



The Sphotavada of Language

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ABSTRACT: The theory of language is very inspirational topic. The *sphota* is the perfect gist of language and is the cornerstone of all linguistic process. *Bhartrhari* is the founder of *sphotavada*. *Sphota* is the original sound produced by various vocal organs with the contact of various places of articulation. I am discussing through this paper about the origin and development of language.

Key Words: Sphota, Language, Bhartrhari, Vakyapadiya, Language

I. INTRODUCTION

A language is a system of signs for encoding and decoding information. Human knowledge is originated from 'Vak'. Concordant to the Indian tradition every branch of learning has a divine origin. "Even every process in nature, man is believed to have a divine touch; language, wisdom, etc. are due to the blessings of *Sarasvati*, the Goddess of Vak" [1]. '*Bhartrhari*' glorifies in his '*Vakyapadiya*', the greatness of the Goddess of speech. And he also asserts that it is '*Vak*' alone created the entire Cosmos.

'*Bhartrhari*' is a great name in *Sanskrit* literature that lived in the 5th Century AD. He was also known as "Padavakyapramanajna". Through his famous work *Vakyapadiya*, *Bhartrhari* depicts his deep knowledge of the central problems of semantics. '*Trikandi*' is another name of *Vakyapadiya*, i.e. that which has three kandas- '*Brahmakanda*' or '*Agamakanda*', '*Vakyakanda*' and '*Prakirnakanda*'. The metaphysical backgrounds of the *Sphota* doctrine are discussed in the beginning chapter '*Agamakanda*'. '*Vakyakanda*' deals with the fundamental subject of semantics in general linguistics and figures out it on the basis of *Sphota* doctrine. The last chapter deals with the concept of the Ultimate essence - '*akhandavakyasphota*'. The output of sound (sabdavirbhava), comprehension (grahana), and communication (vinimaya) are the concepts that revolutionized by *Bhartrhari*. His analytical study surfaced the way for the rational doctrine namely '*Sphotavada*'.

The term '*Sphota*' is derived from a *Sanskrit* root '*Sput*', means bursting or opening. Patanjali defines *Sphota* as '*sphutatarthosmad*', i.e. which meaning is exploded. *Bhartrhari* applies various technical terms like '*sabda*' or '*sphota*', '*dhvani*' and '*nada*'. *Bhartrhari* refers to '*sabda*' or '*sphota*' that the inner unity which conveys the meaning. The original source concept of *sphota* seems to have come from the Vedic time of Indian thought. It is noted that the term '*Sphota*' has been referred firstly by '*Panini*' in his pioneer work '*Ashtadhyayi*'. However, we get a fully developed and systematized description of the *Sphotavada* from the '*Vakyapadiya*' of *Bhartrhari*.

The *sphota* is the perfect gist of language and is the cornerstone of all linguistic process. The etymological meaning of *sphota* is that which bursts. In this context, the gist of language which bursts itself is the *sphota*. It is the internal realness of the sentences which establish language. *Bhartrhari* formulates his *sphota* theory in order to show that without the internal realness of language there can be no arrant realizing of the meaning and operation of language.

II. ORIGIN OF LANGUAGE

According to *Bhartrhari*, *sphota* is the original sound produced by various vocal organs with the contact of various places of articulation [2]. The old *Sanskrit* grammarians treated *sphota* and *dhvani* in different theories. *Bhartrhari*

also mentioned about the theories in his *Vakyapadiya*. According to one view in *Vakyapadiya*, he said that the *sphota* is produced first and thereafter *dhvani*. *Bhartrhari* states in another theory that *sphota* and *dhvani* are producing simultaneously. This theory conceives that there is no gap at all in the yield of both. The *sphota* is the flame of fire and is the central part of sound. But the *dhvani* is the light of the flame. On certain occasions we see the light without seeing the flame. Likewise we hear *dhvani* without experiencing *sphota*. As the flame and light are produced at the same time so is the output of the *sphota* and the *dhvani*.

Bhartrhari explicates that *dhvani* has two faces viz. '*prakrtadhvani*' and '*vaikrtadhvani*'. *Prakrtadhvani* is the original sound, which is the cause of *sphota*. But *vaikrtadhvani* is the pure phonetic term used by grammarians. It is the sound spoken by the speaker and heard by the listener. There is no partition of time in the *sphota* whereas there is interpolation of time in the reflections of this gist.

According to him, *sphota* signifies the audible sound or *dhvani*. *Sphota* controls within the Universal sounds whereas *dhvani* within a specific sound. In modern conditions *sphota* can be understood as having ceaseless typical phonetic characteristics. But *dhvani* is of a phonic type. *Sphota* is that which is to be demonstrated and *dhvani* is demonstrating. *Dhvani* may be variable considering on the speakers style of vocalization. But *sphota* as the unit of speech is not capable to such fluctuations. *Bhartrhari* formulates the idea of *sphota* is a unique philosophical proportion. For him, *sphota* is neither a meaning abiding unit nor a linguistic mark.

Indian grammarians accept the four speech situations namely *para*, *pasyanti*, *madhyama* and *vaikhari*. But *Bhartrhari* does not accept the four level of '*vak*' process. He accepts the three parts viz. *pasyanti*, *madhyama* and *vaikhari* [3]. *Pasyanti* is the latent stage of language. At this stage the distinction between the word-forms and meaning are not there. *Madhyama* is the intermediate stage, where despite the identity of thought and language their distinction along with the distinctive elements of words and meanings are discernible. This stage is the 'pre-verbal' stage. And *vaikhari* is the 'verbal' stage [4]. *Para* is the most elusive form of speech and is realized only in the *nirvikalpa samadhi*. Hence *Bhartrhari* chooses only three relevant for his language analysis [5]. *Sphota* is the real cause of the Cosmos. *Bhartrhari*'s theory of *sphota* is also known as '*sabdadvaita*' or '*sabdatattva*'. He reveals this with mention to five aids to sensible knowledge, viz. *pratyaksa* (perception), *anumana* (inference), *agama* (sabda), *abhyasa* (repetition) and *adrsta* (invisible) [6]. At the personal level, *Sphota* is the idea which twinkles on the mind when a sound is expressed. At the universal level, *Sphota* is the force behind the Word-Logos, the eternal declaring itself through sound. The absolute potentiality of the occurrence of life is charted in the sound of 'Aum', the *pranava*, that direct *prana* or breath.

The '*Mandukyopanisad*' asserts the whole enigma of Brahmn into an elementary sound Aum, the three conditions of waking, dreaming and deep sleep allied to the three mantras of A, U and M, the *Sphota*, the *Nada-Sabda Brahman* being the "material of all words". *Vivekananda* says that 'Aum' alone can be the particularized emblem of all desirable sounds.

Bhartrhari agrees that word and meaning are inseparable units. If we go to the theoretical sense of *sphota*, we can realize that the 'word' means *sabdatattva* (sound principle), *arthatattva* (meaning principle) and *pratibha* (intuition). Words are grammatically the meaning abiding units and the higher or real *sphota* is the real word or *sabda*. According to *Bhartrhari*, the term *sabda* is an equivalent word for *sphota*. The real word or the real *sphota* is the 'Brahman' itself and it is the Ultimate Reality, hence it bears for the *akhandavakyasphota*.

Bhartrhari believes that *sphota* is a two sided coin that is indivisible and changeless. One of its proportions is the sound form and the other is the meaning assuming unit. It is believed that *sphota* along with expressing the meaning also expresses itself [7]. This is expressed *Bhartrhari* by the verse 1:46. K.Kunjunni Raja interprets *sphota* as the linguistic sign in its meaning-bearing aspect [8]. *Bhartrhari* supposes that a word has a double power, *i.e.* a word can express both the meaning and the expressed thing.

III. CONCLUSION

Bhartrhari depicts that *sphota* is a monistic philosophy pertaining the fundamental trouble of the word and its meaning. He distinguishes two components in each important word, the component of sound (*sabda*) and the component of meaning (*artha*). The *sphota* is an inseparable meaning assuming unit of a word, which blishes on the mind when a sound is expressed. It is the sublime theoretical and transcendental speech effect. In the *Veda*'s, there are many expressions which prove that the concept of *sphota* has developed in *Veda*'s. *Rig-Veda* says that a "mahan devah sabdah", which means the Great God, is speech itself.

Since *Sphota* assumes that the apparent Universe arose out of an exploding forth from the changeless substratum. It is also seen as the premature 'Big Bang' theory of the Universe, retroflexed in each individual mind as the possible

arousing of awareness through words and language. Sphotavada says that the very inwardness of the Universe is Sphota. The sound of speech (*dhvani*) apparently arouses the *Sphota* in the listener as *varnasphota*, *padasphota*, and *vakyasphota*, the phoneme-in-morpheme-diction-knowledge, the word-diction-knowledge, and the text-diction-knowledge, individually. According to Bhartrhari, the meaning is accomplished through *vakyasphota* only. Even today this theory is widely admits among modern linguists as the most arrant analysis into the deepness of language, making appreciable profoundness to the Philosophy of Language, Linguistics, and especially in Semiotics.

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