Introduction

It is the belief in the reality of the external world independent of knowing mind wherein the very foundation of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika system of philosophy is laid. This system admits no reality of a higher or lower status than that of this empirical world. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas equate reality with existence, and advance that samavāya, a relation is an existent entity like its two terms.

Before getting into the doctrine of samavāya of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas we require two things to be done as the groundwork of this thesis:

(i) a preliminary survey of their ontology,
(ii) a general study of their conception of relation.

A preliminary survey of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika ontology:

The Vaiśeṣikas have a definite scheme of categories (padārtha) to describe the reality. This scheme is intact recognised by the Naiyāyikas though they have a different scheme of categories of their own. The Vaiśeṣikas thematically admit seven categories (though Kaṇāḍa has mentioned only six in his Vaiśeṣika Śūtra), while the Naiyāyikas admit sixteen

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1. "...dravyagunakarmmasāmānyaviśeṣasamavāyānāṃ padārthānām ..."
   - Vaiśeṣika Śūtra 1-1-4, Kaṇāḍa (40), pp. 4-5.
categories. The Naiyāyikas, however, are not opposed to the seven categories of the Vaiśeṣikas. They rather accommodate the seven in their own system of sixteen categories.

The empirical world is explained in the Vaiśeṣika system to be coherently systematized by seven categories. They are:

1. dravya or substance,
2. guna or quality,
3. karma or action,
4. sāmānya or universal,
5. viśeṣa or ultimate-individuator,
6. samavāya or inherence,
7. abhāva or absence.


3. 'ete ca padārthā vaiśeṣikanaye prasiddhāḥ, naiyāyikānāmapyaviruddhahāḥ." - Visvanatha (77), P.31.

Dravya: Dravya or substance is, according to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas, the substratum of qualities and actions. Qualities and actions

5 The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas do not think in the fashion of the West that substance is that which has an independent being. Platonic substances have this being, but they are not physical in nature. They are the eternal forms of a transcendent world. Substance, according to Aristotle, is being qua being. This being is the ground of all becoming. It is compound entity in the bosom of which the object and its form are unified. Descartes explains substance as an existent thing which requires nothing but itself in order to exist. In the strict sense of this definition God alone is the substance, because he alone exists in his own right, and nothing else is needed for his existence. But in a relaxed sense he has accepted two other substances - matter and mind -, because for their existence they depend on nothing but God. In Spinoza's thought this Cartesian dualism is exterminated into one infinite substance, which exists in itself and conceived by means of itself. Thus in the Western philosophy the conception of substance is mainly based on the conception of self-existence. Leibnitz, however, replaces the notion of self-existence by that of self-activity. But the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas do not hold self-existence to be the criterion of substancehood. They are rather nearer to Locke on the point that substance is the substratum of qualities. But they are far from the agnostic position of Locke that substance is the unknown substratum of known qualities. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas think that the knowledge of the qualities
cannot reside anywhere but in substance. Substance alone can be their substratum. Non-eternal substances remain qualities (nirguna) at the moment of their origination. Again there are many all-pervading substances like self, etc. which have no action.

Thus, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas introduce substance as the inherent cause of a product. By inherent cause they mean the component(s) in which something is produced. Prof. D. N. Shastri has rightly pointed out in his Critique Of Indian Realism that the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory of inherent cause is usually misunderstood on the point that the cloth is produced out of the threads. To quote him, "Cloth is not produced, according to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory, out of the yarn but it is produced in the yarn, ...." Any composite object, according to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas, is a product of three causes, namely,

(i) samavāyi kārana or the inherent cause,

(ii) asamavāyi kārana or the non-inherent cause,

(iii) nimitta kārana or the efficient cause.

A jar, for example, is a composite object. Its parts in which the jar is produced are its inherent cause. The non-inherent cause of it is the conjunction (saṃyoga) of the parts of the jar. The potter or the producer of the jar is its efficient cause. In absence of any one of three causes the jar cannot be brought into existence. The inherent cause of such

occurs along with the knowledge of the substance in which the qualities reside.

6 Shastri, D. N. (67), P. 34.
product cannot be anything other than substance. The notion of substance that it is the inherent cause of a product has no parallel in the East or in the West.

As regards the number of substance the position of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas is pluralistic. They admit nine types of substance. They are:

1. kṣiti or earth,
2. ap or water,
3. teja or fire,
4. vāyu or air,
5. ākāśa,
6. dik or space,
7. kāla or time,
8. ātmā or self,
9. manas or mind.

There are atoms of earth, water, fire and air. These atoms and the other five types of substances are all eternal. The atoms, selves and minds are infinite in number, while ākāśa, space and time are singular. The non-eternal substances are all products of atoms. They exist only as the combinations of atoms. When these atoms disintegrate, they are destroyed.

Guna: According to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas substance alone possesses guna or quality. Some qualities like number, magnitude, etc.

7 No corresponding English word is found which at least approximates the Vaiśeṣika conception of ākāśa.
are possessed by many substances, but some others like sound, cognition, etc. by some particular substances, as sound by ākāśa, cognition by self, etc. Those qualities which are possessed by many substances are general qualities, and those which are possessed by some particular substance, and that particular substance alone, are special qualities. Of course, space, time and mind have no special quality.

The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas hold the view that a quality must inhere in substance, and not elsewhere. It is devoid of quality and action. Qualities are of twenty four types. They are:

(1) rūpa or colour,
(2) rasa or taste,
(3) gandha or smell,
(4) sparsa or touch,
(5) śabda or sound,
(6) samkhyā or number,
(7) parimāṇa or magnitude,
(8) prthaktva or distinction,
(9) samyoga or conjunction,
(10) vibhāga or disjunction,
(11) paratva or remoteness,
(12) aparatva or proximity,
(13) gurutva or gravity,
(14) dravatva or fluidity,
(15) sneha or viscosity,
(16) buddhi or cognition,
(17) sukha or pleasure,
(18) duḥkha or pain,
(19) icchā or desire,
(20) dveṣa or aversion,
(21) prayatna or effort,
(22) dharma or virtue,
(23) adharma or vice,
(24) saṃskāra or tendency.

Qualities may be eternal and non-eternal both. The qualities of perceptible substances are perceptually known. A quality cannot exist without substance, though a non-eternal substance remains bereft of quality at the moment of its origination. Qualities, according to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas, are all objective i.e. extramental.

Karma : Karma or action (or motion), like quality cannot exist without residing in some substance. Action is possessed by substance alone, as quality is. Ubiquitous substances are, however, actionless. Action is the non-inherent cause of conjunction and disjunction.

8 Sound, of course, is known by perception though ākāśa in which sound inheres in imperceptible.

9 In order to explain error Locke admits a set of qualities which he calls secondary qualities. These qualities are external to substance. They are ascribed to substance by the knowing mind. But on this point the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas are of the opinion that all qualities belong to substance.
Action, according to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas, is a fresh space-contact of a substance preceded by the destruction of its prior space-contact. One action cannot be conceived to reside in many substances, because if it is so, then all those substances in which an action is supposed to exist will have to lose the same space-contact and come in another same space-contact at the same time. But it is not possible because two substances cannot be located on one and the same point of space simultaneously.

So one action can exist in only one substance. Again only one action can exist in one substance. If different actions are supposed to exist at a time in one substance, then those actions will be either equally strong, or they will vary in degree of their strength. If they vary, then they will produce a riot in which the weaker actions will disappear and the strongest one will occupy the substance. And if they are equally strong then they will equally hinder each other, and this will rather secure the stability instead of action of the substance.

The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas admit five types of actions. They are:

1. utkṣepaṇa or upward motion,
2. avakṣepaṇa or downward motion,
3. ākūñcana or contraction,
4. prasārana or expansion,
5. gamana or locomotion.

Other motions are classed under locomotion.

The importance of the category of action in the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika
ontology is that the origination of the non-eternal substances cannot be accounted for without it. The parts cannot produce the composite whole until and unless action produces conjunction in them.

Sāmān ya: Sāmān ya or universal is the generic feature of substance, quality and action. By universal what is meant is the class-essence or the class-characteristic which is commonly shared by all the particulars of a class. It is by means of a universal that certain particulars are known to be of a class as well as to be different from the particulars of other classes.

10. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory of universal comes nearer to Platonic theory of universal on the following points:
   First, in both the theories it is held that universals are eternal.
   Secondly, both the theories hold that universals are immutable while particulars undergo changes.
   Thirdly, according to both the theories universals have extramental reality. They exist independently of any knowing mind.
   Fourthly, according to both the theories universals do not depend upon the particulars for their existence. They are by no means affected or reacted by the particulars.
   Fifthly, in both the theories the plurality of universals is admitted. Despite the above points of affinity there is a gulf of difference between the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory of universal and Plato's theory of universal.
Universals are infinite in number, and they are all eternal. A universal continues to exist even when all the individuals (vyakti) under it cease to exist. Universals inhere only in substance, quality and action. In relation to universal they may be called individuals instead of particulars, because the word 'individual' appears to be more appropriate to express the notion of vyakti. Quality and action are destroyed when their substratum, substance, is destroyed. The non-eternal substances are destroyed when their parts disintegrate. But a universal is never destroyed with the destruction of its individuals. At the destruction of all the individuals of a particular universal, the universal exists in time as before.

10. First, the universals of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas are empirical entities, but the Platonic universals are transcendental entities. The universals of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas are perceived on the occasions of the perception of the particulars related with them. But the universals of Plato are sensually intangible. It is nous or reason par excellence by which Plato's universals are known.

Secondly, though both Plato and the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas agree on the point that particulars have nothing to contribute to the reality of universals, still they are not at one regarding their ontological status. Platonic universals are real as forms or ideas of which the particulars are copies or mere appearances. But according to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas particulars are as real as the universals.
It is not the fact that first an individual comes into existence and then a certain universal rides on it. An individual is born bearing its universal. It is the universal which characterises an individual as this or that and identifies it to be of a certain class. A universal, thus, imparts to an individual its class-identity.

According to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas universal par excellence, technically called sattā, has the greatest number of individuals. It exists in all substances, all qualities and all actions. Other universals have lower number of individuals in comparison with sattā. Some universals are strict or restricted universals and they are called jāti. Other universals are called upādhi. A jāti is free from certain conditions which are marked as its bādhakas or disqualifications. They are six in number.

Visēṣa : Visēṣa or ultimate-individuator is admitted by the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas in order to account for the difference between eternal substances. The non-eternal substances may be differentiated by their quality, or action, or universal, or organisation of their component parts. But these cannot differentiate one atom of earth from another, or one liberated self from another, because they have the same quality, the same universal, etc. So it is a problem to establish that they are two different entities. In order to account for their entitative difference the ultimate-individuators are admitted.

When two eternal substances cannot be differentiated by any
means, they are differentiated by their ultimate-individuators. On the one hand an individuator individuates its locus i.e. an eternal substance from other eternal substances; and on the other hand it differentiates itself from the other individuators without reference to anything external to itself. Thus an individuator stands as the last or final differentiator. So it is said to be the ultimate-individuator. Once it is held to be a self-differentiating entity the question of further differentiation does not arise.

Ultimate-individuators inhere only in the eternal substances. But the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas do not admit ultimate-individuators in God and the selves which are in bondage. The selves which are in bondage may be differentiated on the basis of their qualities like cognition, pleasure, pain, etc. God is distinguished by virtue of his eternal knowledge. As eternal substances are infinite in number, so ultimate-individuators also are infinite in number. They are eternal and they reside in the eternal substances by the eternal relation, inherence.

Ultimate-individuators stand for the cause of the cognition of only differentiatedness, whereas universals stand for the cause of the cognition of uniformity and difference both. In a pluralistic ontology the concept of self-discrimination is rarely as bold as it is in the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory of viśeṣa.

Samavāya : Samavāya or inherence is an eternal relation between positive inseparable reals. It is instantiated through certain specific
pairs of reals which are related to each other as the substratum (ādhara) and the superstratum (ādheya). These pairs of reals are as follows:

(1) a substance and its quality,
(2) a substance and its action,
(3) a universal and its individuals,
(4) an eternal substance and its ultimate-individuator,
(5) a part (avayava) and the whole (avayavi) i.e. a non-eternal substance.

Inherence is related with all other positive reals by itself. It requires no other relation for its relation with them. So it is a self-related relation. It is one in number. According to the Naiyāyikas inherence can be perceived; but the Vaiśeṣikas hold that inherence is imperceptible and it is known by inference. The entire cosmic fabric is embodied in inherence, because the other positive reals cannot reveal without being related with it. We shall find its different aspects in details in the following chapters.

Abhāva : The riddle of non-existence is, indeed, no less problematic than the riddle of existence. Abhāva or absence constitutes a part of reality, and it has got to be admitted for the comprehension of the spatio-temporal limitations of the existing objects. As the existence of the finite objects cannot be explained without the notion of absence, so absence

11. 'Non-existence', 'negation', 'absence' - these are the available translations of abhāva.
of something also cannot be explained without considering an existing object as its locus. Thus, presence and absence are, as a matter of fact, interdependent from the point of making each other a part of reality. Because of their having parallel contribution in the system of reality they have obtained equally distinguished status in the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika ontology. A clear meaning of the dismissal of the reality of absence is to argue for the absurdity that everything eternally exists everywhere.

The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas consider the existent things and their absence to be categorially different. But they never suggest the world of absence to be separate from, or transcendent to, the world of positive reals. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas venture to establish not only the existence of absence, but also its co-existence with the positive reals on the evidence of perception and inference. The Vaiśeṣikas hold that absence is known by inference. But the Nātyayikas think that absence is known through perception. They assign non-apprehension (anupalabdhi) of an object to be a condition for the perception of its absence. The perception occurs only when an object is not perceived in spite of all the necessary conditions of its perception are fulfilled. According to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas the perception of its locus occurs on the occasion of the perception of absence. Absence is perceived as the determinans (vīśeṣāṇa), and its locus as the determinandum (vīśeṣya).

Absence is primarily divided as saṁsargabhāva or the absence of that which is negated with reference to some relation other than
identity (tādātmya), and anyonyābhāva or the absence in which something is negated with reference to the relation of identity. Samsargābhāva is of three kinds:

(1) prāgabhāva or the antecedent absence which exists prior to production,
(2) dhvaṁsābhāva or the consequent absence which exists posterior to destruction,
(3) atyantābhāva or the absolute absence which exists through eternity.

The antecedent absence has no beginning, but it is subject to destruction. The consequent absence has a beginning, but it never terminates. The absolute absence has neither a beginning, nor an end. It is eternal. Anyonyābhāva also like the absolute absence is eternal.

The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas being atomists hold that creation starts from the combination of atoms and their disintegration results in the destruction of the atomic products. The cycle of creation and dissolution follows from the unseen fruits of actions (adrṣṭa) of the beings. God (Īśvara), the Supreme Person, dispenses the beings with their fruits of actions as the most Upright Judge. God is the common efficient cause of anything and everything in the world. He is an eternal substance who is omnipresent, omnipotent, omnicient and the moral authority.

This is the sum and substance of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika ontology. In no other system of Indian Philosophy the realistic position is so
convincingly overtoned with spiritualism. Here realism is clear and bold, and close to common sense.

The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika conception of relation in general:

It sounds like a riot-making statement that a relation exists by itself i.e. without depending on its terms. People naively nourish the belief that a relation needs two terms to hang between and without them it vanishes altogether. But the doctrine of samavāya of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers appears to crush this belief. Now, before making investigation into how they do it, it is necessary to have an idea of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika conception of relation in general, and that of samavāya in particular.

Independence may be understood in two different senses: (i) independence in respect of existence, and (ii) independence in respect of knowledge. From the latter point of view a thing is treated to be independent if it is capable of being known without any reference to anything else. Now, such independence can never be ascribed to a relation. If it is stated that a relation can be known by itself i.e. without any reference to its terms, it indeed sounds odd; and the view that whenever a relation is known it is known in terms of its relata, stands beyond controversy.

Gaṅgeśa's definition of relation reflects the above view. A relation, according to him, is that which is responsible for the cognition of the determined or the qualificatory cognition (viśiṣṭadhīniyāmaka) as
distinguished from the non-qualificatory cognition (avīśīṣṭavyāvṛttta). The definition suggests that all cases of qualificatory cognition are cases of some relation. A qualificatory cognition is a cognition which has the following three as its objects:

1. a determinans (viśesana),
2. a determinandum (viśesya),
3. a relation (saṁsarga) between the two.

In such a cognition something is known to be the determinans, something is known to be the determinandum, and something is known as the relation between them. The determinans and the determinandum of a cognition are the two terms of the relation which is also an object of that cognition. The relation becomes an object of a cognition always being accompanied by the determinans and the determinandum. Without any reference to them the cognition of a relation is not possible.

Now, the following general view-points may give us a comprehensive idea of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika conception of relation.

12. "sambandhasāvīśīṣṭavyāvṛttavisīṣṭadhīniyāmakaḥ."
   - Gāṅgeśa (24), P. 652.

13. "The general Indian name for characterization is saṁsarga."
   - Bhattacharya Kalidas (9), P. 14
(1) Whenever a relation is known, it is known with reference to its two terms, or relata, of which a particular one is known to be the determinans (vīśēsana) and the other to be the determinandum (vīśēsyā). A relation is, thus, known as a relation in a qualificatory cognition alone, since only a qualificatory cognition can have a relation as its object. Here it may be noted that a qualificatory cognition not only can have, but must have a relation as its object. So, such cognitions are called sāmsargāvagāhi.

(2) In case something is known to be related with something else, that which is known to be related is called the pratiyogī, and that to which it is known to be related is called the anuyogī of that relation. When the two relata of a relation exist in the substratum-superstratum (ādhārādheya) order, the substratum is known to be the anuyogī and the superstratum is known to be the pratiyogī. A relation can never be known without its pratiyogī and anuyogī. One and the same entity may be the pratiyogī in respect of one relation and the anuyogī in respect of another relation in one and the same time.

(3) All relations are dyadic. That is to say, they hold between two terms, and not more. As for example, a jar is related with the

14. No corresponding English words of anuyogī and pratiyogī are found. So the Sanskrit terms are used here.
ground by the relation of conjunction. Here the conjunction is dyadic since it holds between the following two terms: (i) the jar, and (ii) the ground. Again, the conjunction is related with the jar and the ground both. Here the relation of conjunction with the jar, and that with the ground are viewed to be two different relational situations although the three - (i) the conjunction, (ii) the jar and (iii) the ground - are grasped together in one cognition.

(4) From the point of the direction of relation, a relation is a relation of or a relation with, rather than a relation between; hence, it is asymmetrical. Still the preposition 'between' is sometimes used in connection with relation. It is used, perhaps, only in those contexts where the direction of the relation is either obvious or irrelevant. The one-way direction of a relation may be demonstrated in the following way:

If A and B are taken to be related by the relation, conjunction (ṣamyoga), then the conjunction being a quality will be grasped either to be of A or to be of B. Where it is grasped as the relation of A residing in B, the conjunction is certainly the relation of A with B. But the reverse of this relation i.e. the relation of B with A, is not conjunction; it is conjoinedness (ṣamyuktatva). Again, where it is grasped as the relation of B residing in A, the conjunction is certainly the relation of B with A; and the reverse of the relation i.e. the relation of A with B, is conjoinedness. Thus, in reverse order a relational situation generally becomes different in spite of having the same set of terms. The opposite
directions of conjunction may be diagramatically shown as:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\begin{array}{c}
A \quad \text{conjunction} \quad B \\
&\downarrow \quad \downarrow \\
A & \quad \text{conjoinedness} \quad B
\end{array} \\
&\begin{array}{c}
B \quad \text{conjunction} \quad A \\
&\downarrow \quad \downarrow \\
B & \quad \text{conjoinedness} \quad A
\end{array}
\end{align*}
\]

In regard to the relation, inherence (samavāya), it may be mentioned that its two terms, unlike the terms of conjunction, are known always in a fixed order; for example, the colour of a jar is known to reside in the jar, but a jar is never known to reside in its colour. Now, if A happens to be related with B i.e. to reside in B, by the relation, inherence (samavāya), then B is taken to be related with A by the relation, inherentness (samavetatva), which is the opposite direction of inherence. The one-way direction of inherence may be shown as:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\begin{array}{c}
A \quad \text{inheritence} \quad B \\
&\downarrow \quad \downarrow \\
A & \quad \text{inherentness} \quad B
\end{array}
\end{align*}
\]

Here a point may be noted that the relation of identity (tādātmya) is an exception to this; it remains the same in both directions.

(5) Relations are all intransitive. It means, if a book is related with a table by conjunction and the table is related with the ground by conjunction, then from these two facts it does not follow that the book is related with the ground by conjunction. Transitivity of relation is not admitted by the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers.
In the Vaiśeṣika system of philosophy mainly three types of relation are admitted. They are:

(1) samyoga or conjunction,
(2) samavāya or inherence,
(3) svarūpa or self-relation.

Subsequently the Navya Naiyāyikas have devised many other relations like viṣayatā, ādhāratā, etc. which are virtually the varieties of the third type. All these relations have been classified by the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers in various ways. The details of these classifications suggest certain characteristics which intersect the relations. Some of these characteristics may be mentioned below with a view to have a clear idea of the different features of inherence. Some of these features stand to prove that inherence as a relation exists by itself.

(1) From the point of number a relation may be one (eka), e.g. inherence, or it may be many (aneka), e.g. conjunction.

(2) A relation may be eternal (nītya), e.g. inherence, or it may be non-eternal (anītya), e.g. conjunction.

(3) A relation may be direct (sākṣāt), e.g. inherence, or it may be a chain relation (paramparā), e.g. inherence-in-'the conjoined' (samyuktasamavāya).

(4) A relation may be responsible for the cognition of the substratum-superstratum order (ādhārādheyabhāva) of its relata (vṛttiniyāmaka), e.g. inherence, or it may not be responsible for this cognition (vṛttyaniyāmaka), e.g. identity (tādātmya).
(5) A relation may pervade the whole of their relata (vyapyavṛtti), e.g. inherence, or it may relate its relata in their particular part only (avyapyavṛtti), e.g. conjunction.

(6) A relation may sometimes be a cause-effect (kāryakāraṇa) relation between its relata, e.g. inherence, or it may be a non-causal (akāryakāraṇa) relation, e.g. conjunction.

(7) A relation may be regarded as existent because of having the widest universal (sattā) by the relation of inherence (sattāvattva), e.g. conjunction, or it may be regarded as existent in spite of not having the widest universal by inherence (svātmasattva), e.g. inherence. The widest universal is related with inherence by the relation, co-inherence (ekārthasamavāya).

(8) A relation may be capable of getting related with its relata independently of any other relation (svatantra), e.g. inherence, or it may require some other relation for getting related with its relata (paratantra), e.g. conjunction.

(9) A relation may be one holding between two inseparable entities (ayutasiddha), e.g. inherence, or it may be merely an occasional coupling or contact between two separable entities (yutasiddha), e.g. conjunction.

(10) A relation may be an entity over and above its relata (sambandhibhinna), e.g. inherence, or it may be one which is not an entity over and above its relata (sambandhisvarūpa), e.g. self-relation (svarūpa).

15 "na caibam samavāyohpyavyāpyavṛttiḥ, samavāyena vṛttyā
tasyādhāravṛttitvāt". - Gangesā (24), P.615.
Samavāya or inherence is, thus, a unique relation having a number of features of which the following three may throw some light on the present query - on what ground do the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas declare that inherence exists by itself? The following features taken together, perhaps, provide the ground.

(1) Inherence is one.
(2) Inherence is eternal.
(3) Inherence is self-related.

The doctrine of inherence is one of the most striking speculations in the history of philosophy. It is an outstanding contribution of the Vaiśeṣika School of Indian philosophy. It is offered as an explanation of the mystery of the organisation of the manifold; and, thus, it has occupied a crucial position in the realistic ontology of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas. It explains the basic constitution of the cosmic whole. From atoms to binary molecule, and in every such onward step of creation inherence bears the creational nexus in a unique and uniform pattern; and following this pattern, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas claim, the panorama of the universe has come up.

In the cosmic whole, according to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas, certain reals are inseparably related. As for example, a table and its colour, the earth and its motion, man and manhood - these are all the pairs of inseparable reals. Here, of course, the reals spoken of are all positive reals. Now, the problem of the relation of the character (dharma) and the
characterized (dharmi) between such inseparable entities has been one of the most controversial issues as in the East, so in the West. But this problem has been dissolved in the hands of the most of the metaphysicians, because some of them consider both of the inseparable entities as utterly unreal, some of them think that either of them is unreal and there are some others who hold that they are identical. Some of such Indian views may be stated below:

(1) To the Advaitins the difference between the character and the characterized is merely phenomenal. Beyond this phenomenal level they are identical and their relation is identity (tādātmya). Hence, they refute inherence. The Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṁsakas side with the Advaitins.

(2) The Sāṁkhya philosophers hold the view that the character and the characterized are essentially identical; their difference is due to the transformation of the same thing within itself. So they also reject inherence.

(3) The Buddhists hold the view that the characterized is merely a mental construction, while the characters are real. They do not admit universals to be existing real entities. Again they are divided among themselves as regards the nature of the reality of things. But they all reject inherence.

Thus, in most of the systems of Indian philosophy inherence is rejected. But the realists like the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas, to whom both the character and the characerized are real, have got to face the problem directly. They hold that the relata of inherence are inseparable and at the same time utterly distinct entities. They can be differentiated, but cannot be separated from one another. On this ground it may be argued that identity does not follow from inseparability.

The Vaiśeṣika doctrine of inherence is of much historical bearings over and above its philosophical importance. Its historical bearing may be discovered in the realism of the Prābhākara Mīmāṃsakas. The Prābhākaras, perhaps, adopted the notion of inherence from the Vaiśeṣikas. Like the Vaiśeṣikas they felt the necessity of admitting the reality of a separate relation in order to explain the inseparability of the positive reals. But inherence has not obtained the same status of reality in the ontology of the Prābhākaras, as it has got in the Vaiśeṣika ontology. To the Prābhākaras inherence is of eternal and perishable both types and many in number; but the Vaiśeṣikas count it as one of the eternal reals which exist even in the state of dissolution of the world.

17 The Western philosophers like Spinoza, Hume, Hegel, Bradley, etc. have been able to by-pass the problem of the relation between the character and the characterized. But the thinkers like Locke, Russell, etc. could not avoid it altogether. They somehow got involved with the problem, but they did not face it directly.
The inherence of the Vaiśeṣikas is, thus, historically prior and philosophically much more interesting than the Prābhākaras'.

Here, on the whole it may be remarked that the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas' affirmation of independent reality of a relation is undoubtedly a landmark in the history of realism. Now, it is the time to see how inherence has been theorised in the realistic pluralism of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers; and their theory of inherence is coming to be exposed in the chapters ahead.