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Ontological problems-Their Relation to The Doctrine of Category

(With special Ref. to NV)

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Abstract- India has a great tradition of philosophy and ancient seers have contributed a lot in the field of the many branches of the philosophy including metaphysics (Ontology), epistemology, ethics etc. Particularly Ontology is center of attraction when it defines god and universe. It is known as the deepest root of all Philosophy. It is always referred by discussion of Category. This category is intended to signify a metaphysical reality which is the underlying essence of existence. This paper deals with the concept of ontology and its problems related to categories as available in traditional Indian Philosophy having special focus on Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika. The scope of the elaboration is limited up to popular NV treatises.

Keywords: Category, Substance, Problems, Reality, Epistemology, Substantialists.

I. INTRODUCTION

Ontology is a particular theory about the nature and Categories of being [1]. It is known as the deepest root of Philosophy. The word ontology is derived from the Greek *onto* (being) and *logia* (written or spoken discourse). In Indian Philosophy, Ontology is referred by Tattvamīmāṃsā, discussion of Categories. Substance and its entire gamut fall under the philosophical problems known as Ontology. It is a branch of metaphysics relating to the nature and relations of being or the kinds of existence. Apart from these philosophical trends/beliefs, ontology of modern science comprises material objects, sets of material objects, sub-sets of material objects and so on. Antony Flew says about ontology that *the branch* of Metaphysical enquiry concerned with the study of existence itself (concerned apart from the nature of any existent object). It differentiates between real existence and appearance and investigates the different ways in which entities belonging to various logical

Categories (Physical, objects, numbers, universals, abstractions etc.) may be said to exist [2]. In general, ontology is the study or concern about what kinds of things exist, what entities there are in the universe, what there is etc.

II. PROBLEMS OF ONTOLOGY

Many classical philosophical problems are problems in ontology: the question whether or not there is a god, or the problem of the existence of universals, etc. These are all problems in ontology in the sense that they deal with whether or not a certain thing, or more broadly entity, exists. But ontology is usually, also, taken to encompass problems about the most general features and relations of the entities which do exist.

Problems of ontology can best be comprehended against a compendious survey of the ontological positions taken by some of the Indian thought like Advaita, Sāṃkhya, and Bauddha etc. We find at the one extreme is the Advaita of Śāṅkara which

keeps up the identity as reality and at the other extreme is the Buddhist view which contemplates differences as constituting the essence of reality and in between these two, the view of Sāmkhya is exiting which believes in change.

The Advaita view is that Brahman; the Supreme eternal reality, is the permanent reality and material world has gone this empirical existence. The phenomenal world does not represent a real transformation (Pariṇāma) of its material but it is only an experience. Here, Ultimate Reality or non-dual Brahman appears as the world.

Further, Śankara believes that the conception of the universe based on his thought of super-imposition (*Adhyāsa*, *SmṛtirūpahparatrapūrvadṛṣṭāvabhasahAdhyāsa* *Adhyāsbhāṣya*, Brahmasūtra. p. 4) or semblance of the Sat into something which does not exist [3]. In his favour, he strongly suggests the shell-silver (*Śukti-rajata*) analogy where the shell is real and silver is false [4]. It is multiplicity of names and forms (*Nāma-rūpa*) caused by illusory transformation (*Vivarta*). The only real Brahman appears as the world. It is a fact that the sensible world is but a manifestation of the *Māyā* (ignorance) and is not real in the sense in which Brahman is real and it is after all illusory, it is false or non-existing. It is self-evident that falsity is nothing but a perception of partial truth. Śankara, thus, sustains that Brahman is the sole reality and his *Māyā* is co-associate of the truth [5]. His ontological view is one of pure, homogenous being.

The Buddhist Reality incompletely opposed by the Advaita when Śankara arouses such view as Vaināśika [6]. Buddhists is generally known as Śūnyavādin. Śūnyavādas or nihilism turns all existence, internal as well as external, to be above any expression. Their ideas like permanence (*Nityatva*), identity (*Tādātmya*); generality (*Sāmānya*) are products of imagination. The Upaniṣadic expressions of Soul (*Ātman*), eternity (*Nityatva*) and bliss (*Ānanda*) found in Buddhists as Soulless (*Nairātmya*), impermanence (*Anitya*) and suffering (*Duḥkha*). The characteristic feature of the Buddhist ontology is clearly stated in form of *Kṣaṇabhangavāda*, where the sole and ultimate real is the 'point instant' or 'the moment' (*Kṣaṇa*). Each moment is different from or 'other' than the rest in series (*Santāna*).

Coming to the Cārvāka, he can be called as naturalist, because he believed in the ultimate reality of only physical nature. Everything else is a form which the natural elements assume. The process by which the elements assume the forms are also natural not guided or controlled by any supernatural agency. Cārvāka is firm to hold that the only four categories of reality are to be known i.e. Earth, Water, Fire and Air. All the other categories are not accepted as not being objects of perception.

The Sāmkhya system not only rejected the Brahman of Advaita, the all soul, but emphatically denied the existence of God [7]. The Sāmkhya view of reality also discarded any kind of monism. His view is to be found in the dualism posited between matter and consciousness referred to as Prakṛti and Puruṣa representing the static but conscious. Prakṛti consists three qualitatively different constituents viz. Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas-Sattvarajastamasāmsāmyāvasthāprakṛtiḥ [8]. These are

called Guṇas and these three Guṇas alone represent the objective world [9]. Change is, thus, real in this system.

The Ontological positions of Jainas are necessarily influenced by their respective stands on the problem of change and continuity. The Jaina classification of categories may be presented by the classification of substance where everything is a substance. Here, Categories have been divided in different ways. These are broadly classified into two groups – *Astikāya* (extended) and *Anastikāya* (not extended). *Astikāya* literally means that "mass of all that is". The Jainas classify that there are two classes of *Astikāya* namely *Jīva* or the conscious and *Ajīva* or the non-conscious. *Jīva* is self and *Ajīva* is non-self. In brief, these two are the main categories *Jīva* (soul), *Pudgala* (matter), *Ākāśa* (space), *Dharma* (conditions of movement), and *Adharma* (conditions of rest) are the five *Astikāya* that is mentioned in all Jaina scriptures. There is only one *Anastikāya* namely *Kāla* or Time, which is devoid of extension.

Thus when we, taking all the divisions and sub-divisions into account, find that categories are of six kinds i.e. *Jīva*, *Pudgala*, *Ākāśa*, *Kāla*, *Dharma*, and *Adharma* [10]. But Śankara has mentioned, in his *Sārīrakabhāṣya*, categories into seven types- *Jīva*, *Ajīva*, *Bandha*, *Samvara*, *Nirjarā* and *Mokṣa* [11]. Some add two more to the list namely *Pāpa* and *Punya* and speak of nine type categories [12]. Since all these categories are real and independent, they are also referred to as Substances (*Dravyas*). Ācārya Umāswāti in his *Tattvārthasūtra* has defined categories as *Dravyas-Guṇaparyāyavadravyam* [13], where *Guṇais* the essential characteristics and *Paryāyais* changing modes. It is to be reminded that *Dravya* of Jaina is different from the *Dravyas* of Vaiśeṣikas.

III. POSITION OF NYĀYA-VAIŚEṢIKA

The Nyaya-Vaiśeṣikas are substantialists, while they also accept change. In fact the original purpose of the Vaiśeṣika (and also of the Nyāya which accepts the doctrine of Vaiśeṣika) was to offer a scientific explanation regarding the origin and the nature of the world as a composite of external, unalterable, causeless atom. According to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, the world of external objects is made up of the smallest bits called atoms; the ultimate reals. The categorical theory of Vaiśeṣika in philosophical world is very much significant. It keeps belief in the phenomenal existence of the empirical world. The category of substance became focal point of this doctrine. The Categories of Vaiśeṣika system usually accepted as a classification of real and fundamental entities.

Here, the word categories are the general translation of *PADĀRTHA*. It means 'the thing/meaning of a word' or that which a word refers [14]. First of all Aristotle had defined or used *Padārtha* as categories in western philosophy where he said that only predicates are categories or a general class to which a logical predicate or that which it predicates belongs [15].

The etymological meaning of *padārthais* *Padasya Arthah* (The meaning of word) or a thing having a name. Generally *pada* is synonyms of word. And the *Artha* is that which is taken by the senses [16]. In this sense any external object, which is comprehended by the senses *Padārthah*, therefore, means any

object that is nameable. In western philosophy, word Category is used for *padārtha*. Philosophical categories are classes, genera or types supposed to mark necessary divisions that we must recognize it, we are to make literal sense in disclosure about the world. To be precise, 'A category is a mode of being, a type or kind of being a manner of existing, a way of having ontological status, an ultimate demarcation of reality' [17].

Thinkers of every school of philosophy thought it necessary to begin by arranging the universe into a few elementary classes. Gotama enumerates sixteen *padārthas* are necessary for the function of logic [18]; the Vedantins have two namely Cit and Acit [19], the Rāmānujashaveone more in the form of *śīvar* [20], the Sāmkhyas describe twenty-four *padārthas* [21] while Mīmāsakas draw a sketch of eight and so on [22]. Whatsoever (exists) exists separately (*SarvamPrathate*) from 'other' existing things? To exist means to exist separately ----- . The notion of 'apartness' belongs to the essential feature of the notion of existence (*Bhāvalakṣaṇaprthakatvāt*).

Vaiśeṣika's hypothesis of the categories of Indian Philosophy is quite unique and meaningful where they give an explicit definition of existent. In the words of Whitehead- the Vaiśeṣika attempts to exhibit in our system the characters and inter-relations of all that is observed [23].

Kaṇāda and Praśastapāda give a six-fold classification of categories under which everything can be classified [24]. The categories are: Substance (*Dravya*), Quality (*Guṇa*), Action (*Karman*), Universal (*Sāmānya*), Individuality (*Viśeṣa*) and Inherence (*Samavāya*). A seventh one viz, non-existence (*abhāva*) was also added by the later philosophers like Śivāditya, Śrīdhara, Udayana, Vyomaśiva and others. All subsequent writers mention seven categories and include the non-existence also. Non-existence was affirmed in the Kaṇāda-sūtra but not as a separate category. However, he has used this word *Abhāva* in his treatise numerously [25]. Sridhar holds that Kanada has not mentioned it separately simply because it is not a separate category. It seems that Udayana is the first to enumerate *Abhāvaseperately* and he suggests that though non-existence possesses a form of its own. It is not mentioned as such not because it is a non-entity but because its ascertainment depends on its opposite viz 'Bhāva'.

The Vaiśeṣika system is generally known for his prominence on individuality or *Viśeṣa*. The category name *Viśeṣa* stands for one of the two modes of being that marks the range of existence covered by the *Dravya*, *Guṇa*, and *Karman*. [26] According to Garbe – "Viśeṣa the fifth category...holds an important place in the Vaiśeṣika system in as much as, by virtue of it the difference of the atoms renders possible the formation of the entire system, Vaiśeṣika, is derived from the word for difference (*Viśeṣa*)" [27].

The Nyaya views differentiate categories in different manner. The Naiyāyikas usually accept metaphysical position of Vaiśeṣika. As a matter of fact that the eminent philosophers appointed the Vaiśeṣika ontological scheme and principle of classifying and labeling the real [28]. Gautama mentions as many as sixteen categories in his Nyaya-sutra viz, method of valid

cognition (*Pramāna*), object of valid cognition (*Prameya*), doubt (*Samśaya*), purpose (*Prayojana*), probative examples (*dṛṣṭānta*), established conclusion (*Siddhānta*), members of syllogism (*Avayava*), hypothetical reasoning (*Tarka*), conclusive knowledge (*Nirnaya*), arguing for arriving at truth (*Vāda*), arguing for victory (*Jalpa*), merely destructive argument (*Vitandā*), fallacious reasons (*Hetvābhāsa*), quibbling (*Chhala*), pointless objections (*Jāti*) and vulnerable points in an argument (*Nigrahasthāna*) [29]. One gets liberated from this world of birth and death after the pure knowledge of sixteen categories- *Pramāṇādiṣoḍaśapadārthānāmtattvajñānānmoṣaprāptirbhavati* [30].

When Naiyāyikas talk about categories they preferred the first i.e. the method of valid cognition. The second one tells about knowable, which is the intention of the first one. The remaining fourteen categories are the subsidiaries of the first. In other term, except for the second category, all deal with logic and epistemology with special reference to debate.

Vaiśeṣikas categories are ultimate real and absolute objective facts while the sixteen categories are not the ultimate ontological categories. Nyaya begins mainly as a logical system emphasizing the means of right knowledge. On the other hand, the view of Vaiśeṣika is entirely different. It lays stress on the ontological aspect of the cosmic order. S. Bhaduri is discriminating/differentiating the both doctrines- "While the Vaiśeṣika is mainly a study of reality itself in its various aspects, the Nyāya is the *Pramāṇaśāstra*, an investigation into the problem of knowledge in his relation to reality." [31] Later, the metaphysics of the Nyāya School got coalesced with the Vaiśeṣika, and the Vaiśeṣika in its turn accepted the Nyāya epistemology.

CONCLUSION

Thus when we talk about the categories, one thing is clear that every system accepts the modification of universe. As Bodas says, "In the history of philosophy the categories have been successfully a classification of universal things or of words or of forms of thought; and consequently they have now come to mean simply the highest classes to which all the objects of knowable can be arranged in subordination and system. [32] It must be mentioned here that the Vaiśeṣika as well as Nyāya system of categorization not only entails an idea of whole universe but also implies the scope where all the problems related to the categories could be answered.

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