

Chapter-IV

Different Types of *Abhāva*

I

The category of absence (*abhāva*) has been taken as the object of negative cognition (*nāsti buddhi*). Now, since there are different forms of negative cognition, different types of absence have been admitted and described. The Naiyāyikas believe that there are two fundamental forms of negative cognition: (i) A is not B and (ii) A is not in B. Adhering to these forms they admit two kinds of absence (*abhāva*) namely, *anyonyābhāva* or mutual absence or reciprocal absence as the object of the first form of cognition, and *samsargābhāva* or relational absence as the object of the second form of cognition. It is so called because an entity remains on some locus just as a jar is not on the ground. In this case a relation has been established between a jar and ground, which leads the Naiyāyikas to describe it as relational absence or *samsargābhāva*. The latter kind is subdivided into three kinds: *prāgabhāva* or prior absence, *dhvamsābhāva* or annihilative absence and *atyantābhāva* or constant absence or absolute absence. Thus we get ultimately four kinds of absence. To give a preliminary description of each type, we may say that mutual or reciprocal absence (*anyonabhāva*) is the absence of

identity between two things, or, in other words, difference between two things. Just as an identity between two entities is proclaimed in case of *tādātmya* or identity, the difference between two is also a matter of proclamation. Prior or antecedent absence means absence of a thing before its production. Posterior or annihilative absence is the absence of a thing at its annihilation or destruction. And when an entity is absent from a particular locus, though existing in some other locus, its absence is called constant absence (*atyantābhāva*). In other words, an entity remaining absent in three times like present, past and future is also called constant absence or *atyantābhāva*. *Anyonyabhāva* or mutual absence is established by the negative cognition of the form ‘A is not B’ such as ‘A table is not a chair’. In this form of cognition A’s identity (*tadatmya*) with B is denied. Everything is identical with itself only and not with anything else. So everything has the absence of identity with anything else. Thus A has the relations of identity with itself only and has the absence of identity with B or C or D and so on with everything other than itself. So when it is said- ‘A is not B’, it is to be understood as an absence called the mutual absence. In this connection may be raised regarding its counter-positive and locus. It may seem to us that identity with B is the counter-positive (*pratiyogin*) of the absence and A is the locus (*anuyogin*) of the absence. Regarding the counter-positive of the mutual absence Udayanācārya seems to hold this view.¹ According to him, the complete denial of the identity of one thing with

another is called the mutual absence or *anyonyābhāva*. So when we say ‘A is not B’, the counter-positive is the identity with B. But the older Naiyāyikas put it in a different way. To them, in the case of the mutual absence (*anyonyābhāva*) expressed by the statement ‘A is not B’, B is the counter-positive (*pratiyogī*) and the relation of identity is the limiting relation (*pratyogitā-vacchedaka sambandha*) of counter-positiveness. B is denied of A in so far as the identity relation is concerned. In other words, B’s counter-positiveness with respect to the mutual absence (*anyonyābhāva*) is limited by the relation of identity (*tādātmyasambandhāvachhinna*). The relation of identity (*tādātmyasambandha*) is the only limiting relation in all the cases of mutual absence (*anyonyābhāva*) and every case of absence of a thing through the relation of identity is a case of *anyonyābhāva*. So the mutual absence (*anyonyābhāva*) is denied as the absence, the counter-positiveness of which is limited by the relation of identity (*tādātmya-sambandhāvacchinna- pratiyogitākābhāvatvam*).²

When it is cognized that A is not B, the mutual absence of B in A is known. So the locus of the absence is A and the counter-positive or *pratiyogī* is B. But by virtue of being ‘mutual’ or ‘reciprocal’ in nature, the two entities involved in the case of a mutual absence, one being the locus and the other being the counter-positive (*pratiyogī*), can interchange their position. That which is regarded as the locus can be regarded as the counter-positive (*pratiyogī*) and the *vice-versa*. Hence,

just as we say ‘A is not B’, we can also say ‘B is not A’. If A is not identical with B, then B also is not identical with A. It depends on our point of view or sweet will as to which of them is to be taken as the locus and which one as the counter-positive. If we regard A to have the mutual absence of B, then A is the locus and B is the counter-positive, if, on the other hand, we understand B to have the mutual absence of A then B is the locus and A is the counter-positive. Ontologically each one has got the mutual absence of the other. The Naiyāyikas hold that the mutual absence (*anyonyābhāva*) is to be known as difference (*bhedah*). To say ‘A is not B’ or ‘A table is not a chair’ is to say ‘A is different from B’ or ‘A table is different (*bhinna*) from a chair’. So the form of negative cognition which establishes the reality of mutual absence (*anyonyabhava*) or difference (*bheda*) is not only ‘A is not B’ but also ‘A is different from B’. *Anyonyābhāva* is opposite to identity (*tādātmya*) which is otherwise known as *abheda*. If *tādātmya* or identity is *abheda* then *anyonyābhāva* is *bheda* if the definition of *anyonyābhāva* cited above is reviewed carefully.

There is, however, a philosophical problem regarding the negative cognition of the form: ‘A is not B’. That the mutual absence is the object of such form of cognition is not always the case. In certain occasions an instance of constant absence (*atyantābhāva*) is also found to be object of such form of cognition. For example, if it is said- ‘This cloth is not red’, we mean to say ‘This cloth has the

absence of red colour' and this is an example of constant absence. So, when cognition of the form 'A is not B' is known, it is difficult to decide whether we get a mutual absence or a constant absence as the object of that cognition. In order to solve this problem it can be said that if B stands for a qualifier (*viśeṣaṇa*) then we get a constant absence as the object of the cognition of the form 'A is not B'. But if B does not stand for a qualifier (*viśeṣaṇa*) or property (*dharma*), instead, stands for a *darmī* (a thing which possesses some property) then we get a mutual absence or *anyonyābhāva* as the object of the cognition of the form 'A is not B'. It should, of course, be kept in mind that one and the same thing may be regarded as a *dharma* (property or qualifier) as well as a *darmī* (possessor of a property) under different situations.³ For example, when it is said- 'Red is not blue', both 'red' and 'blue' are taken to stand for *dharma*, red as the possessor of the universal redness (*raktatva*) and blue as the possessor of the universal blueness (*nīlatva*). But when it is said- 'This cloth is not red', 'red' stands for a property or a qualifier.

It may further be said that if the cognition expressed in the statement 'A is not B' can also be expressed by the statement 'A is different from B' then a mutual absence as the object of that cognition can be attained. If, on the other hand, the cognition expressed by the statement 'A is not B' cannot be expressed by the other statement then a mutual absence can never be attained. So it is necessary to adhere to both the forms of cognition in order to prove mutual absence.

The mutual absence of a thing (*dharma*) is, according to the Naiyāyikas, co-extensive (*samaniyata*) with the constant or absolute absence (*atyantābhāva*) of the relevant property (*dharma*) i.e. the property as qualified by which the thing (*dharma*) appears as the counter positive of the mutual absence. For example, if it is said that a table is not a chair, the mutual absence of chair which is said to be co-extensive (*samaniyata*) with the constant absence of chairness. They are co-extensive because whatever is different from chair or has the mutual absence of chair, does not possess the property of chairness or has the constant absence of chairness. So wherever the mutual absence of chair (the thing possessed of chairness) exists, the constant absence of chairness also exists and on the other hand, wherever the constant absence of chairness exists, the mutual absence of chair exists. Thus the constant absence of a property and the mutual absence of the possessor of that property are co-extensive. Now, according to most of the Naiyāyikas, specially those belonging to the early school, if two instances of absence are co-extensive then they are to be regarded as equivalent, and consequently one can be replaced by the other. They maintained this view on the basis of the law of parsimony (*lāghava*). On this view the constant absence of a property (*dharma*) and the mutual absence of the possessor of the property (*dharmī*) are the same. There is, in fact, only one and the same absence, but it appears differently due to the difference in counter-positive and in the limiting

relation of counter-positiveness. This view, however, has not been taken for granted by many of the later Naiyāyikas.

One special character of mutual absence is that unlike other kinds of absence it does not have the relation of opposition (*virodha*) with its counter-positive (*pratiyogin*), rather it is opposed to the property limiting the counter-positiveness (*pratiyogitāvacchedaka dharma*). A mutual absence is not opposed to its counter-positive, because it remains along with its counter-positive in the same substratum at the same time. For example, a table which is different from a pot can have a pot on the same locus. So the table has the mutual absence of pot, as well as a pot on it. Thus both the counter-positive, i.e. the pot and its mutual absence, exist in the same locus, namely, the table, at the same time. On account of this they cannot be said to be opposed to each other. On the contrary, where potness, the property limiting the counter-positiveness with respect to the mutual absence, exists, the mutual absence of pot cannot exist on account of the fact that potness exists in pot and a pot cannot have mutual absence of itself. Everything is identical with itself. So a pot is identical with it and is not different from it. Therefore a mutual absence cannot remain together with the property limiting the counter-positiveness belonging to its counter positive or absentee (*pratiyogī*).

After keeping this feature of mutual absence in view those Naiyayikas, who are of the opinion that the denial of constant absence is identical with its counter-

positive, said that the denial of mutual absence would be identical not with the counter-positive (of the mutual absence) but with the property limiting the counter-positiveness. For example, the constant absence of mutual absence of pot would be identical with potness, which is not the same with constant absence. The constant absence of constant absence of pot would be identical with pot.

A generally accepted view of the Naiyāyikas is that the mutual absence of a thing is eternal (*nitya*). That means, the mutual absence of a thing is always there for all times. It is not the case that the mutual absence of a thing is produced at a particular time and again is destroyed at a particular time. It is neither produced nor destroyed, it exists all the time, and it is ever-present (*sadātana*).

This position is easily understandable to us. If the counter-positive of a mutual absence is an eternal (*nitya*) entity then the mutual absence can also be regarded as eternal. For as long as a thing is there, its mutual absence too is there, and an eternal thing is there all the time, so its mutual absence also is ever present. But when the counter-positive of a mutual absence is taken to be non-eternal (*anitya*) entity, how can the mutual absence be regarded as eternal? An object having both origination and destruction is called non-eternal. So it does not exist at all times. As long as it exists, its mutual absence is to be found there. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers would answer the question in the positive, though

Śivāditya, a commentator of Vaiśeṣika texts, had forwarded a difference of opinion.³

If it is admitted that the mutual absence of substancehood (*dravyatvabhedah*) exists there, then there is no doubt that it is eternal property, and its mutual absence too is so. But if we take, for example, the mutual absence of a jar (*ghaṭabhedah*), would it be an eternal absence? Pots are non-eternal things; can their mutual absence be eternal? We may not have any doubt to accept this absence as eternal if we understand the nature of this absence. By the mutual absence of pot is meant the mutual absence of pot in general. It is a generic absence (*sāmānyabhāva*), which entails that it is the mutual absence of anything possessed of potness. So whatever possesses potness is the counter-positive of the mutual absence of pot. Potness, which is a generic property, limits or restricts the counter positiveness of the mutual absence. Potness, being a universal, is ever present, and some entity, possessed of potness, is also present all the time. Hence, all the time the mutual absence of pot is to be found in other existing classes of entities.

But we may face certain problems when the case of the mutual absence of a particular entity taken as an individual and not as a member of a class. For example, we talk about the mutual absence of a particular entity (*tadghaṭabhedah*) when it is said-- “This pot is different from the pot”. A particular pot taken in its

individuality (*tadvyaktirūpeṇa*) is the counter – positive of this absence. It is an instance of specific type of absence (*viśeṣābhāva*). The counter-positiveness in this case is limited by the individuality of that pot (*tadvyaktitva*). Such a particular individual is non-eternal due to its existence for a definite duration of time. So long as it exists, its mutual absence too can be admitted, but before its production or after its destruction how will we prove the existence of mutual absence? The Naiyāyikas might give a reminder that even in such cases the mutual absence is to be regarded as ever – present, for we cannot deny that all the existing pots are different from a particular pot which was there, or a particular pot which will be produced in future. It can still be argued against the Naiyāyikas that, though it can be possible to cognize in existing pots, it is not possible to know the mutual absence of a particular pot which has been destroyed and which has not yet been produced. As every individual entity is different from every other, we can only infer that all the existing pots are different from any pot which will be produced in future. But it is not possible to know by any means the mutual absence of a particular pot taken its individuality, before that particular individual is produced. So it is difficult to prove that even the mutual absence of a non-eternal individual taken in its individuality is eternal.

Let us turn out attention to the concept of *samasargābhāva* or relational absence. It has three sub – divisions viz. *prāgabhāva* or prior absence,

dhvamsābhāva or annihilative absence and *atyantābhāva* or constant absence.

Now, what is to be understood by *samasargābhāva* or relational absence?

Sometimes it is described as the absence of relation with thing or, in other words, the absence that we get corresponding to the denial of the relation of a thing with another thing. For example, ‘the absence of a pot on the table’ means ‘the absence of the relation of conjunction (*samyoga*) of a pot with the table’. Here we get an absence of relational nature. If this is true, the counter positive of a relational absence must always be a relation positive (*samasargah paratiyogikābhāvah*). The later Naiyāyikas, however, interpret relational absence as the absence of a thing abiding in a certain relation (*samasargāvacchinna- pratiyogitākābhāva*). To them, ‘the relational absence of a pot on the table’ means ‘that there is no pot on the table in the relation of conjunction’. But the problems remain in the fact whether we define a relational absence as the absence of some relation with a thing or as the absence of a thing in some specific relation. So far as the first problem is concerned, it will not be possible to distinguish a relational absence from a mutual absence. It is a well-known fact that in the case of mutual absence too, a relation, namely, the relation of identity is involved. ‘Mutual absence of a thing’ means ‘the absence of identity with the thing’ or ‘the absence of the thing in the relation of identity’. The mutual absence also is the absence of a thing in a specific relation.

Why should then these two be regarded as two fundamentally different kinds of

absence? In view of this problem the Naiyāyikas held that by ‘*samsarga*’ or ‘relation in the case of relational absence’ (*samasargābhāva*) ‘the relations other than the relation of identity’ (*tādātmyabhinna sambandha*) is signified.⁴ There are some justifications for making this restriction, for there is a basic difference between the relation of identity on the one hand and other relations on the other hand. All relations other than the relation of identity hold between two entities (*dviṣṭha*) whereas the relation of identity is a relation which a thing can have only with itself. So the relation of identity is a different kind of relation and stands apart from other relation. Now, the relation determining the counter – positiveness regarding a relational absence being specific as some relation other than the relation of identity (*tādātmya*), it is possible to distinguish a relational absence from a mutual absence.

Prior absence (*prāgabhāva*) and posterior or annihilative absence (*dhvamsābhāva*) are two forms of relational absence. The Naiyayikas differ on the point whether or not the counter – positiveness with respect to these two kinds of absence are limited by some limiting relation. The older Naiyāyikas admitted limiting relations for the counter – positiveness of prior absence (*prāgabhāva*) and annihilative absence (*dhvamsābhāva*). But the later Naiyāyikas have denied the above-mentioned view that the counter – positiveness with regard to any of these two varieties of absence is limited by some relation. They are of the opinion that the

limiting relation of the counter – positiveness is the relation in which the counter – positive cannot exist in the same locus with its absence. The counter – positive and its absence are opposite to each other in the sense that where the counter – positive exists in a particular relation called the limiting relation, its absence cannot exist; on the other hand, where its absence exists, it cannot exist in the relation described as the limiting relation. This is true of mutual absence (*anyonyābhāva*) and constant absence (*atyantābhāva*). But the opposition between a prior absence (*prāgabhāva*) or an annihilative absence (*dhvamsābhāva*) and their counter – positive lies in their inability to exist at the same time. For the ‘prior absence of a thing’ means ‘absence before the production or origin of the thing’; and ‘annihilative absence’ means ‘the absence of the thing at its destruction’. So when the prior or the annihilative absence (*prāgabhāva* or *dhvamsābhāva*) of an entity remains, its counter – positive does not exist. If they could exist simultaneously, there would have been the necessity for indicating the relation in which the counter – positive could not be present in the locus of its own absence. Therefore, there is no limiting relation for the counter – positiveness with regard to the prior absence and the annihilative absence of an entity. If this view of the later Naiyāyikas is taken for granted, the above mentioned concept of relational absence has been defined as the absence, the counter- positiveness of which is limited by some relation other than the relation of identity.

Due to this limitation the definition has been modified further and the reformulated definition goes as follows. That absence is a relational absence, the counter – positiveness of which is not limited by the relation of identity. This definition is formulated by taking ‘*samsarga*’ or ‘relation’ to mean such counter – positiveness as is not limited by the relation of identity (*tādātmyānavacchinnā pratiyogitā*). Counter – positiveness or *pratiyogitā* itself is a relation abiding between the counter – positive and the absence. This relation is further characterized as not being limited by the relation of identity; and such a relation is taken as the significance of the term *samsarga* or relation, which is inserted in the definition of relational absence. But it will not be applicable to prior and annihilative absence (*prāgabhāva* and *dhvamsābhāva*). For relational absence has been defined as the absence, the counter- positiveness of which is limited by certain relation other than the relation of identity, and the counter – positiveness with respect to a constant absence is limited by any relation other than the relation of identity, and the counter –positiveness with respect to prior and annihilative absence (*prāgabhāva* and *dhvamsābhāva*) is not limited by any relation at all. So in all the three cases it is observed that the counter – positiveness is not limited by the relation of identity (*tādātmya*) and all these kinds of absence are clubbed under the class of relational absence (*samsargābhāva*), which is different from mutual absence (*anyonyābhāva*). An equivalent formulation of this definition is as

follows. A relational absence is an absence which is different from mutual absence (*samasargā bhāvatvam anyonyābhāvabhinnabhāvatvam*).

Now an effort is going to throw some light on each of the three types of relational absence (*samsargābhāva*). *Prāgabhāva* (prior or antecedent absence) is one kind of relational absence and there are a lot of problems concerning this. The Advaita Vedantins and Sāmkhya philosophers refuse to accept this kind of absence. Some of the Naiyāyikas (*Naiyāyikaikadeśins*) are of the view that sufficient evidence is not there for accepting of prior absence or *prāgabhāva*.⁵ On the other hand, Jayanta Bhatta belonging to Nyaya school is of the opinion that two kinds of absence are there, one of which is prior absence or *prāgabhāva*.⁶ Gautama's Nyāyasūtra and Vātsyāyana's commentary or *bhāṣya* on it have argued in favour of the existence of *prāgabhāva* or prior absence.⁷

The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers believe that each and every positive entity capable of being produced is non-existent before its origination. This kind of non-existence of an entity is called by them as prior absence or *prāgabhāva*. It is the absence of an entity just prior to its production. According to them, if an entity is not eternal, it comes to being with the help of an aggregate of causal conditions (*kāraṇa-sāmagrī*) at a particular time and until that point of time it remains non-existent. So far as their theory of causation is concerned, they believe that causation entails the origination of a new entity, which did not exist before. It is

known as *asatkāryavāda*. One who believes in such view must admit the prior non-existence or absence (*prāgabhāva*) of a non-eternal entity. Like all other instances of *abhāva* there must be a locus of this absence also and the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers admit that the prior of a thing exists in the inherent cause (*samavāyikāraṇa*) of the thing. So both prior absence (*prāgabhāva*) and its counter – positive (*pratiyogī*) exist in the same substratum, but at different times. For example, the prior absence of a pot (*pāṭa-prāgabhāva*) exists in the pot-halves (*kapāla-kapālikā*) before the origination of the pot, in which the pot, when produced, will reside (through the relation of inherence).

It has already been said that the prior absence (*prāgabhāva*) of an entity exists there until it is produced, but a question may be asked: how long does this absence exist? The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers are of the view that prior absence has no prior limit, though it has an end (*anādih sāntah*).⁸ The prior absence of a thing has no beginning; and hence it is very difficult to say that it comes into being at a particular point of time. This view as such is understandable but it confuses us when considered along with another point made by the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers regarding the prior absence of a thing. For, if the locus of the counter-positive of prior absence (*prāgabhāva-pratiyogī*) is itself a non-eternal entity, it comes into existence at a particular point of time. So before that point of time it cannot be the substratum of the prior absence (*prāgabhāva*) of an entity to

be produced in it. Therefore, it should be admitted that prior absence (*prāgabhāva*) has a beginning (*sādi*) and it comes into existence after the locus of its counter-positive is produced. Or it should be admitted that something other than the non-eternal locus of the counter-positive should be regarded as the locus of prior absence.

The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika thinkers are not in a position to accept the first alternative mentioned above, for that would not solve the first problems. To admit that a prior absence comes into existence at a particular time is to admit that it also has prior absence; the same will have to be admitted in the case of this second prior absence and thus a third prior absence would have to be admitted; and in this way this process would go on infinitely leading to the defect of *Infinite Regress* (*anavasthā*). So the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers would stick to their position that prior absence of a thing is beginning less (*anādi*). They would not even feel the need to revise their standpoint or deviate from their position. They would say that when a prior absence is cognized, it is cognized as located in the locus of its counter-positive and in fact, it cannot be cognized at all except in relation to the substratum of its counter – positive. But it has already been said that like other non-eternal things an absence is related to time (*kāla*) also.⁹

Time (*kāla*) is considered by the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers as the locus of everything that is real in the world (*janyānām janakah kālah jagatāmāśrayo*

matah). So an absence is also situated in time. Sometimes it may be cognized as the locus of some absence, sometimes it may not be so cognized. But, whether or not it is known to be the locus, it continues to be the locus of a thing as long as an entity exists. Time (*kāla*) itself is eternal in nature and hence it is beginning less as well as endless, and beginningless prior absence of a thing is located in it. If the locus of the counter – positive of a prior absence (*prāgabhāva-pratiyogī*) is non-eternal, the prior absence, which exists in time, gets related to the locus when it is produced. Under this situation only the prior absence can be cognized. Whenever a prior absence is known, it is known as located in its counter-positive. That is the reason why the locus of the counter – positive has been mentioned as the locus of prior absence.

The prior absence of an entity is said to have an end, but not endless. It is destructible (*vināśī*) which is its distinctive feature. No other kind of absence is destructible in nature. Other three kinds of absence are all endless. Hence the prior absence is characterized as having the property of being destructible. Now the question is: when does the prior absence of a thing get destroyed and what factor can destroy it? There are two views. According to one view, the prior absence of a thing gets destroyed by its counter – positive (*pratiyogināśya*); and it is destroyed after its counter – positive is originated. For the counter – positive can destroy the prior absence as soon as it itself comes into being. On another view, the cessation

of the prior absence is possible by the aggregate of causal conditions (*kāraṇasāmagrī*) which are responsible for the origination of the counter – positive; and it is destroyed as soon as the counter – positive is produced; and it is destroyed as soon as the counter – positive is originated. Both the views lead to certain philosophical problems which will be discussed intensively. But before that we should draw the attention regarding another problem concerning prior absence.

Prior absence is considered as one of the causal conditions (*sāmagrī*) necessary for the production of its counter – positive (*pratiyogijanaka*). The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers think that by accepting this they can easily justify the fact that one and the same thing cannot be produced twice. They say that a thing cannot be produced more than once, because one of its causal conditions, i.e. the prior absence of it, gets destroyed as soon the thing is originated; and in the absence of it, gets destroyed when an entity is produced; and in the absence of a necessary condition (even if other causal conditions are present) the thing cannot be produced again.

But if the first view concerning the destruction of prior absence is accepted, there would arise the possibility of a thing being produced more than once. On that view prior absence is destroyed by its counter – positive when produced. In that case the prior absence continues to exist even at the moment of the origination of the counter – positive. So the possibility of the origination of the counter – positive

once again cannot be denied on the ground that prior absence of the thing which is a necessary condition for its production is absent. Against this objection it can, however, be said that as long as the produced thing is there, there is no question of its being re-produced. The produced thing itself prevents its reproduction.

The view that prior absence (*prāgabhāva*) is destroyed by its counter – positive (*pratiyogināśya*) is not beyond the question. If this view is admitted, it would lead to the denial of the relation of opposition holding between an absence and its counter – positive. For, if the above-mentioned view is accepted, the prior absence and its counter – positive should exist together in the same locus at the same time for some time. The counter-positive (*pratiyogī*) can destroy its prior absence at least a moment as soon as it is originated and hence at the moment of its origination it exists in its locus along with its own prior absence. This is the gross violation of the rule that an absence and its counter – positive cannot exist together in the same locus at the same time.

The alternative view that a prior absence is destroyed by the collocation of casual conditions (*sāmagrīnāśya*) producing its counter-positive, is not vitiated by the defects mentioned above. But another problem would crop up if this view is taken for granted. According to this view the prior absence of a thing is destroyed at the very moment it is produced, for it is destroyed by the same aggregate of casual conditions leading to the origination of the counter-positive. Now, we have

seen that the collocation of causal conditions producing the counter – positive, includes in it the prior absence of the counter – positive and the same collocation of causal conditions is responsible for the destruction of the prior absence too. So the prior absence itself becomes one of the causes of its own destruction. Now the question is: How can it be justified? Can a thing be a cause of its own destruction? An entity by virtue of being an object of destruction is obviously a cause of its own destruction. If it is taken in this sense, there is no problem in considering the prior absence as the cause of its own destruction. But it may be asked whether in any other sense an entity can be considered as a cause of its own destruction. In order to clarify the matter a few instances can be cited where an entity is considered as the destroyer of itself. Poison is occasionally applied in order to destroy another poison, but the poison applied has got double functions- destroying the other poison and destroying it too. The same type of instance is found in the context of Advaita Vedanta. To the Advaitins self – knowledge (*Brahmajñāna*) in the form of the modification of the internal organ called *antahkarana* (*antahkaraṇavṛtti*) destroys itself as well as ignorance (*avidyā*) simultaneously.¹⁰

Now it is essential to concentrate on the proof for the existence of prior absence (*prāgabhāva*) for an entity cannot be taken as existent if it is substantiated with evidences. There is a lot of dispute on the very existence of prior absence among the philosophers of different schools. The Sāmkhya philosophers do not

admit the prior absence of a thing before its origination. For, they are called Satkāryāvadins on account of the fact that they believe in that whatever is originated remained in its material cause in a non-manifested manner. They also admit that there is no new creation which is nothing but transformation or evolution of what was already there. To them, what is non-existent can never be made existent; whatever is real assumes some form or other. So a thing capable of being produced cannot be non-existent before its production.

Now a question may be raised how the prior absence can be expressed in language. In other words, what would be the specific form of negative cognition indicating the existence of prior absence? The Nyaiyayikas would say that ‘A jar will come into being on the ground’ (*bhūtale ghaṭo bhaviṣyati*) is the form of the cognition which has as its object the prior absence of a jar on the ground. It may not seem to be logically cogent. One may put a rejoinder that to say something will come into being is to assert its future existence, i.e. to assert its connection with the future time. If it is so, how can it assert prior non-existence of the thing? In response to this the Naiyayikas may say that future of an entity implies the counter-positive of prior absence of it at present (*vartamāna prāgabhāva*).¹¹ If the term ‘future’ is taken in the sense of its connection with the time to come, an entity existing in present may be said to be existing in future and hence the expression ‘will come into being’ is very much relevant. It is not possible to say that the eternal objects

like atom, mind etc will come into being from this it can be concluded that an entity remaining absent prior to its production may be said to be continuing in future. From above this rules out the possibility of admitting prior absence of fictitious objects (*alīka*). Neither eternal entities (*nitya*) nor fictitious entities (*alīka*) can be the object of the cognition of *prāgabhāva* and hence the form ‘will come into being’ can never be applicable to these cases. Only the objects capable of being produced (*janya* or *kāryadravya*) have absence prior to their production and are objects of cognitions of the form ‘A jar will be on the ground’.

The Naiyāyikas have forwarded some common sense arguments in favour of the existence of prior absence. It is a fact that regarding some evils and undesirable consequences we always pray to the Almighty in the form- ‘May this not happen!’ From this it is known that the desire has got its content in the form of prior absence of evil or unpleasant thing. The intention of the agent in this context is in favour of the continuance of the prior absence of that evil thing. As all forms of absence are endless in nature, any intention for their continuance makes no sense. As a constant absence (*atyantābhāva*) or an annihilative absence (*dhvamsābhāva*) is sure to continue, there is no scope for expressing our desire in favour of its continuance. But a prior absence of an entity comes to an end when its counter – positive (*pratiyogī*) is produced. One may have the desire for the nourishment of the prior absence (*prāgabhāva paripālana*) of an entity. If he is very much serious to fulfill

his desire, he must keep away the casual conditions producing the counter – positive. Therefore, this kind of desire cannot be justified if prior absence is not admitted.

All the objects that are produced are associated with another kind of absence called *dhavamsābhāva* or *dhvamsa* (annihilative or posterior absence). A thing capable of being produced faces its destruction at a particular point of time. Such destruction or annihilation is admitted as a kind of absence by all. An entity comes to an end as soon as it receives annihilation. The absence following destruction is known by us in the form ‘A jar is destroyed’ (*dhvasto ghaṭah*). When a jar, for example, is broken, it is described as ‘The pot is destroyed’ (*ghaṭah dhvastah*). It signifies that the pot is no longer existent. In other words, it has ceased to exist. So here an absence of the pot is realized from the fact of its destruction. This absence is having a specific character which is different from the other two kinds of relational absence. An absence followed by destruction has a beginning; because it is caused by something at a particular point of time. But prior absence (*prāgabhāva*) or constant absence (*atyantābhāva*) does not have a beginning; because they are not effect in nature. Hence annihilative absence (*dhavamsābhāva*) is enumerated as a relational absence which is an effect (*janya*). It, though an effect is admitted to be endless (*ananta*).¹² A positive entity, if it is a matter of origination, has both a beginning and an end. But in case of an absence

this is not true. Annihilative absence or destruction comes into being at a particular time but it cannot be terminated. Because termination of annihilative absence would entail bringing back its counter – positive, which is not at all possible. An object once destroyed can never come back being. So the annihilative absence of a thing, once started, remains forever. Annihilative absence of a thing, like the prior absence, exists in the substratum of its counter – positive. So the relation of opposition holds between the annihilative absence and its counter – positive. It is our experience that the annihilative absence of a thing exists in its substratum where it existed before.

It has already been stated that *prāgabhāva* or prior absence is one of the collocation of causal conditions (*sāmagrī*) for the origination of its counter – positive. The opposite case, on the other hand, is found in the case of *dhvamsābhāva* or annihilative absence. The *pratiyogī* or counter positive is considered as one of the causes of annihilation on account of the fact that the object of destruction is presupposed for any destruction. The annihilation of an indestructible entity is contradictory in terms.

In this context it is to be borne in mind that the prior absence (*prāgabhāva*) and annihilative absence (*dhvamsābhāva*) would be possible for a particular entity, but not absence of an general class, which entails that such type of absence is always concerned with a particular individual (*veśeśābhāva*), but not a generic

absence (*sāmānyābhāva*)¹³ When the prior or the annihilative absence of a jar, for example, is taken into account, the absence of a particular jar any or a specific pot is to be taken for granted. In this case the *pratiyogitā* or counter-positiveness belongs to the jar limited by the individuality of a jar (*tadghaṭatva* or *tadvyaktitva*) and not by the generic property of jarness (*ghaṭatva*) indicating *ghaṭa-sāmānya*. For we find the prior or the annihilative absence of a pot even when many other pots exist.

There is a diversity of opinion among the Nyāya thinkers regarding the *avachhedaka sambandha* or limiting relation of the *pratiyogitā* or counter-positiveness regarding *prāgabhāva* or prior absence and *dhvamsābhāva* or annihilative absence. A section of the Naiyāyikas is of the opinion that, as *kāla* is the auxiliary cause of products (*janyānām janakah kālah*), it (*kāla* or time) may be regarded as the *avachhedaka sambandha* or limiting relation in these cases. The time prior to the production of the counter – positive (*pūrvakāla*) is the relation limiting of the counter – positiveness regarding prior absence; and the time after the destruction of the counter – positive onwards (*uttarakāla*) is the limiting relation of the counter-positiveness concerning annihilative absence. The Naiyāyikas of this group believes that time is related to the counter-positive through self-linking relation or *svarūpa sambandha*. Such self linking relation is of three types- *kālika-viśeṣaṇatā-viśeṣa* (a specific type of qualifierness with regard to

time), *daiśika-viśeṣaṇatā-viśeṣa* (a specific type of qualifierness regarding space) and *abḥāvīya-viśeṣaṇatā-viśeṣa* (a specific type of qualifierness regarding absence). Among three types of self-linking relations the first one is identical with time on account of the fact that both in the case of *prāgabhāva* and *dhvamsābhāva* the existence of the counter-positive a specific time is denied. Hence the limiting relation of counter-positiveness (*pratiyogitāvachhedaka sambandha*) of these absences is the specific time which is completely identical with time. But the Navya Naiyāyikas are very much reluctant to admit such type of *pratiyogitāvachhedaka sambandha* or limiting relation of counter-positiveness in cases of *prāgabhāva* and *dhvamsābhāva*.

The third kind of *samsargābhāva* or relational absence is called *atyantābhāva* or absolute or constant absence. It is defined as relational Constant absence is eternal (*nitya*) having no beginning and no end (*anādi* and *ananta*). By virtue of being a relational absence, it is differentiated from the reciprocal one (*anyonyābhāva*) which is also considered as eternal. As it is eternal in nature, it is very much easy to make its difference from the other two kinds of relational absence, viz., prior absence (*prāgabhāva*) and annihilative absence (*dhvamsābhāva*), of which the former one has got an end and the latter one has got an origination or beginning. So this definition of constant absence is faultless.

It may be argued that if the constant absence of a thing is eternal, it is tantamount to say that it remains in past, present and future (*traikālīka*).¹⁴ If an object remains in past, present and future, the absentee or counter-positive of such absence would be taken as a fictitious entity (*alīka vastu*), which can never exist in three times, which entails its constant absence. This conclusion has not been taken for granted by the Nyāya philosophers, for they maintain that only real entities included under six categories (*padārthas*) can be the absentee or counter – positive of an absence. Hence the constant absence of the real entities (*tattvas*) which have got an existence in some place or time or other place or time is inconceivable in nature. In response to this the philosophers of Nyāya persuasion would like to say that the cognition of absence is simultaneous with that of locus also. Now, a real entity or *padārtha* existing in a certain place may not exist at all in other places. Colour, for instance, exists in substances like earth, water and fire, but it never exist in air (*vāyu*). From the above fact it can be said that there is constant absence of colour in air (*vāyau rūpam nāsti*). Colour, though exists elsewhere, is always absent from air. In this way, above- mentioned problem may be solved.

The Naiyāyikas are of the view that that the absence of a pot on the table is an instance of constant absence due to the absence of its inclusion under *prāgabhāva*, *dhvamsābhāva* and *anyonyābhāva*. But in this connection a problem can be raised in the following manner. When the absence of a jar is cognized on

the table, the absentee of the absence is a jar which can never stay in the same table. On the table where the pot is absent at this moment, another pot can be brought and placed at the next moment destroying the constant absence. So how can this type of negation be called as eternal? On the event of its admission as eternal it should remain there even when a pot is brought and placed on the table. If it is so, it would give rise to two absurd consequences, viz, the denial of the accepted opposition (*virodha*) between absence and its counter-positive. For, if the absence of a pot is assumed to exist on the table together with the pot, which is its counter-positive, it would lead to contradiction. Secondly, there would have demand to have veridical cognition (*pramā*) of the absence of pot on the table even when a pot is present there. But this goes against our day to day experience.

A section of the Naiyāyikas, for this reason, is of the opinion that there is a fourth kind of relational absence accommodating both production and destruction (*utpāda-vināśaśālī samargābhāva*).¹⁵ The absence of pot on the table is destroyed when another pot is placed on the table, and another instance of the same absence emerges when that pot is removed from the table. This type of absence is transitory (*sāmayika*) as opposed to a-temporal and is situated in something which is not the locus of the counter-positive. So an absence belongs to the fourth kind of relational absence (*caturtha samsargābhāva*) if it exists in some locus other than the locus of

its counter – positive and exists there for temporarily; it comes into being at a particular point of time and terminates to exist at some other point of time.

Some of the Naiyayikas have shown their departure from the above-mentioned issue. They are reluctant to admit an additional kind of absence i.e., the fourth kind of absence in order to resolve the problem raised earlier. A different type of solution is offered by them. To them the absence of a jar on the table, the absence of a cloth in the *almirah*, the absence of milk in the glass etc is regarded as constant absence. All of them are eternal just as the constant absence of colour in the air (*vāyau rūpātyantābhāva*). So the absence of colour (*rūpābhāva*) is always related to air and the absence of substancehood (*dravyatva*) is always related to qualities (*guṇa*-s). But in the former instances, the counter-positive of the absence can sometimes exist in the locus of the absence; a glass, for example, may sometimes contain water, a shelf may sometimes possess books, a pot may be placed on the table. So these absences i.e., the absence of water in the glass, absence of a pot on the table and the absence of a book on the shelf are not related to their respective loci eternally or all the time. When the counter – positive is present in the locus, its absence cannot remain in the locus. But from this it is proved that the absence concerned has been ceased to existence at that time; it continues to exist in some other locus, though not in the same. The constant absence (*atyantābhāva*) of a thing is considered to be eternal in the sense that it

always continues to exist at some locus or other. Let us explain the point further. The Nyaya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers believe that there is only one single instance of the absence of a flower – vase, for example, in a place and we cognize the same at different places. Just as a universal property like cowness is inhered in many individual cows and can be known in them, the constant absence of a thing is also related to many loci and can be known there. Now, as there is only one instance of the constant absence of a thing, it cannot be regarded as non-eternal due to its productivity and perishability. For, the constant absence of a flower–vase, which remains in several rooms, is annihilated when a flower – vase is brought in one of the rooms. Though it is true yet it is to be admitted that the absence of a flower – vase which is destroyed will not be found in other rooms as well. But this is not true, for we do realize the absence of a flower – vase in other rooms. So this absence is to be regarded as eternal. The only other alternative is to admit innumerable instances of the constant absence of one and the same counter-positive. They claim that there is no need to accept several instances of the constant absence of one and the same counter-positive, since by admitting the constant absence of a thing to be one and eternal, all the facts can be accounted for without any difficulty. According to these philosophers, an absence is related to its locus by the *svarūpa* (self-link) relation, which is identical with the locus as qualified by the time of the cognition of the absence (*abhava jñānakālīna-*

adhikaraya-svariūpa). When the counter-positive of an absence is present in a substratum, there is no cognition of its absence; so the locus at that time is not characterized by the time of the cognition of the absence. Therefore the absence has no relation with other loci where the counter-positive is not present. In this way they overcome the difficulty which they had to face as a consequence of admitting constant absence to be eternal.

The absences like prior absence (*prāgabhāva*) and annihilative absence (*dhvamsābhāva*) are called specific absence (*viśeṣābhāva*) on account of the fact that it deals with a particular entity but not concerned with all the members of a class. When the prior absence or annihilation of a jar is admitted, it concerns with a particular individual jar (*ghaṭavyakti*), but not all jars. For this reason it is called specific case of absence (*viśeṣābhāva*). In case of constant absence (*atyantābhāva*) there is the existence of generic absence (*sāmānyābhāva*) in the sense that it entails the absence of all the individual jars (*ghaṭavyakti*).¹⁶ When it is said that there will be a jar on the ground (*ghaṭo bhaviṣyati*), it means the counter-positiveness of it is limited by jarness (*ghaṭatvāvachhinna-pratiyogitā*). In this case a jar limited by jarness will come into being. A jar limited by jarness indicates the absence of jar in general (*ghaṭa-sāmānyābhāva*).

A section of the Naiyayikas believes that there is a specific type of *abhāva* characterized by the relation of *vyadhikaraṇa* (non-co-locus). Any two things can

be related together in either of two ways: (a) co-existence in the same locus (b) non-co-existence in the same locus. The first one is called relation of co-locusness (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*) while the second one is relation of non-co-locusness (*vaiyadhikaraṇya*). Clothness (*paṭatva*) and substanceness (*dravyatva*) coexist in the same locus and hence they are called *samānādhikaraṇa*. Humanity (*manuṣyatva*) and cowness (*gotva*) do not exist in the same locus and hence they are called *vyadhikaraṇa*.

Some scholars think that the relation of *vyadhikaraṇa* can be taken as a determinant of negation. As for example, ‘Someone is not a cow as he is a man’ (*manuṣyatvena gauḥ na*). In this case the cognition of non-existence (*abhāva*) of cowness in a man is grounded on *vyadhikaraṇa dharma* (a property remaining non-co-locus), which serves as a limitor (*avacchedaka*). Such type of non-existence is called *vyadhikaraṇadharmavacchinna abhāva*.

Those who admit *Vyadhikaraṇadharmavacchinna abhāva* argue that if this type of absence is not admitted, it will not be possible to account for such the cognition as ‘There is no hare’s horn (horn as possessed by a hare) in a cow’ cannot be accounted for. They emphatically argue that such cognition as mentioned above is always possible. The content of such cognition is the absence of hare’s horn as located in a cow which is the substratum. Here the locus is the cow, the counter-positive is the horn, and the limiting property of counter-

positiveness is the property of being possessed by a hare (*śasīyatva*). Now, this property does not reside in the horn, which is the counter-positive. Since no hare possesses a horn, no horn is the property of being possessed by a hare. So the absence of horn as limited by the property of being possessed by a hare, which we cognize in a cow is an instance of *vyadhikarṇadharmavacchinnābhava*. A hare's horn being a fictitious entity, we cannot literally talk of its absence. So the absence of hare's horn in a cow has to be interpreted as the absence of horn as limited by the property of being possessed by a hare.

The Naiyāyikas do not admit this kind of absence. Gangeśa has refuted the view that there can be such a type of absence and he refuted the view that there can be such a type of absence and he also denied that we have such cognition as ‘There is absence of hare’s horn in a cow’. For explaining which, it is claimed, *vyadhikaraṇadharmavacchinna abhāva* should be admitted. Gangeśa, however, concludes that we sometimes use such expression as ‘There is no hare’ horn’ (*śaśaśrṅgam nāsti*) and he says that we mean by such expression ‘There is no horn in a hare’ (*śaśe śrṅgam nāsti*).¹⁷

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