

SPHOTA AND DHVANI

Dr. V.P. Udayakumar

न सोऽस्ति प्रत्ययो लोके यः शब्दानुगमादृते।
अनुविद्धमिव ज्ञानं सर्वं शब्देन भासते॥¹

This declaration in the *Vakyapadiya* makes one know the importance of verbal testimony. Then what is Sabda? Sabda has been a matter of controversy among the scholars.

Mimamsakas consider Varna or letter as Sabda. These Varnas themselves are notations of meaning. They opine that the Varnas which are coming out from a places of articulation due to the touching of the air coming out from the Nabhi, becomes Pada, Vākya etc. and denote particular meanings.

अथ गौरित्यत्र कः शब्दः गकारौकारविसर्जनीया इति भगवानुपवर्षः² says *Sabarabhashya* and कः शब्दोऽभिमतः वर्णाः तेषामेव श्रोत्रग्राह्यत्वात्³ so says Salikanatha in his *Prakaranapancika*, thus declare the opinion of Mimamsakas. In short, Sabda, means Varna itself. It is Vibhu and eternal. The relation between the word and meaning becomes nitya (eternal) only when Sabda is nitya. Sabda is of two kinds Dhvani and Varna. Dhvani is a Vayuguna and makes one know about the Varṇa uttered. Varna is a Dravya which is understood by Dhvani. This is the opinion of Mimamsakas.

But Naiyayikas do not consider Varna as nitya. They explain the recognition of Varnas uttered by different speakers by considering them examples of the same Samanya. We take them identical only because of their close resemblance. According to the last Varna along with the culture of the Varnas prior to them, generate the meaning. As the individual Varna cannot produce any meaning, all the Varnas do it together. Each Varna produces a culture of its own and all these cultures along with the final Varna create a meaning. वाक्यस्थेषु खलु वर्णेषु उच्चरत्सु प्रतिवर्णं तावत् श्रवणं भवति, श्रुतं वर्णमेकमनेकं वा पदभावेन प्रतिसन्धत्ते। प्रतिसन्धाय पदं व्यवस्यति।⁴

In *Nyayalilavati* also it can be seen that किं तर्हि प्रातिपदिकम् ? क्रमवद्वर्णसंहतिरिति ब्रूमः।⁵ The *Nyayamanjari* also says किं पुनरिदं पदं नाम ? किञ्च वाक्यमिति ? वर्णसमूहः पदं पदसमूहो⁶ all these are the opinion of Naiyayikas.

Culture is the remainings of our experiences. When there is a need they of course memorise the past. The culture of the individual letter can only make the memory of the Varna and not their meaning. Again through the culture of each Varna we should say that they not only create the Varna but also the order in which they are created. If one says that we are remembering in the same order of utterance, then how can one do it at the same time? How these Varnas became a word which denotes a meaning? Varnas do have the capacity to denote a meaning directly. So to get a meaning from the word or sentence we should imagine that the word and sentence are single units of meaning. This is done by Sphota theory.

Grammarians say that as Varnas individually or collectively do not possess any meaning; we should accept Sphoṭa or Śabdatattva. As Dhvani theory in Alankarasastra, Sphota theory is another great contribution to linguistics. Accordingly

a word or a sentence is not merely the collection of a set of words or alphabets but it is a single unit which has got the meaning. Sphota is a notation which cannot be written or pronounced, but it is the unit of meaning. Or it is a notation which bears a meaning but is indivisible and timeless. The Varnas are merely devices which brings out this notation. This bears meaning. In the angle of meaning we can say it as a 'word' or sentence. It is an indivisible timeless unit.

Thus that which exists in the mind of speaker and the listener and which is a notation the form of Pada or Vakya is Sphota. It becomes clear by the sound produced in a particular order. Sounds are mere manifestations. It only manifests the notations and no other duty is assigned to it. Each sound helps in the manifestation of Sphota. In the beginning, it is not so clear, next becomes clearer, thus goes on till the end. With the Samskara of the previous hearing till the end, it becomes vivid and distinct. Each Varna manifests only one Sphota and this Sphota is one and the whole. The sounds which manifests Sphota cannot be considered as a part of it. But they are the signs to manifest the word.

Eventhough Sphota is manifested by each Varna, the culture of the Varna uttered in the beginning along with the last only makes a meaning. So no meaning is understood by the manifestation of individual Varnasphota. Eventhough the Sphota is one and eternal, the meaning is understood along with the Dharma of the Vijnaka (Manifesting agent). That is why we feel it as different. शेषकृष्णः in his स्फोटतत्त्वनिर्णयः says thus

यथा मणिकृपाणादौ खमेकमनेकधा ।
तथैव ध्वनिषु स्फोट एक एव विभिद्यते ॥⁷

The image of the moon is felt like disturbed in water with the disturbances in water. The crystal is felt as coloured with the colour of the hibiscus. So also jewels, sword, mirror etc. reflects the shape of the face differently. Same process happens in the case of Sphota. The inner Sphota is manifested by Vaikhari. This sound in the form of Vaikhari is produced in different times. The thing which is illuminated by thousands of lamps is the same. In the same way Sphota manifested by different things is the same. When there are no manifesting agents, the crystal is seen. A doubt may be there that in the absence of manifesting agents, Sphota should be seen. In the case of crystal even though there is no manifesting agent like hibiscus, there is another thing that is the human eye which acts as the manifesting agent. That is why crystal becomes visible. But in the case of Sphota there is no such a substitute and so it is not visible. Then again a question arises, ie. if the Sphota is not visible the words like सरः रसः etc. will convey the same sense. Here the answer is the manifestation of Sphota is in the same order that of the Varnas uttered. So there won't be an opposite feeling.

In the word घटः if the pronunciation of विसर्ग and टकार takes place simultaneously the order of these two letters should be taken in दैशिकक्रम। Here देश means the wall of the mind of the listener. That is permanent. Sphota shapes the meaning according to shape of the manifesting Varnas. The meaning of the word घट is revealed only from the Sphota manifested by the word घट and not from the synonym which is not so famous.

The word Sphota is having a special as well as etymological and general meaning (योगार्थ) By the derivation स्फुटति प्रकाशते अभिव्यक्तिर्भवति वा अर्थः अस्मात् the sound producing a meaning is Sphota. The meaning is understood from the sound in the

inner or in the intellect. Some others opine that meaning is understood from the sound which comes out. The outer sound is divided into जाति and व्यक्ति whereas the inner sound is single. जातिस्फोट is again divided into वर्णजातिस्फोट and पदजातिस्फोट and व्यक्तिजातिस्फोट। So also व्यक्तिस्फोट is divided into वर्ण, पद, अखण्डपद and अखण्डवाक्यस्फोट। Altogether there are 8 Bahyasphotas. Patanjali mentions these आभ्यन्तर and बाह्यस्फोट in the पस्पशाह्निक of महाभाष्य। There he says अथ गौरित्यत्र कः शब्दः ...Then he rejects शब्दत्व in जाति, द्रव्य etc. At last he says येनोच्चारितेन सास्त्रालाङ्गूलककुदघुरविषाणिनां सम्प्रत्ययः भवति स शब्दः i.e. the utterance by which we get the meaning of a creature which has horn etc. that is sound. Here he explains the आन्तरस्फोट। Then he says अथवा प्रतीतपदार्थको लोके ध्वनिः शब्दः। The Dhvani from which the meaning is understood is the sound. Here he explains the बाह्यस्फोट। When air passes through various places of articulation like कण्ठ, from there a sound is produced and this Dhvani is known as Vaikhari. By this Vaikhari the eternal, minute sound in Pranavarupa which is situated in the हृदय in the form of मध्यम is manifested and this manifested sound makes one know the Cow which has got the सास्त्रालाङ्गूल etc. This is the sense described in महाभाष्य.

Now we will examine how the Sphota is related to the Dhvani of Alankarikas

Dhvani

The grammarians who tried to establish the Sabdatattva of the sound didn't much bother about the peculiarities of Dhvani as those of Alankarikas. But their explanations on Sphoṭa so much encouraged Anandavardhana in his Dhvanitatvanirupana. He himself acknowledges his gratitude to grammarians in his book. He says that Dhvani is already narrated by the scholars when he explained the ध्वनिलक्षण- यत्रार्थः शब्दो वा... सूरिभिः कथित इति विद्वदुपज्ञेयमुक्तिः, न तु यथाकथञ्चित्प्रवृत्ता इति प्रतिपाद्यते। प्रथमे हि विद्वांसो वैयाकरणाः, व्याकरणमूलत्वात् नवविद्यानाम्। ते च श्रूयमाणेषु वर्णेषु ध्वनिरिति व्यवहरन्ति। तथैव अन्यैस्तन्मलानुसारिभिः सूरिभिः काव्यतत्त्वार्थदर्शिभिः वाच्यवाचकसम्मिश्रः शब्दात्मा काव्यमिति व्यपदेश्यो व्यञ्जकत्वसाम्यात् ध्वनिरित्युक्तः।⁸ By this passage in his text he explains how Sphoṭa and Dhvani is related to each other.

Now let us see how Abhinavagupta explains this portion in his Locana commentary. According to the process it is the last sound of a chain of sounds that enters the orifice of ear, so the heard sounds are sounds born of sounds, not the original sounds produced by the organs of speech.. Even though the ग sound produced is lost in the next moment, by वीचीतरङ्गन्याय it produces the Varnas as that preceded the utterance. It goes on like this and the last गकार in the form of waves is caught in his ear by the listener. Likewise we hear the sound producing sounds. As the last sounds that are heard is formed from the previous ones, they get the quality of vibration as that of the घण्डानाद। These sounds which are formed otherwise are known as Dhvani. To explain this Locanakāra quotes one verse from Vakyapadiya

यः संयोगवियोगाभ्यां करणैरुपजायते।

स स्फोटः शब्दजशब्दाः ध्वनयोऽन्यैरुदाहृताः।।⁹

As all know Sabda is अनित्य sounds generated by वीचीतरङ्गन्याय। Likewise the व्यङ्ग्य sounds or that are produced from Sphota are known as Dhvani. By Sphoṭa Vaiseshikas

understand the प्राकृतध्वनि of Vaiyakaranas. They imply the वैकृतध्वनि of Vaiyakaranas as शब्दजशब्द। These two Dhvanis such as प्राकृत and वैकृत are merely स्फोटाभिञ्जकवर्णधर्म। (the Varṇadharmas which helps in the manifestation of Sphoṭa) As we consider the शब्दजशब्द as Dhvani we can call the indicated meaning of Kavya as Dhvani because it is felt as the echo of a bell.

Then Abhinavagupta shows that the scholars have already considered the Vacakas (Essentially meaningful words) as Dhvani.

प्रत्ययैरनुपाख्येयैः ग्रहणानुगुणैस्तथा।
ध्वनिप्रकाशिते शब्दे स्वरूपमवधार्यते।¹⁰

That which can be understood by the last Varna and which can be called as नाद and that which manifests Sphota, these sounds in the form of Varnas are called Dhvani.

Like this, as the Vyanjakas are called as Dhvani the direct and indirect meanings were called as Dhvani. In short the Dhvani of Alankarikas is different from Sabda as it is invisible but beautiful meanings and metaphors are revealed from it. The Sphota of Sabdikas is different from the sound that is uttered, invisible and the meaning conveyed in different from the word uttered. This may be resemblance between them.

Then the explanation of व्यञ्जनाव्यापार can be seen as

अल्पीयसापि यत्नेन शब्दमुच्चारितं मतिः।
यदि वा नैव गृह्णाति वर्णं वा सकलं स्फुटम्।¹¹

The Varna which is uttered by very less effort is sometimes not understood or otherwise understood fully. In the effort of this articulation, there are other Vrttis such as Druta, Vilambila, Madhyama etc. other than the effort of the speaker. It is वैकृतध्वनि that is responsible for the वृत्तिभेद of Sphota. Likewise व्यङ्ग्य and व्यञ्जक also may be called as Dhvani. Bhartrhari says

शब्दस्योर्ध्वमभिव्यक्तेर्वृत्तिभेदे तु वैकृतः।
ध्वनयः समुपोहन्ते स्फोटात्मा तैर्न भिद्यते।¹²

वैकृतध्वनिः are formed after the manifestation of Sphota. They are responsible for the वृत्तिभेद such as Druta, Madhyama and Vilambita. But by वैकृतध्वनि no change comes to the Sphoṭa.

स्फोटस्य ग्रहणे हेतुः प्राकृतो ध्वनिरिष्यते।
वृत्तिभेदे निमित्तत्वं वैकृतः प्रतिपद्यते।¹³

प्राकृतध्वनिः is responsible for the manifestation of Sphota and वैकृतध्वनि is responsible for different Vrttis.

Alankarikas also consider Dhvani as a special Vyapara which is different from अभिधा, तात्पर्य and लक्षण। So the manifested meaning, the manifesting शब्दार्थः and the manifesting Vyapara, four these are considered as Dhvani by the scholars. The entire Kavya which has four these parts is also known as Dhvani as the parts are considered as Dhvani.

सृष्टिभिः वाच्यवाचकसम्मिश्रः शब्दात्मा काव्यमिति व्यपदेश्यः व्यञ्जकत्वसाम्यात् ध्वनिरित्युक्तः - वन्यालोकः । वाच्यवाचकसहितः सम्मिश्रः इति मध्यमपदलोपि समासः तेन वाच्यश्च वाचकश्च नयन्त, विभावानुभावसंवलनया इति व्यङ्ग्यार्थः च ध्वनिः ध्वन्यत इति कृत्वा। शब्दनं शब्दः व्यापारः न चासौ अभिधादिरूपः अपि तु आत्मभूतः सोऽपि ध्वननं ध्वनिः। काव्यमिति व्यपदेश्यश्च १. साताप ध्वनिः।

उक्तप्रकारध्वनिचतुष्टयमत्वात् अत एव साधारणहेतुमाह व्यञ्जकत्वसाम्यात्। व्यङ्ग्यव्यञ्जकभावः सर्वेषु पक्षेषु सामान्यरूपः साधारणः इत्यर्थः।¹⁴

From this discussion it is understood that Dhvani resembles Sphoṭa.

¹ Bhartrhari, Vakyapadiya, Brahmakanda, Verse 123

² शबरभाष्यम्- 1-1-1

³ प्रकरणपञ्जिका of शालिकानाथः, Chaukhambha Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, 64

⁴ Nyayasutrashya 3-2-62

⁵ न्यायलीलावती, Chaukhambha Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, 106

⁶ न्यायमञ्जरी Chaukhambha Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, 106

⁷ स्फोटतत्त्वनिर्णयः of शेषकृष्णः, Chaukhambha Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, Verse 11

⁸ Dhvanyaloka of Anandavardhana, Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan Varanasi, 2009, 132-135.

⁹ Ibid, 133

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid, 134

¹² Ibid

¹³ Bhartrhari, Vakyapadiyam, Brahmakanda, Bhavapradipa Commentary by Suryanarayana Sukla, Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan Varanasi, Sangraha-kariaka, P 77.

¹⁴ Dhvanyaloka of Anandavardhana, 135

