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The Vaiśeṣika Concept of *Padārtha* and Its Classification

Preliminaries

If I ask you to list all the things you see in your study room, what things will figure in your list? Well, there are various objects in the room. There is a chair, a table, books, pens that have qualities like colour, shape, etc. For example, the table may be brown. One might say that there is some relation between the table and its colour; the book may be placed on the table. Again, there may be some relation (physical contact) between the table and the book. Eventually, a strong wind may enter the room because of which the pen on the table may fall down. This means that some activities or movements also take place in the room. The table is called table because it has a universal property namely tableness, which it shares with other tables. Such universal properties are also there in the room. The table is made of atoms, and each atom has its uniqueness. Such uniquenesses or peculiarities of each atom also exist in the room. Just as there are many “entities” of these kinds in the room, there are many other things not present in the room. For example, there is no horse in the room. However, one can describe the same fact as, “There is absence of a horse in the room”. Hence, absences of various kinds can also form a part of what is there in the room. Now suppose I ask you to prepare a list of all the entities that exist in the world, you would say that it is impossible. Nonetheless, it is certainly possible to make a broad classification or categorization of those entities, which constitute the objects of the world. Vaiśeṣika had provided this kind of list of categories almost two millennia ago. The Vaiśeṣika term for reality as such is “*padārtha*”. Kaṇāda, the author of Vaiśeṣikasūtra, built a system of categories¹ in which he introduced six *padārthas*.² They were *dravya*

¹Generally scholars translate Vaiśeṣika *padārthas* as categories. This translation is inspired by Aristotle’s use of the term “category” to classify predicates that we use to describe things in the world. “In the philosophical vocabulary of European languages, “category” is a derivative of the Greek word first appropriated for philosophical jargon by Aristotle (§7). *Kategoria*, from the verb *kategorēin*, literally “to speak in the marketplace”, entered the language of jurisprudence meaning “to accuse”, that is, to say something about someone. Aristotle adopted it for a classification of the different ways to say things about other things, a classification of kinds of predicates. A philosophical claim lies behind Aristotle’s method. If language is thought reflecting what there is, then the structure of language is the key to the structure of reality. The Indian term for “category”, *padārtha*, the object or meaning (*artha*) of a word (*pada*), suggests a related notion. Though it is not in the Vaiśeṣika texts, some Indian grammarians drew a connection between the first three categories, substance, quality, and action, and the distinction between noun, adjective, and verb. Certain Vaiśeṣika arguments do rely explicitly on word meaning, claiming that words could have no meaning if universals were not real entities” (Ambuel 1998).

² *dharmaviśeṣaprasutāda dravyaguṇakarmasāmānyaviśeṣasamavāyānāma padārthānāma sāharmyavaidharmābhyām tattvajñānānihshreyasama* (Vaiśeṣika Sutra 1.1.4)

(substance), *guṇa* (quality), *karma* (action or motion), *sāmānya* (universal), *viśeṣa* (particularity), and *samavāya* (inherence). At a later stage, *abhāva* (absence) was accepted as the seventh *padārtha*. These seven *padārthas* were accepted, by and large, by all the later Nyāya–Vaiśeṣika philosophers.

Our objective in this module is to study the conception and classification of *padārtha* as described by the Vaiśeṣika system with the help of the following questions:

1. What is *padārtha*?
2. What is the classification of *padārtha*?
3. What is the rationale behind the classification of *padārtha* into seven categories?

What is *Padārtha*?

“*Padārtha*” (*pada*+*artha*) literally means “meaning of a word” (*padasya arthaḥ*). Meaning of a word, according to Vaiśeṣika, is nothing but the object denoted by the word. Hence, *padārtha* means objects referred to or denoted by a word. *Padārtha*, however, does not necessarily mean empirical objects (*vastu*) like a table, a book, or a chair. Instead, it includes everything, which is an object of cognition. An object must exist in reality before it becomes the content of any cognition. *Padārthas* are therefore objective realities. They are not the products of thought; they exist independently of all thoughts referring to them. They exist independent of the knower. However, from the knowledge point of view, according to Vaiśeṣika, *padārthas* are objects of right knowledge.³ This means that whatever we know through perception (*pratyakṣa*) or inference (*anumāna*), the only two sources of knowledge accepted by Vaiśeṣika, is *padārtha*. Praśastapāda in his commentarial work called *Padārthadharmasaṃgraha* states three common characteristics of all the six *padārthas* enumerated in *Vaiśeṣikasūtra*. They are existence, knowableness, and nameableness (*astitva*, *jñeyatva*, *abhidheyatva*). According to these characterizations, each *padārtha* is (objectively) real, it is knowable (through *pramāṇas*), and it can be denoted by a word. They are also treated as definitions of *padārtha*. It means that according to Vaiśeṣikas there is definitional equivalence between “*padārthatva*” and the above three characteristics. This implies not only that every *padārtha* has all the three characteristics, but also that whatever has any of these three characteristics is *padārtha*. In other words, through the notion of *padārtha*, Vaiśeṣikas have tried to give an exhaustive account of whatever is there in the world, whatever can be known to be there, and whatever can be denoted by a word.

³“*Pramiti viśyāḥ padārthāḥ*”-*Saptapadārthi* (2)

Classification of *Padārthas*

As it has been pointed out, Kaṇāda in his classification of categories does not mention *abhāva* as an independent *padārtha*. *Abhāva* as the seventh *padārtha* finds a separate place in the works of later commentators like Śrīdhara (in *Nyāyakandali*), Udayana (in *Kiraṇāvali*), Śivāditya (in *Saptapadārthi*) and Śaṅkara Mīśra (in his commentary *Upaskāra* on Vaiśeṣika Sūtra).

The six-fold or seven-fold classification was not only meant to be collectively exhaustive but also mutually exhaustive⁴. As Halbfass (1992) held, each *padārtha* is ontologically independent and irreducibly distinct.⁵ One and the same entity cannot be, for example, *guṇa* as well as *karma*, or *guṇa* as well as *sāmānya*. Just as they classified *padārthas* into seven kinds, they gave a sub-classification of these *padārthas* following the same policy. The following table gives the classification and sub-classification of *padārtha*, which was broadly accepted by Vaiśeṣika thinkers at a later stage:

Term	Number	Varieties
<i>Padārtha</i>	7	<i>Dravya</i> (substance), <i>guṇa</i> (quality), <i>karma</i> (action or motion), <i>sāmānya</i> (universal), <i>viśeṣa</i> (particularity), <i>samavāya</i> (inherence), and <i>abhāva</i> (absence)
<i>Dravya</i>	9	<i>Ṙṥthvī</i> (earth), <i>jāla</i> (water), <i>tejas</i> (fire), <i>vāyu</i> (air) and <i>ākāśa</i> (ether), <i>kāla</i> (time), <i>dīk</i> (space), <i>ātman</i> (soul), and <i>maṇas</i> (mental organ).
<i>Guṇa</i>	24	<i>Rūpa</i> (colour), <i>rasa</i> (taste), <i>gandha</i> (smell), <i>sparśa</i> (touch), <i>saṅkhyā</i> (number), <i>parimāṇa</i> (dimension), <i>ṣṥṥhaktva</i> (separateness), <i>saṁyoga</i> (conjunction), <i>vibhāga</i> (disjunction), <i>paratva</i> (remoteness in space or time), <i>aparatva</i> (proximity in space or time), <i>gurutva</i> (gravity), <i>dravatva</i> (liquidity) <i>sneha</i> (viscosity), <i>śabda</i> (sound), <i>buddhi</i> (cognition), <i>sukha</i> (pleasure), <i>duḥkha</i> (pain), <i>icchā</i> (desire), <i>dveṣa</i> (aversion), <i>prayatna</i> (effort), <i>dharma</i> (merit), <i>adharmā</i> (demerit), and <i>saṁskāra</i> (disposition)
<i>Karma</i>	5	<i>Utkṣepaṇa</i> (moving upward), <i>avakṣepaṇa</i> (moving downward), <i>ākuṅcana</i> (bending), <i>prasāraṇa</i> (stretching), and <i>gamana</i> (simple locomotion)
<i>Sāmānya</i>	2	<i>Parā jāti</i> (highest universal) and <i>aparā jāti</i> (lower universal)
<i>Viśeṣa</i>	Infinite	-----
<i>Samavāya</i>	1	-----
<i>Abhāva</i>	2	<i>Saṁsargābhāva</i> (relational absence) and <i>anyonyābhava</i> (mutual absence)

⁴Gokhale 1982, p. 207.

⁵This feature according to him was the influence of School of Grammarians on Vaiśeṣika.

Vaiśeṣikas used this technique of mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive classification as a methodological device for critically examining the alleged categories of other schools of philosophy. For example, Mīmāṃsākas of the Prābhākara School had accepted *śakti* (potentiality) as a separate *padārtha*. Vaiśeṣika argue that *śakti* (potentiality) is only the nature of the substance.⁶ Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsākas had accepted darkness (*tamas*) as a separate *dravya* (over and above the nine *dravyas* accepted by Vaiśeṣikas). Vaiśeṣika claimed that darkness is only the absence of light (*abhāva* of *tejas*).⁷ Similarly, they said that *madhyatva* (middleness) may not be a separate *guṇa* (quality) since it is only the negation of priority and posteriority.⁸ In the same vein, Vaiśeṣikas denied similarity (*sādṛśya*), which was accepted as an independent *padārtha* by Prābhākaras. They regarded similarity as universal with a condition (*upādhi*); they accepted heaviness (*gurutva*) as a quality, but not lightness, which was simply the absence of *gurutva* according to them. Similarly, they did not accept number as an independent *padārtha* but included it under *guṇa* (quality).⁹

We do not find uniformity in the classification and sub-classification of *padārthas* in different Vaiśeṣika texts. The theme seems to have developed historically through commentaries and sub-commentaries. The primary source of classification of *padārtha* is *Vaiśeṣikasūtra* written by Kaṇāda, the founder of Vaiśeṣika School.¹⁰ Praśastapāda's *Padārthadharmasamgraha* is a commentary on *Vaiśeṣikasūtra*, but it has the status of an independent work.¹¹ According to some scholars, the original Vaiśeṣika Sūtra mentions three *padārthas*: *Dravya*, *Guṇa*, and *Karma*, only. The other three *Sāmānya*, *Viśeṣa*, and *Samavāya* are later additions.¹² The *Vaiśeṣikasūtra* I.4, which clearly talks about six *padārthas*, according to these scholars might be a later addition. Praśastapāda, however, clearly discusses six *padārthas*. On the contrary, Kaṇāda mentions 17 *Guṇas* (qualities) in the *Vaiśeṣikasūtra*; Praśastapāda mentions 24. Moreover, Kaṇāda in his classification of *padārtha* does

⁶*Śaktir dravyādisvarūpam eva. (Saptapadarthi 56)*

⁷*Andhakāro'pyabhāva eva. (Saptapadarthi 55)*

⁸*Madhyatvam paratvāparatvābhāvaḥ. (Saptapadarthi 54)*

⁹See sections 54–61 of *Saptapadarthi*.

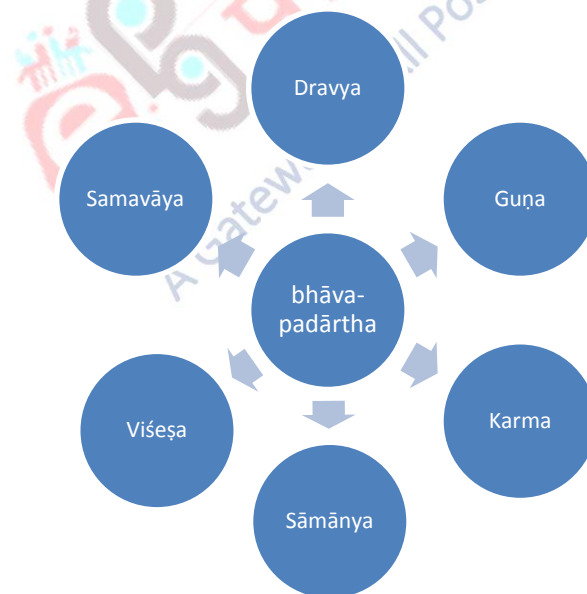
¹⁰Sūtra literature is peculiar to Indian schools. "Sūtra" literally means string or thread. In Indian Philosophy, Sūtra is the text written by founders of school to present the doctrine of the system concerned in the form of "An extremely condensed and cryptic statements (or codes) requiring a commentary or explanation (*bhāṣya*) to make it intelligible" (Grimes 1996, p. 306). Sūtra is an aid to memory and serves as an external mnemonic device to recollect the whole system. Since Sūtras or aphorisms are very condensed, they require interpretation.

¹¹Potter (1977). Hiriyanna (1993 p. 226) says that "The earliest extant commentary upon [Vaiśeṣika Sūtra] is that of Praśastapāda, known as the *bhāṣya*, which probably belongs to the fifth century A.D. But it does not in its exposition follow the order of the sutras. It is a "restatement rather than a commentary"; and in restating the position of the school, it considerably develops it. For instance, the clear formulation of the doctrine of creation with God as creator is found for the first time in it in the history of the Vaiśeṣika school. On account of such developments, the work is to be looked upon more as an independent authority on the doctrine than as a commentary".

¹²Radhakrishnan (1923); Hiriyanna (1993); Phillips (1997). Radhakrishnan (1923 p. 180) in a footnote quotes Vaiśeṣika Sūtra vii.2.3, *Artha iti dravyaguṇakarmasu* and says that "(the Sūtra) i. 1.4, which mentions the six categories, is said to be a later addition".

not mention *abhāva* as an independent *padārtha*. This *padārtha*, namely *abhāva*, finds a separate place in the works of later commentators like Śrīdhara as already mentioned before. Similarly, Īśvara (Paramātman), which was not included by Kaṇāda explicitly in his scheme of *padārtha*, was included in later period as a Kind of ātman. Interestingly, we also come across a Vaiśeṣika system with 10 *padārthas* called Daśapadārtha-śāstra attributed to Candramati. In addition to the seven *padārthas* mentioned above, it lists potentiality (*śakti*), non-potentiality, and commonness.¹³

Though all the seven *padārthas* according to Vaiśeṣikas are real, that is, although they have *astitva* (existence) as a common characteristic, they do not exist on the same level. This gives rise to some conceptual issues. For example, Vaiśeṣikas broadly classified the seven *padārthas* into *bhāva padārtha* (positive entity) and *abhāva padārtha* (negative entity). Positive entities not only exist, but their very nature is *bhāva*, that is, existence of something. Negative entities also exist, but their very nature is “non-existence of something”. Vaiśeṣikas had to accept *abhāva padārtha* because of their moto that every meaningful expression in language must refer to something in the world. In the statement “There is no pot on the floor”, the expression “no” which is a meaningful expression must refer to something. Hence there must be the negative entity namely “absence (of a pot)” to which the expression “no” refers. *Bhāva padārthas* were further divided into six categories: *dravya* (substance), *guṇa* (quality), *karma* (action), *sāmānya* (universal), *viśeṣa* (particular), and *samavāya* (inherence). They are graphically represented below:



But even among these six, the existence of *dravya*, *guṇa*, and *karma* is graded as higher than that of the remaining three. Radhakrishnan explains the difference: “In early Vaiśeṣika, while all categories

¹³See UI H. (1917). *The Vaisakha Philosophy According to the Dasapadartha-Sastra*. London: Royal Asiatic Society. Translated from Chinese into English.

are said to possess the feature of existence in general (*astitva*), a distinction is made between two kinds of being, *sattāsambandha*, ascribed to substances, qualities, and actions, and *svātmasattva* (self-sufficient existence) or the being of generality (universal), particularity (particular), and inherence”.¹⁴

Here, *svātmasattva* means “one’s own existence” or self-identity, which belongs to all *padārthas*. But *sattāsambandha* means relation with *sattā*. Here “*sattā*”, which literally means the same as existence, is a technical term, which means *sattā-jāti* (or *sattā-sāmānya*). According to Vaiśeṣikas, “existence” as a *jāti* exists in only three *padārthas*: *dravya*, *guṇa*, and *karma*. It cannot exist in *sāmānya* because if *sāmānya* also possesses *sāmānya*, then why cannot the latter possess the third *sāmānya* and so on, *ad infinitum*. Hence, there will be infinite regress. *Sattā-sāmānya* cannot exist in *viśeṣa*, because *viśeṣa* by its very nature excludes any kind of “commonness”. *Sattā-sāmānya* cannot exist in *samavāya*, because *samavāya* is one. Moreover, if *sāmānya* exists in anything at all, then it exists there by *samavāya*. Now the question is, by which relation will it exist in *samavāya*? Lastly, *sattā-sāmānya* cannot exist in *abhāva-padārtha*, again because *abhāva* does not have the relation of *samavāya* with anything¹⁵. The conclusion is that although all the six *padārthas* can be called existent in a general sense, only the first three *padārthas* can be said to be existent in the ontological sense of “possession of *sattā-sāmānya*”. In this way, all the six *padārthas* are not at par. Some of them have ontologically higher status than what others have. The seven categories in this way form a hierarchical structure.

The hierarchical order among the Vaiśeṣika categories can be understood in two more ways:

- A) The *padārthas* are related by *ādhāra-ādheya* (substratum–superstratum) relation
- B) Vaiśeṣikas conceive of a hierarchy of *sāmānyas*, which is governed by the pervasion relation (or class–subclass relation).

A) *Ādhāra-ādheya* (substratum–superstratum) relation:

Every entity in the universe is either substratum or superstratum of something. It cannot be completely unrelated to or isolated from all other things.

(a) *Dravya* (substance) is the underlying locus (*āśraya*) of *guṇa* and *karma*. Every quality must reside in some substance by *samavāya* relation. Similarly, every motion must exist in some limited-sized

¹⁴Radhakrishnan (1923, p. 186)

¹⁵This is subject to the doctrine of *jātibādhakas*. It is like a test for calling something a *sāmānya*. The *sāmānya* with *doṣa* (defects) is *upādhi* (condition). (See *Kiraṇāvali*, Saptapadārthi (174); Potter (1977 pp. 135-137; Ganeri (2015). There are six conditions which disqualify any category as *sāmānya*. According to this doctrine, *sāmānyatva*, *viśeṣatva*, *samavāyatva*, and *abhāvatva* cannot be *jātis*. The same principle can be used for showing that *sattā-sāmānya* cannot reside in *sāmānyas*, *viśeṣas*, *samavāya*, and *abhāva*.

substance by *samavāya* relation. We have seen that Vaiśeṣikas classify *dravya* into nine kinds. They are *prthvī*, *jala*, *tejas*, *vāyu*, *ākāśa*, *kāla*, *dīk*, *ātman*, and *manas*. Most of the *dravyas* are defined in terms of the qualities they possess.

(b) We find *ādhāra-ādheya* relation even among *dravyas*. The first four *dravyas* (earth, water, fire, and air) are found in composite form as well as atomic form. But the composite (*avayavin*) *dravyas* are the products of their parts (*avayavas*), and in final analysis they are made of atoms. Now according to Vaiśeṣikas, a composite whole exists in its parts by *samavāya* relation. That is, parts are the substratum of the whole, which they constitute.

(c) All substances, qualities, and motions are the substrata of *sāmānyas*. *Sāmānyas* themselves form hierarchies based on pervasion principle, which we discuss in the next section.

(d) *Viśeṣas* (ultimate particularities) reside in eternal substances by *samavāya* relation. *Viśeṣa* (more specifically, *antya-viśeṣa*) is the ultimate distinguishing feature of an eternal substance.¹⁶ Particularities reside exclusively in the eternal, non-composite substances, that is, in the individual atoms, souls, and mental organs, and in the unitary substances ether, space, and time.¹⁷

(e) *Samavāya* and *abhāva* also reside by *svarūpa-sambandha* in their substrata.

(f) Nyāya-vaiśeṣika thinkers acknowledge the common sense notion that “everything exists in time”. By postulating the relation called temporal relation (*kālika-sambandha*), they say that time is the substratum of everything (“*Sarvādhāraḥ kālaḥ*”).

B) Hierarchy of *sāmānyas* which is governed by the pervasion relation:

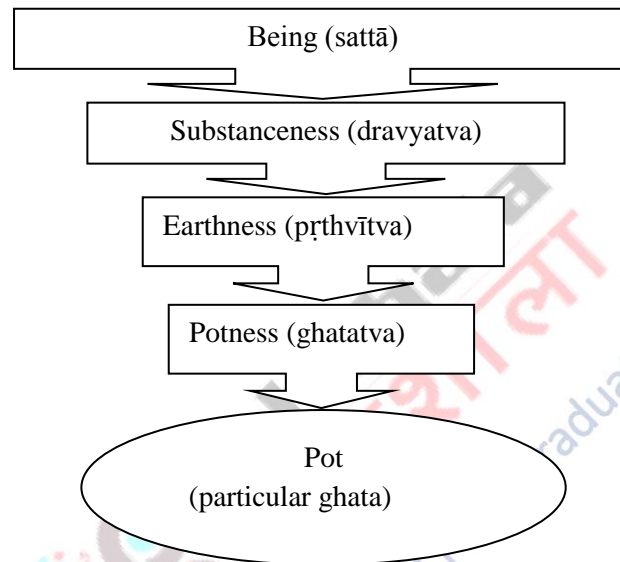
A *sāmānya* (universal) is something which is (i) eternal, (ii) one, and (iii) located or present in all particulars or a plurality of things (substances, qualities, or motions).¹⁸ Take for example a case of a pot. There are many pots in the world, which have potness in common. Pots could be produced and broken, but potness is eternal. According to Vaiśeṣikas, potness is one and eternal, and it resides in all the pots by *samavāya* relation. But according to Vaiśeṣika ontology, every pot is made up of earth (*prthvī*). Similarly, there are things like rock, house, and so on, which are made up of earth. Hence, pots along with these other things also possess in common the *sāmānya* called earthiness. But, we can say about all these earthen things that they, along with water, fire, air, etc., are all substances (*dravyas*). Hence, a pot along with potness and earthiness also has substanceness (*dravyatva*). Now we can go one step further and say that pot is not only a substance but, along with other two categories namely qualities and motions, it has “realness” (*sattā*). Now out of these four *jātis*, namely

¹⁶Viśeṣāstu nitya dravya samavetāḥ (Saptapadārthi 186)

¹⁷Nityadravyavṛttayo vyāvartakā viśeṣāḥ (*Tarkasaṃgrah* 71 Jha 2010)

¹⁸*Tarkasaṃgraha* 70 (Jha 2010). See also Ganeri 2015.

realness, substanceness, earthiness, and potness, the first one, namely realness (*sattā*) is called *parā jāti* (highest universal) since it is present in all the existing things. This *sattā* has the widest scope of its inherence. In the decreasing order of their scope, there are universals of limited pervasions. They are called *aparā jāti* or lower universals. For instance, *dravyatva* (substanceness) will have a greater scope than *prthvītva* (earthness), which in turn will have a greater scope than *ghatatva* (potness). However, all the three will be pervaded by the greatest of all *sattā* (existence).¹⁹ This can be depicted with the help of the following diagram²⁰:



Samavāya as the basis of division of padārtha

In order to understand the defining role of *samavāya* as the basis of the division of *padārtha*, we must understand and distinguish it from other relation, viz. *saṁyoga*. This is an important distinction in this context because, as discussed below, the ontological priority of *padārtha* is determined by *samavāya* and not by *saṁyoga*. However, *samavāya* can be better understood in contrast with *saṁyoga*.

Two Kinds of Relation: *Saṁyoga* (Contact) and *Samavāya* (Inherence):

The Vaiśeṣika system does not talk about relation as an independent *padārtha*, but it discusses relation under two different heads. If there is a physical relation between two separable entities, then it is called *saṁyoga* (contact), and it is included under the broad category called quality. About *saṁyoga* Dasgupta says, “*Saṁyoga* or contact may take place between two things of the same nature which

¹⁹In the Navya–Nyāya language, the relationship between universal and the locus is defined in terms *avacchedaka*–*avachinna* (pervader–pervaded). See Jha 2010, pp. 15–22.

²⁰ It must be noted that *sattā*, *dravyatva*, *prthvītva*, and *ghatatva* inhere in the particular pot (*ghata*). No higher universal inheres in the lower universal. The diagram depicts only the hierarchy of *sāmānyas* based on their scope or pervasion relation. See Raju 1985, p. 261.

exist as disconnected and may later on be connected (*yutasiddha*), such as when I put my pen on the table. The pen and the table are both substances and were disconnected; the *samyoga* relation is the *guṇa* by virtue of which they appear to be connected for a while”.²¹

If on the other hand there is a relation between two inseparable entities, then it should be explained differently. If two things are related in such a way that it is not possible to separate them without destroying them completely, then we must conclude that apart from the two things or an object and its essential quality there must exist a third thing, the *relation of inseparability* itself. Vaiśeṣika terms this relation as *samavāya* (inherence).

Now we are in a position to understand the role of *samavāya* in the classification of *padārtha*. *Samavāya* according to Vaiśeṣikas is obtained between five pairs of relata:

- 1) Substance and quality: A quality exists in a substance by *samavāya*.
- 2) Substance and motion: A motion exists in a substance of limited size by *samavāya*.
- 3) Universal and particular: Universals exist in particulars by *samavāya*.
- 4) Eternal substance and particularity: Particularity exists in an eternal substance by *samavāya*.
- 5) Part and whole: A whole exists in its parts by *samavāya*.

Samavāya in this way always refers to a substratum–superstratum relation of the form “A inheres in B”. We have already seen how Vaiśeṣikas conceive of the whole universe as a relational structure of the substratum–superstratum relations among the seven categories. *Samavāya* plays a key role in this hierarchical structure. Based on the reality of *samavāya* as a fundamental and real relation division, *padārthas* follows the three basic types:

- 1) Anything that does not inhere in anything else but is inhered in

According to this rule, eternal *dravyas* are admitted as those which do not inhere in anything else, but other things (namely universals, qualities, motions, and particularities) inhere in them.

- 2) Anything that inheres in others as well as is inhered by others

This rule allows admission of quality, action, and composite substances. Composite substances inhere in atomic substances and are also inhered in by universals, qualities, and motions. Qualities and actions inhere in substances and have universals such as qualityness and actionness inhering in them, respectively.

²¹Dasgupta (1997), p. 319.

3) Anything that inheres in others but is not inherited in

Sāmānya stands out as something that inheres in plurality of entities. Likewise, nothing inheres in particularities, which, however, inhere in eternal substances.

The fourth type could be conceived as that which neither inheres in anything nor is inherited in by anything. For example, the relation of inherence itself inheres in nothing and has nothing inhering in it. Similarly, an absence (*abhāva*) neither inheres in anything nor is inherited in by anything.

The broad category under which the “order of ontological dependence” can be considered is *dharma–dharmin* (property–property–possessor) or *viśeṣaṇa–viśeṣya* (qualifier–qualificand) relation. For instance, when there is a blue book, then blue is the *dharma* (property), which belongs to the book, and the book is *dharmin* (the property–possessor). In this case, however, there is inherence relation between *dharma* (colour blue) and *dharmin* (book).²² Here, the relation of inherence becomes the most fundamental *padārtha*, which can be used to define the classification of *padārtha*.²³

Conclusion

The Vaiśeṣika pluralism appears grounded in the acceptance of *samavāya* as a relation in the list of categories. Radhakrishnan, however, considers acceptance of *samavāya* as a separate category vulnerable to criticism. “Take away the *samavāya* relation and the whole Vaiśeṣika classification of *padārtha* collapses” (Radhakrishnan, 1923, p. 231). Of course, this approach may not be acceptable to all. How to understand the relation between two entities, which are distinguishable, but not separable, is a question before all metaphysical systems. Vaiśeṣikas answer the question by postulating *samavāya* as a separate category. Other systems have tried to answer it in terms of *tādātmya*, *bhedābheda*, and so on. These different answers have their own problems.

Vaiśeṣika also explains part and whole relation in terms of *samavāya*. This too has been subject to criticism by the Buddhists. Despite the challenges of this kind, the Vaiśeṣika viewpoint about the reality has been appreciated as being in tune with the modern scientific view of reality.

Vaiśeṣika classification of substances and qualities, their approach to *sāmānyas*, *avayavin*, and *abhāva* will be discussed in separate modules. In this module, we were concerned with them in the context of the concept of *padārtha* and the general framework of the seven *padārthas*.

²²Moreover, *dharma–dharmin* relation could be of conjunction. For instance, in the case where fire is in the hill. Here, fire (*dharma*) belongs to the hill (*dharmin*) by the relation of conjunction. Tachikawa 1982, pp. 3–4. See also Ganeri (2015).

²³This principle of classification is based on Udayan’s *Kiraṇāvali*. See also (Ambuel 1998) and (Ganeri 2015).