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An appraisal of Kāla or time- a study based on Jayanta Bhaṭṭa's Nyāyamañjarī

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The concept of time or kāla has received a systematic and bold realistic prospect in the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika thoughts. Advocating a pluralistic metaphysics, these schools focus on the reality of time as vital to their entire conceptual framework. Their philosophical stand regarding the problem of time is distinctly different from that of other schools, not only outside of the pale of the Brahmanical tradition but also within it.

The ontological properties of time are carefully enumerated in the philosophical literature of both the schools. As no beginning or end of any event or entity is conceivable without reference to time. Time itself is classed with the eternal (nitya) categories of existence (Padārtha), i.e., is itself beginning less (anādi) and endless (ananta). It is a substance (dravya), since it has qualities like unity, conjunction, disjunction, etc. It is an independent real which is further characterised as all-pervading (vibhū) as it is in contact with all that is finite ^[1]. The schools insist that it is inherently unitary (eka) and indivisible (avibhājya). They maintained that inference is the valid means of knowledge (pramāṇa) for proving the existence of time. Jayanta Bhaṭṭa's *Nyāyamañjarī* elucidates these points in a brilliant manner. He presents the ontological reality of time as inferable ^[2]. The discussion is put in the form of an exchange first with the principal opponent, the Buddhists, who deny the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika concept of time as an all-pervading, ubiquitous, ontological category of reality. Later, in the second place Nyāyamañjarī elaborates the controversy amongst the Indian realists regarding the question of how time is known. According to one denomination of Mīmāṃsā i.e., Bhāṭṭa School, time is amenable to sense-perception ^[3]. The Prabhākara school of thought goes with the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika model of Kāla or time.

Objections raised by Buddhist in the very existence of time

Now, first I am going to briefly present the views of Buddhists who raised objections in the very existence of time.

As no beginning or end of any event or entity is conceivable without reference to time, but, it is a pity that it is difficult to prove the existence of time. As we perceive a jar, etc., so we do not perceive time. The ideas such as 'slow', 'quick', etc., do not refer to time but only refer to events ^[4].

Secondly, they point out that it is not possible to establish the universal concomitance (*vyāpti*) between time and the ideas such as quickness, slowness, simultaneity etc., as it holds between smoke and fire ^[5]. This is a requirement for valid inference to establish a universal concomitance between the major term (*sādhya*) and the middle term (*hetu*).

Moreover, the usages of expressions like, 'now' and 'then' etc. does not point to the existence of an indivisible time as a substratum. These can be accounted for as pertaining to a sequence of acts ^[6].

Fourthly, they argue that time is nothing but the vibrations of planets, stars etc. and that it is not distinct from ordinary actions ^[7]. That means planetary movements do not indicate any separate existent called time.

The idea of oneness and indivisibility of time leads to controversies ^[8]. It is asked, If these were ontological properties of time, how should in that case the conventional usages of the plurality of time divisions be accounted for.

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These are the objections raised by idealist Buddhist regarding the existence of Kāla. Before retorting the opponent, Jayanta Bhaṭṭa first presents the Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā views seeking to establish the reality of time by immediate perception. In fact, the exponent of the school tried to establish Kāla by refuting the opinions of opponent i.e., Buddhist. However, in that process, they propound their theory. Hence, Jayanta Bhaṭṭa presents them as opponents instead of exponents.

Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā view

Firstly, when an event is perceived it is perceived as qualified by time^[9]. In other words, time is a predicative predicate in a perceptual perception.

They argued that slowness, quickness, simultaneity are not merely attributes of acts, but that they also indicate a substance as the substratum of these notions and that substratum is time^[10]. Such judgments do not refer only to events since the diversity of judgments presupposes the variety of objects.

Without the ontological reality of time one could not account for the awareness of 'the present pot' in contrast to 'this pot'. The attribute 'present' is indicative- as a perceptual datum – of the existence of time^[11].

In other words, the purpose of presenting the Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā view is to refute the Buddhist contention, that the conventional temporal usages do not require the postulation of time as a distinct real.

As the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika is in full agreement with the Mīmāṃsā in their view regarding time as a distinct category of reality, the dispute centers around the issue of what is the valid means of knowing time.

The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika objection is that time cannot be said to be perceived, as it has no sensible qualities such as colour, form etc^[12]. Hence, inference is to be acknowledged as the valid means of knowing it.

The Mīmāṃsaka replied to this objection as, that the atoms (*paramāṇu*), according to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosopher, have forms and yet they are not amenable to perception^[13]. It means 'having form' itself is no criterion for perceptibility, although it is a fact that only a coloured object can be perceived. In other words, such sensible qualities are not criteria of perceptibility. We perceive events as slow, quick etc., which involve a direct reference to time^[14].

Mīmāṃsakas, however, acknowledge that time as such is never an object of perception, but it is perceived always as a qualification of sensible objects. This is to say that time is perceived as a qualifying element (*viśeṣa guṇa*) and never independently of the sensible object^[15]. Hence, whatever is perceived with eyes either as a subject or as a predicate should be included in the list of perceptible objects. But, that time is perceivable is a fact of experience, no law can invalidate it.

Thus, Jayanta Bhaṭṭa presents the views of his opponent Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā, in order to authenticate time as a perceptible object. Now, in order to establish his notion the inferencibility of time, he retorts as-

If both the substance and its attribute can be shown to be separately amenable to perception, it could also be maintained that the qualifying element is perceptible along with the substance. But on the strength of being along an attribute of a substance, not otherwise independently perceivable, it cannot qualify itself as a perceptual datum. Such being the case of the perception of time, always as an attribute- which is itself the Mīmāṃsā contention-, it cannot be established as an

independent real by perception alone, but on the basis of inference.

Rejecting the opinion of opponents which proposes solar and planetary motions to be the basis of notion of time, *Nyāyamañjarī* analyses that when an object is taken as prior in relation to one and posterior to another, they ask, what serves as the basis for the attribution of such qualities to a given object? If it is urged that one is connected with a larger number of solar revolutions than the other, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers raise the problem that there is a direct relation of inherence between the sun and the solar motion, but not between the object in question and the sun, which are remotely separated from one another. Thus, there must be a common medium which can serve as a link between the two, and which, moreover, is capable of transmitting the quality of one to the other. Through the application of the method of exclusion it is argued, that no other substance can perform this specific function, leading to the inference of time^[16]. Thus it is urged, that solar motion can never substitute the function of time. In their analysis of quickness and slowness also the same fact is pointed to. The point of the argument is to focus on the fact, that not only solar motion but no motion whatever can replace time as an objective reality.

To those who insist that solar motion could be the basis for such conventional usages, the question may be posed that in that case, how is one to account for such usages as 'the sun is set since long'? Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers' object to the answer that it is done with reference to other planetary motion, as this would lead to the fallacy of infinite regress. In other words, time is a real per se is to be accepted^[17].

Now, to go back to the question of time as unitary, the philosophers of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika schools admit that, time is inferred as the basis of notions such as priority (*paratva*), posteriority (*aparatva*), of simultaneity (*vaugapadya*) and succession (*ayaugapadya*), of quickness (*kṣipratva*) and slowness (*ciratva*)^[18]. In other words, these are the grounds (*liṅga*) for the inference of the existence of time. All these point to it as one and the same objective real. The manyness of time, i.e., the conventional time-divisions, can be explained with the help of limiting adjunct (*upādhi*) such as the solar motion etc. on the basis of the postulation of a singular, ubiquitous time. It is the action which are past, present and future^[19]. These do not imply any inherent division or plurality in the time per se.

The temporal ideas such as 'prior' and 'posterior' cannot be explained if time is not assumed^[20]. It is omnipresent in dimension since the use of temporal expressions is everywhere noticed. It is partless since no parts, the locus of the whole, are observed. As partless it is self-sufficient. It is a substance because it requires no locus to stand upon. It is also eternal since, the conditions of destruction viz. the separation of parts etc. do never arise in case of time^[21].

Moreover, the existence of time is not in jeopardy because it is not amenable to visual perception, it is conclusively proved through inference. The so-called perceived time as a qualifying element is, of course, a case of extra-ordinary perception^[22]. But, in all cases, it is only inference that can establish the omnipresent, unitary, all-pervading time. Debate is an indispensable part of Indian intellectual tradition. In *Nyāyamañjarī*, Jayanta Bhaṭṭa following the same trend of intellectual tradition presented the views of his opponents first before elaborating his own notion. Advocating a pluralistic metaphysics, the text highlights on the reality of time as vital to their entire conceptual framework.

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2. Nyāyamañjarī, 359-370.
3. Nyāyamañjarīśaurabh, 359.
4. Na tāvat grhyate kālah pratyakṣeṇa ghaṭādivat.
5. Cirakṣiprādibodho'pi kāryamātrāvalambanāḥ. Nyāyamañjarī, 360.
6. Na cāmunava liṅgena kālasya parikalpanā.
7. Pratibandho hi dṛṣṭo'tra na dhūmajvalanādivat. Nyāyamañjarī, 360.
8. Pratibhāsātirekastu kathamcidupapatsyate.
9. Pracitām kāncidāśritya kriyākṣaṇaparamparām. Nyāyamañjarī, 360.
10. Na caiṣa grahanakṣtraparispandasvabhāvakaḥ.
11. Kālah kalpayitum yuktaḥ kriyāto nāparo hyasou. Nyāyamañjarī, 360.
12. Yadi tveko vibhurnityaḥ kālo dravyātmako mataḥ.
13. Atītavartamānādibhedavyavahṛtiḥ kutaḥ? Nyāyamañjarī, 361.
14. Viśeṣaṇatayā kāryapratyaye pratibhāsanāt. Nyāyamañjarī, 361.
15. Krameṇa yugapat, kṣipram, cirāt kṛtamitīdṛśāḥ.
16. Pratyayā nāvakalpante kāryamātrāvalambanāḥ. Nyāyamañjarī, 361.
17. Śāstradīpikā (Kālapratyakṣanirupaṇam) 1/2/5
18. Arūpe nanvayam kālah katham grhyet cakṣuṣā. Nyāyamañjarī, 362.
19. Katham vā rūpavanto'pi parokṣāḥ paramānavḥ.
20. Tasmāt pratītanveśyā kim nimittaparīkṣayā. Nyāyamañjarī, 362.
21. Na cānudghāṭitākṣasya kṣiprādipratyayodayaḥ.
22. Tadbhāvānuvidhānena tasmāt kālastu cākṣuṣaḥ. Nyāyamañjarī, 363.
23. Tasmāt svatantrabhāvena viśeṣaṇatayā'pi vā.
24. Cākṣuṣājñānagamam yat tatpratyakṣamupeyatām. Nyāyamañjarī pg 364.
25. Nanu! Paispandādi kriyābheda evātra nimittam. kaścitparispandaścaturāḥ... Nyāyamañjarī, 366-367.
26. Ibid.
27. Vaiśeṣika Sūtra 2.2.6.
28. See supra note Xvi at pg 367.
29. Tadatra na kālavyatiriktam kāraṇamupapadyate ityato'numiyate kālah. Nyāyamañjarī, 368.
30. Sarvatra vyavahāravat...iti. Nyāyamañjarī, 369.
31. Pratyakṣamapi yoginām... Nyāyamañjarī, 359.
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