UNIT 1 NYAYA – VAISESIKA

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1.0 OBJECTIVES
After reading this unit, the student should be able to:

• Understand the orthodox systems of the Nyaya and Vaisesika.
• Elucidate the Nyaya theory of knowledge.
• Discuss the Nyaya theory of causation.
• Recognize Nyaya conception of God and proofs for the existence of God.
• Be aware of the categories of Vaisesika.
• Appreciate the Vaisesika theory of Atomism.
• Comprehend the Vaisesika concept of Bondage and Liberation.

1.1 INTRODUCTION
The Nyaya is the work of the great philosopher and sage Gautama. It is a realistic philosophy based mainly on logical grounds. It admits four separate sources of true knowledge, Perception (pratyaksa), inference (anumana), comparison (upamana) and testimony (sabda) are the sources of true knowledge. Perception is the direct knowledge of objects produced by their relation to our
Inference is the knowledge of objects not through perception but through the apprehension of some mark. Comparison is the knowledge of the relation between a name and things so named on the basis of a given description of their similarity to some familiar object. Testimony is the knowledge about anything derived from the statements of authoritative persons.

The objects of knowledge, according to the Nyaya, are the self, the body, the senses and their objects, cognition (buddhi), mind (manas), activity (pravritti), mental defects (dosa) rebirth (pretyabhava), the feeling of pleasure and pain (phala), suffering (dukkha), and freedom from suffering (apavarga). The Nyaya seeks to deliver the self from its bondage to the body, the senses and their objects. It says that the self is distinct from the body and the mind. The body is only a composite substance made of matter. The mind is a subtle, indivisible and eternal substance. It serves the soul as an instrument for the perception of psychic qualities like pleasure, pain, etc; it is, therefore, called an internal sense. The self (atman) is another substance which is quite distinct from the mind and the body. Liberation (apavarga) means the absolute cessation of all pain and suffering brought about by the right knowledge of reality (tattva jnana). Liberation is only release from pain. The existence of God is proved by the Nyaya by several arguments. God is the ultimate cause of the creation, maintenance and destruction of the world. Nyaya did not create the world out of nothing, but out of eternal atoms, space, time, ether, minds and souls.

The Vaisesika system was founded by the philosopher and the sage Kanada. The Vaisesika is allied to the Nyaya system and has the same end view, namely, the liberation of the individual self. It brings all objects of knowledge, the whole world, under the seven categories of substance (dravya), quality (guna), action (karma), generality (samanya), particularity (visesa), the relation of inherence (samavaya), and non-existence (abhava). A substance is the substratum of qualities and activities, but is different from both. A quality is that which exists in a substance and has itself no quality or activity. An action is a movement. Particularity is the ground of the ultimate differences of things. Inherence is the permanent or eternal relation by which a whole is in its parts; a quality or an action is in a substance; the universal is in the particulars. Non-existence stands for all negative facts. With regard to God and liberation of the individual soul the Vaisesika theory is substantially the same as that of the Nyaya.
1.3 NYAYA THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge or Cognition is defined as apprehension or consciousness. Nyaya believes that knowledge reveals both the subject and the object; they are quite distinct from knowledge. All knowledge is a revelation or manifestation of objects. Just as a lamp manifests physical things placed before it, so knowledge reveals all objects which come before it. Knowledge may be valid or invalid. Valid knowledge is defined as the right apprehension of an object. It is the manifestation of an object as it is. Nyaya maintains the theory of correspondence (paratah pramanaya). Knowledge in order to be valid, must correspond to reality. Valid knowledge is produced by the four valid means of knowledge-perception, inference, comparison and testimony. Invalid knowledge includes memory (smrti), doubt (samshaya), error (viparyaya) and hypothetical reasoning (tarka). Memory is not valid because it is not present cognition but a represented one. The object remembered is not directly presented to the soul, but only indirectly recalled. Doubt is uncertainty in cognition. Error is misapprehension as it does not correspond to the real object. Hypothetical reasoning is no real knowledge.

Perception, inference, comparison or analogy and verbal testimony are the four kinds of valid knowledge. Let us consider them one by one. Sage Gotama defines perception as non-erroneous cognition which is produced by the intercourse of the sense-organs with the objects; it is not associated with a name and which is well-defined. Inference is defined as that cognition which presupposes some other cognition. Inference is mediate and indirect. Comparison defined as the knowledge of the relation between a word and its denotation. It is produce by the knowledge of resemblance or similarity. Verbal testimony is defined as the statement of a trustworthy person and consists in understanding its meaning.

1.4 NYAYA THEORY OF CAUSATION

Let us now consider the Nyaya theory of Causation. A cause is defined as an unconditional and invariable antecedent of an effect. The same cause produces the same effect and the same effect is produced by the same cause. Plurality of cause is ruled out. The first essential characteristic of a cause is its antecedence; the fact that it should precede the effect. The second is its invariability; it must invariably precede the effect. The third is its unconditionality or necessity; it must unconditionally precede the effect. Nyaya recognizes five kinds of accidental antecedents which are not real causes. Firstly, the qualities of a cause are mere accidental antecedents. The color of a potter's staff is not the cause of a pot. Secondly, the cause of a cause or a remote cause is not unconditional. The potter's father is not the cause of a pot. Thirdly, the co-effects of a cause are themselves not causally related. The sound produced by the potter's staff is not the cause of a pot, though it may invariably precede the pot. Night and day are not causally related. Fourthly, eternal substances like space are not unconditional antecedents. Fifthly, unnecessary things like the potter's ass are not unconditional antecedents; though the potter's ass may be invariably present when the potter is making a pot, yet it is not the cause of the pot. A cause must be an unconditional and necessary antecedent. Nyaya emphasizes the sequence view of causality. Cause and effect are never simultaneous. Plurality of causes is also wrong because causal relation is reciprocal. The same effect cannot be produced by another cause. Each effect has its distinctive features and has only one specific cause. An effect is defined as the counter-entity of its own prior non-existence. It is the negation of its own prior negation. It comes into being and destroys its prior non-existence. It was non-existent before its production. It did not pre-exist in its cause. It is a fresh beginning, a new creation.
1.5 NYAYA THEORY OF THE PHYSICAL WORLD

Now we come to the topic of the objects of knowledge. The physical world is constituted by the four physical substances of earth, water, fire and air. The ultimate constituents of these four substances are the eternal and unchanging atoms of earth, water, fire and air. Akasa or ether, kala or time, and dik or space is eternal and infinite substances, each being one single whole. Thus the physical world is the product of the four kinds of atoms of earth, water, fire and air. It contains all the composite products of these atoms, and their qualities and relations, including organic bodies, the senses, and the sensible qualities of things. According to Gautama the objects of knowledge are the self, the body, the senses and their objects, knowledge, mind, activity, the mental imperfections, rebirth, the feelings of pleasure and pain, suffering, absolute freedom from all suffering. All of these knowable are not to be found in the physical world, because it includes only those objects that either physical or somehow belong to the world of physical nature. Thus the self, its attribute of knowledge and manas are not at all physical. Time and space are two substances which although different from the physical substances, yet somehow belong to the physical world. Akasa is a physical substance which is not a productive cause of anything.

1.6 NYAYA CONCEPT OF GOD

God is the ultimate cause of creation, maintenance and destruction of the world. God is the eternal infinite self who creates, maintains and destroys the world. He does not create the world out of nothing, but out of eternal atoms, space, time, ether, minds and souls. The creation of the world means the ordering of the eternal entities, which are co-existent with God, into a moral world, in which individual selves enjoy and suffer according to the merit and demerit of their actions, and all physical objects serve as means to the moral and spiritual ends of our life. God is thus the creator of the world in the sense of being the first efficient cause of the world and not its material cause. He is also the preserver of the world in so far as the world is kept in existence by the will of God. So also He is the destroyer who lets loose the forces of destruction when the exigencies of the moral world require it. Then, God is one, infinite and eternal, since the world of space and time, minds and souls does not limit him, but is related to Him as a body to the self which resides in it. He is omnipotent, although He is guided in His activities by moral considerations of the merit and demerit of human actions. He is omniscient so far as He possesses right knowledge of all things and events. He has eternal consciousness as a power of direct and steadfast cognition of all objects. Eternal consciousness is only an inseparable attribute of God, not His very essence, as maintained in the Advaita Vedanta. He possesses to the full all the six perfections and is majestic, almighty, all glorious, infinitely beautiful and possessed of infinite knowledge and perfect freedom from attachment.

Just as God is the efficient cause of the world, so He is the directive cause of the actions of all living beings. Nyaya gives the following arguments to prove the existence of God:

1. The world is an effect and hence it must have an efficient cause. This intelligent agent is God. The order, design, co-ordination between different phenomena comes from God.
2. The atoms being essentially inactive cannot form the different combinations unless God gives motion to them. The Unseen Power, the Adrsta, requires the intelligence of God. Without God it cannot supply motion to the atoms.
3. The world is sustained by God’s will. Unintelligent Adrsta cannot do this. And the world is destroyed by God’s will.

4. A word has a meaning and signifies an object. The power of words to signify their objects comes from God.

5. God is the author of the infallible Veda.

6. The Veda testifies to the existence of God.

7. The Vedic sentences deal with moral injunctions and prohibitions. The Vedic commands are the Divine commands. God is the creator and promulgator of the moral laws.

8. According to Nyaya the magnitude of a dyad is not produced by the infinitesimal magnitude of the two atoms each, but by the number of the two atoms. Number ‘one’ is directly perceived, but other numbers are conceptual creations. Numerical conception is related to the mind of the perceiver. At the time of creation, the souls are unconscious. And the atoms and the unseen Power and space, time, mind are all unconscious. Hence the numerical conception depends upon the Divine Consciousness. So God must exist.

9. We reap the fruits of our own actions. Merit and demerit accrue from our actions and the stock of merit and demerit is called Adrsta, the unseen power. But this Unseen Power, being unintelligent, needs the guidance of a supremely intelligent God.

### Check Your Progress I

**Note:** Use the space provided for your answer.

1) How many sources of knowledge are accepted by Nyaya? Explain.

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2) Explain asatkarya vada of Nyaya.

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3. State the arguments of Nyaya for proving the existence of God.

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1.7 VAISESIKA CONCEPT OF PADARTHA OR CATEGORY

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The Vaisesika system is regarded as conducive to the study of all systems. Its main purpose is to deal with the categories and to unfold its atomistic pluralism. A category is called padartha and the entire universe is reduced to six or seven padarthas. Padartha literally means the meaning of a word or the object signified by a word. All objects of knowledge or all reals come under padartha. Padartha means an object which can be thought and named.

Originally the Vaisesika believed in the six categories and the seventh, that of abhava or negation was added later on. Though Kanada himself speaks of abhava, yet he does not give it the status of a category to which it was raised only by the later Vaisesikas. The Vaisesika divides all existent reals which are all objects of knowledge into two classes; bhava or being and abhava or non-being. Six categories come under bhava and the seventh is abhava. All knowledge necessarily points to an object of knowledge and is called a padartha. The seven padarthas are: 1 substance (dravya), 2 quality (guna), 3 Activity (karma), 4 generality (samanya), 5 particularity (visesa), 6 inherence (samavaya), and 7. non-being (abhava).

1. Dravya or Substance

Dravya or substance is defined as the substratum where actions and qualities in here and which is the coexistent material cause of the composite things produce from it. Substance signifies the self-subsistence, the absolute and independent nature of things. The category of substance is the substratum of qualities and actions. The drayyas are nine and include material as well as spiritual substances. The Vaisesika philosophy is pluralistic and realistic but not materialistic since it admits spiritual substances. The nine substances are: 1) earth (prthivi), 2) Water (Ap), 3) Fire (tejas), 4) Air (vayu), 5) ether (akasa), 6) time (kala), 7) space (dik), 8) spirit (atman) and 9) mind (manas). Earth, water, fire and air really signify not compound transient objects made out of them, but the ultimate elements, the supersensible eternal part less unique atoms which are individual and infinitesimal. Earth, water, fire, air and ether are the five gross elements. These and manas are physical. Soul is spiritual. Time and space are objective and not subjective forms of experience. Ether, space, time and soul are all-pervading and eternal. Atoms, minds and souls are infinite in number. Ether, space and time are one each.

2. Guna or Quality

The second category is guna or quality. Unlike substance, it cannot exist independently by itself and possesses no quality or action. It inheres in a substance and depends for its existence on the substance and is not a constitutive cause of anything. It is called an independent reality because it can be conceived, thought and named independent of a substance where it inheres. The qualities are therefore called objective entities. They are not necessarily eternal. They include both material and mental qualities. They are a static and permanent feature of a substance, whole action of a dynamic and transient feature of a substance. A quality, therefore, is different from both substance and action. Qualities include material and spiritual properties. Smell is the quality of earth; taste of water; color of fire; touch of air; and sound of ether. Cognition, pleasure, pain, desire, aversion, volition are the mental qualities which inhere in the self.

3. Karma or Action

The third category is karma or action. Like quality, it belongs to and inheres in a substance and cannot exist separately from it. But while a quality is a static and permanent feature of a substance, an action is a dynamic and transient feature of it. Unlike a quality, an action is the
cause of conjunction and disjunction. Action is said to be of five kinds: 1) upward movement, 2) downward movement, 3) contraction, 4) expansion, and 5) locomotion.

4. **Samanya or Generality**
The fourth category is *samanya* or generality. *Samanya* is generality. Generality is class-concept, class-essence or universal. It is the common character of the things which fall under the same class. The universals reside in substances, qualities and actions. They are of two kinds, higher and lower. The higher generality is that of ‘being’. It includes everything and itself is not included in anything. Every other generality is lower because it covers a limited number of things and cannot cover all things. A universal cannot subsist in another universal; otherwise an individual may be a man, a cow, and a horse at the same time.

5. **Visesa or Particularity**
The fifth category is *Visesa* or particularity. It enables us to perceive things as different from one another. Every individual is a particular, a single and a unique thing different from all others. It has got a unique of its own which constitutes its particularity. It is opposed to generality. Generality is inclusive; particularly is exclusive. Generality forms the basis of assimilation; particularity forms the basis of discrimination. It is very important to remember that the composite objects of this world which we generally call ‘particular’ objects are not real particular.

6. **Samavaya or Inherence**
The sixth category is *Samavaya* or inseparable relation called ‘inherence.’ It is different conjunction or *samyoga* which is separable and transient relation and is a quality. *Samavaya* is an independent category. Kanada calls it the relation between cause and effect. Samvaya is one and eternal relationship subsisting between two things inseparably connected.

7. **Abhava**
The seventh category is *Abhava* or non-existence. Kanada does not mention it as a separate category. Absence of an object and knowledge of its absence are different. The first six categories are positive. This is negative. The other categories are regarded as absolute, but this category is relative in its conception. Non-existence is of four kinds: 1) antecedent non-existence, 2) subsequent non-existence, 3) mutual non-existence and 4) absolute non-existence.

1.9 **VAISESIKA ON ATOMS AND CREATION**

According to Vaisesika diversity and not unity is at the root of the universe. Vaisesika says that atom is the minutest particle of matter which may not be further divisible. The indivisible, partless and eternal particle of matter is called an atom (*paramanu*). All physical things are produced by the combination of atoms. Therefore creation means the combination of atoms in different proportions and destruction means the dissolution of such combination. The material cause of the universe is neither produced nor destroyed. It is the eternal atoms.

The atoms are said to be of four kinds; of earth, water, fire and air. Ether or *akasha* is not atomic. It is one and all-pervading and affords the medium for the combinations of the atoms. The atoms
differ from one another both in quantity and in quality. Each has a particularity of its own and exists as a separate reality. During dissolution, they remain inactive. Motion is imparted to them by the unseen power (adrsrta) of merit (dharma) and demerit (adharma) which resides in the individual souls and wants to fructify in the form of enjoyment or suffering. Atoms are supra-sensible. Atoms increase by multiplication and not by mere addition. When motion is imparted to them by the unseen power, they begin to vibrate and immediately change into dyads. A dyad is produced by the combination of two atoms. The atoms are its inherent cause; conjunction is its non-inherent cause; and the Unseen power is its efficient cause. An atom is indivisible, spherical and imperceptible. A dyad (dvyanuka) is minute (anu), short (hrasva) and imperceptible.

From the standpoint of ancient Indian philosophy the world including physical nature is a moral stage for the education and emancipation of individual souls. The Vaisesika atomic theory of the world is guided by spiritual outlook of ancient Indian philosophy.

The atomic theory of the Vaisesika explains that part of the world which is non-eternal subject to origin and destruction in time. The eternal constituents of the universe, namely, the four kinds of atoms, and the five substances of akasa, space, time, mind, and soul, do not come within the purview of their atomic theory, because these can neither be created nor destroyed. On the other hand, all composite objects, beginning with a dyad or the first compound of only two atoms (dvyanuka) are non-eternal. So the atomic theory explains the order of creation and destruction of these non-eternal objects. All composite objects are constituted by the combination of atoms and destroyed through their separation. The first combination of two atoms is called a dvyanuka or dyad, and a combination of three dyads (dvyanukas) is called a tryanuka or triad. The Tryanuka is also called the trasarenu and it is the minimum perceptible object according to the Vaisesika. The paramanu or atom and the dvyanuka or dyad, being smaller than the tryanuka or triad, cannot be perceived, but are known through inference.

All the finite objects of the physical world and the physical world itself are composed of the four kinds of atoms in the form of dyads, triads and other larger compounds arise out of these. The world or the universe is a system of physical things and living beings having bodies with senses and possessing mind, intellect and egoism. All these exist and interact with one another, in time, space and akasa. Living beings are souls who enjoy or suffer in this world according to their character; wise or ignorant, good or bad, virtuous or vicious. The order of the world is, on the whole, a moral order in which the life and destiny of all individual selves are governed, not only by the physical laws of time and space, but also by the universal moral law of karma. In the simplest form this law means 'as you sow, so you reap,' just as the physical law of causation, in its most abstract form, means that there can be no effect without a cause.

Vaisesika admits the reality of the spiritual substances, souls and God, and also admits the law of karma. The atoms are the material cause of the world of which God, assisted by the Unseen power, is the efficient cause. The physical world presupposes the moral order. Evolution is due to the Unseen Power consisting of merits and demerits of the individual souls which want to bear fruits as enjoyments or sufferings to be experienced by the souls. Keeping in view this moral
order of the universe, the Vaisesika explains the process of creation and destruction of the world as follows: The starting-point of the process of creation or destruction is the will of the supreme Lord (*Mahesvara*) who is the ruler of the whole universe. The Lord conceives the will to create a universe in which individual beings may get their proper share of the experience of pleasure and pain according to their deserts. The world being beginningless (*anadi*), we cannot speak of a first creation of the world. In truth, every creation is preceded by some order of creation. To create is to destroy an existing order of things and usher in a new order. Hence it is that God’s creative will has reference to the stock of merit and demerit act with souls, endowed with the creative function of *adrsta* that first sets in motion the atoms acquired by individual souls in a previous life lived in some other world. When God thus wills to create a world, the unseen forces of moral deserts in the eternal individual souls begin to function in the direction of creation and the active life of experiences. And it is the content of air. Out of the combination of air-atoms, in the form of dyads and triads, arises the gross physical element of air, and it exists as an incessantly vibrating medium in the eternal *akasa*. Then, in a similar way, there is motion in the atoms of water and the creation of the gross element of water which exists in the air and is moved by it. Next, the atoms of earth are set in motion in a similar way and compose the gross element of earth which exists in the vast expanse of the gross elemental water. Then from the atoms of light arises in a similar way, the gross element of light and exists with its luminosity in the gross water. After this and by the mere thought of God, there appears the embryo of a world out of the atoms of light and earth. God animates that great embryo with Brahma, the world-soul, who is endowed with supreme wisdom, detachment and excellence. To Brahma God entrusts the work of creation in its concrete details and with proper adjustment between merit and demerit on the one hand, and happiness and misery on the other.

The created world runs its course for many years. But it cannot continue to exist and endure for all time to come. Just as after the stress and strain of the day’s work God allows us rest at night, so after the trials and tribulations of many lives in one created world. God provides a way of escape from suffering for all living beings for some time. This is done by him through the destruction of the world. So the period of creation is followed by a state of destruction. The process of the world’s dissolution is as follows: When in the course of time Brahma, the world-soul, gives up his body like other souls, there appears in *Mahesvara* or the supreme Lord a desire to destroy the world. With this, the creative *adrsta* or unseen moral agency in living beings is counteracted by the corresponding destructive *adrsta* and ceases to function for the active life of experience. It is in contact with such souls, in which the destructive *adrsta* begins to operate, that there is motion in the constituent atoms of their body and senses. On account of this motion there is disjunction of the atoms and consequent disintegration of the body and the senses. The body with the senses being thus destroyed, what remain are only the atoms in their isolation. So also, there is motion in the constituent atoms of the elemental earth, and its consequent destruction through the cessation of their conjunction. In this way there is the destruction of the physical elements of earth, water, light and air, one after the other. Thus these four physical elements and all bodies and sense organs are disintegrated and destroyed. What remain are the four kinds of atoms of earth, water, light and air in their isolation, and the eternal substances of *akasa*, time, apace, minds and souls with their stock of merit, demerit and past impressions. It will be observed here that while in the order of destruction, earth compounds come first, then those of water, light and air in succession, in the order of creation, air compounds come first, water compounds next, and then those of the great earth and light appear in succession.
1.10 VAISESIKA CONCEPT OF BONDAGE AND LIBERATION

The Vaisesika regards bondage as due to ignorance and liberation as due to knowledge. The soul, due to ignorance, performs actions. Actions lead to merits or demerits. They are due to attachment or aversion and aim at obtaining pleasure or avoiding pain. The merits and demerits of the individual souls make up the unseen moral power, the adrsta. According to the law of Karma, one has to reap the fruits of actions one has performed whether they are good or bad according to the karmas one performed. This adrsta, guided by God, imparts motion to the atoms and leads to creation for the sake of enjoyment or suffering of the individual souls. Liberation is cessation of all life, all consciousness, all bliss, together with all pain and all qualities. It is qualityless, indeterminate, pure nature of the individual soul as pure substance devoid of all qualities.

1.11 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have tried to give central concepts of Nyaya and Vaisesika. Nyaya is a system of logical realism and atomistic pluralism. Nyaya develops logic and epistemology; Vaisesika develops metaphysics and ontology. In this unit we have explained Nyaya theory of knowledge, causation, physical world, God and the proofs for the existence of God. In this unit relating to the orthodox system of Vaisesika, we have discussed Vaisesika categories, atoms, creation, destruction, bondage and liberation. We conclude this unit with the Vaisesika conception that liberation is the real state of the soul free from all qualities and it reduces the soul to a mere nothing.

1.12 KEY WORDS
**Perception:** Perception is a definite cognition which is produced by sense-object contact and is true and unerring.

**Inference:** Inference is the cognition which presupposes some other cognition.

**Comparison:** Comparison is called *upamana*. Comparison is knowledge derived from comparison and roughly corresponds to analogy.

**Verbal Testimony:** Verbal testimony is defined as the statement of trustworthy person and consists in understanding its meaning.

**Cause:** Cause is defined as an unconditional and invariable antecedent of an effect and an effect as an unconditional and invariable consequent of a cause.

**Padartha:** *Padartha* means an object which can be thought and named.

**Dravya:** *Dravya* is the substance. Substance signifies the self-subsistence, the absolute and independent nature of things. Substance is the basis of qualities and actions, actual or potential, present or future.

### 1.13 REFERENCE AND SOURCE BOOKS


