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The Notion of *Kāra* Discussed by the Grammarians

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The word *kāra* is one of the well-known ambiguous terms found in the Pāṇinian system of Sanskrit. This term has been well discussed not only by Sanskrit grammarians but by several other philosophers of different systems. This paper will inquire into the discussion held mainly by the most influential grammarians, especially Patañjali, Bhartṛhari and Bhaṭṭoji Dikṣita.

The term *kāra* appears as *kāra* in Pāṇini 1. 4. 23. Patañjali gives a definition of it in his commentary on this rule, namely, “*karotīti kārakam*: One who acts is *kāra*” (*MBh.* ad 1. 4. 23, 1. 324, 9). And what is called *kāra* is stated as in the passage, “*sādhakaṃ nivartakaṃ kāra-saṃjñāṃ bhavati*: An accomplisher or a completer is given the technical name *kāra*” (*Ibid.*, 1. 328, 8-9). These statements reveal that the basic notion of *kāra* in the domain of the grammar is that the subject which produces an action is called a *kāra*. Patañjali further says that the actor or the accomplisher is absolutely necessary in the occurrence of the action (*nāntareṇa sādhanam kriyāyāḥ pravṛttir bhavati*¹⁾).

Now, the problem arises. Should *sādhana* be understood as the substance which performs the action or something other than the substance, such as the power demonstrated by the substance? That is to say, is the *sādhana* the substance (*dravya*) or the quality (*guṇa*)? Although this distinction is not clear in the above mentioned statements of Patañjali, elsewhere he seems to see them as identical, as in his comments like, “*sādhana* is a bundle of qualities. There is no *sādhana* away from qualities”.²⁾ Here, *sādhana* is used to mean both substance and its quality.³⁾

Thus as the subject of accomplishing an action, substance and its quality are not separated. Since *kāra* has six varieties—an agent (*kartr*), an object (*karman*), an instrument (*karāṇa*), a recipient (*saṃpradāna*), an ablation (*apādāna*) and a locus (*adhikarāṇa*)⁴⁾—, the substance being the substratum of the quality is represented differently in the expressions. The substance itself, however, is not to be differentiated. Only its role in accomplishing the action is realized as different. The six varieties are distinguished by what aspect the performance of the power inherent in the substratum takes when the action occurs. In this case, the different manifestations of this potential power are ranked in order of their relative dominancy to action.⁵⁾

Bhartṛhari, basing his comments on the above statements of Patañjali, gives a more detailed definition of *kāra* from the standpoint of the accomplisher (*sādhana*) or the accomplished (*sādhya*). According to his *VP*. III.7. 1, *sādhana* is the capability (*sāmarthya*) of attaining an action and it is power (*śakti*) which performs the action.⁶⁾ In terms of grammar, when *śakti* is active, that actor is termed *kāra* and as such is subject to grammatical rules. Here, *kāra* represents the substratum wherein *śakti* resides.⁷⁾

This *śakti* appears in various ways when an action takes place and is perceived as the means of action (*sādhana*). When it is represented in verbal expressions, it is the intention of the speaker as to how *śakti* is to be expressed.⁸⁾ Thus, something expressed as *sādhana* in a sentence is inevitably based in *buddhi* (mental functioning), being the source of the intention.⁹⁾

The variation in that one and the same object is expressed as the agent in one case or the object in another is based on *buddhi*. Such variation depends on *śakti* which plays the role of the means of action. Since the action as a whole is conceived as a series of sub-actions (*vyāpāra*) and each sub-action is performed by the *śakti*, the *śakti* appears differently in several aspects of the same action. Depending on the

different aspects of the action performed by the *śakti*, the speaker conceives the different roles of the *śakti* accomplishing the action and gives the designation like the agent or the object.¹⁰⁾ In grammar, such a representation is restricted to six forms.¹¹⁾

Although *kāraka* has six varieties, these six are not equal. In regard to the accomplishing of the action and to the action as a whole consisting of a series of sub-actions, one which has the closest relation to the whole action is the agent. The agent which is the main *sādhana* is followed by other *kāra*kas which are the *sādhana*s of the sub-actions.¹²⁾

Comparing Bhartṛhari to Patañjali, their basic concepts of *kāraka* are not different. The most remarkable point in developing the *kāraka* theory is Bhartṛhari's insight into a scheme of 'substance—quality'.

Bhaṭṭoji Dikṣita mentions several definitions and examines them in his *Śabdakaustubha* on 1. 4. 23. At first he presents Patañjali's etymological definition.¹³⁾ His understanding of Patañjali's definition is that *kāraka* is a *kriyānvayin*, which means "something which is related to an action." In an example "*brāhmaṇasya putraṃ panthānaṃ pṛcchati*: one asks a way to a son of a brahmin", brahmin is not regarded as *kāraka* because he is not related to the act of asking.

However, as Bhaṭṭoji notices, this understanding puts forth an objection to Patañjali's definition. If a *kāraka* is a *kriyānvayin*, *kriyānvayin* would be interpreted more precisely, i.e., only one who is directly related to the action or is a direct producer (*janaka*) of the action by paraphrasing "*karoti*" into "*kriyāṃ janayati*". Once this interpretation is admitted, not only the brahmin but also the son in the above example is not to be regarded as *kāraka*. This is because neither is the direct producer of the act of asking.¹⁴⁾

Accepting this objection, he revises his previous definition of *kriyānvayin* as "*kriyānvayamātra*: only the relation to the action".¹⁵⁾ This revision is very subtle but effective. This can cover both direct producer of the action and the indirect relatum of the action like son.¹⁶⁾

Then, Bhaṭṭoji mentions a final view (*siddhānta*), which is definitely of Bhartṛhari.¹⁷⁾ The state of being a *kāra* is inherent in every substance but the agenthood or the object-ness etc. is not fixed in a particular substance. The said six varieties are relative to each other and, therefore, the substance can be regarded as the agent in one case or the instrument in another.

While admitting the traditional definition, Bhaṭṭoji gives another interpretation. He says:

*vakṣyamāṇakarṭṛtvakarmatvāder acetaneṣv anādiṣu ca nirbādhavāt kayā pacidhātu-
vyaktyā upasthite 'rthe kiṃ karṭṛādikam iti praśne tu prakṛtapacivyaktyupāttavyāpā-
rāśrayaḥ kartā...* (ŚK. on 1. 4. 23, II, 113, 31-114, 2) However, since the agenthood or the object-ness etc. which is to be described is not assumed to an inanimate and an infinite [such as space and time], the question should be as follows: who is the agent in which his action is represented by a particular verbal root as \sqrt{pac} -? In this case, the answer is that the agent is the substratum of the activity (*vyāpāra*) obtained by the verbal root \sqrt{pac} - in context.

According to this view, *śakti* does not have the possibility to be all types of *kāra*. That is to say, *śakti* is limited in its function. Bhaṭṭoji accepts that *śakti* appears differently in any given action, and therefore the restrictions in sentence composition are due to the restrictions in the function of *śakti*.

The difference between Bhartṛhari and Bhaṭṭoji Dikṣita seems to be based on the difference in their points of view regarding how to realize language. Bhartṛhari has developed a sort of semantics based on an ontological scheme composed of quality (= *śakti*) and its substratum (= *dravya*). From this scheme *śakti* being inseparable from its substratum is regarded as the main constituent of accomplishing action and this *śakti* is called *sādhana* or *kāra*.

On the contrary, Bhaṭṭoji declares a limited functioning of *śakti* in sentences. In his analysis of language, he proposes an extremely grammatical interpretation of the term *kāra*. His intention is expressed in his comment, such as “*prakṛta*” ([used] in context). This restriction indicates that the function of *śakti* and its representation in sentences are

to be considered in context. Bhaṭṭoji therefore tries to establish a linguistic treatment of *kāraka* rather than an ontological perspective of *śakti*.

[TEXT] *MBh.* = *Mahābhāṣya*: (1) Ed. by F. Kielhorn, (2) with *Pradīpa* of Kaiyaṭa and *Uddyota* of Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa: Ed. by M.M. Pandita Shivdatta Sharma, 6 vols. Vrajajivan Prācayabhārati Granthamālā No. 23, 1988 *VP.* = *Vākyapadīya* (1) Ed. by Wilhelm Rau. Wiesbaden, 1977. (2) Ed. by Subrahmania Iyer. *kanda* III, 1. Poona, 1963. *ŚK.* = *Śabdakaustubha*: Ed. by Pandita Gopal Shastri Nene. 3 vols. CSS. No. 2, Varanasi, 2nd. 1991.

- 1) *MBh.* ad 2.3.7, 1, 446, 12-13.
- 2) *Ibid.* ad 3.2.115, II, 120, 11-12. *yadi tāvad guṇasamudāyah sādhanam sādhanam anumānagamyam. athānyad guṇebhyah sādhanam bhavati.* Both Kaiyaṭa and Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa clearly support Patañjali's position in their comments on Patañjali's "nāntareṇa sādhanam...", claiming that *sādhana* is a *śakti*. *Pradīpa* on 2.3.7, II, 492. *śaktiḥ kārakam iti pakṣāśrayeṇa vārtikamṇ raty ācaṣṭe—nāntareṇa sādhanam iti. śaktiim ity arthaḥ. Uddyota, ibid. bhāṣye sādhanasābbdena tadgatā śaktir ucxate ity āha śaktir iti.* Kaiyaṭa mentions two views concerning to the relation between *kriyā* and *kāraka* in his commentary on P.2.1.1(II, 332r). 3) See, for example, *MBh.* ad 5.3.55, II, 414, 5-6.
- 4) P.1.4.24-55. 5) *MBh.* ad 1.4.23, I, 326, 9-10.
- 6) *VP.* III.7.1. *svāśraye samavetānām tadvad evāśrayāntare. kriyāṇām abhiniṣpattau sāmartyam sādhanam viduḥ.* 7) *Ibid.*, 28.
- 8) *Ibid.*, 2. 9) *Ibid.*, 3. 10) *Ibid.*, 18. 11) *Ibid.*, 36. 13) *Ibid.*, 37.
- 13) *ŚK.* on 1.4.23, II, 113, 5-7. *anvarthā ceyam saṃjñā "karotiti kārakam" iti. tena kriyānavayino na bhavati. brāhmaṇasya putram panthānam pṛcchatiti. iha hi brāhmaṇaḥ putraveṣaṇam, na tu kriyānvayī.*
- 14) *Ibid.*, 8-9. *tatra praṣṭuḥ kārakatve 'pi yaṃ prati praśnas tasya janakatvāyogād iti cet? satyam. māstu janakatā. kriyānvayamātram iha vivakṣitam.*
- 15) The present writer has no definite conclusion about the interpretation of the word *kriyā* in *kriyānvayin* and *kriyānvaya*. It seems that in the former *kriyā* means an action and in the latter it means a verb. Of course in the Pāṇinian system, *kriyā* is used to denote the meaning of a verbal root.
- 16) *Ibid.*, 10-11. *yadvā sampradānāder api prathamam buddhyārohāt kārakatā.*
- 17) *Ibid.*, 27-30. *kārakatvam tadvyāpyakartṛtvādiṣaṭkaṇ ca vastuviṣeṣe 'navasthitam. viṣeṣaṇaviṣeṣyavat tarhi gauḥ sarvam prati gaur eva, na tu kaṃcit pray agaur itivad viṣeṣaṇam viṣeṣaṇam eveti suvacam. tathā ca kiṃ kārakam, kaḥ kartā, kiṃ karmetyādipraśne sarvam ity uttaram.*

<Key Word> *kāraka*, Patañjali, Bhartṭhari, Bhaṭṭoji Dikṣita.

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