

IS SĀMĀNYA REAL? A CRITIQUE OF THE VAIŚEṢIKA VIEW

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The present paper is an attempt to highlight the arguments forwarded by the Buddhists in favour of refuting *Sāmānyas*. In most of the cases, I have shown my agreement with the Buddhists where by their view is substantiated. In some cases I have shown my own departure from them which is followed by some critical evaluative remarks.

I

The Buddhists have accepted the reality of an object in terms of its causal efficacy (*arthakriyā-kāritva*). All objects that have got causal efficacy are momentary in nature.

It has been argued by the Vaiśeṣikas that the meaning of the term '*Sattva*' (existence or being) seems to be vague to them. The term '*sattva*' means an object's association with *sattā*, *sāmānya* or *jāi* and hence possessing this eternal generic property can be momentary.

In response to this Buddhists rejoin that they do not accept that an object possessing *sattā sāmānya* is existent, If it is so, the existence would have to be admitted in substance, quality and action due to accepting *sattā sāmānya* there. To the Vaiśeṣikas *Sāmānya*, *Viśeṣa* and *Samavāya* do not possess existence or *Sattā* due to the problem of *infinite regress*. If *sattā* or *sāmānya* is accepted in *Sāmānya* or *Viśeṣa* etc, there would arise the question of accepting another *Sāmānya* in it i.e. *Sāmānyatva*, *Viśeṣatva* etc and in this way the defect of infinite regress cannot be avoided. In fact, Vaiśeṣikas have accepted the *Sāmānya* etc. as sat as they are revealed as such, but this is not *Sāmānya* in the technical sense. If the Vaiśeṣikas accept *sattā* in the form of *astitva* in *Sāmānya* etc, and *sattā* in the form

of *sattā Sāmānya* in substance etc. there would be *gaurava*, in determining the criterion of apprehending the *Sat* object. Moreover, another problem would crop up. There would arise common apprehension (*anugatapratyaya*) in the substance etc. due to having the same *sattājāti* in *Sāmānya* etc and hence there would also arise the common apprehension, ¹ which is not observable.

It has been accepted by the Nyāya- Vaiśeṣikas philosophers that *Sattā* or *Jāti* exists in different *loci* bearing same shape and size through relation of inherence. In this connection, the Buddhists ask that, if *Sāmānya* exists in many things bearing same size, how do they admit *sāmānya* or *sattājāti* in different objects bearing different shapes and sizes like substance, quality and action and also between mustard seeds and mountain ? To the Vaiśeṣikas *sattā sāmānya* exists in substance etc. through the relation of inherence (*sāmānya*). If it is taken for granted, the Buddhists argue how the usage of differentiation between a man and a cow in the form : 'This is a cow and this is a man' can be made. If it is said that the universals like humanity, cowness etc. pervading in a man and a cow are the causes of the usage of the differentiation between man, it is not tenable because the concept of universal as propounded by them is under consideration.²

It is enquired by the Buddhists whether the universal exists in all objects or in all individuals belonging to a particular class. In the case of former, all objects would be of a same type due to the existence of same universal in them. If the universal 'humanity' existing in a human being remains in horse etc., the horse etc would have to be considered as man due to having humanity in them, which is not possible. Moreover, it will go against the established thesis of the Naiyāyikas³. If the latter is taken for consideration, it will also create some difficulties. That universal exists in all individuals belonging to the same class is admitted by Praśasta-padā⁴. If this line is accepted, it will lead to some philosophical difficulties as follows :

The universal 'Jarness' did not exist in a piece of mud before the origination of a jar but it is produced just after the origination of the same. It is asked by the Buddhists whether the universal 'jarness' existing in a jar situated in other place is related to this jar existing in a different place or not. If it is so, whether this universal is related to a particular individual after coming from other places or without

coming from there. In the case of former the universal would have to be designated as substance as it possesses the action in the form of movement. In the case of latter there would arise the difficulty in apprehending the relation. For, how can the relation of one object to another be established without accepting the action or movement.⁵

It cannot also be said that the jarness etc existing in a jar etc is related to a jar existing in a different place through its self-extension. For, self-extension is possible for an object having parts (*Sāvayava*). As jarness etc have no parts (*niravayava*) the extension of it is not possible.⁶

Moreover, when a jar is destroyed, the problem is whether the jarness existing in it remains in it or is destroyed or goes elsewhere. The first alternative is not correct as universal cannot remain without its substratum i.e. an individual. Moreover, universal always remains only in the objects other than the eternal ones. If the second alternative is taken into account, it will lead us to accept the antithesis. i.e., the eternity of the universal as accepted by the Naiyāyikas. The acceptance of the third alternative leads to accept another undesired situation. For, universal can go elsewhere if there is movement. If the existence of movement is accepted in *sāmānya*, it would turn into a *dravya* or substance but not *sāmānya* due to having movement in it.⁷

To the Vaiśeṣikas universal exists in substance etc through the relation of inherence. If it is so, the Buddhists argue that the ground on which a jar exists also contains the jarness existing in a jar as the lower part of a jar is connected with the upper surface of the ground. If jarness remains on the ground, the ground would also be taken as a jar, which is not possible. Moreover, jarness cannot pervade a jar existing on the ground without keeping it associated with the ground.

Considering all these defects the Buddhists do not accept *Sāmānya*. To them, *Sattva* is not in the form of *Sāmānya* but in the form of causal efficacy (*arthakriyā-kāritva*).

If *Sāmānya* is not accepted, how is the common knowledge (*anugatapratyaya*) among various individuals of the same class possible. To the Buddhists it is not true that cow is differentiated from other animals like horse etc with the help of *Sāmānya*, but cow is known as distinct in terms of the knowledge

of 'non-cow' (*agovyāvṛtti*). In the same way, a jar is known in terms of the knowledge of non - jar (*aghatavyāvṛtti*)⁸. This is type of negative way of knowing is called *apoha*. *Apoha* is that which can differentiate a particular object from others (*svetaravyāvṛttirūpa*). The distinctness of a jar from other object (*ghaṭetarabheda*) which remains in all individual jars leads us to the apprehension in the form : ' This is a jar but not a cloth' and through this similar cognition among all individuals belonging to the same class is established. the derivative meaning of the term 'apoha' is as follows :

That which differentiates something from others (*apohanam*) is *apoha*. As it differentiates a particular object from others, it is called *anyāpoha*. Ratnakīrti has opined that the verbal usage in the form 'This is a cow' is originated from the apprehension in the form 'This cow is different from non-cow' (*agovyāvṛtti*)⁹. Hence, the phenomenon of *anyāpoha* is the cause of similar apprehension (*anugatapratyaya*) and hence there is no necessity of *Sāmānya*. In other words, the similar cognition of all individuals of the same class is due to an object's unique character (*svalakṣaṇāt*) which is possible through its distinct nature from other objects.

II

It has been stated earlier that the theory of impermanence is related to the non-acceptance of *Sāmānya*, a universal. The Buddhist argue that *Sāmānya* or universal as defined by the Vaiśeṣikas comes under inference (*anumāna*). Hence it does not come under real entity or *satvastu*, but it is associated with *kalpanā*. The word which is used in order to refer to some object becomes the conveyer of the same, but it has nothing to do with reality. Words cannot reveal the real object. The real fire can serve our purpose (*arthakriyākāri*) while the word 'fire' cannot do the same job. The reality exists in the object itself but not in the word etc. The burning property exists in the fire but not on the word 'fire' etc. The words cannot reveal the actual object is evidenced from the following usages. The use of the term *ṣannagari* bearing singular suffix means six cities. From these usages it follows that languages being ambiguous, cannot provide us with the true picture of reality.¹⁰ In this way, the Buddhists have proved that like language *anyāpoha* etc cannot give us a true picture of reality. They at best can give us knowledge of

second order reality i.e. phenomenal reality (*Samvrtisatyatā*) and hence they are also included under inference or *Sāmānyalakṣaṇa*.

The object which exists only for a movement and is not revealed through language is *svalakṣaṇa* and hence perceptual. I do not agree with Sāyana on the following point. If the same object is known in terms of language i.e. if a cow is known in terms of non-cow, it, I believe, comes under *Sāmānyalakṣaṇa* but not *svalakṣaṇa* as claimed by the Sāyana-Mādhava. Moreover, when a cow is known in terms of non-cow through the method of *apoha* it is not possible to know within a movement which again points to the inferential character of the object, but not perceptual or *svalakṣaṇa*. The words etc are called *samvrti* by virtue of the fact that they cover (not reveal) the true picture of reality, which has got a second order importance is Buddhist philosophy.

The concept of *anyāpoha* of the Buddhists has been criticised by the Vaiśeṣika-philosophers in the following way. Though in an individual cow there is the difference of non-cow, it cannot serve the purpose of *anugata-pratīti* i.e. similar cognition. For, if a cow is not definitely known as earlier, there cannot remain the difference of non-cow. If a cow is definitely known earlier, it is known being endowed with cowness which can alone be an object of similar cognition. Moreover, if it is accepted, there would arise the defect of mutual dependence (*anyonyāśraya*), an account of the fact that a cow is known in terms of non-cow and again now-cow is known in terms of a cow. Hence, the phenomenon of *anyāpoha* is not tenable.¹²

The above mentioned view may be refuted following the line of the Buddhists. It is true that if a cow is not definitely known, there cannot remain the difference of non-cow. But it is not tenable that, when a cow is known, it is known being endowed with cowness. The Buddhists might say in this connection that a cow is known in terms of its causal efficacy (*arthakriyā-kāritva*) not in terms of its universal. The question of *anugata-pratyaya* arises if there are few individuals of same type. These individuals are known by virtue of their causal efficacy. In this way, other objects denoted by the term 'non-cow' are also known through their different type of causal efficacy. When someone says that a cow is different from non-cow, he expresses it through language with the help of the process of *anāpoha*.

But the initial knowledge of the 'cow' or 'non-cow' arises from their causal efficacies, but not through the word 'cow' or 'non-cow'. Hence, to the Buddhists there is no necessity of accepting *Sāmānya* for *anugatapratyaya* as the method of *anyāpoha* can serve the purpose.¹³

It has been argued again by the Buddhists that causal efficacy does not exit in cowness etc. which come under *sāmānyalakṣaṇa*. The derivative meaning of the term '*artha-kriyā-kāritvā*' is the power or potency through which the necessity is accomplished. The capacity of accomplishing the activities like burning etc. is *arthakriyākāritva* with remains alone in the unique character of fire, but not in the universals like fireness etc. For, the burning property remains in fire, but not fireness.

This view is not accepted by the Naiyayikas. To them the *Sāmānya-lakṣaṇa* also possesses the capacity of accomplishing some end (*arthakriyākāritva*). When, it is said 'cow should be respected or cow should not be touched with feet', it is not applicable to a particular unique cow, but cow in general bearing the property cowness. To them, if a qualified and being *svalakṣaṇa* becomes *arthakriyākāri*, the qualifier also which is *sāmānyalakṣaṇa* will be *arthakriyākāri* and hence it is absolutely real. (*paramārthasat*).

This view is not also correct. So, far as my understanding goes the Buddhists are very much consistent in their position. From the very beginning they are reluctant to admit the property like cowness etc. in a cow etc. If it is said - 'cow should be respected', it is applicable to a particular cow. If it is accepted, it is tantamount to accepting the same in all individual cases of cow. If there are hundred cows, each and every cow is unique in character and hence there is no necessity of accepting a universal like cowness in it. For *anugatapratyaya* the method of *apoha* is to be restorted to as told earlier. Each and every system of philosophy has got its metaphysical presupposition. The Buddha philosophy starts with the concepts of *duḥkha* and *anityatā*. As the Buddhists believe in the theory of momentariness, they ontologically cannot admit any thing having permanent character like universal etc. The Naiyayikas may not admit the same due to nourishing a different set of metaphysical presuppositions. Both the systems are consistent if their presuppositions or philosophical scheme are reviewed carefully.

To the Buddhists universal is as unreal as the hare's horn due to not having an adequate proof in favour of its existence. As universal remains in many individuals existing in past and future also, it cannot be perceived. Universal or *sāmānya*, underlying various individuals of the same class, is not independent but dependent (*sāpekṣa*). Had there been no individuals of the same class, no *sāmānya* would have been accepted. Hence, the property of existing in the individuals of similar kind (*samānavṛttitā*) clearly indicates its dependent character. As perception can alone reveal those that are at present and in proximity with the sense-organ, it cannot reveal something existing in past and present. Hence, it cannot reveal a universal which remains in all individuals existing in past and future.¹⁴

Linguistic judgements (*vikalpa*) cannot reveal the perceived object, because they are nothing but imaginary objects (*kalpanā*) to the Buddhists. As *Sāmānya* also falls under *kalpanā*, it cannot reveal the perceived objects. Moreover, other *pramāṇas* like *Anumāna* and *Śabda* cannot prove universal as real, as they can reveal something which is imaginary.¹⁵

In other way, the futility of universal can be substantiated. If universal were a real entity, the distinction between universal and particular would have been seen different distinctly, as we find the distinction between fruits of different types put in our hands. But as this distinction between them is not at all found, the reality of the universal is in question. Space occupied by a particular object i.e. jar is not the same from the space occupied by another object i.e. cloth and hence their distinction is clearly noticed. But no distinction is found between the universal and particular, as the space occupied by universal is not found to be different from the space occupied by a particular. Hence a universal is not different from a particular.¹⁶

Moreover, a jar is different from a cloth, because jar is known independently without the help of the cloth. But a universal cannot be known without its association with the particulars. In other words a universal is known if the individuals are known. By virtue of its being dependent character, it cannot be taken as distinct from the particulars. Hence, universal is a null notion.¹⁷

Now a question may be raised whether universal rests on an individual (*vyakti*). If positive, the question arises whether universal wholly or partially rests

in an individual. If universal remains in an individual wholly, it would have been perceived there alone, but not in other individuals, which is not desirable. Secondly, if it exists partially, it cannot remain wholly in it, which will lead to the non-recognition of a cow as cow.¹⁸ Moreover, universal is an entity having no parts (*niravayava*) and hence its partial existence is inconceivable.¹⁹ It is said by the Vaiṣeṣikas that universal exists in more than one or many individuals. But the problem is if a universal wholly remains in an individual, it cannot remain in another. If it occupies a locus wholly, it cannot remain in another at the same time without being born. The Buddhists think that a separable (*yutasidha*) relation is really a relation, but an inseparable relation is not the same in the true sense of the term as there is a complete merging of the two entities.²⁰ In the latter case it is not rational to say that one object remains on another due to their inseparability or complete merging. Hence no relation is possible between a universal and individual.²¹

If a universal occupies all individuals, it would be taken as omnipresent. If it is omnipresent, an elephant would be known as a camel due to the omnipresent character of the universal. It may be argued that a group of individuals can manifest a particular universal, and hence there does not arise any question of overlapping.²² In response to this Buddhists raise another problem. if a universal is revealed in a body which consists of some limb, it follows that from the mutilated limb a universal emerges. Hence, a universal should be perceived in each limb of the body, which is actually not perceived as universal is taken as partless or whole.²³

If a particular limb of body manifests universal, it (i.e. universal) cannot remain in it (limb) just as an object revealed through lamp cannot remain in lamp. In other words, something which is revealed by an object cannot remain in it. Moreover, an object which is not found everywhere is not omnipresent. Hence the universal like cowness etc cannot be omnipresent or all pervasive.²⁴

It may be argued that if universal is denied, how is the common cognition (*anugatapratiti*) explained by the Buddhists. Such a common idea is constructed by our imagination. The so called common element is subjective, but not objective.²⁵ The Buddhists have taken the example of molasses which, though of various types, produce the same effect. As an individual is guided by such impression, they seem to be same. But actually each and every object serves different activity.

We neglect its difference and take it as one.

It may be argued by the Naiyāyikas that if the Buddhists deny universal, how do they employ words to express something and infer? Because, in order to use words one should have the knowledge of universal concomitance between a word and its denotation, and to infer a probandum from a probans one should have a universal concomitance between them.²⁶ In reply the Buddhists are of the view that each and every real object is unique in character (*svalakṣaṇa*), which is absolutely real (*paramārtha satya*). But the verbal cognition and inferential cognition do not reveal the unique character of an object and hence they are taken as constructed through imagination (*kaṇā*)²⁷ which has got a second order reality or concealed reality (*samvṛtisatya*) in Buddhist epistemology. The universal is denied as an absolute reality, but not as *kalpanā*, or imagination which has no ultimate value.

NOTES

- 1 Sāyanamādhava : *Sarvadarśanasamgrahah*. Buddadarśana. Henceforth, *Buddhadarśana*
- 2 *Ibid.*
- 3 *Vaiśeṣiksūtra* - 1.2.3.
- 4 *Buddhadarśana*.
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 Vaiṛṭi (by Panchanana Shastri) on *Buddhadarśana*. *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, p. 69, Calcutta, 1401 (B. S.)
- 10 Rahul Sankīrtayan : *Darshan Digdarshan*, Vol. 2, Calcutta, pp. 255-256.
- 11 *Nyāyabindu*, pratysksa Ch.

- 12 Dasanī on Buddhādarsana, pp. 69-70, Calcutta, 1401 (B. S.)
- 13 *Ibid*, pp. 73-74.
- 14 “..... Jātereṇa pramaṇātītatvena śaśaṅgavadavidyānātṅvāt katham tadvān padārtho bhaviṣyati, tathā hi na tāvat sāmānya-grahanamipuṇamakṣajam jāñānam bhavitumarhati tasya pūrvāparā-nanūsyutasvalaksanamātrāpariccheda-parisamāptavyāparatṅvāt. Samānavṛttitā nāma sāmānyasya rijam vapuḥ/katham spṛṣati sāpekṣamanapekṣakṣajā matih.”
Nyāyamanjarī, p. 271, ed. by Surya Narayana Sukla. Chowkhama, 1971.
- 15 “..... tatpṛṣṭhabhāvinsastu vikalpāḥ svabhavataḥ eva vastusam-sparśakausalauṣṇyātmana iti tadvisayikṛtasya sāmānyasya na paramārthasattvam bhavitumarhati, na ca numānam śabdo vā sāmānya-svarūpa-vāstavatvavyavasthāpana-sāmarthyamaśnute.”
Ibid.
- 16 “..... Atāśca na vyaktivyatiriktam sāmānyam bhedenanupalambhāt. Tathā hi kuvalayāmalakabilvādīni karatalavartīni pṛthagava-lokyante na jātivyakti iti na tayorbhedāḥ, deśābhedaśay cāgrahanād yat khaku yato ‘tiriktam tattadadhiṣṭhitadeśavyati-riktadeśādhiṣṭhanamavadharyate ghaṭādiva paṭaḥ na caivam jātivyakti iti na tayorbhedāḥ.”
Ibid, p.272.
- 17 “Na ca vyaktāvanupalabhyamānyam jātirupalabhyate, tasmānna tato ‘sau bhidyate.”
Ibid.
- 18 “kiṁ pratipindam kārtsyena vartate jātirtaikadeśeneti dvayamapi cānupapannaśm-
Pinḍe sāmānyamanyatra yadi kārtsyena vartate/tatraivāsya samāptatvānna syāt
pindāntare grahaḥ//Ekadeśena vṛṭtau tu gotvajātirna kutraci/samagrāstīti gobuddhiḥ
pratipindam katham bhavet//.”
Ibid.
- 19 “jāteśca niravayavatvānna kecidēkadeśāḥ santi yairesā pratipindam vartate.”
Ibid.

- 20 “Na caikatra pinde samāptyā vartamānā pinḍāntare samāptyaiva vartitumarhati, samāptasya punarutpattim vinā samāptyanta-rānupapatteḥ tathābhūtasya ca vṛttiprakārasya kvacidāpya-darsanāt.”
Ibid.
- 21 “ayutasidhe tu tadekatvat kim kena sambaddhyate.”
Ibid.
- 22 “sarvasarvagatatve syāt karkādāvapi gomatiḥ//
Asvadhīḥ śāvaleyaḍavuṣṭrabuḥhiraḡajādiṣu/
Padārthasankaraścaivatyantāya prasajyate//
Athāpi vyaktisāmarthanīyamānāiṣa samkaraḥ/
Ibid p. 273.
- 23 “Na hi karkādīpinḍānām gotvādi-vyaktikausalāt//
Mavaṁ khaṇḍādyabhivyaktamāpi gotvamanamsakāt//”
Ibid.
- 24 “Dīpavadvyañjakaḥ pinḍo na tu tatpinḍavṛtti tat//
Sarvatra gṛyamānām ca sarvatrāstiti me ‘navayah//
Ibid.
- 25 “Nanvevamapahnūyamāne sāmānye gaugauriti śāvaleyaḍiṣu yo’yamanuvṛttaḥ
pratyah sa katham samarthyisyate, uktamatra vikalpamatrameṣa pratyayo vikalpāśca
narthādhi najanmāna iti
Ibid p. 275.
- 26 “Anīyamāṇe sāmānye nanu śabdānumānayoḥ/
Katham pravṛttiḥ sambandhagrahaṇādhinajamnanoh//
... aghṛitasambandhe ca na śabdāilinge tatpratitimit-padayaitumutsahate iti”
Ibid p. 276.
- 27 “Vikalpaviśaye vṛttiriṣṭā śabdānumānayoḥ /
asastuviśayaścaite vikalpā iti varṇitam//
Ibid.

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