

NYĀYA PHILOSOPHY OF EMOTION

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Abstract: In this paper an attempt is made to present the analysis by Gautama of "human emotions" expressed through body, speech and mind. In his Nyayasutra 1.1.2 he theorises this. According to him, emotions are the outcome of misconception, misunderstanding, misinterpretation, or ignorance. Emotions can be good and bad. But looking from the point of view of ultimate goal of life namely, liberation, even good emotions are nothing but binding factors and as long as these are entertained one cannot be out of the cycle of death and birth. Misunderstanding creates emotions; emotions contribute to the formation of attitudes, good or bad, which lead to good or bad acts which, in turn, leave behind impressions which are responsible for keeping a man in the cycle of death and birth. All human sufferings, therefore, are rooted in misunderstanding. One must, therefore, break this chain and that can be broken only by true cognition or knowledge of fact or truth. In my view, the Nyayasutra 1.1.2 is a comprehensive analysis of human emotion, behaviour, action and purpose and a philosophy of transformation of human life.

0.0 There are six orthodox systems and three heterodox systems of Indian Philosophy. Nyāya, Indian Logic and Epistemology, is one of the six orthodox systems of Indian Philosophy. In this paper an attempt is made to present how the System of Nyāya Philosophy has treated emotions.

1.0 - Before we approach to take up this exercise, it is necessary to keep in mind the following 'world-view of the Nyāya System of Indian Philosophy'. In this system: (a) The world of our experience is *Real* and *Plural*. (b) It is 'Real' in the sense that it exists independent of our mind; it precedes its knowledge; because it exists, we can know it; and hence, it can cause its knowledge. (c) It is the given; we cannot create even a particle of this universe. Nevertheless, we can construct and can imagine, out of the given. Human creativity, therefore, is nothing but the arrangement or re-arrangement of the given. (d) This world of our experience is knowable and nameable. We can verbalize our experience in language. Language, therefore, can capture Reality¹. (e) This world is plural in the sense that the source of our experiential plurality is plural. Neither it is the case that the Reality is only 'One' and that 'One' has either become 'Many' or appears as 'Many'; nor it is the fact that neither 'One' nor 'Many' is the source of plurality.² (f) It is also not true for the Naiyāyikas that this plural world is supposed to be Real only at our transactional level (vyāvahārika-sat) and unreal thereafter. Right from a particle (paramāṇu) up to God (ī śvara) the entire given world is Real and ultimately Real and Plural (paramārtha-sat). Nyāya does not believe in degrees of Reality. X is either 'real'

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¹ The world is a sum total of referents (*padārtha*) of language. cf. *yāvādartham vai nāmadheya - śabdāḥ* (Nyāyabhāṣya on Nyāyasūtra 1.1.4)

² The Philosophy of Becoming and Appearing, by V. N. Jha.

or 'unreal'. It cannot be real for some time and unreal thereafter. (g) There are as many leaving beings so many selves (ātman). Each self is distinct. Plurality is the Reality. (h) All human beings are selves (ātman) in essence. Each self is a spiritual substance. In essence, a self is without any condition (mukta). But when a self assumes a human body, senses and a mind, the self is said to be conditioned (baddha).³ (i) The entire journey of human life is to get rid of this conditioned state and discover one's original de-conditioned state. Every living being is endowed with the capacity to achieve this ultimate goal of life. God is viewed as a facilitator in this exercise. He is so compassionate that He has created this beautiful universe that provides man an opportunity to discover himself or herself. This is how the Naiyāyikas look at the universe.

2.0 - There is another aspect of the Nyāya System which is worth-nothing. The approach of the system has all long been holistic in nature. The system believes that unless the enquiry has something to do with human life, it is meaningless. According to them, the world is a structured entity. Hence, nothing exists in isolation. Therefore, unless our enquiry is holistic one cannot arrive at the truth.

3.0 - Gautama, the author of the Nyāyasūtra, seems to have developed a comprehensive philosophy of life after thoroughly analyzing human behavior. On one hand, he endorses the ultimate goal of life as suggested by the philosophers of the Upaniṣadic period namely, niḥśreyasa (fulfillment) and on the other hand, he offers a complete diagnosis of human behavior and his or her mental states. In Nyāyasūtra 1.1.1 we find Gautama saying that if one comes to know X as X i.e. the Truth, he or she will be able to achieve the state of fulfillment of life which is the ultimate goal of his or her life. This is what is known as self-realization. In Nyāyasūtra 1.1:2 he, therefore, presents how this is going to happen. The sūtra 1.1.2. may be viewed as a complete theory of Indian psychology and a comprehensive philosophy of human transformation. The sūtra runs as follows: Duḥkha-jaṇma-pravṛtti-doṣa-mithyājñānānām uttarottarāpāye tadanatarāpāyād apavargau.⁴ "Ideally speaking, one can attain the ultimate goal of life only when one is free from pain once for all and that will happen only after one has acquired the true cognition which will remove the misunderstanding or misconception which is the root cause of all human sufferings. Once the root cause is destroyed, its product, namely, emotions and attitudes, will be destroyed; once the emotions and attitudes are done away with, their effects, namely, unwanted human behavior is put to rest; its effect, namely, the cause for entering into the cycle of birth and death i.e.: the merits and demerits, will not be there. Once the cause of entering into the cycle of birth

³ Psychology in Nyāya-vaiśeṣika Philosophy, by V. N. Jha.

⁴ *Pramāṇa- prameya- samśaya- prayojana- drṣṭānta- siddhānta - tarka - nirṇaya - vāda - jalpa - vitaṇḍā - hetvābhāsa - chala - jāti - nigrāhasthānānām tattva-jñānāt niḥśreyasādhiḡamaḡ* "It is the knowledge of the real essence (or true character) of the following sixteen categories that leads to the attainment of the Highest Good – 1) The means of Right cognition; 2) The objects of Right Cognition; 3) Doubt; 4) Motive; 5) Example; 6) Theory; 7) Factors of Inference; 8) Cognition; 9) Demonstrated Truth; 10) Discussion; 11) Disputation; 12) Wrangling; 13) Fallacious Reason; 14) Casuistry; 15) Futile Rejoinder and 16) Clinchers." ----Tr. Ganganath Jha.

and death is not there, the person will have no birth and finally, when there is no birth, the person will return to a state which is free from all pains, once for all.”⁵

4.0 - In this diagnosis, Gautama discovers the fact that mithyājñāna or misunderstanding or misconception is the root cause of human sufferings, and immediate effects of this mithyājñāna is the emergence of emotions and formation of attitudes which prompt human behavior. Gautama uses a cover term called *dosa* for emotions and attitudes. Vātsyāyana, the commentator of the Nyāyasūtras, elaborates the term *doṣa* as follows: “etasmāt mithyā-jñānāt anukūleṣu rāgaḥ pratikūleṣu dveṣaḥ Rāgadveṣādihikārāt ca asūyā-īrṣyā-māyā-lobhādayaḥ doṣaḥ bhavanti” (Nyāyabhāṣya on Nyāyasūtra 1.1.2). A misunderstanding or misconception or erroneous cognition results into ‘attachment to something desirable’ or ‘aversion toward something not desirable’. These two further result into n-number of emotions like envy, jealousy, deceit, avarice and so on.

5.0 - These emotions and attitudes manifest themselves in various forms of action in man through three modes: (a) body (*śarīra*), (b) speech (*vāc*) and (c) mind (*manas*). Some of them are evaluated as ‘good’ (*śubha*) and some as ‘bad’ (*pāpa*).⁶ Some of the good acts prompted by emotions and expressed through human body are: charity (*dāna*), protecting (*paritrāṇa*) and service (*Paricaraṇa*); good emotions expressed through ‘speech’ are: telling the truth, saying what is wholesome and agreeable (*satya*, *hita* and *priya*), and studying the books of wisdom (*svādhyāya*); and good emotions expressed through mind are: compassion (*dayā*), entertaining no desire for the belongings of other people i.e. detachment (*asprhā*) and respecting others (*śraddhā*). Similarly, some of the bad acts prompted by these basic emotions, expressed through human body, are: violence (*himsā*), stealing (*asteya*), and sexual abuse (*pratisiddha-maithuna*); bad emotions expressed through speech are: lying (*anṛta-vacana*), talking rudely (*paraṣa-vacana*), hurting or insulting biting speech (*sucana-vacana*) and incoherent babbling (*asambaddha-vacana*) and bad emotions expressed through mind are: malice (*paradroha*), desire for things belonging to others (*para-dravya-abhipsā*) and an inclination towards materialism (*nāstikya*).

6.0 - We have already noted that Nyāya System believes in transformation of man from a conditioned (*baddha*) state to his or her de-conditioned state (*mukta*). Gautama says in Nyāyasūtra 1.1.9 that a person desirous of such a transformation must concentrate on enquiring true nature and function of the following: (i) Self (*ātman*), (ii) Body (*śarīra*), (iii) Senses (*indriya*), (iv) Objects of senses (*artha*), (v) Cognition (*buddhi*), (vi) Mind (*manas*), (vii) Human actions (*pravṛtti*), (viii) Emotions and Attitudes (*doṣa*), (ix) Cycle of birth and rebirth (*pretyabhāva*), (x) Experience of result of action (*phala*), (xi) Pain (*duḥkha*) and (xii) the final aim of human life (*apavarga*).

7.0 - The eighth item in this list is *doṣa* which has been defined by Gautama himself as ‘an inducing or compelling factor to act’ (*pravaṛtanā-Lakṣaṇaḥ doṣaḥ* Nyāyasūtra 1.1.18). *Doṣa* or emotion was identified as *raga* and *dveṣa* by Vātsyāyana

⁵ See Vātsyāyanabhāṣya on Nyāyasūtra 1.1.2.

⁶ See Vātsyāyanabhāṣya on Nyāyasūtra 1.1.2.

which are the effects of misunderstanding or *mithyājñāna*. These two are considered to be the basic emotions of human beings.⁷ Nyāyasūtra 4.1.3 classifies all the emotions into three groups: (a) *rāga-pakṣa* (b) *dveṣapakṣa* and (c) *mohapakṣa*.⁸ Vātsyāyana lists – (i) Love (*Kāma*),⁹ (ii) Selfishness (*matsara*),¹⁰ (iii) Longing for acquiring something which belongs to someone else (*spṛhā*),¹¹ (iv) hankering for rebirth (*trṣṇā*)¹² and greed (*lobha*),¹³ under *ragapakṣa*; (1) Anger (*krodha*),¹⁴ (2) Jealousy (*irṣyā*),¹⁵ Envy (*asuyā*),¹⁶ Malice (*droha*),¹⁷ and Resentment (*amarṣa*),¹⁸ under *dveṣapakṣa*; and (a) Error (*mithyājñāna*),¹⁹ (b) Suspicion (*vicikitsā*),²⁰ pride (*māna*),²¹ negligence (*pramāda*),²² under *mohapakṣa*. Vātsyāyana also defines the three terms *rāga*,²³ *dveṣa*²⁴ and *moha*²⁵ to show why the emotions in these lists are grouped under the names *rāgapakṣa*, *dveṣapakṣa* and *mohapakṣa*. The definitions given by Vātsyāyana²⁶ are: i. *āsaktīlakṣaṇo rāgaḥ* i.e. “*rāga* is excessive attachment”; ii. *amarṣalakṣaṇo dveṣaḥ* i.e. “*dveṣa* is aversion or intolerance”; iii. *mithyāpratipatti-lakṣaṇo mohaḥ* i.e. “*moha* is wrong notion or misunderstanding.” Thus, any emotion can be included in these three categories of emotions. Gautama further points out that, of these three namely, *rāga*, *dveṣa* and *moha*, the *moha* is the most fundamental, because, the other two namely, *rāga* and *dveṣa* and all their manifold manifestations emerge only from misunderstanding or wrong notion or misconception. Gautama says – *teṣāṃ mohaḥ pāpīyān, na amuḡdhasya itarotpatteḥ* (Nyāyasūtra 4.1.6). “Of these three emotions, ‘the wrong notion or illusion’ is more negative because only when *moha* is present, the *rāga* and *dveṣa* can occur, not otherwise.”

⁷ Vātsyāyana paraphrases *pravaṛtana* as *pravṛtti-hetu* i.e. the cause that prompts a man into action. He further says – *jñātāram rāgādayaḥ pravaṛtayanti* “*raga* and *dveṣa* induce a man who has acquired knowledge into activity.”

⁸ See Nyāyasūtra 4.1.3 and Vātsyāyanabhāṣya thereon.

⁹ Strīsambohgecchā kāmaḥ (Nyāyamanjarī Vol. 2, p. 416)

¹⁰ *Yad anyasmai nivedyamānam api vastu dhanavān na kṣīyate tadaparitvāgeccā matsaraḥ*, (Ibid. p. 416)

¹¹ *Anātmīya-vastu-āditsā* (Ibid. p. 416).

¹² *Punarbhavapratisandhānahetubhūtecchā trṣṇā* (Ibid. p. 416).

¹³ *Niṣiddhadravayagrahanecchā lobhaḥ* (Ibid. p. 416).

¹⁴ *Akṣi-bhrū-ādi-vikārahetuḥ prajvalanātmakaḥ krodhaḥ* (Ibid. p. 416).

¹⁵ *Sādhārane api vastuni parasya darśanādi-asahanam irṣyā*, (Loc. cit.).

¹⁶ *Paraguṇeṣu akṣamā asūyā* (Loc. cit.).

¹⁷ *Paropākāraḥ drohaḥ* (Loc. cit.).

¹⁸ *Adarśita-mukhādi-vikāraḥ param prati manyuḥ amarṣaḥ* (Loc. cit.).

¹⁹ *Atasmin tad iti jñānaṃ mithyā-jñānam* (Loc. cit.).

²⁰ *Kiṃsvīd iti vimarśo vicikitsā* (Ibid. pp. 416-17).

²¹ *Asad-guṇa-adhyāropeṇa svotkarṣabuddhiḥ mānaḥ* (Ibid. p. 417).

²² *Kīyad etad ity avajñāya kartavya-akaraṇaṃ pramāṇaḥ* (Loc. cit.).

²³ *Anukūleṣu artheṣu abhīpsālakṣaṇo rāgaḥ* (Ibid. p. 415).

²⁴ *Pratikūleṣu asahanalakṣaṇaḥ dveṣaḥ* (Loc. cit.).

²⁵ *Vastu-pāramārthya-aparicedalakṣaṇaḥ mithyādhyavasāyo mohaḥ* (Loc. cit.).

²⁶ Nyāyabhāṣya on Nyāyasūtra 4.1.3.

8.0 - It may be noted that there are two pairs here: (1) moha and rāga and (2) moha and dveṣa. Moha is common to both, rāga and dveṣa (tau imau mohayonī rāgadveṣau i.e. both rāga and dveṣa have their origin in moha). This implies that illusion, or erroneous notion or misconception or misunderstanding is the fundamental cause from which all emotions emerge and rāga and dveṣa are the basic emotions from which all other types of emotions emerge. Vātsyāyana while commenting on Nyāyasūtra 4.1.6 points out that a person who is under illusion wrongly identifies something as ‘worth-having’ or as ‘worth-avoiding’, from which rāga and dveṣa respectively emerge. Vācaspati Misra, the author of the Nyāyavārttikatāparyatikā, further clarifies this causal relationship between moha and rāga-dveṣa. He points out that under the spell of moha, a person wrongly remembers that something is the means of his or her desired goal or something is the means of his or her undesired goal and accordingly what follows is either rāga or dveṣa towards that particular thing.²⁷

9.0 - Jayantabhaṭṭa, the 9th century AD Kashmiri Naiyāyika, raises a question and himself replies. He asks: If moha is the fundamental cause of emotions why should we not say that doṣa is only one and why should we say that doṣas are three in number? He answers himself by saying that we experience all the three distinctly and therefore we say so. He says – anubhūyate hi rāgadveṣamohānām itaretaravibhaktam svarūpam.²⁸ It is an experience of every body and what a first person, second person and third person experience is cannot be denied. It is true that moha is the cause of both rāga and dveṣa, still, since as rāga and dveṣa prompt a person to act so also the cause of rāga and dveṣa, namely, moha prompts a person to act and hence moha should also be considered as doṣa and as such the doṣa-s are three in number. Here, the distinctness is not claimed on the ground of their function, but, on the basis of their nature.

10.0 - Thus, by now, I hope, it is clear from whatever we have discussed so far that the System of Nyāya has addressed emotions from the mundane point of view as well as from the philosophical point of view. Since the aim of the System has been to suggest what could be the method to get transformation, Gautama made it clear that the root cause of human sufferings is moha or mithyājñāna. It may be noted that Vātsyāyana does not classify emotions as positive and negative or good and bad. Only the actions (pravṛtti) which are the effect of emotions could be either śubha (positive) or pāpa (negative). Philosophically, however, from the consideration of the ultimate goal of human life, all emotions are hindrances since all of them are result of moha. Thus, what we call positive or negative emotion is only in the context of actions that human beings perform to get some thing or to get rid of something. A pravṛtti may be śubha or a-śubha. Emotion is a way of expressing in life. That depends upon how we make use of

²⁷ Mohād viṣayasya sukhāsādhana tvānusmṛtiḥ duḥkhasādhana tvānusmṛtiśca (Nyāyadarśana p. 927)

²⁸ Nyāyamañjarī, p. 418. Jayanta says -- *esām mohaḥ pāpatamaḥ itarayos tu tadadhīnātmalābhāt | mugdhasya hi rāgadveṣau bhavataḥ mithyā saṅkalpāt utpadyamānayoḥ anubhavāt | kuṣaṅkalpaśca mithyājñānaprakṛtiḥ | evam mithyādānanasya eva bhagavataḥ sarvam idam vilasitam yo 'yam anekaprakārah saṁsāraduḥkhabhārah.* (Ibid. p. 417)

these emotions. Our experiences and wisdom (viveka) contribute to the evaluation of the emotions. Emotions can include and emotions can exclude. The emotions which exclude may be termed as 'negative emotion', but emotions that include, that broaden our mind may be classified as "positive or good emotions". Positive emotions are dharma-yielding and negative emotions are adharma or pāpa- yielding in the analysis of Nyāya System of Indian thought. The System suggests that if one wants to discover oneself or wants to return to one's own essential Form, one must go beyond both, positive and negative emotions. Jayantabhaṭṭa declares: *sarvaṃ duḥkhaṃ vivekinaḥ* ("For a wise and reflecting man, everything is nothing but 'pain' which needs to be avoided"). As, without human body, there is no chance to attain salvation, in the same way, without emotions too the journey of transformation cannot begin. This is the rationale of emotions in the analysis of the Nyāya System of Indian Philosophy.

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