

CONCEPT OF CATEGORIES IN VAIŚEŚIKA PHILOSOPHY

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I

The present paper proposes to put forth a basic framework of categories (= *padārtha*-s)¹ as available in the Vaiśeṣika system of Indian philosophy. The scope of this exposition is primarily restricted to classical Vaiśeṣika sources; however some of the later Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika texts will also be referred to wherever relevant.

II

The concept of ‘category’ occupies a distinct place in the field of philosophical thinking right from the time of Ṛgveda² in Indian philosophical tradition and Aristotle³ in Western philosophical thought. Broadly speaking, the idea of category is intended to signify a metaphysical reality which is the underlying essence of existence, as also our knowledge of it. 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”⁴.

It must be mentioned at the outset that the Vaiśeṣika scheme of categorisation not only entails an idea of ‘thinking inside the box’ but also implies many more sets of sub-boxes incorporated within the widest one. In other words, the six *padārtha*-s of Vaiśeṣika subsume several sub-groups of categories within themselves, which have been delineated

¹ H.T. Colebrooke was perhaps the first who rendered the Vaiśeṣika term *padārtha* as ‘category’, *Miscellaneous Essays*, Vol.I, London: 1837, pp.261

² RV, 10/129/1-7

³ Aristotle, *The Categories*, in *Organon*, Vol. I (Reprint) Ed. Harold P. Cooke, London: 1949

⁴ Donald Walhout, “On Categories”, *The Philosophical Quarterly*, xxxiv, 3, October, 1961, p.142

on the basis of various divisions envisaged from different angles. An indepth study of this aspect of categories as conceived in the Vaiśeṣika system is in fact the main focus of this paper.

III

Vaiśeṣika is usually held to be a pluralistic realism in the sense that it propounds six *padārtha*-s as types of reality and claims that all the existent, knowable and nameable entities can be covered under six *padārtha*-s ⁵, namely: *dravya* (=substance), *guṇa* (=property or attribute), *karma* (=activity or motion), *sāmānya* (=universal), *viśeṣa* (=differential or ultimate particularity) and *samavāya* (=inherence). The Vaiśeṣika asserts that these six *padārtha*-s ⁶ are ultimate reals and not merely products of thought; they are not dependent upon human cognition for their existence, although all of them are objects of knowledge.

The various definitions⁷ and divisions of *padārtha*-s available in the Vaiśeṣika tradition aim at expounding the nature of reality and tend to claim that nothing is left out of these types of *padārtha*-s ⁸. The course of development and systematization of the theory of *padārtha*-s in classical Vaiśeṣika might have been gradual as suggested by

⁵ ‘*Etasyāmeva bhāvātmakaṁ viśvamanantarbhavati.*’ -*Tārkikarakṣā* of Varadarāja, Ed. V.P. Dwivedi, *Pañḍita*, Varanasi: 1903, pp. 162-63

⁶ Later on, a seventh category *abhāva* was also added to the Vaiśeṣika list, but because this section of the paper primarily deals with the classical sources, so *abhāva* is not mentioned herein.

⁷ (a) ‘*Abhidheyaḥ padārthaḥ*’ - *Lakṣaṇāvalī*, Ed. Shashinath Jha, Darbhanga: 1963, p.1

(b) ‘*Pramitiviśayāḥ padārthāḥ*’. *Saptapadārthī*, p.2 Ed. and English translation D. Gurumurti, Madras:1932, p.2

⁸ (a) “The Vaiśeṣika system of categories (*padārtha*), with its inherent claim of comprehensive enumeration, is obviously committed to this answer;...The basic claim is that all entities can be listed and classified under certain fundamental titles or categories”. -Wilhelm Halbfass, *On being and What There is*, Delhi: 1993, pp.54-55 and p.70

(b) “As everything whatever subjective or objective, real or unreal, existent or non-existent or subsistent, determinate or indeterminate, conceivable or inconceivable that enters or can enter into philosophical discussion, must be directly expressible or indirectly suggestible (e.g. by words like “contradictory”, “conceivable”, “square-circle”, “meaningless”) by some words or another, it can be at once seen that “*Padārtha*” is the widest term for Philosophy”. D.M. Datta, ‘The Interpretation of Vaiśeṣika Categories’, in the *Philosophical Quarterly*, XXViii No.4 (January, 1956), p.218

some scholars⁹. This is also corroborated from the fact that even after a general acceptance of six *padārtha*-s in Vaiśeṣika, efforts for including many more categories in the list were continuing within and outside the tradition¹⁰. After a formal inclusion of *abhāva* as a *padārtha*, the Vaiśeṣikas had finally accepted seven *padārtha*-s in principle but no more inclusion was accorded further. Accordingly, many Vaiśeṣika scholars have clearly rejected a number of entities proposed as *padārtha*-s by *pūrvapakṣin* (=opponent). In fact, the number of such rejected entities goes upto **twenty three** in one of the later commentaries of *Praśastapādabhāṣya*. The names of these twenty three entities proposed and rejected herein are as follow:

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|-------------------------|---|
| (i) <i>Bheda</i> | (xii) <i>Sādṛṣya</i> |
| (ii) <i>Śakti</i> | (xiii) <i>Tāratva</i> |
| (iii) <i>Śuddhi</i> | (xiv) <i>Mandatva</i> |
| (iv) <i>Aśuddhi</i> | (xv) <i>Ādhārādheyabhāva</i> |
| (v) <i>Bhāvanā</i> | (xvi) <i>Vyañjanāvṛtti</i> |
| (vi) <i>Svatva</i> | (xvii) <i>Sphoṭa</i> |
| (vii) <i>Kṣanika</i> | (xviii) <i>Samsargamaryādā</i> |
| (viii) <i>Vaiśiṣṭya</i> | (xix) <i>Liṅga</i> |
| (ix) <i>Samūha</i> | (xx) <i>Viśeṣana-viśeṣya-bhāva</i> |
| (x) <i>Prakāritva</i> | (xxi) <i>Kāraṇatva</i> |
| (xi) <i>Samkhyā</i> | (xxii) <i>Svarūpasambandha</i> |
| | (xxiii) <i>Tattedantā</i> ¹¹ |

It follows from the above that the Vaiśeṣika doctrine of *padārtha*-s might have withstood various tests of the times and finally emerged as an all-encompassing, well structured framework for explaining the diversities of the universe in seven types of reals. Accordingly, the basic substrata of reality are posited as *dravya*; the attributes and

⁹ Erich Frauwallner, *History of Indian Philosophy*, Eng. Trans. V.M. Bedkar, Vol. II, Delhi: 1973, pp.79-106

¹⁰ For details see Shashiprabha Kumar, *Vaiśeṣika Darśana mein Padārtha-Nirūpaṇa* (Hindi), Delhi: 1992, pp.30-35

¹¹ *Setuṭīkā* of Padmanābha Mishra, Eds. Gopinath Kaviraja and Dundhiraj Shastri, Varanasi: 1930, pp.67-99

activities ascribed to them are explained as *guṇa* and *karma*; their natural commonality and ultimate particularity are described as *sāmānya* and *viśeṣa*; their mutual inter-relation has been explained through *samavāya* and the negative aspect of reality has been elucidated as *abhāva*.

It needs to be mentioned here that even the order of enumeration of these *padārtha*-s is quite significant and has been justified by several Vaiśeṣika scholars¹². *Dravya* comes first in the list, because, being the substratum of all the *padārtha*-s and the only inherent cause, it happens to be the chief *padārtha*. *Guṇa* and not *karma* follows *dravya*, because, unlike *karma*, it resides in all *dravya*-s and is closest to *dravya* on account of the fact that it comes into existence and unites with *dravya* immediately after the *dravya* is produced. *Karma* comes before *sāmānya*, because *sāmānya* is connected with *karma*. *Sāmānya* must come after *dravya*, *guṇa* and *karma*, in which it inheres. *Viśeṣa* follows *sāmānya*, because the former is a counter-entity to the latter. It comes before *samavāya*, because it is a relatum of *samavāya*. *Samavāya* comes last in the list of positive *padārtha*-s, because it operates as a nexus of all the other five *padārtha*-s. And, since *abhāva* is nothing but in the nature of a negative of all the six positive categories, it is quite in the fitness of things that it is placed at the end of the list of *padārtha*-s¹³.

¹² ‘*Ādau dravyasyoddeśaḥ, sarvāśrayatvena prādhānyāt.*
Guṇānāñca karmāpekṣayā bhūyastvād dravyānantaramabhidhānam.
Niyamena guṇānuvidhāyivāt karmaṇām guṇānantaramuddeśaḥ.
Karmānvitatvāt sāmānyasya karmānantaramabhidhānam.
Pañcapadārthavṛtteḥ samavāyasya sarvaśeṣābhidhāne prāpte viśeṣāñām madhye kathanam’.
 Nyāyakandalī (NK) of Śrīdhara, Ed. Durgadhar Jha, Varanasi: 1997, (II Edition), p.17

¹³ ‘*Dravyasya sarvapadārthādhāratvena samavāyikāraṇatvena ca prādhānyāt prathamamuddeśaḥ.*
Guṇajātīyasya sarvadravyavṛttivād utpattiyuttarakṣaṇamevotpannatvenātisānnidhyācca guṇasya
tadānantaryam .Karmajātīyasya tadvaiparītyājīyādhāratvācca tadānantaryam.
Sāmānyasyānuvṛttatvena tritayagatatvena ca bahuviśayatvāt tadānantaryam.
Eteṣām pañcāñām sambandhatvena samavāyasya tadānantaryam.
Ṣaṇṇām niṣedharūpatvenābhāvāsya tadānantaryam ityuddeśakramaḥ.’
 Mitabhāṣiṇītkā of Mādharma Sarasvatī on *Saptapadārthī*,
 Eds. Amarendra Mohan and Narendra Chandra, Calcutta: 1934, pp. 14-15

The exhaustiveness of the Vaiśeṣika list of *padārtha*-s was carried forward to its logical culmination by Udayana when he explained the reason for non-enumeration of *abhāva* in the list of *padārtha*-s by Kaṇāda¹⁴ and then first subdivided these into two types-*bhāva* and *abhāva*¹⁵. Lateron, other scholars like Sivaditya¹⁶, Sri Vallabhacārya¹⁷ and Sridhara¹⁸ followed this line and seven, *padārtha*-s were widely accepted in Vaiśeṣika tradition.

IV

In fact, various schools of Indian philosophical tradition aim at explaining the nature of ultimate reality and offer different denominations for indicating the same. Accordingly, we get several terms such as *tattva*, *prameya*, *jñeya*, *viśaya*, *vastu*, *sat*, *bhāva*, *artha* and *padārtha* for denoting the essence of reality. Needless to say that each of these terms has a different shade of meaning attached with it, which can be grasped by referring to various usages of the same in respective sources¹⁹. The Vaiśeṣika school has not only preferred to use the term *padārtha* for representing numerous categories of reality but has also provided a few fresh insights while discussing different dimensions of it. It is not without reason then, that the system of Vaiśeṣika is also known as *padārthaśāstra*²⁰.

¹⁴ ‘*Abhāvastu svarūpavānapi pṛthak noddīṣṭaḥ. Pratiyoginirūpaṇādhīnanirūpaṇatvat. Na tu tucchatvāt*’. *Kiraṇāvalī*, (KV) Ed. Gaurinath Śāstri, Varanasi: 1980, (KV), p.6

¹⁵ ‘*Sa dvidivho, bhāvābhāvabhēdāt*’. -*Lakasṇāvalī*, p.1

¹⁶ ‘*Pratiyogijñānādhīnajñāno’bhāvaḥ*’. -*Saptapadarthī*, p.62

¹⁷ ‘*Abhāvaśca vaktavyo niḥśreyasopayogitvat, bhāvaprapañcavat*.’ -*Nyāyalīlāvatī*, Ed. Sri Harihara Shastri, Varanasi:1991, II Edition, p.16

¹⁸ NK, pp.553-558

¹⁹ To illustrate a few wide Appendix-I

²⁰ Anand Jha, *Padārthaśāstra*, Lucknow: 1965

The term *padārtha* literally connotes the meaning (*artha*) of a word (*pada*), i.e., an object conveyed by a word. This at once suggests that the reality is objective and so can be communicated through language. Since language presupposes knowledge and knowledge leads to a corresponding real, so the Vaiśeṣikas have incorporated these three aspects²¹ as common criteria of the six *padārtha*-s proposed by them:

*Ṣaṅṅāmapi padārthānāmastitvābhidheyatvajñeyatvāni*²².

i.e., all the six *padārtha*-s have three properties, namely- is-ness, nameability and knowability.

It is noteworthy here that according to Vaiśeṣika viewpoint, the above three are not just common characteristics attributed to the six *padārtha*-s, but are in fact the inherent features expressing their essential nature. It is therefore, that each one of these three is substantially significant for understanding the Vaiśeṣika concept of category. “These three terms in spite of their obvious connotative differences, are thus universal in their extension; they are, therefore, interchangeable, so far as their application to reality as such, or any aspect of it, is concerned.”²³ In other words, in this definition of category comprising of is-ness, nameability and knowability, it is already implied that the Vaiśeṣika school claims to attempt a thorough analysis of reality or a complete classification of kinds of being, and that it purports to take cognizance of everything that simply is (*asti*), that is nameable (*abhidheya*) and is knowable (*jñeya*)²⁴.

The main thrust of Vaiśeṣika system has been on the enumeration and enunciation of *dharma* which comprises of *abhyudaya* (=exaltation) and *niḥśreyasa*

²¹ Obviously, this triple characterisation of Vaiśeṣika *padārtha*-s corresponds well with the contemporary discussion of reality, language and thought.

²² *Praśastapādabhāṣyam* (PPB), with *Nyāyakandalī* (NK) of Sridhara, ed. Durgadhar Jha, Varanasi: 1997, (II Edition), p.41

²³ Sadananda Bhaduri, *Studies in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika Metaphysics*, Poona:1975, p.9

²⁴ For an interesting current debate on this claim, see Roy W. Perrett “Is Whatever Exists knowable and nameable?” in *Philosophy East and West*, Vol.49, No.4 (Oct.1999), pp.401-414

(=accomplishment)²⁵. Of these two, the former is stated to be *tattvajñāna* and also the means for attainment of the later, which in turn signifies the highest end²⁶. Interestingly, just after proclaiming to explain *dharma*, Kaṇāda, the founder of Vaiśeṣika system, proceeds to expound the six *padārtha*-s which does not seem congruous and so he has also earned the ridicule of some of his opponents²⁷, but a closer study reveals that even through this description of six *padārtha*-s, he intends to explain *dharma* only²⁸. Kaṇāda has himself declared in the course of his discourse that a proper knowledge of the six *padārtha*-s through twin methods of *sādharmya* (=similarities) and *vaidharmya*²⁹ (=dissimilarities) among them, will enable the aspirant to accomplish the final goal.

It must be emphasized here that the Vaiśeṣika philosophy aims at accomplishing the ultimate goal of *niḥśreyasa* which can be attained through *tattvajñāna* (=a proper knowledge) of the six categories.³⁰ *Tattvajñāna* is not just an ordinary cognition of objects, but a much focussed and distinct ascertainment of the true nature of several reals accepted in the school. This type of knowledge is made possible by a special kind of

²⁵ ‘*Yato’ bhyudayaniḥśreyasasiddhiḥ sa dharmah’*. *Vaiśeṣika Sutra* (VS), Ed. Sri Narayana Misra, Varanasi:2002 , 1/1/2

²⁶ ‘*Abhyudayatattvajñānam niḥśreyasamātyantikī duḥkhanivṛttiḥ tadubhayaṁ yataḥ sa dharmah. Abhyudayadvāraḥ niḥśreyasamiti madyamalopī samāsaḥ, pañcamītatpuruṣo vā’*. *Upaskāra* of Śaṅkaramiśra with Hindi translation by Dhunḍhirāj Shastri, II Edition, Ed. Sri Narayan Misra, Varansi:2002, p.11

²⁷ ‘*Dharmam vyākhyātukāmasya ṣaṭpadārthopavarṇanam, Sāgarāṁ gantukāmasya himavadgamanopamam’*. An oft-quoted anonymous verse. S. Sankaranarayanan however has mentioned that this might be of Venkatanath Vedant Desika :Vide *Vaiśeṣika Catuḥsūtrī*, A Historical Perspective, Adyar: 2003, pp.57-58

²⁸ ‘*Yathā dharmam vyākhyāsyāma iti prastutya dravyādyupadeśaḥ tatpratipattereva’*. - *Mahābhāṣyapradīpikā* of Bhartṛhari, p.2

²⁹ ‘*Dharmaviśeṣaprasūtāt dravya- guṇakarmasāmānyaviśeṣa- samvāyānām padārthānam sādharmya- vaidharmbyām tattvajñānāniḥśreyasam’*. VS, 1/1/4

³⁰ ‘*Dravyaguṇakarmasāmānyaviśeṣasamavāyānām ṣaṅṅām padārthānām sādharmyavaidharmyatattvajñānam niḥśreyasahetuḥ’*. PPB, p.15

*dharma*³¹, which is manifested through divine benediction only³². It is for this special type of knowing that the twin methods of *sādharmya* and *vaidharmya* have been introduced by Kaṇāda and explained by Praśastapada and his commentators.³³ From this point of view, **the source of knowing, the content of knowing and the methodology for knowing are all related to *dharma* in Vaiśeṣika view.** Therefore, the notion of *sādharmya* and *vaidharmya* is in fact the elaboration of *dharma*, the main theme of Vaiśeṣika.

V

This brings us to the point of *padārtha-sādharmya*³⁴ (=similarities among the *padārtha*-s) which is originally suggested by Kaṇāda and discussed in detail by Praśastapāda and his commentators.

Explaining the terms *sādharmya* and *vaidharmya*, Śāṅkaramiśra says in his commentary on the Vaiśeṣikasūtras that the former signifies common characteristic, while the later express differential characteristic. But these two are not mutually exclusive, since somewhere the similarity is also a dissimilarity of other; likewise

³¹ VS, 1/1/4

³² ‘*Tacceśvaracodanābhivyaktāddharmādeva*’. PPB, p.18

³³ ‘*Sādhāraṇo dharmāḥ sādharṃyam, asādhāraṇo dharmo vaidharṃyam. Sādharṃya-vaidharṃya eva tattavṃ sādharṃya-vaidharṃya-tatvam, tasya jñānam niḥśreyasahetuḥ*’. NK. p.16

³⁴ By mention of *sādharmya*, *vaidharmya* is also implied here since after explaining *sādharmya* it is clearly stated that the *vaidharmya* should be assumed as contrary to the former:

‘*Evaṃ sarvatra viparyayāt sādharṃyam vaidharṃyam ca vācyamiti. Evamanena nyāyena sādharṃyam-yattadeva viparyayādvyaṅgtervaidharṃyam vaidharṃyam yat tadeva viparyayādanuvṛtteḥ sādharṃyam*’.

KV, p.390

whatever is stated as dissimilarity at one place may be a similarity elsewhere. So, this has to be understood by referring to the particular instances.³⁵

After enumerating the six *padārtha*-s, Kaṇāda has drawn a subtle distinction between *artha* and *arthāntara* in his Vaiśeṣikasūtras by stating that the first three categories- *dravya*, *guṇa* and *karma*, are to be characterized as *artha*³⁶, since these have the *sādharmya* of being *sat* (=existent), *anitya* (non-eternal), *dravyavat* (=having a substance), *kārya* (=being an effect), *kāraṇa* (=being a cause) and *sāmānyaviśeṣa* (=having a universal and differential)³⁷, while the remaining three, namely- *sāmānya*, *viśeṣa* and *samavāya* are to be termed as *arthāntara*³⁸ or just *padārtha*-s (by which term the earlier three categories are also covered). The above-mentioned *sādharmya*-s among the first three *padārtha*-s listed by Kaṇāda can be explained as follows:

- (i) **sat**: *Dravya*, *guṇa* and *karma* are characterized as *sat*, since they are related with *sattā* (=existence)³⁹, *sattāvattva* or *sattva* (notion of being related to existence) is therefore the *sādharmya* among *dravya*, *guṇa* and *karma*.
- (ii) **anityam**: All the above three *padārtha*-s are therefore transient.
- (iii) **dravyavat**: The first three *padārtha*-s are inherently related to *dravya*⁴⁰. In other words, *dravya* is the inherent cause for all the three.

³⁵ ‘Sādharmyamanugato dharmāḥ, vaidharmyaṅca vyāvṛtto dharmāḥ. Yadyapi kvacit sādharmyamapi kutaścīt vaidharmyaṅ kutaścīt vaidharmyamapi keṣāñcīt sādharmyaṅ tathāpi tādrūpyeṇa jñānaṅ vivakṣitam’. *Upaskāra*, p.27 (VS, 1/1/4)

³⁶ ‘Artha iti dravya-guṇa-karmasu’. VS, 8/2/3

³⁷ ‘Sadanityaṅ dravyavat kāryaṅ kāraṇaṅ sāmānyaviśeṣavadīti dravyaguṇkarmaṅāmaviśeṣaḥ’. VS, 1/1/8

³⁸ ‘Dravyaguṇkarmabhyo’ rthāntaraṅ sattā’. VS, 1/2/8

³⁹ This is not mere existence which is denoted by *astitva* and is a common characteristic of all the six *padārtha*-s, but a technical term of the Vaiśeṣika system which is defined as: ‘Sadīti yato dravyaguṇakarmasu sā sattā’ (VS, 1/2/8), i.e. *sattā* is that which lends the notion of *sat* to the first three *padārtha*-s, namely: *dravya*, *guṇa* and *karma*.

⁴⁰ The suffix *matup* is used here in the sense of *nityayoga* or *nityasambandha*, (i.e. *samavāya*):
‘Bhūmanindāpraśaṁsāsu nityayoge’ tīśāyane,
Saṁsarge’sti vivakṣāyāṅ bhavanti matubādayaḥ’.- *Kāśīkāvṛtti*, (5/2/94)

- (iv) **kāryam**: The three *padārtha*-s are produced out of their respective causes, so they are *kārya*. Although it might seem a repetition of the similarity *anityam* stated above, yet there is a minute difference in the sense that the former points to the destruction of the product while the latter hints at the production of an effect⁴¹.
- (v) **kāraṇam**: *Dravya*, *guṇa* and *karma* –are the respective causes of their effects, so they share a similarity of being *kāraṇa*, but there is a systematic restriction for their causality as follows:
- (a) *dravya* is the inherent cause for all the products.
while
- (b) *guṇa* and *karma* are the non-inherent cause for all the products.
- (vi) **sāmānyaviśeṣavat**: This is an expansion of the first point mentioned above which refers to the broadest possible generality, *sattā* or *parasāmānya* pertaining to all the three *padārtha*-s, namely *dravya*, *guṇa*, and *karma* in a collective manner. But the *sāmānyaviśeṣa* or *aparāsāmānya* is available separately in *dravya*, *guṇa* and *karma* each in the form of *dravyatva*, *guṇatva* and *karmatva*.

Thereafter, several other sets of similarities among different groups of *padārtha*-s have been elucidated in the *sūtra*-s which definitely help in a better and clearer understanding of the Vaiśeṣika categories. For example, both *dravya* and *guṇa* are stated to possess a common characteristic, namely *sajātīyārambhakatva*⁴² (= giving rise to similar effects). In simpler terms, it means that substances produce another substance and qualities produce another quality (while *karma* does not produce another *karma*)⁴³.

⁴¹ Vide Udayavīr Śāstrī, *Vaiśeṣika Darśanam* with the Hindi commentary *Vidyodaya Bhāṣya*, Delhi:2006, p.23

⁴² ‘*Dravyaguṇayoḥ sajātīyārambhakatvaṃ sādharmaṃ*’. VS, 1/1/9

⁴³ ‘*Karma karmasādhyam na vidyate*’. VS, 1/1/11

VI

It is in the above background that Praśastapāda has titled his treatise as *Padārthadharmasaṅgraha*(=a compendium of characteristics attributed to the *padārthās*)⁴⁴. Explaining the significance of this title, Udayana has clarified in his commentary that *dravya* etc. are the *padārtha*-s; *sādharmya* and *vaidharmya* among these *padārtha*-s are the *dharma*-s, which are mutually qualifying each other and have been scattered in different places; a collective description of all these features at one place is the distinguishing characteristic⁴⁵ of this text of Vaiśeṣika.

In addition to the above *sādharmya*-s suggested by Kaṇada, Praśastapāda gives the following two common characteristics of three *padārtha*-s, *dravya*, *guṇa* and *karma*:

- (i) ***svasamayārthaśabdābhidheyatvam***: It means that the first three *padārtha*-s are termed as *artha* because the tradition of Vaiśeṣika has followed this course of calling them as such⁴⁶.
- (ii) ***dharmādharmakartṛtvam***: The first three *padārtha*-s are caused by *dharma* and *adharma* as their subsidiary causes⁴⁷.

In contrast to the above, the remaining three Vaiśeṣika categories, i.e., *sāmānya*, *viśeṣa* and *samavāya* share the following seven *sādharmya*-s⁴⁸ according to Praśastapāda:

⁴⁴ ‘*Padārthadharmasaṅgrahaḥ pravakṣyate mahodayaḥ*’. PPB, p.1

⁴⁵ ‘*Padārthadharmasaṅgraha iti. Pādārthā dravyādayasteṣāṃ dharmāsta eva parasparaṃ viśeṣaṇībhūtāste’ nena saṅgrhyante. Śāstre nānāsthāneṣu vitatā ekaṭra saṅkalayya kathyanta iti saṅgrahaḥ*’. KV, p.43

⁴⁶ ‘*Vaiśeṣikāḥ svayam vyavahārāya yaḥ saṅketāḥ kṛto’ smin śāstre arthabdād dravyaguṇakarmāṇi pratipattavyāni’ iti, tena dravyādīni trīṇi nirupapadenārthaśabdenocyante.*’ NK, p.45

⁴⁷ ‘*Dharmādharmotpattinimitatvaṃ trayāṇām*’. NK, p.45

⁴⁸ ‘*Sāmānyādīnām trayāṇām svātmasattavaṃ buddhilakṣaṇatvamakāryatvamakāraṇatvamsāmānyaviśeṣavattvaṃ nityatvamarthaśabdānabhidheyatvaṃ*’. PPB, p.49

- (i) **svātmasattvam:** The three *padārthā*-s namely *sāmānya*, *viśeṣa* and *samavāya* exist in themselves and are not related with *sattā* like the former three *padārthā*-s⁴⁹.
- (ii) **buddhilakṣaṇatvam:** The above three *padārthā*-s are to be defined through *buddhi* only, no other means of knowledge can prove them⁵⁰.
- (iii) **akāryatvam:** The three *padārthā*-s are not the effect of any cause, since they are *nitya* and hence are not produced⁵¹.
- (iv) **akāraṇatvam:** *Sāmānya*, *viśeṣa* and *samavāya* are also not the cause of any effect, i.e., they do not produce any thing since they are neither the material cause nor the non-inherent cause⁵².
- (v) **asāmānyaviśeṣavattvam:** These three *padārthā*-s have no sub-classes. In other words *sāmānya*, *viśeṣa* and *samavāya* do not have any generic attribute due to different *jātibādhaka* conditions⁵³.
- (vi) **Nityatvam:** The later three *padārthā*-s are eternal because they are indestructible⁵⁴.

⁴⁹ ‘Svātmasttvaṃ sattāviraḥaḥ’. KV, p.279

⁵⁰ ‘Buddhilakṣaṇatvaṃ buddhimātramamiṣāṃ lakṣaṇaṃ pramāṇam, na tu dravyādivat pramāṇāntaramastīyarthāḥ.’ KV, p.281

⁵¹ ‘Akāryatvamanāditvam.’ KV, p.287

⁵² ‘Samavāyiasamavāyikāraṇatvābhāvaḥ’. -Vyomavatī (VV), Part-I, Ed. Gaurinath Shastri, Varanasi: 1983, p.41

⁵³ ‘Asāmānyaviśeṣavattvaṃ aparasāmānyaviraḥaḥ.Sa ca sāmānyeṣvanavasthānāt.’ -KV, p.295

⁵⁴ ‘Nityānām bhāvo nityatvamavināśītvam.’ VV, Part. I, p.41

- (vii) **arthaśabdānabhidheyatvam**: *Sāmānya*, *Viśeṣa* and *samavāya* are not expressed by the word *artha* like the former three *padārthā*-s (*dravya*, *guṇa* and *karma*).⁵⁵

VII

Obviously, the above account of *padārtha-sādharmya* provided by Praśastāpāda is quite significant since it clarifies the minute difference between two sub-groups of categories briefly suggested by Kaṇāda as *artha* and *arthāntara*. More importantly, the subtle distinction among *astitva*, *sattāsambandha* and *svātmasattva* is quite pertinent from this point of view and it is not easy to discern the same. In fact, the three terms aim to convey that *astitva* is ‘being’ in general and it naturally belongs to all the six *padārthā*-s;⁵⁶ *sattāsambandha* is the inherent relation of *sattā*⁵⁷, the widest possible generality with *dravya*, *guṇa* and *karma* only; *svātmasattva* is self-sufficient existence, independent of the subsistence of being⁵⁸. The former three *padārthā*-s, which besides being *sat* in themselves, are also related to *sattā*⁵⁹ or existence while the later three are just existent in themselves, they can not be related to *sattā*⁶⁰, the widest possible form of *sāmānya* conceived in the Vaiśeṣika system. Therefore, the remaining three categories are *svātmasat* or self-existent, *sattā* does not pertain to them.

⁵⁵ ‘Svasamayārthaśabdānabhidheyatvaṁ caiteṣāṁ sādharmaṁ’.- NK, p.53

⁵⁶ ‘Astitvaṁ vidhimukhapratyaya viśayatvaṁ. Pratiyogyanapekṣanirūpaṇatvamiti yāvat’.-KV, p.216

⁵⁷ ‘Sattāsambandhaḥ samavāyalakṣṇaḥ’.-KV, p.246

⁵⁸ ‘Svatmasattvaṁ sattāviraḥaḥ’.-KV, p.279

⁵⁹ ‘Drvyāditrikavṛttistu sattā paratayocyate’. *Kārikāvalī* of Viśvanātha 8

It means that *sāmānya* can pertain to *dravya*, *guṇa* and *karma* only- *sāmānya*, *viśeṣa* or *samvāya* can not contain *sāmānya*. For details see *Jātibādhakasaṅgraha* of Udayana: KV, p.321

⁶⁰ ‘Svātmaiva sattvaṁ svarūpaṁ yatsāmānyādīnāṁ tadeva teṣāṁ sattvaṁ, na sattāyogaḥ svatvam. Etena sāmānyādīnāṁ trayāṇāṁ sāmānyarahitatvaṁ sādharmaṁuktamityarthaḥ’.-NK, p.49

As already stated, Praśastapāda has delineated upon this **inter-categorical** aspect of *padārtha*-s in detail and has brought out nine sets of *sādharmya*-s among different groups of six *padārtha*-s⁶¹. After expounding the above *sādharmya*-s, it has been stated that the *vaidharmya*-s can be comprehended as contrary to the former⁶². In fact, this inter-categorical classification in Vaiśeṣika sources has been done so minutely and precisely that it can definitely lead to *tattvajñāna*, i.e. the discerning ascertainment of each of the *padārtha*-s, as propounded by Kaṇāda in the beginning of his *śāstra*.

Just as the *sādharmya*-s among six categories are enumerated by Praśastapāda and explained by his commentators, likewise an **intra-categorical** discussion of the similarities and dissimilarities among the nine *dravya*-s and the twenty four *guṇa*-s are also discussed in detail by Praśastapāda⁶³.

VIII

What follows from the foregoing discussion is that this technique of *sādharmya* and *vaidharmya*, if applied properly, can prove to be very beneficial for gaining the right kind of knowledge. Just as the well known Nyāya style of three-pronged discussion⁶⁴ is an external format of discussion, similarly this is an inherent method of delving deep into the core nature of reality. So this particular method of knowing, i.e. *sādharmya* and *vaidharmya* is an essential contribution of Vaiśeṣika philosophy, which also forms the basis of its realistic outlook.

In fact this twofold method of knowing is very much ingrained in the Indian philosophical tradition and has been expressed through numerous pairs of antonyms such as *sat-asat*, *ṛta-anṛta*, *tama-jyoti* and *vidyā-avidyā* etc. which are frequently available in

⁶¹For details see Appendix II

⁶²‘*Evam sarvatra sādharmyam viparyayāvaidharmyañca vācyamiti*’. PPB, p.68

⁶³For details see Appendix III and Appendix IV

⁶⁴ ‘*Trividhā cāsyā śāstrasya pravṛttiḥ- uddeśo lakṣaṇam parīkṣā ca*’.
Nyāyabhāṣya of Vātsyāyana on Nyāyasūtra, 1.1.1

Vedic literature. The standard technique of *anvaya* and *vyatireka* adopted in the inferential process of Indian logic also speaks of similarities and dissimilarities while the style of comparing and contrasting two objects vouches for an intensive understanding of the essence of reality. Therefore, the Vaiśeṣika system has to be credited for this *vaiśiṣṭya* (=speciality) in its approach which claims that once the common characteristics and the distinguishing features of the *padārtha*-s are comprehended, their real nature will automatically be understood and *niḥśreyasa* would be accomplished.⁶⁵ This not only paves the path for attaining the ultimate goal but also exhibits the rationalistic attitude of Vaiśeṣika scholars. Moreover, this distinctive outlook of understanding each entity of reality in its own nature is better suited to a pluralistic realism for explaining things as differently and uniquely as they are, rather than interpreting them in a unified ideational form in which they do not actually seem to be.⁶⁶

IX

It also needs to be remarked here that there have been strong arguments for refutation of the Vaiśeṣika doctrine of categories from various schools like Jaina, Bauddha, Sāṃkhya, Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta which have been duly responded by the followers of Kaṇāda. In due course of time, the Nyāya school joined hands with Vaiśeṣika and both of them grew stronger together through mutual complementarity. Accordingly, some efforts were made to include the sixteen *padārtha*-s enumerated in the Nyāya system within the seven *padārtha*-s of Vaiśeṣika⁶⁷ and *vice versa*.

⁶⁵ ‘Śaṭpadārthasādharṃyavaidharṃyatattvajñānaṃ muktasya niḥśreyasakāraṇamiti’. VV, Part. I, p.11

⁶⁶ “Kaṇāda aims at a direct appraisal of the world of existence and he presents the structural build up of this world in terms of the diversities evident in it, i.e. in terms of the categories. No other system of Indian thought seems to aim at this kind of a direct, simple, logical and non-speculative approach to the world of existence”. Veena S. Gajendragadkar, *Kaṇāda’s Doctrine of the Padārthas*, Delhi: 1988, p.24

⁶⁷ (a) *Tarkadīpikā*, Ed. Y.V. Athalye, English Translation R.R. Bodas, Poona: 1974, II Edition, pp.64-65

and *Dinakārī* on *Nyāyasiddhāntmuktāvalī* (NSM), with *Dinakārī* and *Rāmarudrī*,

Ed. Hariram Shukla, Varanasi: 1972, p.31

(b) *Nyāyabhāṣya* on N.S.1/1/9 and *Tarkabhāṣā*, Ed. and Hindi Translation by Ācārya Viśveśvara,

Varanasi:2000 (Tenth Edition), pp.168-169

However, a question arises here that although the founders of the system have accepted the doctrine of *padārtha*-s and have also discussed in detail the notion of *sādharmya* among them, yet why is it that the later scholars in the tradition have strongly opposed *sādrśya* (=resemblance) as an additional category posited by the Mīmāṃsakas?⁶⁸ On minute observation, a plausible response from the Vaiśeṣika point of view could be given that the concept of *sādharmya* signifies similar features and is not a metaphysical category at all, rather it can be subsumed under *sāmānya*⁶⁹ which is already an accepted category of Vaiśeṣika system. But in the earlier phase of Vaiśeṣika, this distinction between *sādharmya* and *sāmānya* might not have been very clear. Therefore, a modern scholar has even gone to the extent of suggesting that *sāmānya* was originally a synonym of *sādharmya*⁷⁰. We may agree with him or not, but this point is worth exploring in detail. *Sādrśya*, on the other hand, has been explained as availability of several similar features in two different objects and has been covered under *sāmānya* itself⁷¹. One of the later scholars has given an interesting argument in this regard by saying that even if *sādrśya* be accepted as an additional *padārtha*, it is not going to help in attainment of *tattvajñāna* directly or indirectly, so there is no need to enumerate it as an independent *padārtha*⁷².

X

In brief, it may be stated that the Vaiśeṣika concept of categories is very comprehensive since it not only presents a profound framework for an exhaustive enumeration of reals, but also outlines several significant inputs in this regard. It is due to

⁶⁸ Vide *Prakaraṇapañcikā* of Śalikanatha Misra, Ed. A.S. Sastri, Varanasi:1963, p.268

⁶⁹ The subtle difference among *sādrśya*, *sādharmya* and *sāmānya* can be grasped through their respective definitions provided by Vaiśeṣika sources such as follow:

(a) ***Sādrśyam***: *Tadbhinnatve sati tadgatabhūyodharmavattvam*. NSM, p.43

(b) ***Sādharmyam***: *Samāno dharmah sadharmah, tasya bhāvaḥ sādharmyam*. Ibid., p.75

(c) ***Sāmānyam***: *Samānānām bhāvaḥ sāmānyam*. NK, p.747

⁷⁰ Harsh Narain, *Evolution of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika Categoriology*, Vol. I, Delhi: 1976, p.178

⁷¹ ‘*Sādrśyam upādhirūpaṁ sāmānyam*’. *Saptapadārthī*. p.46

⁷² *Dinakarī*, pp.44-45

this extensive approach that in later times, even *abhāva* was accepted as an additional category in the list of *padārtha*-s and the system of classical Vaiśeṣika, which first propounded the theory of six categories, came to be known as *Saptapadārthī*. Although many more categories were subsequently proposed to be included in the Vaiśeṣika scheme of things, as is evident from the texts like *Daśapadārthī*⁷³ (retained in the Chinese tradition), yet till date the system of Vaiśeṣika is widely known as an exponent of seven categories.

To conclude, the doctrine of categories in Vaiśeṣika philosophy is a remarkable achievement in the history of Indian philosophical thought which has percolated in several branches of learning⁷⁴ and has influenced the Indian mind for quite long. Although much of the post-Kaṇāda and pre-Praśastapāda Vaiśeṣika literature has unfortunately been lost and the system did not get due recognition because of its materialistic orientation, yet its contribution to the concept of categories in Indian philosophy is undeniable. In the words of Erich Frauwallner: “In spite of that, the historical significance of the Vaiśeṣika is immensely great and the influence, which it has exercised, can be hardly over-estimated. The manner to think-which it has created in the doctrine of the categories, has shone out far and wide and has influenced the new school of the Nyāya until the present times. The opponents of the Vaiśeṣika also could not escape its influence. They have developed and formed a large part of their doctrine in the discussions with the Vaiśeṣika. So in spite of its weaknesses or foibles, this system represents a significant limb of Indian philosophy which assumes an important place inside the whole and without which the remaining would never be fully intelligible.”⁷⁵

⁷³ Hakuju Ui, *Vaiśeṣika Philosophy According to Daśapadārthaśāstra*, Ed. F.W. Thomas, Varanasi: 1962

⁷⁴ Vide Anantlal Thakur, *Origin and Development of the Vaiśeṣika System*, New Delhi:2003, pp.367-457

⁷⁵ Erich Frauwallner, p.180