CHAPTER - III

AN ESTIMATE OF THE IDEALIST POSITION ON UNIVERSAL

SECTION - I

THE BUDDHIST VIEW REVIEWED

The contention of the Buddhist logician that the universal is a figment of imagination is a hollow assertion unsupported by experience and logic. The underlying universal is described by the Buddhist to be a subjective fiction. The Realist vehemently reacts to it. All general characters, the Realist holds, synthesise different particulars into a class and differentiate them from others. If there are no universals then each individual thing should be apprehended as a unique particular having no community of nature whatever with other things. Thus the Buddhist view would result in the impossibility of all knowledge and complete anarchy in the use of words.¹

¹. api ca sāmānyābhāve ko' rthah śabdāsāmsargavāya-ah ? na tāvat svalaksanam, kṣaṇikatvasya sarvato vyāvṛttasya saṁketaviśayatābhāvāt. nāpi vikalpaḥ śabdārthah, tasya kṣaṇikatvād asādhāraṇatvāc ca. - Nyāya Kandali, page 785, lines 3-5.
One of the main objections raised by the Buddhist against the reality of universals is that, the two incompatible characters cannot co-exist in the same locus at one time is not tenable. Jayanta Bhaṭṭa in his Nyāya-maṃjarī points out that there is no incompatibility between a universal and the individuality of thing-in-itself. Without contradicting each other individuality and its generic character co-exist in one and the same individual. A tableness and earthness co-inhere in an individual table. As a table is a member of table-class, so it has the specific character of tableness. It is also an earthen pot. So it has got the generic character of earthness. Hence the Nyāya school holds that the specific character and the generic one (universal) are not opposed to each other and they are in a position to co-exist in the same locus.²

The Buddhist thinkers further propose that class-notions originate from verbal conventions set up by the

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² vaśtuno' ūgīktā prājñair ata evo' bhayātmatā /
   yau brūtastv ekarūpatvaṁ tāv ubhāv api ubhāv
common consent of the people. It is like putting the cart before the horse. Verbal conventions are ultimately based on experience. They arise from the experience of common features which synthesize things into classes. Thus the apprehension of universals cannot be made the basis of general notions. Buddhist conception of universals as fictions of thought, Jayanta upholds, would render inference and verbal knowledge impossible.

The simple apprehension of the specific character of an object does not prove the falsity of its generic character. There is no opposition between generality and individuality. Likewise the Naiyāyika, Kumārila Bhaṭṭa in his Ślokavārttika holds that every object in this world has two characters - generic and specific. A universal is both identical with or different from an individual. The Buddhist contention that universal is not a perceived fact at all, does not satisfy an Indian

3. yathākalmaśavarṇasya yatheṣṭaṁ varṇani -
   grahaḥ / citratvād vastuno' pyevaṁ
   bhebhābhedāvadhāraṇam // - Ślokavārttika,
   Ākṛtivāda, verse 57.
logician. Jayanta asserts that the universal, like the particular, is comprehended in uncontradicted and indubitable sense-experience.4

All our perceptual cognitions as 'this is also a cow', 'this is also a tree' and so on prove that things have both universal and particular characters. So the perceptibility of universals cannot be denied.5 The Naiyāyikas argue that generality and individuality are not contradictory characters since they co-exist in a valid perceptual experience. They are perceived together in the same locus.6 Their co-existence cannot


be the case of an illusion because it is not sublated by experience. The objection raised by the Buddhist against the reality of universal that the relation between a universal and an individual is also logically unsound. The relation of inherence (samavāya), as the Realist views, holds between a universal and a particular. The two objects which are held to be different on epistemological grounds do not occupy different spaces. The parts exist independently of a whole. But the whole cannot exist independently of its parts. As the whole and parts cannot exist independently of one another so they cannot occupy different spaces. Where the two objects occupy the same space but are presented to our consciousness as distinct from each other a distinct relation subsists between them. This is called the relation of inherence.


In reply to the question in regard to the substrates of the universal as pointed out by the Buddhist, the Realist may argue that a universal wholly inheres in each of its loci. It may be argued that if a universal wholly stands upon a particular locus then it should not be noticed in another locus. It is a fact that if it is also perceived in another individual. A universal has no parts. So it does not partially exist in the different individuals.

The Buddhist may raise a fresh objection that there is no convincing reason to admit that the two relata a universal and an individual which the relation of inherence (samavaya) connects, are inseparable, because a relation presupposes its relata. If a relation does not exist then a relation cannot take place. If an individual exists prior to its relatedness then it is a case of relation which subsists between two separate relata. To this the great teachers of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika system reply that the two relata of the relation of inherence (samavaya) are not separable. Whenever an individual comes into being them it becomes united with its universal. A universal does not come to its new locus from an old one. But the material
cause from which the locus of a universal comes into existence enforces its union with its universal. This union happens due to the operation of the law of causation. All universals are omnipresent. But a universal is not perceived in everywhere since a distinct individual is the manifestor of its universal or class (jāti). A particular individual manifests a distinct universal. Whenever an individual is perceived the universal is also perceived there. The generic character of cowness cannot be perceived at a spot where a cow is absent. If an individual 'cow' is brought then the universal of 'cowness' is perceived there. As one can drag a body and not the soul, so one can bring an individual cow to a spot and not the universal of 'cowness' along with it. So the universal of 'cowness' exists even at a spot where an individual remains absent. Whenever a distinct individual is seen a universal is also manifested. A universal cannot be perceived unless and until its manifestor exists. Moreover, the hypothesis of an exclusion from non-cows in lieu of the universal of 'cowness' suffers from serious charges. The advocate of the theory of double negation (apoha) fails to answer how a newly born cow becomes excluded from non-cows. If a cow is excluded from now-cows as soon as it is born then it
becomes also united with its universal as soon as it is born. The Buddhist cannot give up the track of universal experience of the world of real objects. As our experience of a particular remains ever uncontradicted so our experience of a universal does never meet with contradiction. As we cannot deny the existence to a particular so we cannot deny the existence to a universal. As we perceive the particular with our sense-organ so we perceive a universal. A universal is not a concept but a percept. We cannot infer it from an effect, since an effect may otherwise be explained.

We may further argue that distinct universal stand upon distinct groups of individual. The distinct character of an idea can only be explained by a distinction in the character of its corresponding object. If we admit the general principle that distinct idea has a corresponding distinct object then the existence of the universal cannot be denied.
SECTION - II

THE ADVAITA VIEW ANALYSED

The champions of Śaṅkara school do not join their hands with the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika in regard to the treatment of the theory of universal. Though the Advaita school endeavours to controvert the Nyāya stand, still it does not totally demolish the concept of universal. Actually the Advaitin approaches the problem of universal in a different way. This school considers universal from the standpoint of absolute identity. Universal, the Advaita holds, is an eternal existence. The word 'sāmānyya', according to Vedānta, does not express the sense of class-essence as admitted by the Naiyāyika. The word 'sāmānyya' in Vedānta has been employed to denote the sense of "sattā" or all-embracing existence. The Advaita school does not acknowledge the Nyāya view of universal simply because this would evidently be incompatible with the fundamental theories of Śaṅkara's extreme Advaitism.

We have already discussed that the Advaitin does not recognise the universal of the realist to explain the general concepts. All our general conception, according to the Śaṅkaraite, can be explained by general characteristics possessed by particular things.
Cituskha and Śrīhara, the two great pioneers of Śāṅkara's school have spent substantial energy to reject the Nyāya view of universal. Unfortunately, they are almost silent in explaining the Advaita stand on universal. The great Madhusūdana Sarasvati is perhaps the first Advaitin who attempts to present the Advaita view of universal. The Vedāntin, as Madhusūdana points out, does not admit universal or sāmānyā apart from universal existence (sattā). Following the foot-prints left by Madhusūdana, Brahmānanda in his comments on Advaitasiddhi explains the Advaita concept of universal as an eternal existence.

Brahmananda holds, that there is no convincing argument in acceptance of a plurality of universals with a view to explain our general ideas. One universal Existence associated with all experience is in a position to explain all diverse class-concepts when it is determined by particulars. The ultimate universal Existence is the

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identical substratum of all particular experiences.\footnote{2}

One universal existence is apprehended in so many ways due to the force of prim or dial ne-science (mulajñāna). Brahman as eternal existence is covered by sakyajñāna not by mulajñāna. When this veil is removed by the mental psychosis in the form of ghaṭa, pot etc. there remains no obstacle in the revelation of Brahman as existence in all our experience 'san ghaṭaḥ', 'san paṭaḥ' etc.\footnote{3} The other divisions such as 'ghaṭatva', 'paṭatva' etc. are in the form of classes or categories. These categories

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{tasmāt ghaṭaḥ san ityatra bhāsamānam}
ghaṭagatam eva sattvam trikāla -
bādhhyatvam -
Gauḍabrahmānandi on Advaitasiddhi,
page 318, line 20.

\item \textit{sadātmanā na brahmaṇo mulājñānenā}
vṛttavam, kintu ghaṭādyavacchinna -
saktyajñānenai'va. tathāca caṅsurādijanya -
vṛttyā tadāvaraṇabhaṅje sati san ghaṭaḥ ityatra
brahmaṇo sphurane bādhakabhāvāt - Advaitasiddhi,
page 318, line 6-8.
\end{itemize}
are the universal corresponding to concepts and words. Names corresponding to class-concepts do neither imply an ultimate plurality of universals or jātis nor an eternal universal. All our class-concepts can be explained by the identical shapes or configurations of the particulars. Particulars by their own nature reveal the universal existence in diverse forms. All the class-concepts, as the realist holds, do not merely refer to differences. And this identity is the identity of Existence. In this way the Vedāntin maintains that the universal or sāmānya is a real entity common to all our experience, while class-concepts or jātis are false determinations of this ultimate identity of universal.

4. vyaktiviśeṣavīśiṣṭavena satsāmānyasyai' va tattadvyavahārajanakatvopapatteḥ - Advaitasiddhi, page 316, lines 9-10.

5. ghaṭādayaḥ svānugatapratibhāse vastuni kalpitāḥ vibhaktatvāt evām brahmaḥ - anugacchati ghaṭādikām vibhajyate, san ghaṭah, san pataḥ. - Ibid, lines 4-6.
Thus it appears that the advocates of Saṅkara's Advaitism do not deny the existence of universal. They merely try to disprove the Nyāya view of universal, which according to Vedānta, may not be true at the same time with the theories of unqualified Monism. This Advaita position on universal is neither build up on realism nor on nominalism. It is generally characterised as a kind of conceptualism. But in our consideration it would be right to characterise it even as moderate realism since the Advaita school recognises the objective basis of all general ideas.