UNIT 1 : VAIŚEṠIKA : DRAVYA, GUṆA, SĀMĀNYA AND ABHĀVA

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1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to :

- describe briefly of Vaiśeṣika Philosophy
- explain briefly the concept of different categories
- evaluate different kinds of categories.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces you to the concept of Categories in Vaiśeṣika Philosophy. The word Vaiśeṣika is derived from 'Visesa', which means 'particularity'. The Vaiśeṣika philosophy is one of the central schools of Indian philosophy. The founder of Vaiśeṣika Philosophy is Kanāda, who is also known as Kanabhuk, Ulūka and Kāshyapa. Kanāda, the founder of

Vaiśeṣika system wrote the 'Vaiśeṣika Sūtra'. He did not distinctly introduce the idea of God in the Vaiśeṣika Sūtra. There were also three other authors, who explained the nature of God. They are namely Prāsatapada, Sridhara and Udayana.

A Category is called padārtha. Padārtha literally means 'the meaning of a word'. The Vaiśeṣika philosophy accepts six categories and a seventh category that of 'abhāva', was added later on. Kanāda, the founder of Vaiśeṣika, does not give 'abhāva' the status of a category, and finally it was recognized by the later Vaiśeṣika. The seven categories are as follows:

1) Substance (dravya), 2) Quality (guṇa), 3) Action (karma), 4) Generality (sāmānya), 5) Particularity (Vishesa), 6) Inherence (samavāya) and 7) Non-existence (abhāva).

1.3 VAIŚEṢIKA EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge is a quality of the self. Knowledge is mainly of two kinds: valid knowledge and invalid knowledge. Valid knowledge is that which represents the real character of its object. Invalid knowledge is that which does not represent the real character of its object. Valid knowledge is of four kinds : 1) Perception, 2) Inference, 3) Recollection and 4) Intuition. Invalid knowledge is also of four kinds : 1) Doubt, 2) Illusion, 3) Indefinite perception and 4) Dream.

Let us now discuss these types of both valid & invalid knowledge.

1.3.1 Valid Knowledge

Perception : Regarding valid knowledge perception can be mentioned as internal or external. Perception is a kind of knowledge and is the attribute of the self. In internal perception, the mind which is the internal organ comes into contact with the physical states like cognition, pleasure, pain, desire, aversion and volition etc. External perception takes place when the five external organs of sense come into contact with the external objects. External perception is of five kinds, olfactory, gustatory, visual, tactual and auditory.

Inference : The word 'inference' or anumāna comes from two words. The two words are 'anu' and 'mana'. Anu means after and māna means knowledge. So, inference or anumāna is a knowledge which arises after other knowledge. For example, from smoke the existence of a fire is inferred. From the heating of water the existence of a fire is inferred.

Recollection : Recollection considers the real nature of an object perceived in the past. Perception or thought is the existing cause of recollection.

Intuition: Intuition is regarded as the immediate conception of the real nature of the past, present and future objects. It is produced by the internal organ not by the external sense-organs.

1.3.2 Invalid Knowledge

Doubt : Regarding invalid knowledge, doubt is indefinite knowledge. Whenever we perceive the common quality of two objects and the recollection of their peculiar qualities generates a doubt as to whether the object perceived is one or the other. When we see a rope as a rope we have the right knowledge. If we are uncertain whether it is a rope or a snake, we have doubt.

Illusion : Illusion is regarded as knowledge of one object as different from another. It is a definite knowledge which does not consider the real nature of an object. A cow is misperceived as a horse. It is also a wrong perception by a sense organ.

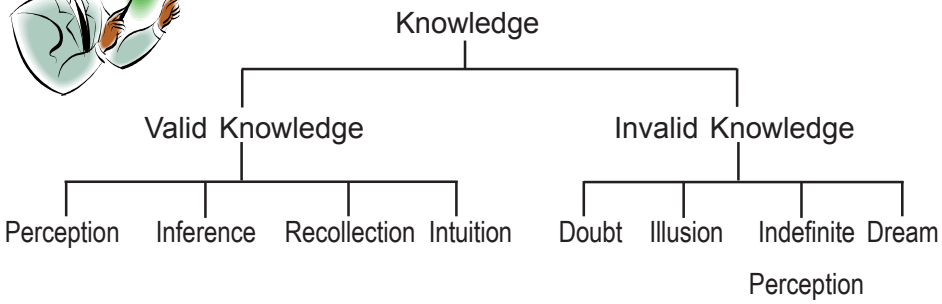
Indefinite perception : When a familiar or an unfamiliar object is perceived as 'something', we have indefinite perception. A person unfamiliar with a Jackfruit tree has an indefinite perception of it. He perceives the genus of Jackfruit tree. But he does not know that its name is Jackfruit tree. So, he has indefinite knowledge of its name. His indefinite perception of the Jackfruit tree is 'something'.

Dream : Dream is regarded as the mental perception of a person though the sense-organs and these sense organs have ceased to

function. We have seen some unreal objects through sense-organs in dreams.



LET US KNOW





ACTIVITY 1.1

a) What do you mean by categories in Vaiśeṣika philosophy?

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b) What are the role of five elements in substance?

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1. What are the kinds of valid knowledge, according to Vaiśeṣika system?

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Q.2. What are the kinds of invalid knowledge in Vaiśeṣika system?

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Q.3. State whether the following statements are true or false :

a) Inference is a knowledge which involves after other knowledge. (True / False)

b) Doubt is invalid knowledge. (True / False)

Q.4. Mention the categories of Vaiśeṣika system.

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Q.5. What are two classes of Vaiśeṣika system under which the categories are Divided?

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Q.6. What do you mean by intuition? (Answer in about 30 words)

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1.4 KINDS OF CATEGORIES : WHAT THEY ARE

Category means Padārtha in Vaiśeṣika Philosophy. Padārtha literally means 'the meaning of a word'. The Vaiśeṣika philosophy divides all existent reals in two classes– Bhāva or being and Abhāva or non-being. The first six categories comes under Bhāva and the seventh in Abhāva. The seven categories are :

Bhāva :

1. Substance (Dravya)
2. Quality (Guṇa)
3. Action (Karma)
4. Generality (Sāmānya)
5. Particularly (Visheṣa)
6. Inherence (Samavāya)

Abhāva :

7. Non-existence (Abhāva)

SUBSTANCE (DRAVYA) : Kanāda, the founder of Vaiśeṣika system defines substance as an entity or existence which has qualities or actions. It has a real and objective existence. A substance is the material or inherent cause of its effect. Threads are the inherent cause of a cloth.

QUALITY (GUṆA) : Quality or guṇa cannot exist independently by itself unlike substance. A quality is different from substance and action. A quality always inheres in a substance. It is also devoid of action.

ACTION (KARMA) : Action or Karma is a physical motion. An action stays in one substance only. It does not stay in many substance. It is non-eternal and exists in a non-eternal substance. There are five kinds of action:

1) Upward Motion (Utksepana), 2) Downward Motion (Avaksepana), 3) Contraction (Akunchana), 4) Expansion (Prasārana), 5) Locomotion (Gamana)

GENERALITY (SĀMĀNYA) : According to Vaiśeṣika, generality is the objective basis of the notion of common characters among many individuals, who are different from one another. It is the essential and common character of many individuals.

PARTICULARITY (VISEṢA) : It may be noted that every individual is a particular and a single. Particularity or Viśeṣa enables us to perceive things as different from one another. According to Kanāda, it is one of the ultimate distinguishing features of an eternal substance.

INHERENCE (SĀMĀVAYA) : Inherence or sāmāvaya is regarded as an independent category. According to Kanāda, it is the relation between cause and effect. It is one, because it has the distinguishing feature. It is also eternal.

NON-EXISTENCE (ABHĀVA) : Abhāva is a negative category. Kanāda, the founder of Vaiśeṣika system, does not give 'abhāva' the status of a category. But it was recognized by the later Vaiśeṣika. Abhāva is relative in its conception. There are four kinds of non-existence or abhāva– (1) Antecedent non-existence (Pragabhava), (2) Subsequent non-existence (Pradhavamsabhava), (3) Mutual non-existence (Anyonyābhāva) and (4) Absolute non-existence (Atyantā bhava)

Let us now discuss the categories of Substance, Quality, Sāmānya and Abhāva in detail.

1.5 SUBSTANCES : (DRAVYA) WHAT IT IS



Substratum : It means underlying layer.

The first category of Vaiśeṣika philosophy is substance. Substance can be defined as ***substratum*** of qualities and actions. Qualities and actions cannot be found without substance. It can be stated that substance is the basis of qualities and actions, actual or potential, present or future. Substance cannot be defined apart from qualities and actions. Ultimate substances are eternal, independent and individual also. The Vaiśeṣika philosophy is pluralistic and realistic, but this philosophy is not materialistic. The substances are nine that include material and spiritual substances. The Vaiśeṣika system also admits spiritual substances. The nine substances are : 1) Earth (Prithivi), 2) Water (AP), 3) Fire (Tejas), 4) Air (Vayu), 5) Ether (Akasha), 6) Time (Kāla), 7) Space (Dik), 6) Spirit (Atman) and 9) Mind (Manas)

Again, substance indicates the absolute, the self-subsistence, and independent nature of things. It can be noted that compound substances which are made of parts and arise out of the simple ultimate substances are necessarily impermanent. It is also subject to production and destruction. On the other hand, simple ultimate substances which are the material causes of the compound substances are eternal, and it is also not subject to production and destruction. Substance is not a mere collection of qualities and actions. The Buddhist realists maintain that it is not a mere aggregate of qualities. Again, it is also not a mere complex of ideas as the Buddhist idealist maintains. Substance has a real, objective existence. It differs from its qualities and actions, because it is their substrate. So, if it were not different from them, it would not be their ***substrate***. Qualities and action are not self-existent, but they exist in a substance. It is stated that the relation between a substance and its qualities and action is inherence or sāmāvaya.



Substrate : A Substance or layer which is under something or on which something happens.

It can be stated that a substance is the material cause of its effect. This characteristic distinguishes it from a quality and an action which are non-inherent causes. Threads of a cloth are the inherent cause. On the other hand, the conjunction of threads, which is a quality, is its non-inherent

cause. Substance has an existence over and above that of its parts. It can be noted that the relation between a material cause and its product is inherence or sāmāvaya.



Transient : means not being.

Earth, water, fire, air and ether are called five elements (bhūtta). These do not really signify the compound ***transient*** objects made out of them. But these are ultimate elements. Ether is not atomic but infinite and eternal. These are also physical. Each of them possesses a peculiar quality which distinguishes it from the rest. The peculiar qualities of earth, water, fire, air and ether are smell, taste, colour, touch and sound respectively which are sensed by the five external senses. The external senses are constituted by the respective elements whose specific qualities are also sensed by them. The sense of smell is constituted by the element of earth and so on. Time and space are one each, eternal and all-pervading. They are also infinite and imperceptible. It is also partless and indivisible. They are spoken of as having parts and divisions. Time is the cause of our cognitions of past, present and future and of 'younger' and 'older'. Again, space (dik) is the cause of our cognitions of 'east' and 'west', 'here' and 'there', 'near' and 'far'. It is also different from ether (akasha) which is a notified substratum of the quality of sound.

There are also innumerable souls. Again, each soul is individual, eternal, independent and all-pervading. It is regarded as the substratum of the quality of consciousness. But we know that consciousness is not the essence of the self. It is also not an inseparable quality of the self. It can be regarded as an adventitious attribute possessed by the self. It is regarded as adventitious because the self does not possess this quality during sleep. The consciousness of the quality must exist somewhere. It is not regarded as the property of the body or the mind or even the senses. It must exist in the self.



Cognation : In philosophy & psychology, it means a mental process that makes one want to do something.

Again, other important qualities possessed by the self are desire, and volition. Jnana, ichchha and yatna are ***cognition***, affection and conation respectively. Self is the substance directly known through expressions : 'I am happy', 'I know' etc. Mind or manas is accepted as a substance also. It is regarded as internal sense. It can be stated as atomic

but it does not give rise to compound objects. It is again many and each is eternal and imperceptible. But we know each self has a mind also. The self comes into contact with the objects. It has existence and its existence is inferred from the fact that the self must perceive internal states of cognition. Again, in the perception of external objects the mind is selective and active. We do not perceive colour, touch, taste, smell and sound. But all the external senses may be in contact with their objects. It can be noted that for perception attention is required and attention is the active turning of the mind towards the objects of perception. So, in perception the self must fix the manas on the object of perception. Therefore, manas or mind is a substance and it is atomic and partless. It also comes into contact with one sense only at one time. All the nine substances of the Vaiśeṣika are objectives realities. Earth, water, fire, air, and manas are also atomic and eternal. The first four produce composite things, but mind or manas does not. It is already pointed out that earth, water, fire, air and ether are the five elements. Time and space are objective and not subjective. Ether, space, time and soul are all pervading and eternal.

It can be pointed out that a substance has the genus of substance. Substance can be mentioned as eternal and non-eternal. Again, non-eternal substances consist of parts, and are produced by their combination and destroyed by their separation. Composite substances are non-eternal. They are not independent and self-subsistent, but they exist in their component parts. But the atoms like earth, water, fire and air are eternal. They are not produced and destroyed. They are independent and self-existent.

1.6 QUALITY (GUṆA)

The second category of Vaiśeṣika philosophy is quality or guna. Quality can not exist independently by itself. A quality can be defined as devoid of qualities and it is not an unconditional cause of conjunction and disjunction. Quality or guna inheres in a substance. It can be conceived, thought and named and therefore it is called an independent reality. The qualities are therefore called objective entities. They are not necessarily eternal. They also include both material and mental qualities.

Prasastapāda adds one characteristic of a quality. He defines it as an entity related to the gunus of quality, continual in a substance, and devoid of quality and action. Qualities inhere in a substance. But sometimes a substance also inheres in another substance. A composite substance inheres in its component parts. Therefore, a quality is defined as devoid of qualities. Again, a composite substance is not devoid of qualities, but a quality is devoid of qualities. An action also inheres in a substance. It is also devoid of quality. It is an unconditional cause of conjunction and disjunction. But a quality is not an unconditional cause of conjunction and disjunction. So a quality is different from an action.

Again, it can be stated that a quality is devoid of action. A substance has an action. Generally, a quality has no motion, but it is motion because its substrate is in motion. A quality is devoid of quality. The quality of a substance is number. But it can be stated that it is not a quality of its colours, tastes and other qualities. A quality has also a community– the genus of quality. Again, a quality differs from community, especially from particularity and inherence, which are devoid of community. A quality differs from a substance, because it is devoid of qualities. It also differs from an action, which is devoid of qualities. But it is an unconditional cause of conjunction and disjunction.

A quality is not their unconditional cause. The quality of the genus exists in a quality. It also possesses an inferior community also. It can be noted that a colour possesses the genus of colour. Kanāda, the founder of Vaiśeṣika philosophy mentions seventeen qualities. Again, seven more qualities are added by Prashastapāda. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school has recognised these twenty-four qualities. It is also not necessary to mention them all as they are not equally important. They include material as well as spiritual properties. It is pointed out that smell is the quality of earth, taste of water, colour of fire, touch of air, and sound of ether.



ACTIVITY : 1.2

a) What is the distinction between Substance and Quality, and action?

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b) Do you think that quality is an independent reality? If yes, why?

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.7. State whether the following statements are True or False :

a) Padārtha literally means the meaning of a word. (True / False)

b) A quality always inheres in a Substance. (True / False)

c) Generality is the common characteristics of many individuals. (True / False)

d) Vaiśeṣika philosophy is not materialistic. (True / False)

e) Substance is the substratum of qualities and action. (True / False)

Q.8. Give the definition of the Category-Substance. (Answer in about 40 words)

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Q.9. What is Samavāya, according to Vaiśeṣika system.(Answer in about 30 words)

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Q.10. How the category-Quality is defined? (Answer in about 20 words)

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Q.11. What are the number of qualities recognized by Kanada?

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1.7 GENERALITY (SĀMĀNYA)

The fourth category of Vaiśeṣika philosophy is Generality or Sāmānya. Sāmānya is class-essence, class-concept or the universal. The Sāmānya stands, not for the class, but for the common characteristic of certain individuals. It does not stand for the class also. Sāmānya is the cause of assimilation. It is natural and not accidental. It is one, eternal and it exists in many individuals. Community inheres in many individuals. There is the genus of cow in many cows, which is one and not different in different individual cows.

Generality inheres in all its proper individuals. From this point it can be pointed out that the genus of cow exists in all individual cows. But it does not exist in all individual cows, sheep, goats etc. It can not be perceived in all individuals. Whenever a community is not limited to a particular place, but it exists in all its proper individual.

Community or Generality inheres in all its proper individuals with an identical nature.

Sāmānya also exists in many individuals. The genus of cow does not exist in one cow, but it exists in all cows. There is no genus of ether, because it is one.

Community is the cause of common character in many individuals. It can be asserted as universal class-essence existing in many similar individuals. A concept is produced by a community.

Community, again exists at the same time in its identical nature in many individuals. Community does not stop to exist in one individual, when it exist in another individual.

Community is one in many individuals, and therefore it is eternal. One community could not subsist in many non-eternal individuals, if it were not eternal.

Again, community is different from the individuals. If community were not different from its substrates, then it would be produced and destroyed with them. They are also temporary, while it is eternal. Community can be produced by assimilative cognition, which also apprehends their common character.

The colour of genus is inferior to the genus of quality. The genus of upward motion is inferior to the genus of motion. There is the highest genus (Parājāti) and the lowest species (Aparājāti)

The universals also exist in substance, qualities and actions. They are also divided in two kinds– higher and lower. Being (Satta) is the highest generality. Being is common in substance, qualities and action. But being is different from them. On the other hand, substance, qualities and actions are different from one another, but being is identical in them. Being includes everything and itself is not included in anything. Again, another generality is also lower, because it includes a limited number of things. One universal can not exist in another universal. If a universal can exist in another universal, then an individual may be a horse, a cow and a man at the same time. Therefore, only one universal can exist in all individuals of a class.

Realism, conceptualism and nominalism are the three views that appear in Indian Philosophy in the schools of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Jainism and Vedānta, and Buddhism respectively. The universal are only names and not reals according to it. A cow is called a 'cow' not because it shares the universal 'cowness'. Jainism and Vedānta maintain that the universal is not a mere name. They believe in conceptualism. But Jainism and Vedānta do not maintain objective and independent reality of the universal over and above the particulars. The universal also exists in the particulars apart from our mind in the particulars. The Vaiśeṣika School is an advocate of realism. It also believes that both the particulars and the universals are real.



Fragments: a small portion.

1.8 NON-EXISTENCE (ABHĀVA)

The seventh category of Vaiśeṣika philosophy is non-existence or Abhāva. Non-existence is absolutely necessary for the Vaiśeṣika philosophy. Non existence or abhava is four kinds– 1) Antecedent non-existence (Prāgabhava), 2) Subsequent non-existence (Pradhvamsabhāva), 3) Mutual non-existence (Anyonyabhāva), and 4) Absolute non-existence (Atyanta bhāva). Antecedent non-existence is the non-existence of a thing before its production. This non-existence has no beginning, but it has an end. It ends when the things is produced. For example, a pot does not exist before its production and destruction. Subsequent non-existence is the non-existence of a thing after its destruction. It has a beginning but it has no end. Mutual non-existence is the non-existence of a thing as another thing, which is different from it. Absolute non-existence implies the absence of a relation between two things in the past, the present and the future. It is a pseudo-idea. For example, hare's horn, sky-flowers etc.



ACTIVITY 1.3

a) What is the difference between Kārma and quality? Discuss.

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b) What is your view about ultimate substance? Discuss.

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c) In what condition, quality and community can be differentiated? Discuss.

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.12. What is Sāmānya or Generality in Vaiśeṣika philosophy?

(Answer in about 60 words)

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Q.13. What are the two Indian Schools which believe in conceptualism?

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Q.14. What are the four kinds of the categories non-existence or abh□va?

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Q.15. State whether the following statements are True or False :

a) Being is the highest generality. (True/False)

b) Community is eternal. (True/False)



1.9 LET US SUM UP

- The categories play a vital role in the Vaiśeṣika system.
- The Vaiśeṣika system accepts the seven categories
- Category means pad□rtha.
- The word Vaiśeṣika is derived from 'Visesa', which means 'particularity'.
- The founder of Vaiśeṣika Philosophy is Kanāda, who is also known as Kanabhuk, Ulūka and Kashyapa. Kanāda, the founder of Vaiśeṣika system wrote the 'Vaiśeṣika Sūtra'.
- The Vaiśeṣika philosophy accepts six categories.

- Knowledge is mainly of two kinds: valid knowledge and invalid knowledge.
- Valid knowledge is of four kinds : 1) Perception, 2) Inference, 3) Recollection and 4) Intuition.
- Invalid knowledge is also of four kinds : 1) Doubt, 2) Illusion, 3) Indefinite perception and 4) Dream.
- The Vaiśeṣika philosophy divides all existent reals in two classes– Bhāva or being and Abhāva or non-being.
- A quality can be defined as devoid of qualities and it is not an unconditional cause of conjunction and disjunction.
- Kanāda, the founder of Vaiśeṣika system defines substance as an entity or existence which has qualities or actions.
- The Sāmānya stands, not for the class, but for the common characteristic of certain individuals.
- Non existence or abhava is four kinds– 1) Antecedent non-existence (Pragabhāva), 2) Subsequent non-existence (Pradhvamsabhāva), 3) Mutual non-existence (Anyonyabhāva), and 4) Absolute non-existence (Atyantabhāva).



1.10 FURTHER READINGS

1) Chatterjee, S. C. & Dutta, D. M. (1958). *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*. University of Calcutta.
2) Dasgupta, S. N. (1991). *A History of Indian Philosophy*. Motilal Banarasi Publication.
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4) Kappor, Subodh. (2004). *The Systems of Indian Philosophy*. Cosmo Publication.
5) Radhakrishnan, S. (1923). *Indian Philosophy* (2 volumes). Oxford: University Press.
6) Sharma, C. D. (1973). *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy*. Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass.

7) Sinha, Jadunath. (1999). *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*. Pilgrims Books.



1.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No. 1 : Perception, Inference, Recollection and Intution.

Ans. to Q. No. 2 : Doubt, Illusion, Indefinite perception and Dream.

Ans. to Q. No. 3 : a) True b) True

Ans. to Q. No. 4 : (1) Substance (dravya), (2) Quality (guna), (3) Action (karma), (4) Generality (sāmānya), (5) Particularity (Visheṣa), (6) Inherence (sāmāvaya) and (7) Non-existence (abhāva)

Ans. to Q. No. 5 : Bhāba and Abhāva

Ans. to Q. No. 6 : Intution is considered as the immediate apprehension of the real nature of object of the past, present and future object. This kind of knowledge is acquired through mind.

Ans. to Q. No. 7 : a) True b)True c)True d) True e)True

Ans. to Q. No. 8 : Substance is the substratum of qualities and actions. It can be stated that qualities and actions cannot be found exist without substance. Therefore, it is the basis of qualities and actions, actual or potential, present or future.

Ans. to Q. No. 9 : According to Kanāda, the relation between material cause and its effect is known as Sāmāvaya or Inherence. But, it is not the conjunction of material cause and its effect.

Ans. to Q. No. 10 : According to Kanāda, Quality is defined as devoid of qualities, but it is not an unconditional cause of conjunction and disjunction

Ans. to Q. No. 11 : Seventeen qualities

Ans. to Q. No. 12 : It is class essence, class concept or the universal. It stands not for the class, but for the common characteristics of certain individuals. As for instance, there is the genus of cow in many cows. It indicates that the genus of cows exist in all individual cows, which is one and not different in different individual cows.

Ans. to Q. No. 13 : Nyāya – Vaiśeṣika and Jainism

Ans. to Q. No. 14 : Antecedent non-existence, Subsequent-nonexistence, Mutual non-existence and Absolute non-existence.

Ans. to Q. No. 15 : a) True b) True



1.12 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very short Questions :

Q.1. What are the seven categories?

Q.2. What are the four kinds of valid knowledge?

Q.3. Who is the founder of Vaiśeṣika system?

Q.4. Give an example of antecedent non-existence.

Q.5. What are the nine substances in Vaiśeṣika system?

B) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q.1. Briefly explain the category of Abhāva.

Q.2. What is Generality? Discuss briefly.

Q.3. What is valid knowledge, according to Vaiśeṣika system?

Q.4. Briefly explain the four kinds of Abhāva.

C) Short notes on (Answer each question in about 150 words)

a) Abhāva b) Substance

c) Quality d) Genarality

D) Distinguish between (Answer each question in about 150 words)

a**)** Generality and Particularity

b**)** Valid knowledge and Invalid knowledge

E) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q.1. Discuss the different kinds of categories in Vaiśeṣika Philosophy.

Q.2. Evaluate the epistemology of Vaiśeṣika philosophy.

Q.3. How many substances are accepted by Vaiśeṣika philosophy? Discuss the role of Substances in that philosophy.

Q.4. Explain with example the different kinds of abh▫va.

Q.5. Explain the category of Substance.

Q.6. Define the category of Quality. Explain its nature.

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