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Vaastu Shaastra: Continuum of Time Space and Existence

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Abstract

Future is invented through a dialogue with the past engaged in the present. Collective memory is a reservoir from which an individual or society draws resources to shape the future. This Recollection or collective memory is a cultural phenomenon and a product of variable cultural practices that bring images of the past into circulation. This past is further invested with meanings and interpretations through overt acts of remembrance in the form of stories, rituals, monuments, images, poems, epitaphs etc. Memory, recollection and history thus are not separate from each other. The foundation for Indian civilization, history and thought laid down by the Vedic Literature represents cultural forms of remembrance in varied forms, traditions and practices. This paper will explore how *Vaastu Shaastra* as a primeval oral tradition includes some key concepts about Time in Physics and continues as a practice among those who treasure the knowledge value of tradition and know the art of preservation. As part of the poetics of cultural translation, the ancient scientific knowledge of *Vaastu*, continues to intrigue contemporary minds, across cultural time and space.

Keywords: Orality, Memory, Time, Space, Matter, Cosmology

Memory has always been an integral part of our knowledge systems as the Vedic knowledge was preserved through *Shruti* (hearing), *Smriti* (memorizing) and *Puranas* (written texts). The

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perspicacious achievements of Indian culture lay scattered across several fields of study in archaic Indian texts ranging from the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* to a gamut of scriptural, gnostic, scientific and artistic sources. Further the development of the six traditional branches of erudition (*Vedangas*), and gradually other scientific disciplines like arithmetic, algebra, astronomy, medicine, chemistry, biology, astrology, logic and grammar bespeak of India's astute tradition. Living in the echoes of that culture, we Indians inherited traditions richer and more vigorous than other nations, and the extraordinary collective recollection, cultivated by congruous exercises, preserved many antediluvian oral works for posterity, *Vaastu Shaastra* being one of them.

Every human activity or experience, whether physical or psychological, convivial or environmental, is inexorably linked with the passage of time. One of the most intriguing aspects of the mindset, cerebrating process and approach to the construal of the antediluvian India is that Existence is a cyclic progression in Space and Time where Dissolution follows Engenderment in an illimitable cycle. This view seems to follow logically from the cyclic progress of birth and death with the cyclic progression of Time itself, denoted by the annual revolution of the Earth around the Sun. The mindset of modern Science inclines to expound most things in terms of a linear chain of overt and demonstrable physical cause and effect and within the short time frames of the working day or a lifetime. It declines to optically canvass experiences of existences in a holistic perspective of astronomical time frames because they are not overt or demonstrable in the short time frames of here and now. The Indian concept of Time is cyclical, perpetual and degenerative as opposed to the Western notion of time, which is linear, inhibited and progressive. This concept

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of sempiternal and cyclical Time is proximately cognate to the concept of *atman*. The authentic self is ever-subsisting, not only in the future but withal from the past. This notion of two-way sempiternity, however, is not reserved solely for the realm of spirit (*Brahman*) but elongates to this temporal world. According to the oldest Indian traditions, the Macrocosm is understood to be the body of the highest, illimitable spiritual being and thus has some of his properties. This rendered into the language of contemporary science, designates, “The Macrocosm is illimitable in space and time and is illimitably heterogeneous” (“The Cosmological Principle of Ancient India”). This further denotes that our Earth is not a unique, exceptional, celestial body. Many such "earths" (those oldest cosmological considerations do not refer to any categorical kind of celestial bodies) preceded and many will follow our Earth in time. The most distinct source of the archaic Hindu perspective of the Cosmos is a dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna the eleventh chapter entitled “The Vision of The Universal Form “of the *Bhagavad-Gita*:

Pashyaadityaan vasoon rudraan ashwinau marutastathaa;

Bahoonyadrishtapoorvaani pashyaashcharyaani bhaarat

Ihaikastham jagatkritsnam pashyaadya sacharaacharam;

Mama dehe gudaakesha yachchaanyad drashtumicchaa;

Na tu maam shakyase drashtum anenaiva swachakshushaa;

Divyam dadaami te chakshuh pashya me yogamaishwara(Verse 5-7)

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The physical macrocosm thus is "temporal", its physical characteristics are defined qualitatively and quantitatively in and by Time, Space, and Mass/Energy (customarily abbreviated as just "matter"). This macrocosm never had a beginning: Time, Space, and Matter have always subsisted in some form. The concept of Time and Space is astronomically consequential in both science and Indian philosophical thought. Both Space (i.e., "the heaven") and Matter ("the earth") commenced simultaneously with Time. Time itself, according to this most profound (yet simple) of all declarations, had a commencement. According to Vedic physics, different planetary levels have different time scales. Relativity of Time has also been elaborately described in the Vedic literatures. ("The Eternal Future of Time, Space, and Matter"). The *Bhagavata Purana* presents the rudimental concept of Time and more concretely, the time scales involved in all cosmic and human processes. Time itself is considered a Power of the Divine, subtle, latent and imperceptible in the Lord in His Unmanifest state. Once Manifestation commences, Time becomes gross and perceptible because it is coterminous with manifestation and envelopes and affects everything that manifests. The Divine has Perpetual Time as an Unmanifest part of Himself and manifests as Finite Time in human consciousness of humans as a timeline beginning at birth and ending at death, during which time the Indwelling Spirit is present in them. In *Skanda 3*, of the *Bhagavata*, Maitreya tells Vidura of how Kapila edifies his mother Devahuti :

anta: puru°ar£p²a k;lar£p²a y§ bahi: .

samanv|ty|°a sattv;nj_ bhagav;nj;tmam;yay; .(3-26-18A).

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The Supreme Divine, by virtue of His divine potency, pervades everything internally as the Indwelling Spirit and externally as Time. Earlier in Chapter 11 of the same *Skanda*, Maitreya gives Vidura details of how Finite Time becomes quantifiable utilizing the relative forms of kineticism of the Sun as the timekeeper. The minutest conceivable particle of matter is the *Paramanu*, and hence the infinitesimal time the Sun takes to cross this infinitesimal. *Paramanu* is the most diminutive conceivable unit of time. In the *Maitri Upanishad* time is given the same high status as in the *Atharva Veda*. In *Maitri* 6:15, there is a mention of two forms of *Brahman*: Time and the Timeless. That which is prior to the sun is the Timeless (*a-Kala*), without components (*a-Kala*). But that which commences with the sun is Time, which has components. Verily, the form of that which has components is the year. As in the *Atharva Veda*, time is here given the highest status of being identified with Prajapati, but now additionally with- *Brahman* and *Atman*. Verse 16 goes on to describe embodied time as the great ocean of creatures, planets, and all things. The sun is fittingly identified as the symbol of Time. The *Vedas* withal offer their own notional theorizations regarding time. Time (*kala*) is described in one hymn as the first god, subsisting in many forms. Time is the lord of all and the father of Prajapati. The macrocosm is set in kineticism and sustained by time. Indeed, in the *Atharva Veda* 19:53 and 54, Time is celebrated as the primordial power and coalescing principle of the macrocosm. In *kala* lie the worlds and the sun. By *kala* was the macrocosm urged forth. *Kala* is *Brahman*. "Time contains and surmounts all, and still perpetuates onward"(Brown45). *Vakyapadiya* 1:3 states that all other powers within the engendered macrocosm are in the first instance governed by the ingenious power of time. Through Time things come to be and through Time things pass away. Time is the efficient cause by which Brahma

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controls the cycles of the macrocosm. According to Bhartrhari, Time is the *Svatantryasakti* of *Brahman*. Due to *avidya* (ignorance) there is, first of all, appearance of diversity. Diversity is temporal and spatial. The former comes first. Consciousness, at this stage called *pasyanti*, which is without any sequence. When it becomes associated with *pranavrtti*, it appears to have sequence due to Time (Iyer 54).

Both continuity and illimitability are applicable to Time and Space: they are the terms of an extension of consciousness in which things take place or are arranged in a certain cognition, succession, order. There are again different orders of Time and Space; that too depends on the consciousness. Timelessness and Time are two terms of the aeonian existence. The Spaceless Perpetual is not an indivisible illimitability of Space, there is in it no near or far, no here or there – the Timeless Sempiternal is not quantifiable by years or hours or aeons, the experience of it has been described as the perpetual moment. But for the mind this state cannot be described except by negatives, – one has to transcend and to realize it. Modern theoretical cosmology commenced with the application of general relativity to the macrocosm as a whole by Einstein in 1917. Turning to the Indian antediluvian view on this subject, *Mahabharat* says:

This beginning less and illimitable time cycle (*Kal-Chakra*) moves externally like a perpetual flow in which beings take birth and die but there is never birth or death for this. The engenderment of gods is briefly denoted as thirty-three thousand, thirty-three hundred, and thirty- three. (*Adi-Parva*, 1st Chapter, 40-41).

Bhagwad Gita describes a cyclic macrocosm as:

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All embodied beings emanate from the Unmanifest at the commencement of Brahma's day; at the commencement of his night, they merge in the same subtle body of Brahma, kened as the Unmanifest. (VIII-18).

Yoga Vashishtha, additionally recounts the cyclical nature of time, where Kakabhushundi has optically discerned *Ramayan* 11 times with different outcomes and optically discerned *Mahabharat* 16 times with different results, but, after visually perceiving *Daksha Yagya* twice, he did not either care to visually perceive it again or optically discerned no point to visually perceiving any more, as it ended the same way each time. Further conversations verbalize about the atoms or *anu* at quantum level and inside each quantum level are different macrocosms. A woeful queen is shown that her husband is still alive in one of the quantum or atomic macrocosms and ruling sagaciously and is given the option to join him there. The conception of Heisenberg's Principle is enunciated when a *rishi* visits and illustrates a decision tree by exhibiting how several parallel macrocosms, with all possible results of a decision, could occur and utilizes that illustration to expound why he took the decision he did in this macrocosm.

The stories that the *Bhagavata Purana* weaves into this astronomical matrix of Space and Time are simply mind-boggling in the reach of their imagination. The stories cover the activities of Gods and humans, often both together, often traversing these astronomical spans of Space and Time. The story of king Kakudmi tells of a human who traversed the astronomical time span of the first 27 *Mahayugas* of the current *Vaivasvata Manvantara*. Solicitous to find a good match for his comely daughter Revati, he went to *Brahma Loka*, the world of Brahma, to get his advice. There, he had to wait for around 20 minutes (on the cosmic scale) for Brahma to return from visually

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examining a dance performance. Optically discerning him, Brahma told Kakudmi that during this period of his waiting, 27 *Mahayugas* had already elapsed on earth, and if he (Kakudmi) were to return now, he would find people on the earth relishing the avatar of Krishna.

So far, we have seen that Time is the vibration of Space and both are equipollent. Time is one of the subtle elements of Space (*akasa*). Time is the causal element of all objects of the Macrocosm. Those who do not realize the ingenious dynamism of inner space cannot ken the dynamism of outer space. According to the Indian philosophical thought all objects of nature are considered as cumulated entities (forms) of energy and matter. Space, whether of the individual or the macrocosmic, possesses a unique quality of experiencing. It is hypersensitive, besides being super potential. This is capable of giving form to its experience. For the experience to take form, the space goes into self-spin. It vibrates. This effective force of the Space is called *Kala*, the Absolute Time. *Kala* literally betokens that which emerges from within. This transpires to be the intrinsic property of space. This is contained in all animate object of Nature. What is authentically experienced by the Space is vibrated into a form within. This is just like the vibration of the stringed instrument turning into sound forms. The Space is sensitive enough to injunctively authorize rhythmically structured and aesthetically alluring. This is its unique quality. The science of *Vaastu* designates the macrocosmic rhythm of the Space and the emanation of ecumenical objects there from, in musical phrases, and is the key to the culture of India holistically. Mayan is the author of this revelation. Space is the primal element. There are two such spaces, the inner

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space and the outer space. This space subsists in all animate objects. Nothing in this macrocosm is inanimate.

Space has different calibers and different contexts. For some it is a subsistent content involving position order and distance. According to critical Realists space denotes valid erudition of physical authenticity that can be universalized under headings as distance position size etc. To a spiritualist, the higher caliber of authenticity is non-spatial. This physical spatial world has no ostensible limits. Astronomy too tells its marvels of constellations in pathless spaces. The first philosophical view of authentic Space identified it with a void in which atoms somehow subsist. For Newton it was an independent variable. The science of *Vaastu* is based on the concept of Space (subtle energy) as a dynamic element out of which all objects of nature come into existence and into which all disappear ultimately. The frequency of vibration of this subtle energy, which is based on a particular rhythm or time measure, causes the birth and development of all objects of nature. So, Time is the causal element of all material forms. The philosophical frame of *Vaastu* is based on this continuum of existence, space and time. Space here is the substance of all substances, the Ultimate substance. It is filled with minutest particles called *paramanu*. Every *paramanu* is a minute space possessing Energy. Among the four *Upa Vedas*, *Sthapatya Veda* deals with architecture. According to the *Sthapatya Veda* the temple and the town should mirror the cosmos and both astrology and *Vaastu Shastra* balance different forms of energy emanating from different planets.

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Vaastu Shastra, the antediluvian Indian science of town orchestrating and architecture, aimed at achieving a balance among functionality, bioclimatic design, religious and cultural credence (Ananth 37). In the *Atharva Veda*, there is a clear reference to the house as a building. This science has developed over generations as a result of observations of the influence of the Sun and the Magnetic fields on earth and living bodies, mentally and physically. It dealt with cosmic principles of Ecumenical engenderment, which the Divine *Shilpis* elongated to their engenderment on earth. This science was expounded and propagated by the divine architect, Viswakarma (the Macrocosmic Engenderer) the architect of Gods and the Mayan (the illusionist), the architect of demons. As per the scriptures, once a fierce battle took place in antediluvian times between a demon Andhakasur and Lord Shiv. During the battle, a few drops of Lord Shankar's sweat fell on the ground and gave birth to a formidable monster. The monster at once commenced to kill the gods. Acting unitedly then, all the gods captured the monster and buried him with his face facing down. The gods withal granted a boon to pacify him: "You shall be worshipped in all auspicious tasks." Since the gods made an abode on the monster, he came to be kened as *Vaastu Purush*, and since all the gods have an abode on him, he is worshipped by prudent people. Vishwakarma is regarded as the father of *Vaastu Shastra*. In his treatise Vishwakarma Prakash, he indites about the inception of *Vaastu Purush*:

Tamev Vaastu Purusham Brahma Sama Srijatprabhuh |

Krishnpakshe Tritiyata Masi Bhadrpade Tatha ||(quoted in S.Kak)

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The forms and geometrical patterns in *Vaastu* are the replicas of the subtle forms experienced at *Anahat* (the heart chakra). Further, the verbal forms that we engender by mouth are all spatial forms or the force of vibrations. Time dissolves them into the cosmic space, as soon as they shoot forth from within. The *Agnicayana* altar, the centre of the great ritual of the Vedic times that composes a major portion of the narrative of the *Yajurveda*, is visually perceived as the prototype of the temple and of the Indian tradition of architecture (*Vāstu*). The *Agnicayana* ritual is predicated upon the Vedic division of the macrocosm into three components of earth, atmosphere, and firmament, which are assigned numbers 21, 78, and 261, respectively; these numbers integrate up to 360, which is the symbolic representation of the year. These triples are optically discerned in all authenticity, and they enlarge to five elements and five senses in further emanation. The central conception of this scheme is that of recursion, or repetition in scale and time. The macrocosm is taken to be mapped into the individual; it is withal symbolically represented in the ingenious arts, as in music, dance, sculpture, and sacred architecture. In literature, we visually perceive recursion in the story within story genre that is to be found in the Vedic hymns, the Epics, the Yoga Vasishtha, and the Puranic texts. Not only is the temple a symbolic representation of the cosmos, the *Rigveda* itself was orchestrated as a five-layered altar by stacking up the 10 books in pairs, two books to a layer. These hymn numbers have several symmetries, such as pairs of hymn numbers differing by 12, 17 and 29, and the numbers have an astronomical substratum that is described at length in *The Astronomical Code of the Rigveda* (Kak65).

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Yantras have also been utilized in India to represent esoteric erudition, and the substratum of this esoteric cognizance is cosmology. The *Śri Cakra* or *Śri Yantra* is the tripartite division of the macrocosm into earth, atmosphere, and the sun mirrored in the individual by the body, the breath, and the inner lamp of consciousness. It may withal be optically discerned as the three main divisions of the body into the head, the chest, and the lower trunk. Its fundamental form is that of three triangles, two pointing downwards and one upwards. Within each triangle are two other triangles, of alternating opposing polarity in terms of the direction of pointing that represents male and female principles. *En masse*, this integrates up to 9 interpenetrating triangles, 5 downward pointing *Śakti* principle and 4 upward pointing *Śiva* principle), which through their overlaps constitute a total of 43-minute triangles. Right through the middle of this is the dot, the *bindu*, who is *Śiva*, the witness, or consciousness. The *Śri Cakra* ritual infuses the design of the *yantra* with chant, representing the cumulation of space and sound. Its closed, concentric circuits correspond to the nine planes of consciousness of the spiritual seeker. Each plane is a stage on the ascent of one's being toward the inner self. In the figure of the *Vaastu Purush* the free space is the cumulated field of energy and matter and source of all forms that we optically discern in material world and is packed with cubical atoms of energy. The primal manifest form of the unmanifest is square (primal wave pattern) and is designated as the diagram of embodied Energy -*Vaastu Purusha Mandala*. The micro space, in the cubical shape is foetus, *Garbha* or *Bindu*. This micro adobe is the repository of light and sound. The free space is Light and the Light is *Mool* or source of the macrocosm and macrocosmic forms. Light is *Brahman*, *Atman*, *Vastu Brahman*.

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Ramayana and *Mahabharata* have references to the science of *Vaastu*. Seven and eight storied buildings in the *Ramayana* speaks of the concurrence of Time and Space. In *Mahabharata* the *Mayasabha*, *Indraprastha*, and *Dwarika* are magnificent examples of *Vaastu Saashtra*. *Manasara* and *Mayamata* the two ancient texts also provide validation of construction of buildings. Thus, we see that this Archaic Indian Science of Time and Space, Sound and Light, Word and Form deals with the perpetual process of the subtle energy manifesting into material space or material form. In short, it is the science of manifestation of energy into matter or material form. The main aim of *Vaastu* science is to create building spaces to live in harmony with subtle nature. The inner space of an individual and the outer space in the cosmos are vibrating at a particular frequency or rhythm. If a part of the space is isolated and enclosed by a four-walled structure it becomes a living organism and enclosed space starts vibrating at a particular frequency. Hence both time and space are perfectly coordinated in *Vaastu*. The above manifestation of Time and Space also implies that our conception of physical space is in conflict with the consciousness as we explore and understand the relationship between *chit*, *achit* and *ishvar*, without *chit* or consciousness the physical world does not subsist. The whole journey of consciousness through the five elements is a movement of Time. From subtle microscopic changes through cosmic changes within the universe, all are governed by Time. There is cosmic time in the macrocosm, called *yugas*, and in the microcosm, called *prana* and *prana* is the movement of cellular intelligence. Wherever there is movement there is direction; similarly, where there is direction there is movement. Time is movement and life is a process. In the journey of

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consciousness into matter, both Space and Time play an important role. The ancient Vedic literature and Indian knowledge systems on science tell us that cosmic energy has a concrete influence on living beings. Five elements reside in nature in categorical proportions. *Vaastu Shaastra* involves the alignment of these five rudimental elements according to the law of nature. The effects of these five elements have to be studied to appreciate the science of *Vaastu* in its pristine form and additionally to pacify skeptics who question the efficiency and validity of *Vaastu Shaastra*.

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