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THE NYAYA-VAISESIKA CONCEPT OF UNIVERSAL



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Abstract: The Universal is an independent category of reality in the Nyaya-Vaisesika Metaphysics. The general term used in Vaisesika philosophy for such an entity is Samanya. But Goutama, the writer of Nyayasutra used the term jati in the place of Universal. In the present text, the notion of Universal will be explained on the basis of authentic books of the Nyaya and the Vaisesika philosophy.

Keywords: independent category, Samanya, Nyayasutra, authentic books.

INTRODUCTION:

According to Nyaya Vaisesika Universals are real, independent, ubiquitous and eternal entities which inhere in individual substances, qualities and notions. The term Universal or samanya used in the Vaisesika philosophy in the sense of 'Common features. Things must be admitted to possess common features which enable us to classify them and give them a common designation. These Common features are what the Nyaya Vaisesika Calls samanya. The universal cow must be different from the Particular cow, because, it is designated by a distinct name 'Cowness'.

The Sanskrit word that Goutama used is jati, etymologically associated with the notion of natural kinds. Goutama said that jati "Seems to be what we should call a natural class."¹ Vatsyayana, the commentator of Nyayasutra, used the term Samanya and jati in two different senses. According to him a samanya is a "pure" universal, like Being, which assimilates without differentiating, while a jati is an Ordinary Property like horseness or tableness one which both assimilates and differentiates.

Prasastapada, the commentator of Vaisesika sutra, defines universal as the community which is the cause of identical Conception² of Particular things, and which inheres identically and wholly in each of its subjects. Precisely, the universal, according to Prasastapada, is the basis on which a community of nature is apprehended in numerically different things. But this definition of the Universal is not Precise. Vacaspati Misra, therefore, rightly regards this definition as unsatisfactory. According to him, 'this is to be accepted as a definition of the universal in so far as it serves to distinguish it from the individual and the configuration.³

The Neo-Naiyaikas define universal as 'that which is eternal and inherent in many individuals'.⁴ From this definition we come to know that universal's has three essential features : (1) eternity, (2) Commonness, and (3) inherence. The term 'eternity' inserted in the definition of universal to exclude conjunction. If in the definition of universal, the term 'eternity' does not included, then

conjunction itself would come under the definition of universal; because like universal conjunction is also inhere in many. But conjunction is non-eternal, whereas universal is eternal. Thus, the term eternity inserted in the definition of universal to show that the universal is not the subject of production and destruction, and for this universal is different from conjunction.

The Second qualification 'commonness' has been inserted to keep out over-coverage to the dimension (parimana) of akasa. The dimension of akasa is eternal and inhere in akasa. But as the akasa is one, the dimension of akasa not common. And the third qualification 'inherence' is necessary to Prevent absolute non-existence (atyantabhava) from being included in the definition of universal. The absolute non-existence is eternal and common, but not inherent in anything. Thus, the term 'inherence' inserted to avoid the inclusion of absolute non-existence under the definition of universal. There is no doubt that this is a satisfactory definition of universal, It brings out the essential characteristics of the universal, from the Nyaya-Vaisesika Point of View, which serve to distinguish universal from the other Categories.

According to Nyaya-vaisesika philosophy the universal (samanya) stands, not for the class, but for the Sub-classes. It is the universal by the possession of which different individuals are referred to as belonging to one class. Universal is eternal, one and belonging to many⁵ It is eternal, though the individuals in which it belongs are subject to Creation and destruction. It is one. though the individuals in which it inheres are many. It is Common to many individuals. There is the class-essence of the universal of man, called man-ness' or 'humanity', which inheres in all individual men. Similarly 'Potness' inheres in all individual Pot. The universals inheres in individual Substances, qualities and actions.⁶

From the above discussion we know that the universals resides in many Particular things. Here a question may arise that is there any difference between the universal

and the Particular? According to Nyaya Vaisesika the Universal is distinct from Particular. The universal and Particular, though intimately related, are regarded as existentially, or ontologically, different. The universal is different from Particular, because, its Cognition is distinct from the cognition of Particular. According to the Naiyaikas, the distinct cognition of the universal is for its distinct character which must also be the basis of the distinct name given to it. But the difference of cognitions does not imply the difference of their objects. Universal is also opposed to the Particular in essential characteristics. It is by definition eternal and common, whereas the Particular is non-eternal and non-common. Thus, there is no common bond uniting the universal and the Particular.⁷

Udayana, the writer of Kiranavali, defines universal in different aspects. Those are:- 1. Universal is natural property of the common individuals, not accidental.⁸ Here it is clear that the individuals where

universal resides are many, that is why the universal is called common features. Universal is a natural property, not accidental property. As the universal inheres in many individuals it is called natural property. The universal 'potness' inheres in different individual 'Pot'. Thus 'Potness' is a natural Property of 'Pot'. 2. According to udayana universal is one, eternal and resides in many⁹. Universal is eternal, because it is not the Subject of production and destruction. Universal is one, because the cognition of universal does not depend on the cognition of its counter-entity (Pratityogi). The universal inheres in many individual. So according to Udayana universal is eternal, one and inheres in many.

The Particularity of the Nyaya-Vaisesika Concept of universal is that it does not accept all general features as universals (jati). The universal or genus is the natural and eternal class-essence, such as 'manness', 'horseness', 'Tableness' etc., Which is the eternal feature of Particular things. On the other hand, there are some general features, like 'fatness' 'thinness' 'shortness', 'cookness' etc., which are accidental properties, are recognised not as universals (jati), but as upadhis. The classification of universal as jati and upadhi was made by Udayana. He enumerates six impediments called jati-badhakas to explain the distinction between jati and upadhi.¹⁰ These impediments are:-

1. Vyakterabheda: A property belonging to one individual, e.g. 'time-ness' (Kalatva), is not a Proper universal, but an imposed property.
2. Tulyatva: Two general properties having the same meaning do not stand for different universal. E.g., buddhitva and jnanatva.
3. Sankara: Two properties which coexist in one instance and one of the two does not fall completely within the other. E.g., elementhood and materiality are imposed property.
4. Anavastha: Any property, whose incorporation would result in the production of an infinite regress. E.g., universality is not a proper universal (jati), but an imposed property (upadhi).
5. Ruphani: A property which is supposed to have as loci entities which by hypothesis are unique is an imposed property, not a proper universal. Such as, individuatoriness (Visesatva).

6. Asambandha: If a property is such that it cannot, consistently with Nyaya-Vaisesika theory, to be construed as inhering in its loci then it is an imposed property (upadhi), not a proper universal (jati). Such as inherenceness is an imposed property.

It is clear from the above explanation that the theory of 'jati badhakas' is formulated in conformity with the ontological scheme of the Nyaya-Vaisesika philosophy. Any property in the case of which one or more of these impediments are present, is to be regarded as an upadhi. According to Nyaya-Vaisesika universals are two kinds: higher (Para) and lower (apara).¹² Being (Satta) is the highest universal, for it is found to characterize the largest number of entities. It includes everything and itself is not included in anything. All other universal is lower, because it covers a limited number of entities. Lower universals are also called 'Samanya-Visesa', because they synthesise the members of their own class and also serve to differentiate them from the members of other classes. The universal 'Being' (satta) is the cause of synthesis. So it is called Par excellence.

It is significant to note that Kanada said, 'the distinction of universal and Particular is relative to thought'¹³ this does not mean that the universal and the particular are thought constructions. It only means that the conception of the universal as a identical and differentiative character is relative to thought. But this does not mean that universal and particular are mere subjective concepts in our mind. Both are objective realities. The universal has as much objective reality as the particular.

It must finally be remarked that the universal, in the Nyaya-Vaisesika view, is an existent (bhava) entity and the particular substances, qualities and motions manifest it. According to Vaisesikas knowability and nameability are common feature (sadharmya) of all entities. The universal is the common feature of substances, qualities and motions, because it belongs only to the said entities. We have know that the universal are the common features of things making their identical cognition Possible. We further know that the Vaisesika accept universal as a separate entity for its identical cognitions. According to Nyaya-Vaisesika, the universal must be regarded as different from the particular in which it inheres. Though universal is distinct from the particular, their intimate relation is also a felt fact, the one is never apprehended without the other. Universals are located in the particular. But the particular is not the seat of the universal, it is only the means of revealing it, so that we may view it as being everywhere or only where the corresponding particulars are.

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