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CONCEPTION OF SPACE (DIK) IN THE VĀKYAPADĪYA

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Bhartṛhari holds space to be a Power or a Force (Śakti) along with time.[1] By Śakti he means something dependent, i.e. something which abides in its substratum and has no existence independently of it. Space cannot be a substance, as held by the Vaiśeṣika, for it is a Śakti which is to be inferred from its effect of helping things hold together. Such a Śakti cannot be expressed by a single word or phrase and has to be defined. The required definition of space, Bhartṛhari gives us in Kārikās 2 and 3 of the Dik Samuddeśa.[2] Dik is a Śakti which is the cause of differentiation (vyatireka) between a limit and an object sought to be limited by it, which again is the cause of the notion of straightness without reference to any other thing and which presents the lower species of motions such as rotatory, horizontal, etc. This Śakti, though one, is diversified by its limiting adjuncts. As explained by Helārāja, the relation between two things, one being prior and another posterior to it, is an adventitious quality produced in them, which certainly is no part of their nature; for that is incapable of producing it; it must, therefore, have another cause, and that cause is Dik (space). If it be urged that this (new) relation may be the effect of a universal, etc., we say no, for we are not conscious of our notion of it being coloured by a universal, etc. By the process of elimination, therefore, it is Dik that is the cause of it and nothing else. Hence the Vaiśeṣikas say: 'The characteristic of Dik is that it is from or on account of it that there arises the fact that this thing is here or there from this other thing.'[3] Since Dik is knowable only by inference and is understood as a qualification of things, it cannot be an independent substance. Dik is not perceptible like substances such as earth. Though Dik is one, yet by virtue of its limiting adjuncts, it appears as many and is spoken of as ten. It is the conjunction of the sun with a particular part of the horizon that is the cause of our notion of the east, the west, etc.

Now if an accessory cause such as conjunction with the sun is to be accepted to explain our notion of the east or west, etc., why not dispense with Dik altogether, asks the objector? The reply is that the conjunction is not by itself either prior or posterior, which relation is admittedly a product of Dik. Nor can it be advanced that time can be that effective cause in place of Dik; for it is also equally the cause of the notion of the relation of mutual priority and posteriority. Because, these notions produced by time and space belong to two different spheres, this necessitates the assumption of these two distinct entities. The relation of priority and posteriority between finite bodies (corporeal things) is caused by space and that between the parts of an action, or between two actions having two different substrata, in the form of succession, is caused

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[1] Dik sādhanaṃ kriyā kāla iti vastvabhidhāyinaḥ /
Śaktirūpe padārthānāmatyanta manavasthitāḥ // III. 6. 1.

[2] Vyatirekasya yo heturavadhipratipādyayoḥ /
Ṛjvityeva yato' nyena vinā buddhiḥ pravartate //
Karmaṇo jātibhedānām abhivyaktir yadāśrayā /
Sā svair upādhibhir bhinnā śaktir dig iti kathyate // III. 6. 2. 3.

[3] Ita idam iti yatas taddiśo liṅgaṃ-vai. su. II. 2. 10.

by time. This is set forth in Kārikā (III. 6. 4).[1] As explained by Helārāja, our notions of prior and posterior in respect of finite things arise from their conjunction with a place which is prior or posterior, but a place owes this priority or posteriority to space (Dik).

Not only that. Dik (space) is also the cause of the hypothetical relation of priority and posteriority between infinite things on the one hand, and finite things on the other. Hence there is no escape from it. Now ākāśa is one, but this one ākāśa comes to be differentiated by objects in association with it. Thus conditioned, it has various conjunctions and disjunctions with the parts of finite substances. It is space itself qualified as prior or posterior, east or west that functions to relate the assumed parts of the ākāśa. Thus a group of stars conjoined with prior ākāśa is termed prior, and another conjoined with posterior ākāśa is termed posterior. All this is beautifully expressed in Kārikā III. 6. 5.[2]

Now an objector makes an attempt. He urges that the assumption that space possesses pūrvatva and paratva as parts of its nature involves the fault technically called *anavasthā* and asks if space can have such parts as intrinsic or integral to it. He also asks—what is wrong with the places that they are incapable of having such parts? This is answered in Kārikā III. 6. 6.[3] That a place is a container or a receptacle is its own nature, it is not dependent upon the power of something else; but priority or posteriority is no part of its nature. When a place comes to have this adventitious quality, it must be due to a cause outside it and that cause is space. But in the case of space, priority or posteriority is not dependent upon anything else, it is a part of its nature. And space, being infinite, cannot assume the character of a receptacle in addition to its quality *pūrvāparatva*, for which it would require a cause. But space must be a principle such as is inferable from its effect, priority or posteriority, viz. it must be of the nature of priority and posteriority. This is cryptically put down in the first half of the Kārikā 'Diśo vyavasthā deśānāṃ digvyavasthā na vidyate'. Every thing has its own unique nature; hence space cannot be both a receptacle and have the nature of priority and posteriority. Things come to have varied or complex nature only under the influence of other things in relation with them. And, if a substance were assumed to possess a variety of Śaktis, it would work independently of accessory causes and might produce all sorts of effects.

Bhartṛhari once again emphasizes that Dik is a Power (Śakti) and that priority and posteriority form its very nature. It is the condition of the priority and posteriority in places; but priority and posteriority are its own inherent qualities which are not due to any other external object.

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[1] Parāparatve mūrtānāṃ deśabhedanibandhane /
Tata eva prakalpyete kramarūpe tu kālataḥ //

It may be noted that the Text of the Vākyapadīya and of the Helārājīya (the Commentary thereon) is generally corrupt but at places so horribly spoilt by the unintelligent scribe that it is a challenge to the most learned among scholars. Even the most ingenious fail to hit upon the correct reading. The confusion is indeed baffling. In the above Kārikā, we have changed the original reading 'Kramarūpe na kalpataḥ' to Kramarūpe tu Kālataḥ, for that alone makes sense, and has, besides, the support of Helārāja who remarks: Pūrvamabhūd bhaviṣyati paramiti tu kriyāpaurvāparyaṃ kālaśaktikṛta pratibandhābhyanujñāvaśād vyavatiṣṭhata iti.

[2] Ākāśasya pradeśena bhāgaiścānyaiḥ pṛthak pṛthak /
Sā saṃyogavibhāgānām upādhitvāya kalpate //

[3] Diśo vyavasthā deśānāṃ digvyavasthā na vidyate /
Śaktayaḥ khalu bhāvānām upakāraprabhāvitāḥ //

The Dik which gives the notion of priority is prior. If it were otherwise, Dik would be an empty name, not signifying any real thing.[1]

To Bhartṛhari, as to the Vaiśeṣika, Dik is *vibhu*, all-pervading; for it operates everywhere: the quality of priority or posteriority is produced by it in all things without exception. This is what is meant by vibhutva, all-pervasiveness, declares Bhartṛhari.[2]

How do we know that space exists?

The definition of space (Dik) given above implies that we derive our knowledge of it from inference. Now what is the basis of this inference? In other words, what constitutes the logical ground (liṅga) for this inference? A summit of a mountain is aglow with sunshine, while another is covered by thick shade. This division of the mountain into parts, characterized by sunshine and shade, would not be possible, if there were no space. For in the absence of space, there would be no prior or posterior limit which alone is the cause of the notion of the plurality of parts. The division into parts (to have been due to relation with Dik) is surely the evidence of the existence of Dik.[3]

It might perhaps be urged that so far as corporeal bodies are concerned there is little necessity of postulating an independent entity like Dik to account for the notion of the diversity of parts, because that diversity can become the object of our consciousness by virtue of the conjunction of those bodies, say, with shade, sunshine, etc. To this we reply 'No'. It is wrongly assumed here that corporeal bodies are directly in conjunction with shade or sunshine. The fact is that it is their component parts that are directly conjoined with sunshine or shade. For instance, the rays of the sun that fall on one side of a jar are in contact only with the potsherds of that particular side; and on the other side, the potsherds alone are in conjunction with the shade. This means that the jar is neither in conjunction with the shade nor with the sunshine. If, however, it be said that the whole, the substance, having the same locus with, and thus present in, the parts is in contact with the shade, etc., we point out that in that event the whole, being in contact with the shade, etc., will cease to have the same locus with its parts—a contingency highly undesirable. Moreover, it is an indirect admission that it is parts only that are directly in conjunction with the shade, etc. Hence Dik has to be assumed to account for the notions of priority, posteriority, lowness, highness, etc., in all corporeal things.

There is also another logical necessity for the assumption of Dik. All produced things are ultimately the product of atoms. The atoms are believed to be without parts. Production of various things means combination of atoms. But how do they combine and how does the minimal gross magnitude (visible to the naked eye) arise from the combination of atoms which are the limits of minuteness? As a rule a magnitude is capable of giving rise only to a superior magnitude of the same order. Thus the gross magnitude of two bodies is invariably found to be the cause of a grosser magnitude in the body which they produce by their combination. Hence the magnitude of a dyad (dvyanuka) should be minuter than that of either of the constituent atoms. The Vaiśeṣika, however, denies causal efficiency to atomic magnitude and hence rules out a minuter

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[1] Pratyastarūpā bhāveṣu dik pūrvetyabhidhīyate /
Pūrvabuddhir yato dik sā samākhyāmātramanyathā // III. 6. 7.

[2] Sarvatra tasya kāryasya darśanād vibhuriṣyate /
Vibhutvametad evahur anyaḥ kāryavatāṃ vidhiḥ // III. 6. 17.

[3] Chāyābhābhyāṃ nagādīnāṃ bhāgabhedaḥ prakalpate /
Ataddharmasvabhāveṣu bhāgabhedo na kalpate // III. 6. 12.

magnitude resulting in the effect. Bhartṛhari has his own answer. He affirms that atoms, though themselves without parts, come to have four sides and the lower and upper surfaces by virtue of association with Dik (space). Thus when six atoms combine, they have each a side for conjunction. This explains the resultant gross magnitude. Yet, however, unless Dik is assumed, it would not be possible to account for the development of a gross magnitude from the atomic magnitude of the constituents. Dik has, therefore, to be assumed as the very first cause of the ascription of parts to the primary material cause of production, viz. the atoms.[1]

The necessity of the assumption of *dik* has been challenged on yet another ground. It is urged that things emerge (come into existence) possessed of a particular structural arrangement of parts, how then does Dik help to give them a form? To this Bhartṛhari gives a reply in Kārikā III. 6. 14.[2] Says he: Things are in their nature devoid of locus (deśa), parts (bhāga), succession (krama) and the colouring by conditions (upāśraya); it is only on account of their association with other things that they vary. Infinite things such as ākāśa have no locus (or locality), for they are all-pervading. Similarly with finite things, for how could such an external thing as a place or room form part of their nature? Both these categories of things are only assumed to be in conjunction with places or to inhere in them. Things are in their nature devoid of parts which are distinct from them, and which are assumed to be related to them. And if things have no real parts, they are free from succession, for that is grounded on difference. Again, in their own nature, they are not subject to the colouring by limiting adjuncts. But it is association with other things that seems to change their nature, which really remains unaffected. Thus of a number of things lying in the same direction, say, the west, one particular thing may be positionally lower. Now this notion is entirely due to *dik*. Again, the parts of a whole stand undistinguished on account of the quality of inherence. But we have a notion of its parts. This notion, too, is produced by *dik*.

If, indeed, things are really without parts, how is it that an object like a jar presents itself to us as a whole apparently made up of parts and possessing sensible magnitude? To this Bhartṛhari's reply is that, as a matter of fact, the whole being quite distinct from its component parts a jar as well as an atom is devoid of parts. It is under the influence of the power called *dik* that the component parts develop positional relation of priority and posteriority and become non-distinguishable from the whole by virtue of the quality of inherence. If a whole were in its very nature possessed of parts, it would not be one, but many. And we are here not concerned with secondary divisibility, for that could well be predicated even of an atom. As for magnitude itself, which is minute in the case of an atom and gross (sensible) in the case of a jar, it is also different from the thing produced. Dimension is a specific Force which is the cause of our notions of the gross and atomic magnitudes. Hence what differentiates a jar from an atom is the difference in dimension.[3]

Again, if wholes are really different from their component parts, and if a qualification supplied by a limiting adjunct is no inherent part of their

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[1] Paramāṇor abhāgasya diśā bhāgo vidhīyate /
Bhāgaprakalpanāśaktiṃ prathamāṃ tāṃ pracakṣate // III. 6. 13.

[2] Adeśāścāpyabhāgāśca niṣkramā nirupāśrayāḥ /
Bhāvāḥ saṃsargirūpāttu śaktibhedaḥ prakalpate //

[3] Nirbhāgātmakatā tulyā paramāṇor ghaṭasya ca /
Bhāgāḥ śaktyantaraṃ tatra parimāṇaṃ ca yattayoḥ // III. 6. 15.

nature, all things would become undefinable and indistinguishable. They would, like Brahman, be internally non-differentiable (svagatabhedaśūnya). To this Bhartṛhari says: we agree. This is the real nature of things. All this difference is apparent, it is empirical, a product of avidyā. It has become, as it were, a part of the nature of things and cannot be denied. Yet it cannot be maintained that it is real. As already observed, the wholes are different from their parts. But the parts must be different from their parts, and these other again from their parts, so on and so forth, till we come to the atom. To the atom too, space imparts parts or sides, for how else is the undifferentiated atom to produce diversity? Space, too, is differentiated by conjunction with the sun. The conjunctions of the sun are also differentiated by the different parts of the Meru mountain; and these parts by their own, and these again by their parts, till we come back to space. This difference is like a movement in a circle and stops nowhere. There is *anavasthā*. All this difference therefore lacks proof and must be held to be apparent only. Not only are things not differentiated in themselves, but they are not differentiated even by the limiting adjuncts, for they must themselves be differentiated by other limiting adjuncts, and those others by still others, and so on and so forth, the differentiation stopping nowhere. The limiting adjuncts, too, therefore are quite incapable of differentiating the nature of things.[1]

Now Bhartṛhari declares emphatically that he would be a bold man indeed who would deny the empirical existence of both time and space. All our experience is determined by priority or posteriority. The notion of priority and posteriority has become so inextricably woven with our consciousness of things that it has become vital to our very being. We are as much convinced that time and space exist as our own consciousness (Intelligence) which is no other than the self; and the self is recognized by all controversialists. Since both time and space are objects of experience, there is little sense in discarding them.[2]

And if time and space are discarded, what will be there to regulate our conduct, secular and religious? Shastraic injunctions, with a seen or unseen purpose, such as 'one should face the east when dining', 'one should perform the śrāddha ceremony in the afternoon', could not be faithfully carried out in the absence of both time and space. For, in their absence, there would be nothing to cause the notion of priority and posteriority in things and actions. Although this world is devoid of succession, there being nothing prior or posterior positionally or chronologically, yet the enlightened person to whom the falsity of this world of phenomena has become manifest, accepts this world and while he rejects time and space on the basis of reason, does accept them both in practice; for there is no escape from the notion of priority and posteriority generated by them.[3]

The Advaitin's View

As is usual with Bhartṛhari, he concludes his treatise on space with the statement of the Advaitin's view of it. According to this view, Dik (space) does not exist externally. It is the externalization of the Inner

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[1] Yataḥ prakalpyate bhedo' bhedastatrāpi dṛśyate /
Adṛṣṭoparatiṃ bhedamato' yuktataraṃ viduḥ // III. 6. 16.

[2] Caitanyavat sthitā loke dikkālaparikalpanā /
Prakṛtiṃ prāṇināṃ tāṃ hi ko'nyathā sthāpayiṣyati // III. 6. 18.

[3] Saṅkaro vyavahārāṇām prakṛteḥ syādviparyaye /
Tasmāt tyajannimān bhāvān punar evāvalambate // III. 6. 19.

Consciousness under the influence of Avidyā without a beginning, an outward manifestation of that one Principle in various forms which have no real existence.[1] Bhartṛhari repeats the idea when he says: The heaven, the earth, the wind, the sun, the oceans, the rivers and the quarters are all parts of the internal organ, which have manifested them in so many external forms.[2] This Appearance is, therefore, independent of any real external existence. Priority and posteriority too are the product of Nescience. Things are said to be internal and external; but as a matter of fact, there is no such difference. The so-called difference does not go beyond words, it does not touch the nature of things.

Proceeding further, Bhartṛhari discusses the question whether space is one or many. He says that neither assumption brings us any the nearer to the truth. The assumption that space is fundamentally one, being only diversified by the various limiting conditions, is as false as the one that space is primarily many as inferred from its effects. Anyway human activity goes on unhampered. Things are not in their essence as they are represented to us by various thinkers; surely they could not have the conflicting characteristics attributed to them by the different schools of thought. Their true nature transcends the various views held of them.[3]

Now Bhartṛhari argues why oneness or manyness cannot be true of space, and, for the matter of that, of any thing. There is the dictum that of two interdependent things, if the one cannot be proved, the other too becomes automatically unproved; hence the oneness or manyness of space is incapable of proof. We in this world go by our experience, take things as they appear to us. In the ultimate analysis, even such contraries as difference and non-difference do not exist. The one without a second is the only truth. Moreover, space has been defined here as a power, which is the condition of other things. And a power cannot be said to be one or many.[4] Manyness is doubtless predicable of things possessed of power; but a power cannot be differentiated, dependent as it is on a substratum, even when they, the substrata, are many. Nor the oneness such as experienced in a jar is part of the nature of a power.[5]

And there is further reason why oneness or manyness in respect of a power like space is unprovable. The concept of oneness must necessarily involve the concept of its opposite, viz. manyness. It cannot stand alone. It is unthinkable without its counterpart. Similarly manyness, dependent upon its opposite oneness, is unthinkable; independently of the latter. Hence neither oneness nor manyness can be exclusively predicated of space. It is therefore neither one nor many.

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[1] Antaḥ karaṇa dharmo vā bahirevaṃ prakāśate /
Asyām tvantar bahirbhāvaḥ prakriyāyāṃ na vidyate // III. 6. 23.

[2] Dyauḥ kṣamā vāyurādityaḥ sāgarāḥ sarito diśaḥ /
Antaḥkaraṇa tattvasya bhāgā bahiravasthitāḥ // III. 7. 41.

[3] Ekatvamāsāṃ śaktīnāṃ nānātvaṃ veti kalpane /
Avastupatite jñātvā satyato na parāmṛśet // III. 6. 24.

[4] Naikatvam asti nānātvaṃ vinaikatvena netaraḥ /
Paramārtho tayor eṣa bhedo' tyantaṃ na vidyate // III. 6. 26.

[5] Na śaktīnāṃ tathā bhedo yathā śaktimatāṃ sthitiḥ /
Na ca laukikam ekatvam tāsāṃ ātmasu vidyate // III. 6. 27.