

Chapter-1

Introduction

This study is proposed as an inquiry into Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika metaphysics with special reference to the category of *samavāya*.

Belief in the reality of the external world independent of its knowledge by a knower is the realist stand of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika outlook. It lays down a basic and guiding principle that experience is the sole criterion of our acceptance of the reality of external objects: *samvid eva hi bhagavati vastupagame naḥ śaraṇam*¹. The function of philosophy is rather to analyse that experience and evolve a coherent system of that analysis. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika metaphysics undertakes just that analysis and bases its metaphysical structure thereon.

Our common experience presents a world consisting of separate individual objects which are called substances (*dravyas*). They appear as substrate of certain properties. Substances, being the substrate of properties, the two appear in the relation of the container and the contained, *ādhārādheya bhāva*², and therefore, the two cannot be identical; they must be different in their essence. For instance, in the case of the experience of a white cloth, the white colour is experienced as a property which resides in the substratum, cloth; and therefore, white colour and cloth are different in their essences. Essential differentiation between the substratum and its properties, *dharma-dharmi bheda* is the cornerstone of the structure of realism. *Dharmaśca dharmīno vastuto vidyate*³, the six categories accepted by Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika follow as corollaries from that basic principle.

Substratum (*dharmin*) is always in the form of a substance (*dravya*). But the properties (*dharmas*) residing in a substratum are found on further analysis, to be of various kinds. Some properties like colour appear to be of the nature of stationary attributes of their substrata. They are called qualities (*guṇas*). Others are of evanescent nature, for example, the motion of a body. They are called movements (*karma*). We, thus, arrive at the first three categories: (1) *dravya*, (2) *guṇa* and (3) *karma*. Of the numerous objects of our experience, some are so similar that they are designated by a common noun, and there must, therefore, be something common to all individuals of a class. That common thing was regarded as the universal (*sāmānya* or *jāti*), which is the fourth category of the school. In the case of atoms of the same class, differentiation of one atom from another was assumed to be due to a special property called *viśeṣa* residing in the atoms which was later on extended to other eternal substances also, *ekatva* and *ekapṛthakatva*, for example. *Viśeṣa* is the fifth category of the school. Of the five categories, the last four, viz., quality (*guṇa*), etc., being of the nature of properties (*dharmas*), are only found to be residing in the substratum (*dharmin*) which is the first category, i.e., substance. The universal (*sāmānya*) is held to be residing in *dravya*, *guṇa* and *karma*. Although the properties, *guṇa*, etc., are different in essence from *dravya*, they cannot exist as separate form, or independent of a *dravya*. Therefore, the relation between the former and the latter cannot be an ordinary one, called 'connection' (*samyoga*), which obtains between the two substances that can be connected and separated at will. A sixth category, therefore, in the form of a special relation called *samavāya* was assumed. This special sixth category is our object of our study and inquiry. To the sixth categories, originally accepted by the school, a seventh one, namely, *abhāva* (non-existence) was added at a later date.

The theory of causation is held in Indian philosophy to be the pivot theory of the metaphysical structure of a system. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory of causation also rests on the same principle, the differentiation between the properties and their substratum (*dharmadharmiveda*). An effect like cloth which is experienced as produced in its cause, an effect is produced *not out of* its cause, but *in* its cause, viz., the threads is like a property of the threads which are its substrata. It would, thus, appear that a property is not only in the form of qualities and actions, etc., but it may also be in the form of a substance. A substratum and its property being different in *essence*, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory declares that the *essence* of cloth was different from that of threads. Thus, the principle of differentiation between properties and their substrata (*dharmadharmiveda*) is the corner-stone of the structure of the school's metaphysics.

Ordinarily, studies of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika metaphysics is only few and far between often it is the epistemology of that attracts most of the attention. We have ventured to study one of the school's metaphysical categories, namely, *samavāya* for a specific reason. The relation renders a unique service to the school. *Samavāya* is held as a separate external objective category, by *samavāya* most wonders are done, by this relation all the attributes, qualities, actions, the universal and the particular are made to reside in their substrata. In the theory of causation, the material cause is called *samavāyi kāraṇa*, the cause is regarded as a form of part (*avayava*), and the effect as a form of 'whole' (*avayavin*) of the parts, the two are different in their essence, and yet exist simultaneously side by side. The threads of a piece of cloth and the cloth itself, the *avayavas* and the *avayavin* are two different substances, having separate essence and separate qualities, and yet by virtue of *samavāya*, both of them have simultaneous existence and occupy the same space. The idea of two material

substances occupying the same space militates against the very conception of a material substance. It is the very nature of matter to be resistant to another matter occupying the same space. The Buddhists point out that *sapratighatva*, which means impenetrability or resistance to another matter occupying the same space. Even Descartes said that in elaborating on his idea of *Rex Extensa*. *Sapratighatva*, for the Buddhists, is the nature of *rūpa* or matter. The miracle of numerous substances occupying the same space becomes possible by *samavāya*, which is a unique Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika concept. Both Uddyotakara and Vācaspati Miśra (in the *Vārtika* and the *Tikā* thereon) have explicitly made the point. They call it by the name of *dravya samāhāra*.

In course of our inquiry we shall notice that Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika had never been a closed system, nor had it been a monolith of settled opinions. There is no finality in philosophical thinking, and any one of the philosophical approaches might be most appealing in a particular setting. Vācaspati Miśra is a great example of the truth. He becomes a faithful adherent of any one system at the time he expounds it. Śrīdhara is second to none in upholding the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika realism, and yet he did not resist the influence of idealist systems like Sāṃkhya, Vedānta and even Buddhism. In the *Nyāyakandalī*, he salutes the *nitya-vijñāna-vigraha*, and *nirmalam advitīyam*. They are Vedānta ideas. Speaking of the nature of self-realization he quotes a verse from *Sāṃkhya-kārikā* to the effect that true knowledge of self consists in realizing that the soul is free from all adjuncts of knowing, feeling and acting.⁴ In the same context he declares that one who thinks that the soul is an actor or enjoyer is ignorant. This too is a Sāṃkhya idea: *yaḥ kartā bhoktāstity ātmānam abhimanyate....so avidyān*.⁵ In the context of the means of freeing oneself from the feelings of attachment and hatred Śrīdhara quotes a verse of Dharmakīrti, which says, if the

theory of self or soul is accepted, there arises the idea of *other*, and differentiation between the self and others causes attachment and hatred. This is a denial of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory of the soul. But the point is that as for the psychological insight Śrīdhara does not shy away even from his philosophical adversary. Again Udayana, the great champion of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, while refuting Yogācāra idealism declares that if somehow Yogācāra succeeds in proving that difference in cognition is not caused by the difference in the cognized objects, it will only lead to the establishment of Vedānta theory.

*na grāhya-bhedam avadhūya dhiosti vṛttis
tad-bhāvane balini vedanaye joyaśriḥ.*⁶

Did the author of *Ātmatattva viveka* know that Vedānta theory is as much damaging to the doctrine of realism as that of Yogācāra? Śaṅkara's argument against *samavāya* is a case in point. There is a reason why the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika writers felt shy of their realism in the context of the theory of emancipation. According to the idealist systems of Vedānta as well as the Buddhists, it is held that our mundane state is due to ignorance, a kind of primordial error; and emancipation comes about when that error is set aside by true knowledge. The idea is so deeply rooted in the Indian mind that even a realist system, where it should have no place, succumbed to it. Such a theory hardly fits in with the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika metaphysics, according to which the world, exactly in the form it is experienced, is real, and all attributes like knowledge, desire, hatred, effort, etc., pertain to the soul as a matter of reality. But that theory of emancipation seems to have been adopted in the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school from the earliest times, for it is found in the *Nyāya Sūtra* and its commentary by Vātsāyana.

There is another feature worth noticing. Gaṅgeśa tuned the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school from metaphysics to logic and epistemology exclusively. He is the hero of the post-Buddhist period of the Nyāya-

Vaiśeṣika school. The new turn given to the school by Gaṅgeśa put an end to the development of the metaphysical theories of that school. So far as metaphysics is concerned, there is hardly any significant contribution of the post-Buddhist period to the thought of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika. With the exit of the Buddhist opponents, there was left no interest in disputation on Realism versus Idealism. The principal adversary in all disputations now is no more the Buddhist, but the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā school, especially the Prabhākara-school. Earlier, during the period of conflict with the Buddhists, the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā was regarded as an allied school. Vācaspati Miśra uses the word '*svatantra*'⁷ for Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā.

The Nyāya Theory of Knowledge by S.C.Chatterjee is a lucid exposition of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika epistemology, and in many ways, it is an admirable work. The *Studies in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika Metaphysics* by Sadananda Bhaduri appears to have been conceived as complementary to Chatterjee's book. It deals chiefly with the material aspect of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, but does not deal at all with metaphysics proper. So far as the pure metaphysics of the school is concerned, it has been just touched upon only in the last two chapters on *Whole and Part* and *Causality*. Theories relating to these topics were developed in conflict with the counter-theories of the Dignāga-school. The author does make some stray references to Buddhist theories, but the structure of the Dignāga system as a whole is left ungrasped. There is another difficulty. The doctrines of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika underwent considerable changes at different stages of the development of the system. Usually expositors of modern times do not as a rule mention the period with which they are concerned. Ordinarily, they may be supposed to present the theories of the school in the latest form of its development. This takes away much of the drama that was enacted throughout the history of the development of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika metaphysics.

The present study is not historical, rather conceptual. Our chief concern is to understand the role of *samavāya* as a category in the metaphysics of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school of realism. Towards the endeavour lessons of history is a valuable aid. We have described Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika as a school upholding realism. A caution with regard to the usage of the term 'realism' should be in order. There are no exact equivalents in Sanskrit terminology for 'realism' and 'idealism' to carry the same connotation. D.N. Shastri has suggested that *Bāhyārthavāda*, a theory upholding the reality of external world would be the exact Sanskrit equivalent for the term 'realism'. The term '*sarvāstivāda*' is used for realistic Buddhist schools of Vaibhāṣika and Sautāntika. But the term '*sarvāstivāda*' cannot be used to describe orthodox realistic systems like the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika or the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā. Neither are the theories of these schools designated as *bāhyārthavāda*, although, in their later development, they are principally concerned with defense of realism against the Buddhists. Even on the Buddhist side, the term '*sarvāstivāda*' does not connote realism in its usual sense. *Sarvāstivāda* literally means a theory of the existence of all objects, external as well as internal. Śaṅkara has used this term in that sense, i.e., in the sense of realism. But in reality the word '*sarvāstivāda*' was used in Buddhist philosophy in quite a different sense. Śaṅkara has used the term '*sarvāstivāda*' for both the schools as explained in *Bhāmatī*.⁸

Why should there be no term in Sanskrit having the same connotation as the term 'realism'? It may be suggested that all the orthodox philosophical systems, with the exception of the Vedānta, are realistic. Even the Vedānta is realistic from the phenomenal standpoint of reality, *vyāvahārika sattā*. If they are all realists, the need for a special term to differentiate them does not arise. In western thought also, in the Greek and the medieval period, all the systems were realistic and there was no problem of realism versus

idealism. It was since the time of Descartes that this problem came to be fore. Similarly, in ancient Indian thought the existence of the external world was taken for granted by all the systems. The need for proving the reality of the external world did not arise even after the appearance of *vijñānavāda*. It became an acute point of controversy only when the realism of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school was challenged by Dignāga. In ancient time realistic systems were pluralistic, while idealistic ones inclined to monism. Advaitavāda is used to differentiate the idealistic Vedānta from the realistic systems which uphold pluralism or *dvaitavāda*. And lastly, *vijñānavāda* may not be an adequate term for idealism in all its varieties. It may be adequate for subjective idealism of the Yogācāra School. *Vijñānavāda* is not to be used in a wider sense like idealism, and does not cover, for example, the objective idealism of Plato, or the transcendental idealism of Kant.

Realism is also used for the theory that the universals residing in particulars have their independent reality. Presently the term is used for the theory that external objects have their reality independent of our knowledge of them. 'Realism' in the sense of a theory upholding independent reality of the universals is contrasted with the theory of 'nominalism' or 'conceptualism', which holds that the universals have no independent reality, but exist only in the mind as general concepts. For instance, the universal cow-ness has no independent external reality, but it is only a mental concept produced by the repeated cognitions of a cow and brought forth before our mind by the force of the word *cow*. Just as there is the conflict between realism versus idealism, so in medieval Europe, there was the conflict of realism versus nominalism.

In the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, the two meanings of realism coincide. The reality of external objects is one meaning of *realism*. The other meaning is that a universal as an external reality, *sāmānya* is a

padārtha, and that it is different from the reality of its particulars. Whether a universal has an independent reality or not is one of the principal bone of contention between the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and the Buddhists. The latter are conceptualists or nominalists, and hold the view that universals have no external existence and consist only in the exclusion of other objects from the concept of one object, e.g., cow-*ness* means the exclusion of non-cows, i.e., horses, etc. from the cow: *atadvyāvṛtti* or *apoha*. Exclusion which is the essence of the universal is a mere thought-construction, *vikalpa-yonayaḥ śabdāḥ vikalpāḥ śabda-yonayaḥ*. The universal being only a thought-form, there can be no question of its being an independent reality.

With the sense of *realism* characterizing the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, we may now proceed to consider the viability, validity and reality of *samavāya* in all its ramifications.

To reiterate the point about this study, it is a conceptual study, a study of the concept of *samavāya* as a category of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika metaphysics, the role it plays in the realistic standpoint. The intention of this study is not exegetical, i.e., no exegesis of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika texts in particular.

Sworn to realism as the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika is the question arises, is *samavāya* as real as other *padārthas* of the categorical network? If we take the word *artha* to mean literally a real object, then we may also ask: is *samavāya* an *artha* or a *padārtha*? According to Kaṇāda, the last three categories, namely, *sāmānya*, *samavāya* and *viśeṣa* are *padārthas*, but not *arthas*. Does it show that Kaṇāda's *padārtha* is just the meaning of a word, and not an external objective real? With respect to *sāmānya* and *viśeṣa*, he has expressly declared that they depend merely on our intellect: *buddhyapekṣam*.⁹ They reside in their substrate by *samavāya* itself

does not reside by some other relation. Shall we then say that *samavāya* possesses a larger degree of reality than *sāmānya* and *viśeṣa*? In fact, the subsistence (*vr̥tti*) of *samavāya* in the objects related, not being by any other relation, is in the form of the related objects themselves. Thus we find that from the standpoint of reality, out of the categories other than substances (*dravya*), qualities (*guṇa*) and actions (*karma*) form one group, and *sāmānya* and *viśeṣa*, the second group, and *samavāya* forms a third group. *Abhāva*, being of negative character, constitutes the fourth group. It may, however, be noted that this kind of gradation, although it follows from the account of the categories as given in the authoritative manuals, is not expressly stated in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika works.

Different grades of reality of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika categories result from the basic principle that whatever enters into the texture of our experience must have its counterpart in the external world. Critical thinkers of the school, however, did not fail to notice the limitations of this basic principle. In the first instance, according to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, all our experiences are not necessarily valid as it is held to be by the Prabhākara School of the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā. The evidence of experience may sometimes be erroneous. Again, if we were to have an external counterpart for every factor of our experience, our world of reality would be flooded with unlimited contents. For instance, in that case, we shall have to assume a new relation for the subsistence of the inherent relation: *samavāya* also. External reality, for the latter Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, is to be assumed only where the assumption leads to brevity (*lāghava*). *Samavāya* as a separate category is accepted on the same principle. Instead of numerous relations in the form of numberless objects, the assumption of one ubiquitous entity, *samavāya*, leads to brevity: *ananta svarūpānām sambandhatva-kalpane gauravāl lāghavād eka samavāya-siddhi*.¹⁰ One might be reminded of Occam's razor in

Western philosophy. Similarly the universal, *dravyatva* is accepted by the later Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, not because of its being experienced as such, but because it is the determining or distinguishing characteristic (*avacchedaka*) of the inherent causation: *samavāyī-kāraṇatāvacchedakataya*.¹¹ In simple language, it means that only a substance can be an inherent cause: *samavāyī-kāraṇa*. Prior to the Navya-Nyāya school, the existence of an external reality corresponding to all of our ideas was always assumed. *Samavāya*, though primarily a metaphysical principle, plays an epistemological explanatory role as well in the case its employment in explaining the causal phenomena.

Although, according to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, all the objects coming under the categories and their subdivisions possess objective reality, it appears that there are different levels or gradations of reality. This point is quite harmless, and in no way does it jeopardize the avowed realistic inclinations of the school. *Sāmānya* and *viśeṣa* were in the beginning regarded only as intellectual abstractions (by Kaṇāda). Objective reality was ascribed to them by Praśastapāda. They both reside in their substrata by *samavāya*. *Samavāya* is also regarded as an objective reality. It is related to the objects (which are related by it) not by any other relation, but in the form of the related objects themselves. Therefore, it appears that its level of reality is different from that of *sāmānya* and *viśeṣa*. On any account, *samavāya* is a unique Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika category, both in its ontological and epistemic import and functions.

Notes and references

1. *Nyāyavārttika-tātparyaṭīkā* , - Vācaspati Miśra.
2. *Praśastapāda Bhāṣya*.
3. *Nyāyavārttika-tātparyaṭīkā* , - Vācaspati Miśra.
4. *Sāṃkhya-kārikā* ,verse 64, - Śrīdhara.
5. Ibid.
6. *Ātmatattvaviveka*- Udayana.
7. *Nyāyavārttika-tātparyaṭīkā* , -Vācaspati Miśra.
8. *Śārīraka-bhāṣya*, (I.2.18), - Śaṅkara.
9. *Vaiśeṣika Sūtra*, (I,ii,3).
10. *Nyāya Siddhānta Muktāvalī*, on Verse II.
11. *Nyāya Siddhānta Muktāvalī*, on Verse III.