ syuḥ*), women (*striyo*), *Vaiśyas* (*vaiśyās*) and *Sūdras* (*sūdrās*) if they do *bhakti* (*vyapāśritya*) to Kṛṣṇa (*mām*) (Gambhirananda’s translation 396-97). The verse, for the first time, opens up the path of ultimate salvation through *bhakti* to the

large numbers of working class people and women. The slavery reduced even the free Aryan *Vaiśyas*, the majority of toiling masses who were the original proud *Viśha* of early *Gaṇa* communes, to the degraded position of the *Sūdras* and the women. After the ruined *Vaiśyas* were thrown into the ranks of the slaves, the Aryan slaves formed the overwhelming majority of population and making ally with the unconquered or semi-conquered tribal population, they could initiate civil war against the ruling class people. In order to stop their rebellion and earn their loyalty, there was no better option for the ruling class people other than providing liberation to the working class people through *bhakti*. It is in this material necessity; it was announced salvation to the working class people in the name of Kṛṣṇa of the *Gītā* (Dange “Slavery Weakens” 172). Besides, Buddhism had already offered salvation to women and *Sūdras* and this also compelled the post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* to do the same (Ambedkar “Essays” 190). Hence, the *bhakti-mārga* of the *Gītā* is the social product of the post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* and it was introduced by the ruling class people for their historical necessity of doing compromise with the working class people.

The *Gītā's bhakti* theory gained popularity in feudalism because its concept of unflinching loyalty to a single God suited the feudal ideology perfectly. The chain of personal loyalty, the essence of fully developed feudalism, binds the serf and retainer to feudal lord and baron to king or Emperor. It is the ideological basis of feudal society. In feudalism, the means and relations of production: land ownership, military service, tax-collection and the conversion of local produce into commodities are operated through the chain of personal loyalty. The barons are personally responsible to the king and part of a tax-gathering mechanism. The Manusmṛti king, for example, had to administer everything himself, directly or through agents without independent status. In order to hold the feudal society and its state mechanism, the best religion is

one, which emphasizes the role of *bhakti* or personal faith. The loyalty of feudalism leads one to such an extent that Ganga and Pallava, nobles of the south, offered their own heads to some god or goddess for their royal master's welfare. Many inscriptions mention this. Marco Polo reported that many vassals cast themselves upon the king's funeral pyre to be consumed with the royal master's corpse. The infamous custom of *Sati* is also rooted in the concept of *bhakti* or personal faith and it is recorded with increasing frequency among the ruling classes from the sixth century [A.D.] (Kosambi "Social" 39-40; "Towards" 208-09). This shows that the *Gītā's bhakti* theory plays a significant role to strengthen the feudalist notion of personal loyalty, giving it the moral, spiritual and religious support. It works as an ideological backbone for consolidating feudalism in society.

The *Gītā's bhakti* theory, however, was used against feudal exploitation in the *bhakti* movement of the Middle ages. The *bhakti* movement in India has many points of resemblance with the Reformation movement in Europe. Although the keynote of the movement was *bhakti* to Lord Vishnu and his *avatārs*, Rama and Kṛṣṇa, it was not a purely religious movement. The *Gītā's* concept that all men and women, high and low can attain communion with God and enjoy eternal bliss through *bhakti-mārga* became the central idea of the *bhakti* movement, which rallied wide sections of the masses to fight the priesthood and caste tyranny. The *Vedāntic* doctrines of Ramanuja and his disciple, Ramananda worked as the main sources of inspiration for this reform movement. Ramananda attacked *Brāhmiṇ* supremacy and the caste system, travelling everywhere. He had many disciples and they belonged to the people of low caste and low economic background. Ramananda's disciples Raidas, Dharna, Kabir, Tulsidas, Dadu, Nanak, Namadev, Tukaram, Chaitanya were such type of people and they launched the *bhakti* movement vigorously against the different types of feudal

exploitations. Some basic principles of the movement were: recognition of the unity of the people irrespective of religious considerations, equality of all before God, opposition to the caste system, the faith that a person's communion with God depends on his virtues and not on his wealth or caste, emphasis on *bhakti* as the highest form of worship and denigration of ritualism, idol-worship, pilgrimages, and all self-mortifications. In addition to their raising voice against blind superstition and the caste system, some leaders of the *bhakti* movement mentioned above even provided the leadership to the revolt of the traders, artisans and poor peasants against feudal oppression and Moghul domination and misrule. The tools of *bhakti* movement, i.e., mass prayers, dances, community singing and the personality of the saint inspired the creative energy of the people, awakened the people against caste and religious exclusiveness of feudalism and gave an impetus to anti-feudal struggles. But, the *bhakti* movement could not go far beyond its limitations. The *bhakti* movement, after all, is a religious movement and the impulse for religion comes through emotion and not through reason. As a result, the *bhakti* movement became incapable of making a rational investigation of the social problems and giving their rational solutions.

Although the movement managed to awaken the masses against social oppressions, it failed to grasp the real causes of those oppressions and to offer the radical solution of human sufferings (Damodaran "Bhakti" 314-23). The *bhakti* movement of the Middle Ages, based on the *Gītā's bhakti* theory, ultimately failed to abolish the social evils of Indian society including the caste injustices and other social inequalities. It is no wonder that the movement based on *Gītā's bhakti* theory, rooted in the feudal ideology, became incapable of eliminating the different types of social injustices created by the feudalism itself.

The ruling class people introduced the *bhakti* concept to do compromise with the working class people so that they would not come into rebellion against their hegemony. The author of the *Gītā* encoded this conception in the text and this *bhakti* concept makes the majority of toiling masses work in this earth without disturbing the peace of the exploiting class people in the hope of attaining liberation and equality in the empirically non-existent Kṛṣṇa's world. Therefore, the *Gītā's* call for *bhakti* to Kṛṣṇa becomes ". . . a powerful instrument for wining over the masses to the cause of Brāhmaṇism" (Meghnad Desai "Authorship" 134). The ruling class people make the *Gītā's bhakti* theory as their powerful ideological weapon to suppress the working class people keeping them in their slavery forever. In IX.34 and XVIII.65, the *Gītā* teaches a devotee the methods of doing devotion to Kṛṣṇa. The devotee has to fix his mind on Kṛṣṇa (*manmanā bhava*), he has to be his devotee alone (*mad-bhaktah*), he has to sacrifice all of his actions to him (*madyājī*) and he has to bow down (*namaskuru*) only to him (*mām*) (Gambhirananda's translation 397-98,738). The *Gītā's* this prescribed method of doing devotion to Kṛṣṇa is no different from the method a person of low profile adopts while doing devotion to the person of high profile in feudalism. The fact is that the *Gītā's bhakti* theory provides the philosophical ground for the birth, development and the durability of the feudalism (Kiran "Prachin" My translation 45). The *Gītā's bhakti* theory works as a backbone of feudalism. Gopiraman Upadhyaya concludes: "The Bhakti-mārga, in essence, is the path of admiring the ruling class people" ("Upanisad" My translation 297). The *Gītā's bhakti* theory, rooted in the feudal ideology of loyalty, teaches the working class people to sing the songs of praise of their exploiters, the ruling class people.

The *Gītā's bhakti* theory makes the working class people slavish and dependent on their exploiters and besides, it also makes people irresponsible for their

actions. In IX 29, the *Gītā* declares that there is nothing detestable (*dveṣyaḥ*) and dear (*priyaḥ*) to Kṛṣṇa and he is impartial (*samaḥ*) towards all beings (*sarva-bhūteṣu*). He only regards him dear who worship (*bhajanti*) him with devotion (*bhaktiyā*) (394). This implies that the God is like a fire. Like fire, the God does not ward off cold of those who are afar, but removes it of those who approach near to him (394). The God does not judge people according to their virtues but regards them dear whether they approach him or not. The God does not take him dear who is a non-devotee but a virtuous one but takes the man of bad conduct as his dear one and removes his crime if he worships him with devotion. In IX.30, the *Gītā* explains this proposition in clear terms: "*api cet sudurācāro bhajate māmananyabhāk / sādhuveva sa mantavyaḥ samyagvyavasito hi saḥ* (Even if a man of very bad conduct worships Me with one-pointed devotion, he is to be considered verily good; for he has resolved rightly.)" (395). The verse argues that if he worship (*bhajate*) Kṛṣṇa (*mām*) with one pointed devotion (*ananyabhāk*), a man of very bad conduct, of extremely vile behavior and condemnable character (*su-durācāraḥ*), is also considered a good and well behaved person (*sādhuḥ*) (Gambhirananda's translation 395). This concept of the *Gītā* makes a person irresponsible in his conduct because he feels there is God behind him to remove his sins of his misconduct. This concept even encourages a criminal doing more heinous crimes as he feels there is Kṛṣṇa to remove his crimes after he becomes his devotee. While interpreting this verse, Meghnad Desai argues: "I can take crores in bribe but if I visit temples and make a large donation, I can consider myself forgiven by God. No wonder, Indian temples are so wealthy with donations by the devout!" ("Contemporary" 164). This is the social consequences of the *Gītā's bhakti* theory. The authors of the *Gītā* did not become serious while propounding its *bhakti* theory for this illusory material world. The *Gītā's bhakti*

theory may be responsible for the eternal world of Kṛṣṇa, but it is not responsible for this material world.

The *Gītā* interprets the *bhakti-mārga* not as difficult path as *Vedic* sacrifices and *Upanisadic* austerities. The God, as the *Gītā* claims, accepts even a leaf (*patram*), a flower (*puṣpam*), a fruit (*phalam*) or water (*toyam*) devotionally presented (*bhakti-upahṛtam*) by a devotee (IX.26, 392) and a person attains the state of Kṛṣṇa (*yāti madbhāvam*) if he only remembers Kṛṣṇa (*smaran mām eva*) at the time of his death (*anta-kāle*) (VIII.5, Gambhirananda's translation 344). Anybody can fulfill such requirements of *bhakti-mārga* and it seems everybody attains salvation through it. The *bhakti-mārga* finds no demarcation of the good and the bad conducts of the people of this world. If there is really God, the God should distinguish the good from the bad. The God should reward the good and punish the bad one, no matter who is his devotee or not. However, the *Gītā's bhakti-mārga* does not define the God as such and it has a different implication. The *Gītā's bhakti*, in fact, does not imply the *bhakti* of God, but it implies the *bhakti* of the ruling class people. It is the nature of the ruling class people not of the God that judges people according to the people's devotional attitude but not according to their virtues. For the ruling class people, the criminals are dearer than the virtuous ones because the criminals do their *bhakti* while virtuous people do not. The *Gītā's* above representation of God matches perfectly with the characteristics of the ruling class people. This shows that the *Gītā*, through its *bhakti* theory, strengthens the hegemony of the ruling class people over the majority of population, the working class people.

The *Gītā's bhakti* theory is its innovation and works as an ideological spiritual tool of the ruling class to dominate and exploit the working class people. The *Gītā's*

bhakti concept develops along with the development of monotheism, the product of the rise of territorial kingdoms. The *Gītā's bhakti* concept comes as a compromise of the slave owners with the new forces of early feudalism and as a result, the *Gītā* announces salvation to women and the large number of working class people, the *Vaiśyas* and *Sūdras* through *bhakti-mārga*. There is also the influence of later Buddhism for the development of the *Gītā's bhakti-mārga*. The ruling class people use the *Gītā's bhakti* theory to earn loyalty from the large number of working class people and to stop the rebellion of the working class against them. The *Gītā's bhakti* theory becomes the principal ideological tool of feudalism. The *Gītā's* this theory makes the working class people slavish and encourages some people to be irresponsible in their conducts too. The *Gītā's* portrayal of *bhakti* concept, in truth, implies not the *bhakti* to God but the *bhakti* to the ruling class people.

5.4 Theory of *Cāturvarṇāh* of the *Bhagavad Gītā*

The *Bhagavad Gītā* teaches us about the performance of caste duties. The *Gītā* suggests a person to perform his caste duties considering them as "his own proper duties, or *sva-dharma*" (Dasgupta "Philosophy" 502). The *Gītā* upholds the *Vedic* class division of society (*Varṇāshrama-dharma*) and sanctifies it (Damodaran "Bhagavad" 187). The *Vedic varṇas* or *Cāturvarṇāh* ". . . arose as a division of labor in society" (Dange "Gana-Gotra" 60), but the *Gītā* makes the *Cāturvarṇāh* "sacrosanct" (183). The divine song gives the unequal status to the people belonging to the four *varṇas*. The *Brāhmiṇs* and *Kṣatriyas* are elevated to superior position while the majority of people, the *Vaiśyas* and *Sūdras* are degraded to the inferior status. Besides, the *Gītā* links its theory of *Cāturvarṇāh* to "the theory of innate, inborn qualities in men" (Ambedkar "Essays" 183). In other words, the *Gītā* makes

the *varṇas* hereditary. The *Gītā's Cāturvarṇāh* does not comprise all the people into its fold and the *Gītā* defines the people outside *Varṇa*-system as outcaste.

The outcaste occupies its position in the text below *Sūdras* and as equal with dogs.

The *Gītā's* hereditary caste system and its "graded inequality" (Ambedkar "Triumph" 148) put the majority of toiling masses in a disadvantageous and disrespectful position. The *Gītā's* this notion of caste represents and strengthens the Hindus religious notion of caste which advocates untouchability too. The concept of untouchability gives birth to the varieties of social injustices in Hindu society.

Therefore, the caste oppressions have their roots to people's religious belief and they have also their roots to the class based state mechanism as the ruling class people maintain their hegemony over the working class people with the help of such unjustifiable, oppressive and superstitious religious beliefs.

The term '*varṇa*' has a different origin. The '*varṇa*' initially denotes "colour" or "complexion" (Kosambi "Marxist" 33; Damodaran "Chatur-varṇya" 57; Aahuti "Question" 72). The early Aryans were color-conscious and they did not want to mix their blood with the original inhabitants. As a result, they divided the society first based on color (Damodaran "Chatur-varṇya" 57-8). The word 'Aryan' literally means 'noble' and the Aryans were fair-skinned people. They lately entered India from the northwestern passes and conquered the dark-skinned natives (Chattopadhyaya "Ganapati" 181). The early division of people into two *varṇas* is also justified by the *Ṛgvedic* mantras. In early hymns of the *Ṛgveda*, there are only two human *varṇas*, that of the Aryans and that of their *Dāsa* opponents. But, with the division of Aryan social classes, the word *Dāsa* or *Dāsyu* loses its ethnic significance. Later, the term, *Dāsa* is included within the Aryan's division of society and it not only means the native slave but also denotes "ignoble" 'inferior' or the least civilized men, namely

the *Sūdras* (Kosambi “Marxist” 33; K. Mishra “Study” 25). This shows that there were only two *varṇas* in ancient India based on color: the fair-skinned Aryans and the dark-skinned non-Aryans.

The four *Varṇa*-system (*varṇāshrama dharma*) divides the Aryans themselves and it is introduced for the first time by one of the hymns known as the *Puruṣa Sūkta* towards the end of the *Ṛgveda*, i.e., in the tenth book. The hymn puts forward a peculiar theory on the origin of the *varṇas*: "The Brāhmiṇ was his mouth, of both his arms was the Rajanya made. / His thighs became the Vaiśhya, from his feet the Shudra was produced" (X: 90.12, Griffith's translation 21). In the above verse, we find a metaphysical description of the evolution of four *varṇas*, in which the four *varṇas* are described as the organic part of the primeval man or *Brahman*. The *Brāhmiṇs* are born from the mouth of *Brahman*, the *Kṣatriyas* from the hands, the *Vaiśyas* from the thighs and the *Sūdras* from the feet. This elevates the position of the *Brāhmiṇs* and keeps the *Sūdras* to the worst position. However, the *Vedic Śāstras* are not unanimous in the four divisions of *varṇas*. The *Shatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (II, 1-4-11) argues that *Prajāpati*, the creator of the people, gives birth to different trios and among them the third trio is *Brāhma*, *Kṣhatra* and *Viśha*, i.e., the three *varṇas*. *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* (III, 12-9-12) tells us that each *Veda* gives off one *varṇa*. The ancient *Ṛgveda* gives off the *Vaiśhya*, the *Sāmaveda* gives off the *Brāhmiṇ* and the *Yajus* gives off the *Kṣatriya*. Both of these *Brāhmaṇas* describe the three *varṇas* and do not mention the *Śūdra* as the fourth one. The *Taittirīya Samhitā* of the *Yajurveda* (VII, 1-1-4) agrees with *Puruṣa Sūkta* verse in its mythical description about the origin of the four *varṇas* but it describes the three *varṇas* having a deity each and the fourth, the *Śūdra* slave, alone with no deity (qtd. in Dange “Rise” 101-02). The reason maybe that the first three *varṇas* sprang from the same homogeneous Aryan society,

hence they had deities, while the *Śūdra* had none, being an alien conquered slave (Dange "Rise" 102). It can be concluded that the *Śūdra*, the fourth *varṇa* in the Aryan division of *Cāturvarṇāh*, originally did not belong to the Aryans themselves. The *Śūdra* constituted the non-Aryans, *Dāsa* and the conquered alien tribes. Later, when the Aryans themselves were kept in *Śūdra varṇa*, the non-Aryans, and the alien tribes were excluded from the *Varṇa*-system and they were named as outcastes.

The Aryan *varṇa* division was originally based on the division of labor. In the beginning, the *Varṇa*-system was "an occupational institution" (K Mishra "Development" 48). Damodaran asserts: "The four *varṇas* mentioned in the *Puruṣa Sūkta* represented a division of labour among what came to be regarded as the four natural components of social life" ("Chatur-varnya" 58). The whole ancient world had such a system like Aryan's *Varṇa*-system. The Egyptians and the ancient Persians had it and Plato took it as an ideal form of social organization (Ambedkar "Triumph" 148). Contrary to the claims of the religious writers of antiquity, the *varṇa* scheme is not the peculiar invention of the genius of this or that *Vedic Ṛishi* or god. The *Vedic varṇa* division is the expression of division of labor in society arises out of necessity, out of growing productive forces (Dange "Rise" 99). The development of the productive forces is a necessary condition for the division of labor in society. Marx states:

Division of labour in a society, and the corresponding tying down of individuals to a particular calling, develops itself, just as does the division of labour in manufacture, from opposite starting-points. Within a family, and . . . within a tribe, there springs up naturally a division of labour, caused by differences of sex and age, a division that is consequently based on a purely

physiological foundation, which division enlarges its materials by the expansion of the community, by the increase of population, and more especially, by the conflicts between different tribes, and the subjugation of one tribe by another. (“Division” 332)

The above quotation of Marx describes the necessity of the division of labor in ancient human society. The growing multiplicity of products, tasks and functions naturally led the classless or *varṇa*-less ancient Aryan Commune on the road to division of labor. The members of the whole commune involved in different tasks according to their natural qualities to increase production and this divided them into different *varṇas*. This leads us to believe that the Aryan *varṇāshrama* system “. . . arose during the disintegration of the old tribal communism and the emergence of slavery . . .” (“Feudalism” 204). The *varṇāshrama* slavery “. . . began to appear in India in the beginning of the first millennium B.C.” (Damodaran “Beginnings” 43).

At the beginning, the *varṇa* division was not based on the exploitation of one *varṇa* by another. The early *varṇa* division, “. . . due to the absence of private property and collective ownership of the principal means of production, does not allow the *Varṇas* to become hostile classes. . .” (Dange “Rise” 100) and “. . . in their early stages they [*varṇas*] operated as factors helping and accelerating social development” (Damodaran “Feudalism” 204). However, the *Varṇāshrama* system lost its progressive characteristics with the passage of time. The *varṇa* division of the ancient *Gaṇa-saṃghas* turned into the class division in slavery. The old and relatively simple *varṇāshrama* system of the slavery was gradually transformed into the new, extremely complex and ramified caste system (*Jāti Dharma*) along with the rise and growth of Indian feudalism (Damodaran “Feudalism” 206; Dange “Preface” xvi).

The caste system, the offspring of the *varṇāshrama* system, ultimately became the source of the varieties of social inequalities and the ruling class people have made it the organ of oppression to the working class people.

The *Varṇa*-system, based on the division of labor, ultimately converted into the hereditary based caste system. *Varṇa* and caste both connote status and occupation of people. The *Varṇa*, however, is not hereditary either in status or occupation, while the caste implies a system in which status and occupation are hereditary and descend from father to son (Ambedkar “Triumph” 117). In course of time, the ancient *varṇa* was converted into caste and thereby the people’s status or occupation began to be determined not by their virtues, but by their birth.

This change was accomplished by three stages. There are ample evidences in the religious literature to support this proposition. In the first stage, the *varṇa* i.e., the status and occupation of a person, was determined for a prescribed period of time. A body of officers, called *Manu* and *Sapta Rishis*, used to select people fit to be the upper three *varṇas* and those who were not selected were called *Sūdras*. Such *varṇa* arrangement lasted for one *Yug* i.e., a period of four years. The personnel of the *varṇa* changed in every four years. The last time some of those who were left to be *Sūdras* were selected for being the upper three *varṇas*, while some of those who were selected last time to be the upper three *varṇas* were left for being fit for *Sūdras*. The *varṇas* of people were changed periodically according to their mental and physical talent and occupations needed for community. In the second stage, the *varṇa* or the status and occupation of a person was determined for his life time. A sort of a Board of Interview of *Manu* and *Sapta Rishis* was replaced by more progressive *Āchārya Gurukul* system. The *Gurukul* was a school run by a *Guru* (teacher) also called

Āchārya (learned man). All children were sent to this *Gurukul* for taking twelve years' education. Like the modern convocation ceremony, the *Upanayan* ceremony was conducted after the period of education was over. It was a ceremony at which the *Āchārya*, evaluating his virtues and natural talents, determined the *varṇa* of the student. The *varṇa* was a sort of educational degrees of a person, which lasted throughout his life. But, it did not transfer from father to son. Naturally, *Brāhmaṇism* was dissatisfied with this system because the *Āchārya* could declare the child of a *Brāhmaṇ* as being fit for only to be a *Śūdra*. The *Brāhmaṇs* were anxious to avoid this outcome. As a result, the *Brāhmaṇism* made the *varṇa* hereditary. In order to accomplish the job, the *Brāhmaṇism* converted the *Upanayan* from educational to religious ceremony and reversed the relation of training to *Upanayan*. In the *Gurukul* system, training came before *Upanayan* but, under the *Brāhmaṇism*, *Upanayan* came before training. The *Brāhmaṇism* negated the importance of training for awarding the *varṇa* in *Upanayan* ceremony. Moreover, the *Brāhmaṇism* transferred the authority from *Guru* to the father in the matter of performing *Upanayan*. The father acquired the right to perform the *Upanayan* of his child and consequently, he gave his own *varṇa* to the child. It was the third stage in which the *varṇa* or the status and occupation of a person became hereditary and thereby the *varṇa* converted into caste (Ambedkar "Triumph" 118-20). This is the historical account about the conversion of *varṇa* into caste. The *varṇa* becomes caste when the *varṇa* loses its earlier characteristics and becomes hereditary.

The conversion of Aryan *varṇa* into caste takes a long period of time. It takes almost a thousand year after the establishment of the *varṇa* system in India. There was relatively loose *varṇa* system by the pre-Maurya era (c. 600 BC- 300 BC). There are many examples where the rulers upgraded the brave and talented *Vaiśya* and

Śūdra into the status of the *Brāhmiṇ* or *Kṣatriya* class. The hereditary caste system was the product of post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism*. *Manusmṛiti* legalized it for the first time (Aahuti “Question” 73-4). The *Manusmṛiti* is said to be revealed to man by Manu to whom it was revealed by the creator himself. But, the claim made in the *Manusmṛiti* regarding its authorship cannot be justified by the contents of the text. The authorship of the text is attributed to Manu because of Manu’s great prestige in the ancient history of India. The Author of *Nārada Smṛiti* written in about the 4th century A.D. reveals the secrecy about the author of the *Manusmṛiti*. According to *Nārada*, certain Sumati Bhargava composed the *Manusmṛiti* and its date is assigned between 170 B.C. and 150 B.C. The *Brāhmaṇic* revolution by Pushyamitra took place in 185 B.C. and this makes us to believe that the code known as *Manusmṛiti* was promulgated by Pushyamitra himself, embodying in it the principles of *Brāhmaṇic* revolution against the Buddhist state of the Mauryas (Ambedkar “Triumph” 104-05). The contents of the text prove the above proposition. The *Manusmṛiti* conveys the post- Buddhist *Brāhmaṇic* ideology of hereditary caste system and tries to legalize the innumerable social inequalities and injustices born out of this system. The *Manusmṛiti* IX.317, for example, upholds the essence of the hereditary caste system as follows: “A *Brāhmaṇa*, be he ignorant or learned, is a great divinity, just as the fire, whether carried forth (for the performance of a burnt-oblation) or not carried forth, is a great divinity” (Buhler’s translation 66). The above passage explains the hereditary excellence of a *Brāhmiṇ*. The *Brāhmiṇ*, though he is an ignorant one, naturally becomes divine and superior, if he takes birth from the womb of a *Brāhmiṇ* caste. This implies that people will be superior according to their inborn caste, but not according to their qualities and virtues. The *Manusmṛiti*, by upholding the hereditary caste system, degrades the lower caste people by giving the high status to every

Brāhmiṇ and his progeny. With the legalization of the system by the *Manusmṛiti*, the hereditary caste system becomes the easy weapon of the post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* to dominate and suppress the lower caste people.

The *Gītā*'s theory of *Cāturvarṇāḥ* is also based on the hereditary caste system of the post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism*. The *Manusmṛiti* vindicates the hereditary caste system more openly, and consequently, its casteism is easily exposed among the modern readers. The *Gītā*, however, adopts the roundabout way for the vindication of the hereditary caste system. The *Gītā* projects the theory of hereditary *Cāturvarṇāḥ* more convincingly giving it a philosophical garb. In IX.32, the *Gītā* speaks about the hereditary status of *Vaiśyas* and *Sūdras*. According to the verse, their status is determined by their very birth. The verse describes *Vaiśyas* (*vaiśyāḥ*) and *Sūdras* (*śūdrāḥ*) as the people who are born of sin (*pāpa-yonayaḥ syuḥ*) (Gambhirananda's translation 396-97). The verse upholds the essence of the hereditary caste system and at the same time, it defiles the status of both *Vaiśyas* and *Sūdras*, the overwhelming majority of working class people. The *Gītā* goes a step ahead than *Manusmṛiti* in downgrading the working class people as the *Manusmṛiti* does not downgrade the *Vaiśyas* putting them as equal with *Sūdras*. The *Manusmṛiti* X.4 keeps the *Vaiśyas* with the *Brāhmaṇa* and *Kṣatriya* as being twice-born (*dvijas*) and defines the *Śūdra* as having the single birth (Buhler's translation 67). This makes a difference between *Vaiśyas* and *Sūdras* in their earlier status. The word *Vaiśya* is derived from the *Ṛgvedic* 'viś' or 'viśaḥ', which signify 'a tribe' or 'people' or 'settlers' (K.Mishra "Development" 36-8). The *Vaiśyas* represent the majority of toiling masses and the original proud *Visha* of early *Gaṇa* Communes (Dange "Slavery Weakens" 172). The above verse of the *Gītā* brings down even the *Vaiśyas*, the majority of working class population, to the degrading position of the *Sūdras*. This shows that the *Gītā* is a later

ideological production than the *Manusmṛiti* when the class state based on the private property had reduced the economic status of the free Aryan *Vaiśyas* into slavery.

The *Gītā* upholds the four *Varṇa*-system or *Cāturvarṇāh* of the *Puruṣa Sūkta* hymns of the *Ṛgveda*. The *Gītā* introduces the *Cāturvarṇāh* in the verse IV.13 and gives it divine validity:

cāturvarṇyam māyā sṛṣṭam guṇakarmavibhāgaśaḥ

tasya kartāramapi mām viddhyakartāramavyayam

[The four castes have been created by Me through a classification of the *guṇas* and duties. Even though I am the agent of that (act of classification), still know Me to be a non-agent and changeless.]. (185-6)

According to the above verse, the God creates (*sṛṣṭam*) the four castes (*cāturvarṇyam*) in accordance with the qualities and actions (*guṇa-karma-vibhāgaśaḥ*) but the God is unable to change (*akartāramavyayam*) the caste system even though he creates (*kartāramapi*) it (Gambhirananda's translation 186-7). The verse proclaims the creation of the *Cāturvarṇāh* as the great achievement of God and makes the God responsible for all the social inequalities and injustices born out of the caste system. The verse claims the *Cāturvarṇāh* as God's creation but argues that the God himself cannot change it. This implies that the *Gītā* makes the caste born social inequalities and injustices eternal. One may point out that the *Gītā* is against the hereditary caste system because the verse says the God divides people into four *varṇas* according to their qualities and actions. In IX.32, as mentioned above, the *Gītā* degrades the *Vaiśyas* and *Sūdras* by their very birth and the above verse discusses about the *guṇa* (quality) and *karma* (action) for the classifications of *varṇas*. This appears

contradictory. The verse IV.13 even reminds us the ancient Aryan *varṇa* division based on people's virtues and natural talents. However, the word *guṇa/ karma* of the above verse do not signify people's this worldly *guṇa/ karma* or qualities and actions.

The *Gītā* divides the people into four castes according to their otherworldly or inborn *guṇa / karma* or qualities and actions. The *Gītā* classifies the duties (*karmāṇi*) of the *Brāhmaṇas*, the *Kṣatriyas*, the *Vaiśyas* (*brāhmaṇa- kṣatriya- viśām*) and of the *Sūdras* (*śūdrāṇām*) according to the qualities (*guṇaiḥ*) born from nature (*svabhāva-prabhavaiḥ*) (XVIII.41, 702-03). The *Gītā* classifies the duties of four castes according to the *guṇas* one inherits with his birth. The *Gītā* discusses about “. . . the *karma*, duty; *sahajam*, to which one is born, which devolves from the very birth” (XVIII.48, Gambhirananda's translation 709). The *Gītā's guṇas* are otherworldly and hereditary, as the *Gītā* does not suggest putting a particular person in a particular caste according to his these worldly qualities. Unlike the ancient *varṇa* division, the *Gītā* does not suggest putting a *Brāhmiṇ's* child in a particular caste according to his particular quality. A person inherits his caste from his father, no matter what quality he possesses. Sardesai argues:

The *Geeta* does not say that those who have the mentality and habits of menials are to be treated as Sūdras. It clearly states that Sūdras have the 'natural' mentality of servants. So one is a Sūdras before one becomes a menial. This means that Sūdras were Sūdras by birth, not because of any inherent servile traits or mentality. (“Riddle” 18)

This suggests about the *Gītā's* hereditary *guṇas* that divide people into four castes. The *Gītā* nowhere says to put a *Brāhmiṇ's* child in a *Śūdra* caste if he possesses the servile traits and there is no mention in the text about caste conversion according to

the particular quality of an individual. Radhakrishnan discloses the difficulties of the *Gītā* in distinguishing the qualities of people to put them in a particular caste:

“Though originally framed on the basis of qualities, caste very soon became a matter of birth. It is hard to know who has which qualities. The only available test is birth” (“Theism” 489). The *Gītā* does not prescribe the ancient tradition in finding out the qualities of people in order to put them into four different castes. For the *Gītā*, the hereditary *guṇas* define the caste of an individual.

The *Gītā's karma*, mentioned in the verse IV.13, also signifies the otherworldly *karma* or action of an individual. The word, in the *Gītā*, represents the *karma* of the *Karma* doctrine or the ancient *Karma* theory, a theory that advocates the reward of *karma* through rebirth. This theory considers people’s happiness and misery as the result of their *karma* or actions of previous life and consequently, the people can pluck the fruits of their present actions in the next life. As a result, the *Karma* doctrine was harnessed to justify the caste inequalities from the times of the *Upanisads*. The *Chāndogya Upanisad* V.10.7 elaborates:

Accordingly, those who are of pleasant conduct here – the prospect is, indeed, that they will enter a pleasant womb, either the womb of a Brahman, or the womb of a Kṣatriya, or the womb of a Vaiśhya. But those who are of stinking conduct here – the prospect is, indeed, that they will enter a stinking womb, either the womb of a dog, or the womb of a swine, or the womb of an outcast (*Caṇḍāla*). (Hume’s translation 174)

The *Chāndogya*’s above passage describes the hereditary caste system based on the *Karma* doctrine. The passage argues that people’s higher or lower caste is determined by the good or bad actions of their previous life. It negates the ancient system of

varṇa division based on people's these worldly qualities and actions. The *Gītā's* division of *Cāturvarṇāḥ* is also based on this same law of *karma* (Chattopadhyaya "Lokāyata" 194). The *Gītā's karma*, which determines people's caste, denotes the people's otherworldly *karma* or the *karma* of their previous life. The post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* exploits the *Karma* doctrine in order to justify the superiority of the higher caste people. Meghnad Desai asserts: "But since rebirth is never empirically verifiable, it is a belief system which will suit the upper castes to propagate as it gives a double justification of their status – not only are they born Brāhmaṇ but thanks to past deeds they deserve to be so" ("Contemporary" 146). The doctrine justifies the privileges of the higher castes and the downgrading conditions of the lower castes people. The ruling caste people make the doctrine as their weapon to pacify the anger of the working caste people, calling them to pluck the fruits of their present actions in their empirically non-existent future rebirths.

The *Gītā* elaborates the duties of the four castes based on their hereditary or inborn *guṇa/ karma* or qualities and actions. The natural or inborn duties of *Brāhmaṇas* (*svabhāvajam brahma-karma*) are the control of the internal and external organs (*śamaḥ damaḥ*), austerity (*tapah*), purity (*śaucam*), forgiveness (*kṣāntiḥ*), simplicity (*ārjavam*), knowledge (*jñānam*), wisdom (*viññānam*) and faith (*āstikyam*) (XVIII.42, 704-05). The natural or inborn duties of *Kṣatriyas* (*svabhāvajam kṣatra-karma*) are heroism (*śauryam*), boldness (*tejah*), fortitude (*dhṛtiḥ*), capability (*dākṣyam*), not retreating from battle (*yuddhe apalāyanam*), generosity (*dānam*) and lordliness (*īśvarabhāvaḥ*) (XVIII.43, 705-06). The natural or inborn duties of *Vaiśyas* (*svabhāvajam vaiśya-karma*) are involving in agriculture, cattle rearing and trade (*kṛṣi-gaurakṣya-vāṇijyam*). The service (*paricaryātmakam*) is described as the natural or inborn duties of *Sūdras* (*svabhāvajam Sūdrasya-karma*) (XVIII.44,

Gambhirananda's translation 706). The *Gītā's* above classifications of caste duties almost resemble with the *Manusmriti's* prescribed duties for the four caste people. The *Manusmriti* prescribes teaching the *Veda* for *Brāhmiṇs* (X.80, 69), carrying arms and protecting the people for *Kṣatriyas* (X.79-80, 69), trade, rearing cattle and agriculture for *Vaiśyas* (X.79-80, 69) and the service to the three higher castes for *Sūdras* (I.91, 3). In X.83, the *Manusmriti* prescribes the ruling *Brāhma-Kṣatriya* class for avoiding the involvement in agriculture (Buhler's translation 69). Although the *Gītā* does not suggest this to *Brāhma- Kṣhatra* class as directly as the *Manusmriti*, no such physical labor as agriculture is kept in the *Gītā's* classification of duties for them. It is the ideological expression of the feudal elites, who look down and express their contempt upon physical labor (Damodaran "Feudalism" 208). Between the ruling *Brāhma-Kṣatriya* classes, the *Brāhmaṇic* literature including the *Gītā* gives more privileges to the *Brāhmaṇas*. Ambedkar asserts: "By the denial of education to the *Sūdras*, by diverting the *Kṣatriyas* to military pursuits, and the *Vaiśyas* to trade and by reserving education to themselves, the *Brāhmiṇs* alone could become the educated class – free to misdirect and misguide the whole society" (Triumph" 152). The *Gītā* and the *Manusmriti* both allocate the field of knowledge and education only to the *Brāhmaṇa* class. The duty of acquiring knowledge and giving education to people makes the *Brāhmiṇs* more dominant, influential and powerful than other three castes people. The *Brāhmaṇa* class, with the authority of knowledge and education, could lead the whole society to its desired direction.

The *Gītā* recommends people for the strict implication of the prescribed hereditary based caste duties. The text does not allow people to exchange their caste duties according to their capability and interest. In III.35, the *Gītā* stresses:

śreyān svadharmo viguṇaḥ paradharmāt svanuṣṭhitāt

svadharme nidhanam śreyah paradharmo bhayāvahaḥ

(One's own duty, though defective, is superior to another's duty well-performed. Death is better while engaged in one's own duty; another's duty is fraught with fear.). (166)

The *Gītā* repeats the first line of the above verse again in XVIII.47 (708).

The verse does not suggest a person to choose the duty/the job according to his interest and capability. The job of every person is pre-determined before his or her birth. Even though a person has an interest and capability to perform other's caste duty (*para-dharmāt*) he is not allowed to perform it. He should consider his inferior (*viguṇaḥ*) caste duty (*sva-dharmaḥ*) as superior (*śreyān*) and perform it. He should receive death (*nidhanam*) happily while performing his own caste duty (*sva-dharme*) but if he performs other's duty (*para-dharmaḥ*), it would be frightening (*bhayāvahaḥ*) (Gambhirananda's translation 166). There is nothing more frightening for a person than death. A person can earn an ill fame if he is engaged in unethical, immoral and criminal activities and the ill fame of a person might be more frightening than death. But, the person earns fame by the well-performance of duties. There is nothing wrong if a *Śūdra* can perform well the duties of a *Brāhmiṇ*. It only makes a difference for the *Brāhmaṇical* literature. The *Manusmṛiti* expresses the similar views as the *Gītā* in relation to hereditary caste duties. In VIII.272 and X.96, the *Manusmṛiti* prescribes the severe punishment to the lower caste people if they arrogantly presume to preach religion to *Brāhmiṇs* and with covetousness; they live by the occupations of the higher caste people (Buhler's translation 52, 69). The *Gītā* along with the *Manusmṛiti* give the clever justification of the ruling caste people's ascendancy

through such watertight and inhuman regulations for the performance of the hereditary based caste duties. This exalts the higher caste people and degrades the lower ones. This obstructs the progress and development of the talent and the intelligent persons belonging to the lower castes and it, ultimately, obstruct the progress and the development of the society.

The consequence of going against the *Gītā's* suggestion of the verse III.35 can be illustrated by the myth of a *Śūdra* saint Sambuka. Among the four castes, the *Śūdra* is defined as the lowest one. They are described as single birth and they are not permitted to worship the *Vedic* gods or study the *Vedas* (Gambhirananda “Monasticism” 702; Damodaran “Chatur-varnya” 60). In the ancient time “. . . the study of the *Vedas* stood for education” (Ambedkar “Triumph” 139). This means that the *Sūdras* are barred from education and are kept outside the pale of religion. The *Sūdras* are regarded as the “private property” of the ruling class people, just like cattle and household utensils (Damodaran “Chatur-varnya” 60). The *Sūdras* do not have the right of performing sacrifices, *tapas* or gifts (Dasgupta “Philosophy” 514) and they are exempted from the privileges of the *Vedic* four stages or *āshramas*. The four *āshramas*: *brahmachārya*, *grihastha*, *vanaprastha* and *sanyāsa* are not designed for the *Sūdras*. Their *sva-dharma* is to work hard and serve the higher caste people to the end (Damodaran “Chatur-varnya” 60). The *Gītā's* verse III.35 prescribes the *Sūdras* to follow their menial *sva-dharma* strictly. If they dare to transgress their *sva-dharma*, it is suggested that they would get its frightening consequence. *Rāmāyaṇa*, a *Brāhmaṇic* literature, illustrates its example. Sambuka belonged to a *Śūdra* caste but he became a saint (*muni*) by performing ascetic penances in the forest. He transgressed the *Śūdra's* *sva-dharma* as a *Brāhmaṇ* only could do the ascetic penances. The *tapas* performed by the *Śūdra* saint Sambuka was considered as vice (*adharmā*)

and it was believed that it brought calamity in the kingdom of Rama in the form of the death of an infant son of a *Brāhmiṇ*. The event was reported to king Rama and he beheaded Sambuka for transgressing his caste-duties (qtd. in Dasgupta “Philosophy” 506-07). Sambuka possesses *Brāhmaṇic* qualities by judging from the *Gītā*'s prescription of the natural qualities of the four *varṇas* but, like in the ancient system, he was not awarded a *Brāhmiṇ varṇa*. On the contrary, he was beheaded for his transgression of caste duty. He was not allowed to perform the *Brāhmaṇic* duty because he was a *Śūdra* by birth. The myth of Sambuka exhibits the inhuman consequences for transgressing the *Gītā*'s injunction of the performance of the prescribed caste-duties of the hereditary based caste system.

The myth of Ekalavya further justifies the negative consequence for transgressing the *Gītā*'s injunction of the verse III.35. Ekalavya, being the son of a Nisada King, was not allowed to be the warrior by getting instruction from the *Brāhmaṇa* tutor Drona who taught archery only to the sons of the Aryans (qtd. in “Social” 326). The *Mahābhārata* describes Ekalavya's *Kṣatriya* qualities but he was restricted to be the warrior as he was a Nisada by birth and Nisada belonged to "out of Aryan community" (K.Mishra “Tribes” 137). The *Brāhmaṇic* literature, including the *Gītā*, aim to protect the privileges and luxuries of the ruling castes people by prescribing the strict implications of unjustifiable and cruel hereditary caste duties. The ruling castes people need the backbreaking toil of the working castes, the *Vaiśyas*, *Sūdras* and outcastes for their survival and luxury. Therefore, they cannot allow the working castes people the privileges of going into the forest [like Sambuka] for doing penances (Sardesai “Riddle” 20). This is because there is a rare instance of the retirement of men from *Vaiśhya* and *Śūdra* into the jungle for doing penances (K. Mishra “Social” 360). Likewise, the ruling castes do not allow the working castes

and the outcastes like Ekalavya to adopt such a job like to be the warrior. The labor and service of the *Vaiśyas*, *Sūdras* and outcastes are necessary for the ruling castes people, the *Brāhmiṇs* and *Kṣatriyas* as they are the leisured class people, exempted from the labor of production. This is the essence of the suggestion of the *Gītā's* verse III.35 and the myths of Sambuka and Ekalavya.

Dharma is the widely used term in the *Gītā*. It generally connotes a religious, moral and ethical concept of social conduct. It is a common concept applicable to all equally. The virtue (*dharma*) and vice (*adharmā*) should be applied equally for all human beings. However, according to the *Gītā*, there is no common *dharma* for all people. For the *Gītā*, *dharma* connotes "specific caste-divisions and caste-duties" (Dasgupta "Philosophy" 487). In III.35, the *Gītā* describes *dharma* as *sva-dharma* of each individual caste and consequently, *dharma* differs according to each caste. The *dharma* of the *Sūdra* is different from that of the *Brāhmiṇ*. The *Gītā* does not discuss about the common *dharma* for all, and the text upholds the *varṇāshrama dharma*. It considers the *varṇāshrama dharma* as preordained and omnipotent and takes it as the law of society. The *Gītā* aims to protect the *varṇāshrama dharma* and considers its violation as being the great crime. In IV.7, the *Gītā* claims that whenever (*yadā yadā hi*) there is (*bhavati*) decline (*glāniḥ*) of virtue consisting of the duties of castes and stages of life of living beings (*dharmasya*) and increase (*abhyut-thānam*) of vice (*adharmasya*) then Kṛṣṇa (*aḥam*) manifests himself (*sṛjāmi ātmānam*) in the world (180). In IV.8, the *Gītā* gives reason for Kṛṣṇa's manifestation. Kṛṣṇa takes birth in every age (*yuge yuge*) for the protection (*paritrāṇāya*) of the pious (*sādhūnām*) and for the destruction (*vināśāya*) of the evildoers (*duṣkṛtām*) and thereby establishing the virtue (*dharma samsthāpanārthāya*) in the world (Gambhirananda's translation 180-81). In the above verses, the *Gītā* explains Kṛṣṇa's main concern on

the re-establishment of the *varṇāshrama dharma* behind his manifestation in the world. Sardesai finds the verses as the reflection of the reality of the situation. The confusion in the *Cāturvarṇāh* hierarchy created by Buddhism and the Shaka-Kushana invasions made the author of the *Gītā* to write "*adharmā* raising its head (*abhyut-thānam adharmasya*)". The Shaka-Kushana invasions were a massive, tribal immigration into India and these invasions disturbed the caste hierarchy of *Cāturvarṇāh* by creating the situation of intermingling of castes (*varṇa-saṅkara*) ("Riddle" 15-6). The rising tide of Buddhism also brought a great change in the hierarchy of *Cāturvarṇāh*. Under the Buddhist regime, a *Śūdra* could acquire property, get education and could even become a king. A *Śūdra* could even rise to the highest rung of the social ladder and could become a Buddhist *Bhikṣhu*, the counterpart of the *Vedic* order of *Brāhmiṇs* (Ambedkar "Triumph" 138). This explains about the objectives of Kṛṣṇa behind his incarnation in every age. Kṛṣṇa takes birth in the world to preserve the caste inequalities as suggested by the system of *Cāturvarṇāh*. The *Gītā*, in the above verses, indicates the people of the lower castes as being the evildoers (*duṣkṛtām*) who perform the duties of the higher caste people as Sambuka and Ekalavya by transgressing their own caste duties. The *Gītā* calls those people the pious one (*sādhūnām*) who perform duties obeying the rules of the *Cāturvarṇāh*. This shows that the *Gītā's* caste *dharma* ultimately benefits the ruling castes people, the *Brāhmiṇs* and *Kṣatriyas*. In the name of re-establishment of *dharma*, the ruling caste people made the story of Kṛṣṇa's divine incarnation so that they could protect their privileges and luxuries provided by the system of *Cāturvarṇāh*.

The *Gītā* attributes God for the creation of the *Cāturvarṇāh* but does not say anything about the creation of those people who are outside the four *varṇas*. The four

varṇas did not cover all the population of ancient India. There were people who did not belong to any of the four *varṇas*. There were innumerable tribes who continued to exist down the centuries, maintaining their own separate occupational groups. Some were agriculturists, some hunters, others cattle breeders, fishermen and so on. Some belonged to artisan groups such as masons, tanners, basket makers and locksmiths (Damodaran “Chatur-varṇya” 60; “Feudalism” 207). Even in the *Mahābhārata*, there is the description of the *Nāgas*, the people outside four *varṇas*. The word ‘Nāga’ is a generic term for forest aborigines who have the cobra (*nāga*) as their totem. The *Nāgas* are obviously non-Aryan and thus outside the *Varṇa*-system (Kosambi “Aryans” 93; Meghnad Desai “Contemporary” 147-48). The people who do not belong to the *Varṇa*-system or who are expelled from the *Varṇa*-system are known as outcastes. They are kept below the lowly *Sūdras* (Damodaran “Chatur-varṇya” 60). Although the *Gītā* does not mention about the creator of an outcaste, it outlines their status in V.18: "*vidyāvinayasampanne brāhmaṇe gavi hastini / śuni caiva śvapāke ca paṇḍitāḥ samadarśinaḥ* (Sages see with an equal eye, a learned and humble Brāhmiṇ, a cow, an elephant or even a dog or an outcaste.)" (Radhakrishnan’s translation 210). The verse makes a contrast of the learned *Brāhmiṇ* with a dog or an outcaste. An outcaste (*śvapāke*) is equated here with a dog (*śuni*). Gambhirananda translates the word *śvapāke* as "an eater of dog's meat" (258) and Ranganathananda translates the word as "who eats the dog" or "*caṇḍāla*" (Vol.2, 68). This shows how lowly the *Gītā* treats to an outcaste. There is the similar treatment to an outcaste in the *Manusmṛiti* as well. In XI.183, the *Manusmṛiti* treats an outcaste as a dead man (76) and in III.92; it equates the outcastes and *caṇḍālas* with dogs (Buhler’s translation 15). The *Gītā* and the *Manusmṛiti* give the same status to an outcaste. The outcaste comprises the large number of working class people of India and thus, the *Gītā*'s attitude towards an

outcaste shows the text's class affiliation. The *Gītā* takes the stand of the ruling class people and downgrades the toiling masses.

The low treatment of the *Sūdras* and the outcastes in Aryan society gives birth to the concept of untouchability. The Aryan *varṇas* originate with the division of labor in society, turn into hostile classes into slavery and become cruel in the feudalism. The ancient *varṇāshrama* system, in its original form, did not know about untouchability and it came into being along with the caste system. The feudal ruling class people expressed their contempt to the physical labor and treated all the lower castes working class people as inferior and untouchable (Damodaran "Feudalism" 208). Untouchability, among all racial and ethnic problems, is the most brutal and humiliating to the human dignity (Aahuti "Question" 69). The practice of untouchability devalues the lower castes, the large masses of working class people into something less than human beings (417). The caste system, the natural offspring of the *varṇāshrama dharma*, treats the working class people, the *Sūdras* and the outcastes as being the *atīsūdras*, the untouchables. The system, with its barbarous inequalities, atrocious discrimination and degradation, is legitimized and sanctified by a combination of scriptural injunction, mythology and ritual (Bardhan 409-10). The post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* used the *Gītā* as the main scriptural source for the purpose.

The post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* makes the system of *Cāturvarṇāh* more rigid and cruel. The ruling castes people, possessing all material wealth, ". . . were not supposed even to touch a *sūdra*" (Damodaran "Chatur-varnya" 59-60) in pre-Buddhist days too but the untouchability was not developed as a concept in those days. The post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* developed the untouchability as a concept and

systematized and legalized it by the two pillars of caste system: prohibition of intermarriage and prohibition against inter-dining. In the pre-Buddhist days, the *Varṇa*-system was flexible and it had nothing to do with the marriage. The males and females belonging to the different *varṇas* could lawfully marry to each other. There are numerous examples in support of this proposition. The *Kṣatriya* king Shantanu married with a *Śūdra* women Ganga and Matsyagandha. The *Brāhmiṇ* Parashara married with the same *Śūdra* woman Matsyagandha. The *Kṣatriya* Vishwamitra married with Apsara Menaka and the *Kṣatriya* king Yayati married *Brāhmiṇ* Devayani and the Asuri-non-Aryan Sharmishta. These are the examples of some well-known and respectable persons of the Hindu lore. The post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism*, however, made laws in order to put a stop to these intermarriages between the different castes people. The *Brāhmaṇism* stopped Pratiloma marriage in which the children of mothers of the higher castes are dragged down to the lower castes of their fathers. The children get the caste of their fathers because of the rule of Pitra Savarnya or patriarchy. On the other hand, the *Brāhmaṇism* did not stop Anuloma marriage, but only replaced Pitra Savarnya by Matra Savarnya in it, in which the castes of the children are determined by the lower castes of their mothers. This made Anuloma marriage mere matter of sex, a humiliation and insult to the lower castes people and a privilege to the higher castes men for lawfully committing prostitution with the lower caste women. Thus, the prohibition of intermarriage put the lower caste people into a disrespectful position and made them untouchable. The untouchability of the lower castes people was made more apparent by the prohibition against inter-dining. The *Brāhmaṇic* literature, the *Manusmṛiti* describes the food of the *Śūdra* as impure as semen or urine. The analysis of the content of the *Manusmṛiti* reveals the attitude of the post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* against intermarriage and inter-dining (Ambedkar

“Triumph” 122-23, 137). The prohibition of intermarriage and inter-dining keeps the lower castes, the large section of working class people in a complete isolation and through these prohibitions, the *Brāhmaṇism* makes the lower castes people as non-human, inferior and the untouchables. The *Gītā* has described an outcaste as being equal with dog but the untouchability keeps the lower castes people below in status than dogs.

The concept of untouchability of the lower castes people, originated with the prohibition of intermarriage and inter-dining, begets the varieties of social discrimination and injustices. The caste system of Hindu community makes many castes belonging to the *Sūdras* and outcastes as “untouchables” and Ambedkar gives a common term “*Dalit*” to identify them (64). But, the ruling castes people give the *Dalit* community various derogatory names such as *Śūdra*, *achut* (untouchable), and *pāni acal* (water unacceptable) (“Myth” 63). Even at the present time, the poorest and most oppressed people are *Dalit* in South Asian countries with Hindu population, especially in India and Nepal. Even today, the *Dalits* are not allowed to enter into temples, canteens and the homes of the higher caste people. They are not allowed to touch public wells, taps and water holes and they need to use “separate” water sources. Even today, many higher caste people do not eat with *Dalit* and do not drink water touched by them. *Dalit* are still not free to choose their occupations. *Dalit* need to greet the higher castes people with words like *jadau* (a form of greeting), *mālik* (master), *bāje* (grandfather) or *biṣṭa* (patron). Even today, the so-called higher caste people murder inter-caste couples (Aahuti “Question” 68, 90-1). For example, on 23 May, 2020 A.D. (10th Jestha, 2077 B.S.), Nepal was shocked by the cruelest and painful event in which six lower caste youths including the suitor Nabaraj B.K. were killed by the so-called higher caste youths at Soti, Chaurjahari municipality-8, Rukum

West. The Parliamentary Special Investigation Committee reported the caste discrimination as the major cause of the event. They were killed at a crime that they wanted to help Nabaraj B.K., a *Dalit* youth, to marry with his beloved Susma Malla, the higher caste girl (Parliamentary, My translation 1, 42). This is only the representative event but Nepal observed such countless events born out of the caste discriminations. The National Crime Records Bureau of India portrays the alarming situation about the crimes committed by the non-*Dalit* to the *Dalit* people in India: “. . . a crime is committed against a Dalit by a non-Dalit every sixteen minute; everyday, more than four Untouchable women are raped by Touchables; every week, thirteen Dalits are murdered and six Dalits are kidnapped” (qtd. in Roy 29). These are some illustrations of the horrible crimes born out of the caste discriminations. Many crimes are not reported and the *Dalit* community is obliged to tolerate, without any fuss, the countless social discriminations, such as “. . . the stripping and parading naked, the forced shit-eating (literally), the seizing of land, the social boycotts, the restriction of access to drinking water” (Roy 30). The untouchability of the caste system is the scar of humanity and it does not allow the *Dalit* community to come to the status of human beings.

The untouchability of the caste system, with its barbarous discrimination and degradation to the *Dalit* community, rooted deeply in Hindu Societies. The problem is chronic in village areas where the large numbers of backward and uneducated Hindu population settle. There is a reason behind the cruelty of the Hindu villagers to the *Dalit* community. Ambedkar argues: “. . . the Hindus observe caste not because they are inhuman or wrong-headed. They observe caste because they are deeply religious.” The higher caste Hindu population behaves cruelly with the *Dalit* community not because they are inhuman and cruel but because “. . . their religion . . . inculcated this

notion of caste” (20.9, 586). Ambedkar further points out: “Caste is the natural outcome of certain religious beliefs which have the sanction of the shastras” (21.2, 590). This shows that the religion makes people blind to observe such barbarous caste discriminations and the *Śāstras* sanction the religion. The *Śāstras* justify the caste inequalities making the religious notion of caste sacrosanct. The *Dalit* community must grapple with their real enemy and the *Śāstras*, not the people who observe caste, are their real enemies. The occasional inter-dinning and intermarriage are not the real remedy of the problem. The real remedy of the chronic caste discrimination is to destroy the belief in the sanctity of the *Śāstras* (“Annihilation” 20.9, 586). The Hindu *Śāstras* like the *Gītā* and the *Manusmriti* teach people about the Hindu's notion of caste inequalities and people believe in the sanctity of these *Śāstras*. According to 2011 census, 79.8 percent populations of India are Hindus and they regard the *Bhagavad Gītā* as their basic scripture (Kuiken 39). Therefore, the *Gītā* has a high social impact in implanting to people's mind about the Hindu's notion of caste and thus, it is necessary to make people aware about the hollowness of the *Gītā* to shatter the people's belief in the caste system.

It is necessary to destroy the sanctity of the *Śāstras* that teach people about caste inequalities if we want to pull out people from the religious quicksand. But, it is not an easy job. The notion of the sanctity of the *Śāstras* is deeply rooted in people's mind. A rigorous and protracted struggle is needed in order to make people aware about this false notion. The lower caste people are engaged in caste struggle against this notion of *Śāstras* and the caste discriminations of Hindu religion. The caste struggle, however, is not sufficient on its own for the purpose. It is needed to connect the struggle against the caste discriminations with the general struggle of working class people. Arundhati Roy observes having the two-way relationship between the

caste and class struggle. The people, who are revolutionary in their attitude, should develop a radical critique of *Brāhmaṇism* and those who understand *Brāhmaṇism*, should sharpen their critique of capitalism (286). The caste is a religious concept. It outgrew in the particular mode of production and it ends when the productive forces develop to such an extent that provides the ground for its elimination. The caste system was developed in feudalism from *varṇāśrama* slavery and began to lose its strength with the ascendancy of capitalism. The bourgeois mode of production provides ground to slacken the caste system. Kosambi argues:

. . . city life, crowded accommodation, modern transport by rail, bus, and boat, the packing together of workmen of all castes into one factory, and the overwhelming power of money in a cash economy destroys the main feature of caste: hierarchical isolation by groups. The Brāhmiṇ priest is out of place in mechanised life; machines run by scientific laws that do not justify a caste hierarchy. (“Primitive” 52)

The capitalist mode of production provides such ground, which is essential for the elimination of the caste system. The bourgeois law does not recognize caste and gives complete freedom in the matters like intermarriage and inter-dining. However, as mentioned above, there are countless caste born crimes, inequalities and discriminations still prevailed today in Hindu Society. Although the capitalism is more progressive than the feudalism in the matter of caste system, it is unable to eliminate the system.

The caste system still does not lose its validity for the new bourgeois-democratic state power based on class-antagonisms. The system may continue to persist under capitalism and threatens at times to become a source of dangerous

tensions. The British encouraged the caste division and used it systematically to keep India divided (Kosambi “Primitive” 52). The caste division has always become a powerful weapon in keeping the people divided and making them weak in the face of any challenge of the ruling class people (405). When class divisions and class struggles are becoming sharper in Hindu society, the ruling class people use the caste division as a powerful weapon to divide the militant masses, locked in class struggle (Bardhan 414). The question of caste exploitation is not an isolated one and it is an integral part of the class question. Mao points out: “In the final analysis, a national struggle is a question of class struggle” (“Oppose Racial” 3). The economic cause was the principal one behind the emergence of the *Varṇa*-system. The *Śūdra*, originally, was a proletariat, deprived from the means of production. Even now, the *Dalit* problem is related with the exclusion of *Dalit* in the means and resources of production. The majority of people of the *Dalit* community belong to the working class and thus, the *Dalit* problem is a special kind of class problem in South Asia (Aahuti “Question” 114). Moreover, the caste struggle, done under capitalism, cannot achieve its ultimate goal. The socialist mode of production alone manages to provide the ground in which the every form of human exploitations including the national and caste exploitations can be eliminated. Marx and Engels write: “In proportion as the exploitation of one individual by another is put an end to, the exploitation of one nation by another will also be put an end to. In proportion as the antagonism between classes within the nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end” (“Proletarians” 57). Marx and Engels point out that the national or caste oppression will end with the abolition of class exploitation. The caste question is essentially one of the emancipation of the broad masses of oppressed and exploited working class people of all castes. Therefore, the *Dalit* liberation movement should be

forged fraternal relations with the proletarian revolution. The *Dalit* community will get liberation from every kind of exploitation only after the realization of socialism. During the entire long period of socialist society, the people of the various castes become free from the religious superstitions, raising their class-consciousness and political thinking. The religious scriptures like the *Gītā* do not affect the minds of people in socialism because it will be the age of science and reason. In socialism, the *Gītā's* theory of *Cāturvarṇāh* will lose its validity because the socialist state power does not need it in order to establish the egalitarian society and in the socialist mode of production, the people are almost equal.

The *Gītā's* theory of *Cāturvarṇāh* makes the ancient *varṇa* division, based on the division of labor, hereditary and divine. The *Gītā* makes the *Varṇa*-system hereditary by linking it with an individual's inborn *guṇas* and *karma* and makes it divine by mentioning it as the God's creation. This is the expression of the post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇic* ideology of caste system. The *Gītā* degrades the *Vaiśyas*, *Sūdras*, and the people belonging to outside *Varṇa*-system, the outcastes. The *Gītā* degrades them as they belong to the working class people. The *Gītā* advocates the caste *dharma* (*sva-dharma*) and suggests its strict implications. This benefits the ruling class people in order to dominate and exploit the large numbers of working class people. In course of time, the Aryan's low attitudes to the *Sūdras* and outcastes give birth to the concept of untouchability in Hindu society and this concept begets the varieties of social injustices. The Hindu *Śāstras* like *Gītā* inculcate the Hindu's discriminatory notion of caste in people's mind, making the notion divine. The caste inequalities and injustices create caste struggle in Hindu society but the caste struggle alone is not sufficient to liberate people from the caste system. The caste struggle is the question of class struggle as the root of the caste system, the religion, the outcome

of the particular mode of production, will lose its validity only after the realization of socialism. Therefore, the caste struggle should be forged with the proletarian revolution for the complete elimination of the caste system.

5.5 The Place of Woman in the *Bhagavad Gītā*

The *Bhagavad Gītā* mentions woman only two times in the entire text. In I.41, the woman (*strisu*) is presented as the source of the intermingling of castes (*varṇa-saṅkaraḥ*) (27) and in IX.32; the women (*striyaḥ*) are degraded to the status of the *Sūdras* (*śūdrāḥ*) (Gambhirananda's translation 396-97). In both verses, the *Gītā* expresses the negative attitude to women. There is no *varṇa* division of women in the text as the *Gītā* treats the women of all *varṇas* equally. The *Gītā* gives us the impression that the text is written, “. . . for just the two top varṇas . . . and, of course, even in those top two castes for men only, not for women . . .” (Meghnad Desai “Nationalist” 38). The *Gītā* is misogynist, but the *Gītā's* misogynistic attitude represents the ideologies of the particular time of Indian history. The *Gītā's* both verses carry the degrading attitudes to woman of class society but the verse I.41 carries the ideology of slavery, while the verse IX.32 represents the feudalist ideology. There was mother-right in the ancient communistic household in which the group-marriage provided the ground for the lineage through mother and the inheritance relations arose out of it. The birth of private property and classes put men in the first place and they establish the father-right overthrowing the mother-right. The ancient group-marriage is converted into monogamy in slavery and this makes women into chattels and the instruments of breeding children. The woman's position is even more degraded into feudalism and they are treated as untouchables in the feudalist mode of production. The women are not liberated even in capitalism and

they will achieve their complete liberation only after the abolition of private property and classes, the original causes of women's degradation, into communistic societies.

Woman holds almost the half population of the world. She is the mother and the creator of the world. She does not deserve the status given by the *Gītā*. The woman had a great power and prestige in the ancient collective or communistic household. There was the matriarchal society and the woman had the supremacy in the house. It is the false notion that the woman was the slave of man at the beginning of human society. This notion comes down to us from the period of Enlightenment of the Eighteenth century (Engels "Origin" 226). In the stage of savagery, all people including Aryans were savage and they lived in small groups. The small social group of men and women fought with wild nature, working and living collectively and breeding within itself. As in economy, so in sex, they were savage, half man and half animal growing out of nature. Being a savage, they tried to understand nature and overcome her. They were not aware about the incestuous relationship of the present day. They kept sexual relationship between the male and female no matter who they belong to. They happened to be son and mother, father and daughter and brother and sister (71). There was the system of group-marriage and ". . . matriarchy arose from 'group-marriage' in ancient society . . ." (Dange "Primitive" 69). In all forms of the group family, the father is not identified, but it is certain who the mother is. She recognizes her natural children from other many children of the group. This makes us clear that in group-marriage, descent is traceable only on the maternal side and thus, the female line alone is recognized. This is the fact in savagery and to the lower stage of barbarism. This exclusive recognition of lineage through the mother and the inheritance relations that arose out of it ultimately gave birth to the mother-right (Engels "Origin" 220). The lineage of the mother in the family establishes the

supremacy of woman in the primitive communistic household. The communistic household was based on the collective ownership of the instruments of production and the products in which woman's labor was considered as important as man's. The man went outside in order to earn the livelihood and the woman cared for the house, prepared food, and clothing for the commune ("Primitive" 81). The mother-right made the women superior in those days, though they participated in the household works. The 'savage' warrior and hunter were male and they had been content to occupy second place in the house and give precedence to the woman (Dange "Slavery of Woman" 117). This is the position of woman at the dawn of human history. Every phenomenon is changing and developing and hence, they have to be viewed historically. The historical materialist approach of study reveals us the prime position of woman in ancient society.

The woman gains the supremacy in the house because the group-marriage provides the material ground for the lineage of the mother, the pre-condition of the mother-right. But, it is difficult for the people of the present day to believe on the existence of the group-marriage in ancient society. The group-marriage is the form in which the whole groups of men can keep promiscuous sexual relationship with the whole groups of women and vice-versa. There is little scope of sexual jealousy and the conception of incest is not applied in it. The existence of the group-marriage in ancient society is proved by the sexual practices of some savage people (Native races) lived even at present in the different parts of the world. The brother and sister can marry to each other and sexual relations between parents and children are permitted among the people of these races to this day. Bancroft testifies the existence of this practice among the Kaviats of the Bering Strait, the Kadiaks near Alaska and the Tinnehs in the interior of British North America. Letourneau notices the same fact

among the Chippewa Indians, the Cucus in Chile, the Caribbeans and the Karens of Indo-China. The abundance of such practices is revealed by the accounts of the ancient Greeks and Romans concerning the Parthians, Persians, Scythians and Huns. It is reported that even the sexual intercourse between parents and children are not taken as disgusting in their communities (Engels "Origin" 215). The sexual practices of different ethnic people, who live at the stage of savagery and barbarism even at the present time, give us the proofs about the sexual practices of the ancestors of the civilized people. The ancestors of all civilized people of the present day once lived in savagery and barbarism and adopted the similar sexual practices like the above-mentioned ethnic people of the world.

The existence of the group-marriage in ancient society is also proved by Aryan mythologies recorded in different *Brāhmaṇical* literature. *Ṛgveda*: X.61. 5-7 mentions about the incest (qtd. in Kosambi "Origin" 64). The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* iii.33.1 tells us that *Prajāpati*, the original Creator, married his daughter and explains everything as the creation out of their incestuous relationship (qtd. in Kosambi "Origin" 64; Dange "Primitive" 72). The *Matsya* and *Vāyu Purāṇas* mention the same thing of Brahmā, the creator. *Harivamsha* mentions other famous instances of the group-marriage. Vashishta *Prajāpati* married his own daughter Shatarupa when she came of age (ch.2). Manu married his daughter Ila (ch.10), Janhu married his daughter, Janhavi-Ganga (ch.27) and Surya married his daughter Usha. The *Harivamsha* even records about the sexual relationship between grandfather and granddaughter. Soma had a daughter named Marisha and all the ten brothers and Soma together got a son, Dakshaprajāpati, on Marisha. This Daksha got twenty-seven daughters and he gave them to his father, Soma, for the creation of progeny. Daksha is also shown to be a son of Brahmā, he gave his daughter in marriage to his father Brahmā and from that

marriage was born the famous Narada (qtd. in Dange "Primitive" 72; Ambedkar "Ancient Regime" 5-6). The above Hindu 'sacred' history records reveal about the existence of group-marriage in ancient Aryan society. The above examples of group-marriage are not treated with horror by the *Brāhmaṇical* literature, though such practices are abhorred by social ethics of the modern India. They are simply explained away by saying that such sexual relations are permissible for gods. It is interpreted as the *Dharma*, the mode of social organization of remote antiquity and hence, is permissible (Dange "Primitive" 69, 72-3). The above examples of the group-marriage, whatever explanations they achieve by *Brāhmaṇical* literature, give us information about the ancient Aryan's mode of social life.

The instances of the group-marriage of earlier times show that the marriage customs of people vary according to the different stages of human development. Engels points out the three chief forms of marriage according to the three main stages of human development: "We have, then, three chief forms of marriage, which, by and large, conform to the three main stages of human development. For savagery – group marriage; for barbarism – pairing marriage; for civilization – monogamy, supplemented by adultery and prostitution" ("Origin" 248). Engels' proposition is corroborated by the ancient Hindu literature. The ancient Hindu writers did not hide inconvenient facts in the matter of sex relations. They admit that sex relations of their society are very different from those of earlier society. They claim that the four *Yugas* had four different sex relations 'to generate progeny'. In *Shanti Parva* of the *Mahābhārata*, the great patriarch Bhishma characterizes the sex relations of the four *Yugas*; *Krita*, *Tretā*, *Dwāpar* and *Kali*, naming them as *Samkalpa*, *Samsparsha*, *Maithuna* and *Dwandwa* respectively. *Samkalpa* signifies the complete promiscuity in which there is no social or personal barriers laid down. In *Samsparsha*, the sexual

relations between the most near relatives are banned. *Maithuna* carries the features of pairing marriage, the last stage of the group-marriage. *Dwandwa* represents the monogamous marriage of the *Kali* age (qtd. in Dange "Primitive" 70). *Samkalpa* sex relations of the *Krita* age resemble with Engels' definition of the group-marriage of savagery. *Samsparsha* and *Maithuna* of the *Treta* and *Dwapar Yugas* carry the features of the group and the pairing marriage, the sexual relations of the upper stage of savagery and barbarism, and the *Dwandwa* marriage of the *Kali* age stands for the monogamy of the age of civilization. The essence of Hindu's four *Yugas* and their four forms of marriages almost resemble with the essence of Engels' division of three eras and their three chief forms of marriages.

In the early form of group-marriage, there were no social and personal restrictions for the sexual intercourse between male and female. There was complete promiscuity. The *Samkalpa* form of sexual relation prevailed at the early stage of human history. But, this form of promiscuity was found to be injurious to the growth of progeny. Hence, this gave birth to the consanguine family in which sexual relations between parents and children are prohibited. Here, the marriage groups are ranged by generations: all the grandfathers and grandmothers are regarded as mutual husbands and wives and equally the fathers and mothers form the second, their children, the third and their grandchildren, the fourth circle for the mutual husbands and wives. In the second stage, the sexual barrier was created between brothers and sisters. A group of men and women become the common husbands and wives in which their natural brothers and sisters are excluded. These common husbands and wives no longer addressed one another as brothers and sisters, but as punalua, the intimate partner. So, Lewis H. Morgan calls it the punaluan family (qtd. in Engels "Origin" 216- 18). It becomes difficult to apply the second barrier because of the

greater equality of ages of the brothers and sisters. The Yama-Yami dialogue of the *Rgveda* exhibits this difficulty. Yami, the sister of Yama, implores him to make her his wife but Yama refuses, calling the sister marriage a sin (X.10, Griffith's translation 199-202). The barrier of marriage between brothers and sisters gave birth to the organization known as *Gaṇa-Gotra* in which *Sagotra* marriage was ruled out. In this new system, the husbands and wives must belong to different groups or *Gotras* (Dange "Primitive" 74). This system still prevails in Hindu society.

The varieties of prohibitions for the marriage increased and this growing complexity of marriage prohibitions made the group-marriages more and more impossible. The pairing family supplanted them. In the pairing family, one man lives with one woman, but polygamy and occasional infidelity remain as privileges for men. Either party can easily dissolve the marriage tie and the children belong to the mother alone as formerly (Engels "Origin" 224-25). The *Gandharva* form of marriage is taken as an example of the pairing family in Aryan life. The 'holy practice' of Vishwamitra-Menaka and of Dushyanta-Shakuntala is taken as its examples. The Pāṇḍava brothers practiced almost every form of marriage and family. The remnant of group-marriage is noticed in polyandry- five natural brothers having one common principal wife, Draupadi. Having Draupadi as their principal wife, each Pāṇḍava had other wives too. Hidimba had a pairing family with Bhima and Chitrangada with Arjuna until a son was born to each. In both cases, the sons remained with their mothers who were freed from their husbands after a certain period (Dange "Primitive" 77-8). The above examples show the existence of pairing family in ancient Aryan life. In pairing marriage, the women, though they lost some of their ancient privileges, were still free and they could practice some of the provisions of

earlier group-marriages. The pairing marriage had not still made the women the slave of their husbands.

The domestication of animals and the breeding of herds provided an unprecedented source of wealth in primitive societies and this created a new social relationships. Gaining a livelihood had always been the business of the man. He domesticated animals and tended the herds and hence, he owned them. The man obtained other commodities and slaves in exchange of cattle. The surplus resulted from production belonged to man. The woman shared in consuming it but she had no share in owning it. The ownership of the wealth pushed man forward to first place and forced the woman into second place (Dange "Slavery of Woman" 117). The division of labor remained unchanged, but with the increase of wealth in the family, the household works of woman got the second position in comparison with the man's job of obtaining livelihood. Engels asserts:

The very cause that had formerly made the woman supreme in the house, namely, her being confined to domestic work, now assured supremacy in the house for the man: the woman's housework lost its significance compared with the man's work in obtaining a livelihood; the latter was everything, the former an insignificant contribution. (319-20)

The increased family wealth gave more power to man and in case of separation, the man took the new sources of foodstuffs – the cattle and the new instrument of labor – the slaves with him and the woman just retained the household goods. Besides, pairing marriage introduced a new element into the family, the authenticated natural father. The power of wealth along with the authenticity of the natural father led man to overthrow the traditional order of inheritance in favor of his children. This was

done by overthrowing the mother-right. The reckoning of descent through the female line and the right of inheritance through the mother were overthrown and male lineage and right of inheritance from the father established ("Origin" 231-32). This is the origin of the father-right, which rested on the two pillars, the male's ownership in the means of production and paternity.

The pairing marriage introduced the authenticated natural father, but it did not become sufficient to provide undisputed paternity for the inheritance of father's property. This gave birth to the monogamian marriage, which provided the undisputed paternity for the child to be the heirs of his father's wealth. The monogamian family differs from the pairing marriage in the rigidity of the marriage tie, to which the man can only dissolve and cast off his wife. In monogamy, the wedded wife is expected to maintain strict chastity and conjugal fidelity (237). In antiquity, monogamian wives were kept in seclusion and surveillance in order to preserve their chastity and conjugal fidelity. The monogamian marriage is not based on individual sex love and it is the first form of the family based not on natural but on economic conditions, namely, on the victory of private property over the original, naturally developed, common ownership. Its principal aim is to procreate children for the inheritance of the father's property (238-39). The monogamian family arose in the transition period from the middle to the upper stage of barbarism and got its final victory in civilization (237). It marked the emergence of private property and class society. The monogamian marriage brought, for the first time, the antagonism between man and woman and introduced the first gender-oppression with that of the female sex by the male (240). The monogamian marriage becomes curse for the female sex because it provides undisputed paternity for the establishment of father-right. The father right, with its introduction of male lineage and male's right in inheritance of the father's property,

deprives woman from lineage and property right and makes them mere sex object and the instrument of breeding children. Engels insists: “The overthrow of mother right was the *world-historic defeat of the female sex*. The man seized the reins in the house also, the woman was degraded, enthralled, the slave of the man’s lust, a mere instrument for breeding children” (233). The father-right, which is strengthened by the monogamian marriage, makes monogamy itself a mockery for the woman as, in patriarchal society, monogamy is applied only for the woman, but not for the man (238). Man forces woman for chastity and fidelity, but there is a continuation of the old sexual freedom for the men. The men, since the end of the commune and rise of slavery and class rule, are engaged with gusto into adultery and its most extreme form prostitution (“Origin” 241). Hence, the monogamian marriage was introduced only for the benefits of male sex and it was introduced to beget undisputed heirs for the inheritance of the father’s property.

The procreation of the undisputed heirs was the sole aim of the monogamy of class-ridden patriarchal society. The Aryan ancient writers did not hide this naked fact of monogamy in their writings. The father needed a son to inherit his property. The man cared the chastity of his wife if she could give him his own child, but if he himself failed in that aim, he hired the strangers for the purpose. Vyasa was hired begetting the heirs of Vichitravirya from his wives. Deerghatamas had the wives of Bali and some Brāhmiṇ passerby on the road had the wife of Sharadandayana. The *Rishis* provided the heirs of Pandu from his wives. In these stories, women are treated not as human beings, having their own feelings and choice, but as a mere instrument for breeding children. This is the idea of the age of slavery and private property and class rule (“Primitive” 80). In the age of slavery, the man was bought and sold to produce wealth for the slave-owner and so was woman to produce a son to

inherit father's property. The slavery reduced woman, the great mother of the communistic household, to the status of a chattel, a mere means to get children (Dange "Slavery of woman" 122). In I.41, the *Gītā* reveals this ideology of slavery:

adharmābhibhavāt kṛṣṇa praduṣyanti kulastriyaḥ

strīṣu duṣṭāsu vārṣṇeya jāyate varṇasaṅkaraḥ

(O Kṛṣṇa, when vice predominates, the women of the family become corrupt. O descendent of the Vṛṣṇis, when women become corrupted, it results in the intermingling of castes.). (Gambhirananda's translation 27)

The above verse converts the status of women into Chattels, as the family property, having no human sense of good and bad. The environment can play the secondary role for the conversion of human behavior, but the verse defines the external environment (*adharmābhibhavāt*) as the sole cause for the corruption (*praduṣyanti*) of women (*strīṣu*). The women are, after all, the human beings and they can think about their right actions in the post-war period too. They are not the inhuman entities to be possessed and controlled all the time. The verse also postulates the women as being the instruments of breeding children. The women were kept in the house and were not allowed to participate in the great war of the *Mahābhārata*. The male warriors valued women only so far as they produced their children for the inheritance of their property. In the verse, Arjuna expresses his fear on the adulterous relationship of their widows with other castes men in the post-war period. He has a fear that the women would beget others' children and create the mixture of castes (*varṇa-saṅkaraḥ*). He has the fear that their wives would not beget their undisputed proper heirs. Arjuna's this fear shows the women's chief function as breeding children for their husbands.

Thus, the verse converts women into Chattels and the instruments of breeding children. This is the ideology of slavery, which is well expressed in the verse.

The slavery seized every right of woman as a human being. In the age of slavery, the woman was converted into an object to be bought and sold, rented out or loaned by the owning husband for begetting sons to inherit father's property. In addition to the wife, this treatment was applicable to the daughters and others as well. A continuous chain of renting-out of the daughter is well demonstrated by the story of Madhavi, the daughter of Yayati depicted in the *Udyoga Parva* of the *Mahābhārata*. The rights of the slave-owning husband were not limited only to renting-out of his wife, daughter, son and others. He had absolute right even to kill them at his will. The three episodes, the episode of Sudarshana-Oghavati, Gautama-Gautami and Jamadagni-Renuka, describe the gradual downfall of women and the rise of men in absolute power in Aryan society. These episodes also demonstrate the different sexual ethics of the different time. In the first episode, Oghavati slept with a *Brāhmiṇ* guest in the absence of her husband, Sudarshana and he was very pleased for the action of his wife. Sudarshana was happy because his wife had carried out the duties of a hostess. In the *Gaṇa-Gotra* custom, the husband sent his wife to sleep with the guest to please him. The incident belongs to the period when the communistic household is breaking down and the woman is forming an independent household, living in the pairing form of the family with her husband. This is the reason why Sudarshana was afraid that his wife may not fulfill the duties of the hostess and was pleased to find out that she did it. In the next episode, Gautama asked his son, Chirakari, to behead his mother Gautami who slept with Indra in the absence of her husband. The son is in dilemma. He knows, according to the old custom, his mother is not wrong and being her son, he could not kill her. But, according to the new class

law, he must obey the father's order. With the end of the communistic household, the husband became the slave-driver of his wife and sons became the mother's executioners. But, in this episode, the son does not carry out his father's order and Gautama also accepts the accomplished fact and is pacified. This incident belongs to the period when the slavery came into existence but its law was not yet become all-powerful. In the third episode, the slavery was fully developed and its law became all-powerful. Jamadagni finds that his wife, Renuka, just cast a loving glance at Chitraratha Gandharva. He orders his son, Parashurama, to kill her and he did it there and then. Here, the husband establishes the full power over the life of his wife. He completely dominates her personality and freedom. The wife is interpreted here as having no personality, no liberty and no mind of her own (Dange "Slavery of woman" 122- 25). These three episodes demonstrate us the consequences of the fall of the commune and the rise of private property to the life of women. The story of Madhavi and the episode of Jamadagni-Renuka show the cruelty of the rule of man and the subjugation of woman into slavery.

The women lost freedom along with the rise of slavery and their condition worsened in feudalism. All the inequalities and discriminations of women born with slavery were retained and added in feudalism. These women's inequalities and discriminations were legalized in feudalism and were applied in society vigorously. The *Brāhmaṇical* literature, especially *Manusmṛiti*, written "between 170 B.C. and 150 B.C." (Ambedkar "Triumph" 105) legalized them in Aryan society. The *Manusmṛiti* portrays women as being "disloyal towards their husbands" (IX.15, 57) and suggests us "to guard them" (IX.16, 57). It prescribes us to keep women "in dependence by the males (of) their (families)" (IX.2, 56). In childhood, a female must be kept under father, in youth under husband and after husband's death under her

sons because a woman is not fit for independence (IX.3, 56; V.148, 33-4). The right of divorce is out of question for a wife and she is not released from her husband even after she is sold or repudiated by him (IX.46, 58). A woman has no right to study the *Vedas* (IX.18, 57) and a *Brāhmiṇ* is not suggested to eat food given at sacrifice performed by a woman (IV.205, Buhler's translation 27). The above verses of the *Manusmṛiti* degrade women to the status of cattle that should be guarded and controlled and to the status of the *Sūdras*, who do not have the right to study *Vedas* and perform sacrifices. In other words, the *Manusmṛiti* makes women untouchables as *Sūdras* in feudalism. In IX.32, the *Gītā* upholds the *Manusmṛiti*'s attitude to women, degrading them to the status of the *Sūdras*:

mām hi pārtha vyapāśritya ye 'pi syuḥ pāpayonayaḥ

striyo vaiśyāstathā sūdrās te 'pi yānti parām gatim

(For, O son of Prtha, even those who are born of sin – women, Vaiśhyas, as also Sūdras –, even they reach the highest Goal by taking shelter under Me.). (396)

The verse downgrades women (*striyo*) and all the working class people, the *Vaiśyas* (*vaiśyāḥ*) and *Sūdras* (*sūdrāḥ*) calling them as born of sin (*pāpayonayaḥ syuḥ*) (Gambhirananda's translation 397). The *Manusmṛiti* has not degraded *Vaiśyas* to the level of *Sūdras* (X.4, Buhler's translation 67), but the *Gītā*, in the above verse, keeps the *Vaiśyas*, *Sūdras* and women in the same rank. This shows that the *Gītā* reflects the position of women of the *Manusmṛiti* era and even of the later period.

The comparison of women with *Sūdras* and describing them as born of sin are the sufficient proofs to show the low attitudes of the *Gītā* towards women. The *Gītā*, in few words, justifies the inequalities of women encoded in the *Manusmṛiti* and makes

them valid. The above single verse of the *Gītā* discloses the worsening condition of women in feudalism.

The *Gītā's* two verses, dedicated to women, carry the ideologies of the two different social mode of productions, i.e., of the slavery and feudalism. As described above, the verses I.41 and IX.32 carry the ideologies of Indian slavery and feudalism respectively. I.41 degrades woman into Chattel and the instrument of breeding children and IX.32 downgrades woman to the status of untouchables, as being born of sin. The verse IX.32 carries the essence of the low treatment of women of the *Manusmriti*. The *Gītā* and the *Manusmriti* both are considered as sacred texts of the Hindu religion and this makes us feel and realize such a low position of women in Hindu society. The woman, all-powerful and sacred great mother of the ancient communistic household, was turned into a Chattel in slavery and into an untouchable in feudalism. Although the *Manusmriti* and the *Gītā* are silent on the issue, the Hindu society even practiced the cruel, inhuman and infamous *Sati* custom, in which widows were burnt alive on the funeral pyre of their husbands. A few cases of *Sati* mentioned in the epic *Mahābhārata* (K. Mishra “Social” 344) indicate that the custom originated in slavery. This horrifying custom of *Sati* began in slavery and died out but it was again revived from early feudal times after Pushyamitra’s *Brāhmanic* revolution, sometime later than the composition of the *Manusmriti* (Kosambi “From Tribe” 119; Ambedkar “Triumph” 125). The custom began to be practised “with increasing frequency among the ruling classes from the sixth century [A.D.]” (Kosambi “Towards” 209). The *Sati* was defined as *dharma* (virtue) of woman and she was forced to immolate herself with her husband’s corpse. Even today, the barbaric custom of *Sati*, in the name of religious rights (*dharma surakṣhā*), is glorified and claimed to be a customary right of the Rajputs (Bardhan 412). The notion of religion

makes human beings blind and they cannot judge what is right and what is wrong with reason. The religious scriptures, like the *Gītā*, make the superstitious and unscientific beliefs sacrosanct. They give the false notion that God himself ordains all human inequalities, discriminations and injustices. Besides, Kṛṣṇa, in the *Gītā*, who sanctifies all the inequalities belonging to the working class men and the women of all classes, claims himself as being the supreme God. This makes the *Gītā* being a more successful scripture in order to hoodwink people and the text's defined low position of women can have perennial effects for the freedom and equalities of women.

The Hindu *Śāstras*, like the *Gītā*, justify and protect the varieties of women inequalities, oppressions and injustices in Hindu society. However, the Hindu society is not alone for the maltreatment to women. The women are obliged to tolerate the most barbaric forms of exploitations in Islamic societies even at the present time. The Islamic women face the “mountains of religious superstition” and the Islamic rulers still follow “. . . the medieval practice of literally locking women inside the house and controlling their every movement, as one example of what has come to be known as ‘gender apartheid’, an extreme case of the feudal form of women’s oppression still so prevalent around the globe” (8). The women are not also free from exploitations in Christian societies. There are some forms of the most backward ideological expressions of subordinating women in Christian countries. It is noticed “. . . the growth of religious obscurantism in the US, where fundamentalist Christians oppose abortion rights and demand a return to traditional reactionary values in the home and in general” (8). Thousands of years of traditions oppress women in countless forms in every society. Huge sections of the world’s women are still dominated and controlled by male family members. The most infamous forms of exploitation like the hated *Chador*, female circumcision and forced sterilization are still prevalent in some

societies. The arranged marriages of Children, men's "ownership" of children, dowry blackmail and wife-beating are common in most of the societies. There is men's "right" to divorce and to adultery but if women do the same things, they are punished by banishment or death. In addition to these and other feudal or semi-feudal "traditions" of women's oppressions in the oppressed countries, the women in the "advanced" countries are also suffered by "modern" forms of oppressions, like constant sexual harassment of different types, plus pornography, prostitution and multiple forms of violence, including rape and physical abuse (8). Although the woman oppressions exist in every society, they vary according to the different religious societies and different mode of productions. The women are freer in other societies than Muslim societies and the women become more independent in capitalism than in slavery and feudalism. However, women are not equal even in bourgeois-democratic countries such as the United States, France or the United Kingdom. The women's participation at the parliaments and in other power structures exhibits the domination of men over women ("Unleash" 7). This shows that it is necessary for us to bring change in people's religious thinking and to go further than capitalism in order to achieve the complete emancipation and equality of women.

The women's oppression begins with the introduction of private property and classes and ends with their elimination. Hence, the women question is not isolated question and is related with the question of class struggle. Lenin points out it in the conversation with Clara Zetkin: "Must I avow, or make you avow, that the struggle for women's rights must also be linked with our principal aim – the conquest of power and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. At present, this is, and will continue to be, our alpha and omega" (Zetkin 17). The woman's right should be linked with the ownership of property, which women had in the ancient

communistic household. The women's emancipation only begins with the rejection of the petty-household economy and the participation on a large-scale socialist economy (Engels "Origin" 320; Lenin "Great" 23). The women's participation on the large-scale socialist economy assures them the ownership of property and, as a result, the men can no longer dominate them in the family. However, the complete emancipation and equality of women can be possible not in socialism but in communism when the root causes of women's exploitation, the private property and classes will be abolished. In communism, the relation between the sexes will become a purely private matter in which society does not intervene. Along with the elimination of private property, the dependence of the wife on the husband and of the Children on their parents will come to an end (Engels "*Principles*" 21). The religious *Śāstras*, like the *Gītā*, will not affect people and they will be free from every kind of religious superstitions in the future scientific communism.

The *Gītā* gives the low position to woman but the *Gītā's* such attitude expressed in two verses, represent the ideologies of the two different social modes of production. The verses I.41 and IX.32 represent the ideologies of slavery and feudalism respectively. The introduction of the private property and classes in society snatches away the women's power and freedom of the ancient communistic household. The male's ownership in property pushes the female sex in second place and thereby the man establishes the father-right overthrowing the ancient mother-right. The earlier group-marriages, which provided women their lineage and the right in inheritance of property, waned away and this gave birth to the monogamian marriage system. The monogamy of slavery, which is applied only to women, transforms the female sex into a chattel and the instrument of breeding children. The forms of women's oppression are extended into feudalism and the feudal society

degrades the position of women and makes them untouchables, as being born of sin.

Although the women's oppressions are reduced in capitalism, the multiple forms of their exploitations still survive in different religious societies of the world.

The women's degradations, born with the private property and classes, will only come to end in future communistic societies, in which the private property and classes do not exist. In such societies, the people will be free from the magic of religious *Śāstras* like of the *Gītā* and they will come out from every form of religious superstitions, as these societies will be the most advanced scientific communistic societies.

The *Bhagavad Gītā* plays the negative social roles as the text outlines the counter-productive and discriminatory social values and ethics for the modern scientific world. The *Gītā's* teachings are superstitious, otherworldly, asocial and selfish. The *Gītā's* teachings reflect the ideologies and the interests of the ruling class people and they serve the rulers to strengthen and extend the age-old superstitious, oppressive and discriminatory class-based state power.

The *Gītā's jñāna* theory is based on the *Upanisadic* idealism and it suggests people to acquire the knowledge of empirically non-existent otherworld, eternal Self and *Brahman*. The *Gītā's* theory of knowledge, as it rejects the validity of the empirical world, contradicts with the dialectical materialist theory of knowledge. The *Gītā's jñāna* theory makes people believe in mysticism. The *Gītā* upholds the essence of the *Mīmāṃsakas' Vedic karma*. The *Gītā* suggests the purposeful action for the ruling class people and it propounds the theory of *niskāmkarma* (desire-less action) for the working class people. The *Gītā's niskāmkarma* theory serves the ruling class people in pacifying the eruption of anger of the working class people against the oppressive state power. The *Gītā's* this theory also makes people irresponsible in their

duties as it releases them from the responsibility of the consequences of their action. The *Gītā's karma* theory carries the essence of *karma* doctrine, which suggests people to pluck the fruits of their action in empirically non-existent rebirth. This *doctrine* tries to justify the status of the people as resulted from the *karma* of their previous life. The *Gītā's* suggestion of *bhakti* in its *bhakti* theory implies not the *bhakti* to God but the *bhakti* to the ruling class people. The *Gītā's bhakti* theory expresses the ideologies of the ruling class people of feudalism and makes people slavish as well as irresponsible in their conducts.

The *Gītā's* theory of *Cāturvarṇāh* implants the social discriminations by making ancient *Varṇa* division, based on the division of labor, hereditary and divine. The *Gītā* downgrades all the working class people, the *Vaiśyas* and *Sūdras*, into disrespectful position. The Aryan's low opinion on *Sūdras* and outcastes and its legalization by the Hindu *Śāstras* including the *Gītā* give birth to the concept of untouchability in Hindu society and it begets the varieties of social inequalities and injustices in the modern world. The *Gītā* gives the low position to women, the half population of the world. The *Gītā*, which expresses the ideologies of the ruling class people of slavery and feudalism, obstructs the social progress of the modern scientific world and it becomes the major obstacle for the modern people in order to establish the egalitarian society.

Chapter Six

The *Bhagavad Gītā*: A *Brāhmaṇical* Literature of Slavery and Feudalism

The *Bhagavad Gītā*, according to the dialectical and historical materialistic analysis, is found to be a developing text that carries the *Brāhmaṇical* ideologies of slavery and feudalism. The text develops up to the present form through different additions and alterations. The *Gītā*, as it has conglomerated the ideas of the divergent schools of philosophy, does not maintain the status of an independent treatise and is incompatible and self-contradictory. It carries the ideologies of the ruling class people of slavery and feudalism and therefore, the text has negative social impact in the modern world of science and freedom. The *Gītā*, being an important Hindu scripture, becomes the major impediment for establishing the egalitarian society in those countries where the majority of Hindu population resides.

The *Gītā* is found to be divided into two major portions in terms of its production. There is a short original *Gītā*, written with the *Mahābhārata*, which conveys the ideologies of the expanding slave states of early Indian slavery. The original *Gītā* discloses the conflict between the ideologies of the primitive Aryan *Gaṇa-Saṃghas* and the rising Indian slavery and shows the ideology of the rising Indian slavery as winner. Arjuna, the follower of the principles of *kuladharmā* of the primitive Aryan *Gaṇa-Saṃghas*, hesitates while participating in the fratricidal war, killing his own relatives. Kṛṣṇa, the ideologue of the rising Indian slavery based on private property and classes, reveals to Arjuna the greed for wealth, power and prosperity as being the ethics and morality of the new age and tells him there is no sin in killing his relatives. This part of the *Gītā*, altogether eighty-five verses up to II.38,

is the original one that has a natural connection with the heroic story of the *Mahābhārata*.

The major part of the *Gītā*, all the remaining verses after II.38, does not have the natural connection with the heroic story of the epic and it is interpolated later in the *Mahābhārata*. The post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* composed it and interpolated into the heroic lays of the epic to make it popular with the popularity of the *Mahābhārata*. The interpolated part of the *Gītā* reveals the post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇical* ideologies. This part of the text upholds the post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇical* notion of ritual sacrifices, discriminatory hereditary caste system and the concept of monotheistic Supreme God. The post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* renovates the *Vedic Brāhmaṇism* and the interpolated *Gītā* reflects the notion of renovated *Brāhmaṇic* religion. The post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* uses the *Gītā* with its renovated *Brāhmaṇic* religion as an effective weapon in the struggle against Buddhism.

The study shows that *Gītā* contains a few of its own and many of others. It discusses the different schools of philosophy prevailing by the time of early Indian feudalism. The text, except from *Lokāyata* philosophy, borrows the best from each of these systems of philosophy and interprets them as its own. It upholds both the *Vedic* notion of blood sacrifices and the Buddhist virtues of non-violence (*ahimsā*). It takes its standpoint on the *Upanisadic* idealism and converts the atheistic and materialistic *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga* philosophy to the theistic and idealistic ones. It refutes the ancient materialistic *Lokāyata* philosophy, calling it as *Āsura* views. The conglomerated ideas of the divergent philosophic systems make the text not as an independent treatise but as a review synthesis of mutually incompatible many contemporary schools of philosophy. This makes the *Gītā* a self-contradictory text.

The *Gītā* discusses about the *Vedas* and *Vedic* ritual sacrifices. It upholds the principles of Jaimini's *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā* philosophy while dealing with the *Vedas* and *Vedic yajñas*. The text, like *Mīmāṃsakas*, makes the *Vedas*, the simple creation of the *Vedic* Aryan poets, sacred and mystifies the *Vedic yajñas*. It interprets the *Vedic* knowledge as a vast storehouse that cannot be apprehended easily by the ordinary minds and exalts the *Vedic yajñas* as an ultimate means to fulfill the human desires. The *Gītā*, however, is inconsistent while dealing with the *Vedas* and *Vedic yajñas*. The text, in an attempt to reconcile the theory of *Vedic yajñas* with the *Upanisadic* knowledge, criticizes the *Vedic* texts and condemns the *Vedic yajñas*. It criticizes the *Vedic* texts on the ground that they prescribe the desire based *Vedic yajñas*. It converts the desire based *Vedic yajñas* into desireless ones and recommends the sacrifice of knowledge (*jñāna-yajña*) as being the best sacrifice among all the sacrifices. This shows the text's double stand on the question of the *Vedas* and *Vedic yajñas*.

The *Gītā* depends on the *Upanisads* for its philosophic background. The *Upanisads* contain both the materialistic and idealistic trends but the *Gītā*, like the *Vedānta*, extracts only the idealistic trend from the *Upanisads*. The *Gītā* expounds a coherent idealistic philosophy through the exposition of the *Upanisadic* concepts of soul (*ātmā*), *Brahman* and illusion (*māyā*). It plagiarizes the concepts and even some verses from the *Upanisads*. The text explains the *Upanisadic* concept of soul as its own. It upholds the *Upanisadic* concept of *Brahman* as a qualityless, undifferentiated ultimate principle and at the same time, makes *Brahman* subordinate to the personal God, Kṛṣṇa. It borrows the concept of *māyā* from the *Upanisad* and defines the visible material world as *māyā* or illusion. The *Gītā's* idealism, in essence, is no different

from the *Upanisadic* idealism; therefore, the *Gītā* is taken as the gist of *Upanisadic* idealism.

The *Gītā* modifies the materialistic *Sāṅkhya* system into the framework of the *Upanisadic* idealism. It converts the anomalous position of *puruṣa* of the original *Sāṅkhya* system into the Supreme God. It defines the *Sāṅkhya*'s *avyakta*, the primeval matter, being the intelligent principle, the Supreme God. It interprets the *Sāṅkhya*'s *prakṛiti* as the *māyā* power of God and makes the *Sāṅkhya*'s cosmical three *guṇas*; *sattva*, *raja* and *tama* subjectivistic and psychical. It treats *Sāṅkhya*'s both *prakṛiti* and *puruṣa* as being the parts of the Supreme God. The *Gītā*'s such a treatment to *Sāṅkhya*'s *prakṛiti*, *puruṣa*, *avyakta* and three *guṇas* negates the *Sāṅkhya*'s doctrine of *pradhāna*, the doctrine of *svabhāva* and the concept of eternal motion of matter. The *Gītā*'s *Sāṅkhya*, therefore, represents the complete surrendering of the basic principles of the original *Sāṅkhya* system. The text borrows the *Sāṅkhya* terminologies and expresses the *Vedāntic* philosophy through them. The *Gītā*'s *Sāṅkhya* does not reveal the principles of the original *Sāṅkhya*. It, in essence, is the disguised *Vedānta*.

The *Gītā*, like *Sāṅkhya* system, modifies the ancient atheistic and materialistic *yoga* practices into the theistic and idealistic one. The *Gītā*'s *yoga* is influenced by Patanjali's *Yoga* philosophy. It upholds Patanjali's *yoga* steps with slight variations and defines these steps of *yoga* as the steps of a ladder to climb up to the Supreme God. It negates the utility of the ancient *yoga* practices as a magical performance performed for this-worldly material benefits. The *Gītā*'s *yoga* does not carry the materialistic meaning and the text's varieties of definitions of the term *yoga* express the idealistic world outlook. The text gives high priority to *yoga* and

the *Gītā* is itself defined as *Yogaśāstra*. The *Gītā's Yogaśāstra*, however, explains the *brahman* or the knowledge of *Brahman* or soul. This shows that the *Gītā* transforms the original meaning of *yoga* and makes the *yoga* as a vehicle for conveying the *Vedānta* philosophy.

The *Gītā*, without mentioning the name Buddhism, borrows many things from Buddhism, the rival religion of *Brāhmaṇism* in ancient India. It develops the concept of *brahma-nirvāṇa*, the ultimate state of a *yogī*, borrowing the Buddhist concept of *nirvāṇa*. The text, like in Buddhism, gives high priority to sense-control or asceticism to achieve the state of *brahma-nirvāṇa*. The Buddhist doctrine of rebirth and *karma* helps the *Gītā* for enriching its *Upanisadic* doctrine of transmigration of soul. The text borrows some terminologies like *nirvāṇa*, *maitra* (friendliness) and *karuṇā* (kindness) from Buddhism. The *Gītā's* ethical principles are based on the Buddhist virtues like non-injury (*ahimsā*), non-attachment, humility, forbearance and sincerity. The later Buddhism influences the text in developing its *bhakti*-based monotheism. The *Gītā* borrows the best from Buddhism and the post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism* uses them in the struggle against Buddhism itself.

The *Gītā* expresses the inimical views towards the ancient materialistic *Lokāyata* philosophy. It calls it as *Āsura*-views, the views of the pre-Aryan *Āsura* tribe. The *Lokāyata* views, however, represent the ancient materialistic views of the laboring masses of non-Aryans and the Aryan *Vaiśyas* and *Sūdras* as well. The *Gītā* criticizes the *Lokāyata* views with a heap of abuses and slanders. However, the text, in course of its refutation, reveals the main tenets of *Lokāyata* philosophy such as the concept of non-existence of separate soul from body, the materialistic theory of knowledge, the *svabhāva-vāda*, the rejection of *karma* doctrine and the explanation of

the worldly phenomena through reason. The *Gītā* refutes the *Lokāyata* philosophy as it contradicts with the *daivīc* views of the *Brāhmiṇs* and *Kṣatriyas* and the idealistic views of the text.

The *Gītā* gives a review of these divergent schools of philosophy and attempts to synthesize them. It attempts to reconcile the irreconcilable different schools of thought. The desire based *Vedic yajñas* cannot be converted into the desireless one and the atheistic and materialistic *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga* cannot be reconciled with the *Vedānta* philosophy. The principles of the *Vedic* blood sacrifices cannot go together with the Buddhist virtues of non-violence (*ahimsā*). The *Gītā* repeatedly emphasizes the Buddhist virtue of non-violence; yet the entire discourse of the text is an incentive to war. This shows the bundle of inconsistencies contained in the text and anyone can question about the basic validity of the text that expounds a moral philosophy. The incompatibility of the *Gītā* invites the different interpreters to interpret the text in their own peculiar way.

The *Gītā*, according to the study, plays the negative social roles in the modern scientific world. The three basic frameworks of the text; the *Vedāntic* idealism, the theory of *Cāturvarṇāh* and its treatment to women lay the moral codes in the modern time that go against social progress, democracy and socialism. The text's *Vedāntic* idealism works as an effective weapon in the hands of the ruling class people to suppress the toiling masses by making them superstitious. The text's theory of *Cāturvarṇāh* and its treatment to women create caste and gender inequalities, break social harmony and increase the varieties of social evils and injustices. The *Gītā's* these three basic positions might have had value in the age of slavery and feudalism

when people could not find out the secret of nature but they lose their validity in the modern world based on science and freedom.

The *Gītā* elaborates its *Vedāntic* idealism through its three *mārgas* or theories: the theory of knowledge (*jñāna mārga*), the theory of action (*karma mārga*) and the theory of devotion (*bhakti mārga*). The *Gītā's* theory of knowledge is based on the *Upanisadic māyā-vāda* and explains the Self or *Brahman* as the ultimate object of knowledge. The *Upanisadic māyā-vāda* explains the material world as a *māyā* or illusion and hence, the *māyā-vāda* does not consider the knowledge gained by the sense perceptions as valid. The text does not suggest any valid and scientific sources of knowledge. It suggests the three sources of knowledge: the faith, the service of the teacher and the *Dhyāna-yoga*. However, the *Gītā*, through the suggestion of these three sources of knowledge, implants the notion of faith in people's mind towards the ruling class people. The faith, as a source of knowledge, implies the faith towards the empirically non-existent Supreme Being and the faith towards the ruling class people as well. The text, in order to attain knowledge, suggests serving the teacher in such a way that a slave serves his slave master. Through the suggestion of the *Dhyāna-yoga*, the *Gītā* minimizes the importance of the physical labor of the toiling masses, making a person a monk or *sannyasi*, the privileges of the leisured class people. The text argues that with these three sources, one attains the knowledge of Supreme Being and this knowledge works as *mārga* or path, the *jñāna mārga* that leads a person up to God. This is a mystical idea. This mysticism of the text makes its theory of knowledge otherworldly and asocial. The *Gita's* theory of knowledge has no positive social implications in the visible material world. The *Gītā's* suggested three sources of knowledge, far from expounding any knowledge; ultimately, serve the ruling class people, creating the notion of faith to them in the mind of toiling masses.

The *Gītā's karma* theory is based on the explanation of the term *karma* in three different senses: the *Vedic karma*, *niskāma karma* and caste duty. The text defines *karma* as the performance of *Vedic* observances and transforms the desire-based *Vedic karma* into the desireless one. It suggests the goal oriented action for the ruling class people and expounds the *niskāma karma* theory for the toiling masses.

The *Gītā's* theory of *niskāma karma* or desireless action aims to pacify the anger of the toiling masses against the ruling class people and stop their rebellion against the oppressive state power. This theory also makes a person socially irresponsible, releasing him from the consequences of his action. The text puts caste duty or *svadharma* in preference to common duty and allows people even doing violence (*himsā*) if it falls on the caste duty of a person. The *Gītā* explains the *Vedic karma*, *niskāma karma* and caste duty based on the principles of *karma* doctrine or the ancient *karma* theory. The *Gītā's* three *karmas*, according to the *karma* doctrine, are prescribed to perform to reap the fruits not to this birth of a performer but to his rebirth. As a result, the *Gītā's karma* theory, based on *karma* doctrine, justifies the social inequalities and injustices, calling them as the natural outcome of people's *karma* of their previous births. The *Gītā*, in some verses, advocates *karma mārga* as being excellent, but the text ultimately suggests *jñāna* or *bhakti mārga* as being the ultimate path for spiritual salvation.

The *Gītā* recommends the *bhakti mārga* or the path of devotion as being the easiest and the best one for an individual's spiritual salvation. The women and the toiling masses, the *Vaiśyas* and *Sūdras* are not granted salvation through *jñāna* and *karma mārgas* but the *Gītā*, for the first time, has granted their salvation through *bhakti mārga*. The *Gītā's bhakti mārga* is found to be the outcome of the compromise between the slave owners and the new forces of feudalism. The text's *bhakti* concept

arose with the concept of monotheism, the outcome of the territorial kingdoms and it fully developed in feudalism. The *Gītā's bhakti* theory becomes the principal ideological tool of feudalism for earning loyalty from large number of toiling masses and stopping their rebellion against the ruling class people. This theory, through the concept of *bhakti* to God, strengthens the *bhakti* to the ruling class people. The ruling class people, therefore, use the *Gītā's bhakti* theory as an effective ideological tool to make the toiling masses obedient and submissive to them.

The *Gītā's* theory of *Cāturvarṇāh* downgrades the large number of working class people, the *Sūdras* and outcastes. It makes the ancient *Varṇa* division, based on the division of labor, divine and hereditary. The text, though it does not speak on the creation of outcastes, attributes the creation of *Cāturvarṇāh* to God. It converts the ancient *Varṇa* division, based on an individual's this-worldly qualities and actions, into the caste system, the *Varṇa* division based on hereditary or an individual's inborn qualities and actions. The caste system is the ideological expression of the post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism*. The *Gītā* allocates the discriminatory duties to the different castes and outcastes and recommends strict restriction against interchanging the caste duties. This benefits the ruling castes, keeping the working caste people in a disadvantageous position. In course of time, the low treatment of *Sūdras* and outcastes gives birth to the concept of untouchability in Hindu society and the Hindu *Śāstras*, like the *Gītā* sanctifies it. The Hindu's concept of untouchability gives birth to varieties of social injustices in the modern world. The untouchability of the Hindu society is the scar of humanity and the *Gītā's* notion of caste strengthens this concept and prolongs its lifespan.

The study finds the *Gītā* as misogynist, representing the ideologies of the two different historical epochs of India. The text mentions woman only in two verses and the verse I.41 and IX.32 disclose the ideologies of slavery and feudalism respectively. The slavery reduces woman, the great mother of the ancient communistic household, into a chattel and the instrument of breeding children. The text portrays this notion of women in I.41. The condition of women deteriorates even more in feudalism. The feudalism converts women into untouchables equal to *Sūdras* and outcastes. The text portrays this ideology of Indian feudalism in IX.32. The verse gives an equal treatment to both *Sūdras* and women and interprets them as being born of sin. Such a degradation of women can only be the picture of feudalism. Although the women's oppressions are relatively reduced in the capitalist mode of production, the *Gītā's* such a notion to women becomes an impediment for the equality and freedom of women in Hindu society. The *Gītā*, being one of the important religious *Śāstras* of Hinduism, can misdirect people inculcating in them the discriminatory notion and the low position of women.

It is the researcher's opinion that the *Gītā's Vedāntic* idealism, expressed in its three theories, makes people superstitious as they recommend people to follow some social ethics and behavior favoring the ruling class people. The text's suggested sources of knowledge implant in people's mind the faith to the ruling class people. The *niskāma karma* theory based on *karma* doctrine can be used to pacify the anger of the suppressed class against social oppressions and injustices, and the *bhakti* theory makes the laboring masses submissive to their rulers and exploiters. The *Gītā's* theory of *Cāturvarṇāh* degrades the status of the working class people, *Sūdras* and outcastes to the low level and the text gives the low position to women, the half population of the world. The text's three theories or *mārgas*, the theory of *Cāturvarṇāh* and its

treatment to women expose the *Gītā* as being the *Brāhmaṇic* literature of slavery and feudalism with its affiliation to the ruling class.

This study reveals the following principal findings: (a) The *Gītā* contains two *Gītās* within it; the original and interpolated ones, which carry the ideologies of the period of Indian slavery and feudalism respectively. (b) The *Gītā* contains the bundle of inconsistencies as the text synthesizes the self-contradictory divergent ideas of the different contemporary schools of philosophy. (c) The *Gītā* has been found the *Brāhmaṇic* literature of the period of slavery and feudalism and hence, it outlines the superstitious, unscientific and discriminatory ethics and morality not digestible in the present context. The *Gītā*, as the study observes, takes the class partisanship to the ruling class people and the scripture can be used to perpetuate the suppressive mechanism in modern time too.

The study holds relevance in the context of Nepal to open up a debate on the usefulness of the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. The teachings of the *Gītā*, based on the ethics and morality of the period of slavery and feudalism, go against the scientific spirit. The study will make Nepali *Dalit* community, women and the large number of Nepali working class people aware about the text's discriminatory notions. It also makes people conscious of the class partisanship of the scripture to the ruling class people. The researcher realizes that there could be other potential topics for further research on the *Gītā*. Some of the research topics would be: i) Concept of God in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, ii) Philosophical Discourse in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, and iii) *Dharma* (Virtue) in the *Bhagavad Gītā*.

Appendix

Phonetic Symbols Used in Transliteration

Vowel Alphabets of Sanskrit Transliteration

Sanskrit Letters in Devanagari	Vowel Letters	Transliteration	Sounds Like
अ	a, A	<i>a, A</i>	o in son
आ	A, a	<i>ā, Ā</i>	a in master
इ	i, I	<i>i, I</i>	i in if
ई	ee, Ee (long)	<i>ī, Ī</i>	ee in feel
उ	u, U	<i>u, U</i>	u in full
ऊ	oo, Oo (long)	<i>ū, Ū</i>	oo in boot
ऋ	ri, Ri	<i>r, Ṛ</i>	ri in rishi
ॠ	ree, Ree	<i>ṛ, Ṛ</i>	
ऌ	lri, Lri	<i>l, Ḍ</i>	
ॡ	lree, Lree	<i>ḷ, Ḹ</i>	
ए	e, E	<i>e, E</i>	e in ten
ऐ	ai, Ai	<i>ai, Ai</i>	y in my
ओ	o, O	<i>o, O</i>	o in over
औ	au, Au	<i>au, Au</i>	ow in now
(<i>anusvāra</i>)	m, M	<i>m̄, M̄</i>	m in hum
: (<i>visarga</i>)	ha, Ha	<i>ḥ, Ḥ</i>	h in huh!
◌ [◌] <i>candrabindu</i>	nj, Nj	<i>~</i>	nj in <i>anjuli</i>

ऽ (single <i>avagraha</i>)	A	'	in <i>so'hamasmi</i>
ऽ (double <i>avagraha</i>)	Aa	"	in <i>tamasā''vritāḥ</i>

Consonant Alphabets of Sanskrit Transliteration

Sanskrit Letters in <i>Devanāgarī</i>	Consonant Letters	Transliteration	Sounds Like
क्	K	K	k in <i>king</i>
ख्	Kh	<i>Kh</i>	kh in <i>blockhead</i>
ग्	G	<i>G</i>	g in <i>guard</i>
घ्	Gh	<i>gh</i>	gh in <i>log-hut</i>
ङ्	Ng	<i>ṅ</i>	ng in <i>king</i>
च्	Ch	<i>C</i>	ch in <i>chin</i>
छ्	Chh	<i>Ch</i>	chh in <i>staunch- heart</i>
ज्	J	<i>J</i>	j in <i>jug</i>
झ्	Jh	<i>Jh</i>	Jh in <i>hedgehog</i>
ञ्	N	<i>Ñ</i>	n in <i>canyon</i>
ट्	T	<i>t</i>	t in <i>ten</i>
ठ्	Th	<i>th</i>	th in <i>light-heart</i>
ड्	D	<i>d</i>	d in <i>doom</i>
ढ्	Dh	<i>dh</i>	dh in <i>godhood</i>
ण्	N	<i>ṇ</i>	n in <i>phanā</i>
त्	T	<i>T</i>	French <i>t</i>

थ्	Th	<i>Th</i>	th in <i>thumb</i>
द्	D	<i>D</i>	th in <i>then</i>
ध्	Dha	<i>Dh</i>	dha in <i>breathe here</i>
न्	N	<i>N</i>	n in <i>pen</i>
प्	P	<i>P</i>	p in <i>pen</i>
फ्	Pha	<i>Ph</i>	pha in <i>loop-hole</i>
ब्	B	<i>B</i>	b in <i>ball</i>
भ्	Bha	<i>Bh</i>	bha in <i>abhor</i>
म्	M	<i>M</i>	m in <i>money</i>
य्	Y	<i>Y</i>	y in <i>yellow</i>
र्	R	<i>R</i>	r in <i>row</i>
ल्	L	<i>L</i>	l in <i>low</i>
व्	V	<i>V</i>	v in <i>avert</i>
श्	sh (palatal)	<i>Ś</i>	sh in <i>shoot</i>
ष्	sh (cerebral)	<i>ṣ</i>	sh in <i>show</i>
स्	S	<i>S</i>	s in <i>sin</i>
ह्	H	<i>H</i>	h in <i>hollow</i>
क्ष्	Ksh	<i>kṣ</i>	ksh in <i>kshetri</i>
त्र्	Tr	<i>Tr</i>	tr in <i>trailokya</i>
ज्ञ्	Jn	<i>Jñ</i>	jn in <i>jnani</i>

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