

CHAPTER VI

THE MEANING OF SPHOṬA

The theory of *Sphoṭa* is one of the most outstanding and foremost aspects of the Indian schools of philosophy. A notion on the nature and power of the word and its sound is expanded in the form of almost a theory by the great intellectuals of different branches of philosophy like Pāṇini, Patañjali, Bhartṛhari, Bhaṭṭojidīkṣita, Kaṇḍabhaṭṭa, Nāgeśabhaṭṭa, Kumārila, Jayanta, Śabara and others. It is believed that the theory of *Sphoṭa* is propounded by Ācārya Sphoṭāyana.¹ But in the absence of the valid evidence, this hypothesis does not get any concrete stand. The study of the development of the theory of *Sphoṭa* also does not support the hypothesis put forward by some of the authors.

The word *Sphoṭa* is derived from the root *Sphuṭ* - *Sphuṭati* (1P) (to burst, to expand). It simply means the element which reveals the sense of the word. It is different from sound (*Dhvani*). Sound is an instrument through which this *Sphoṭa* element becomes perceptible. Letters or words are like the outer forms of the *Sphoṭa* element. It can be illustrated with the example of a word *Ghaṭaḥ* (a pot). When someone utters ‘*Ghaṭaḥ*’, a particular shape of a pot is imagined in the mind of the listener. The mental operation is same even in its negation e.g. *Ghaṭo Nāsti* (there is no pot). The utterances and tones vary from speaker to speaker, but the perception remains the same and this perception does not undergo any change from the point of view of Time. Such kind of perception is beyond the limitation of Time. For the execution of this perception, letters and their sounds are required. The *Ghaṭaḥ* needs the combination of letters *Gh*, *A*, *ṭ*, *A* and *H*, for its execution. Each letter has its own sound. The combination of different sound manifests the letters and ultimately the *Sphoṭa*. This *Sphoṭa* is

¹ स्फोटायनं पराणयं यस्य सः स्फोटायनः, स्फोटप्रतिपादनपरो वैयाकरणाचार्यः । ये त्वौकारं पठन्ति ते नडादिषु, अश्वादिषु वा स्फोटशब्दस्य पाठं मन्यन्ते । Haradatta, *Padamañjarī* on 6.1. 123, p. 145

somehow similar to the concept of *Āvirbhāva* and *Tirobhāva* concept of *Vedānta*. *Sphoṭa* becomes perceivable when it is uttered through the medium of letters and sounds otherwise it persists forever in latent form.

The term *Sphoṭa* is defined in several ways by different scholars. *Sphuṭati prakāśate 'rtho 'smāditi Sphoṭaḥ* (that from which the meaning bursts forth or shines forth),² *Sphuṭyate Vyañjate Varṇairiti Sphoṭo Varṇābhivyañjyate* (that which reveal the sense of the letters) and *Sphoṭa Sphuṭati-bhavatyasmadartha-iti Sphoṭo 'rhapratyāyakaḥ* (that from which the meaning is produced).

This *Sphoṭa* element is discussed in the context of letters, word and sentence. Through the *Sphoṭa* all kinds of worldly behaviours take place. But scholars have difference of opinion regarding which part of speech contains this *Sphoṭa* element. According to some, it resides in the letter; others find it in the word; some postulate it in the sentence and for some it is an intact entity which cannot be seen separately in the forms of either letters or words or sentence. The last view was exclusively developed and standardized by the great grammarian-philosopher Bhartṛhari in his magnanimous work VP.

VI.1. Bhartṛhari's Theory of *Sphoṭa*

According to Bhartṛhari's theory, a word or a sentence is not just a combination of different sound units arranged in a particular order. But it is a single meaningful symbol. The different variations of sounds are purely the means by which the symbol is revealed. This symbol bears the meanings of the words. It is invisible and beyond the limit of time. The articulated sounds which are bound to time are the means of revealing this symbol. It is an entity which is manifested by the letters. According to Bhartṛhari, speech and thought are only two aspects of the same speech-element.

² Nāgeśabhaṭṭa, SV, p. 5

अर्थभागैस्तथा तेषामान्तरोऽर्थः प्रकाशते ।

एकस्यैवात्मनो भेदौ शब्दार्थावपृथक्स्थितौ ॥ २.३१ ॥³

Bhartṛhari opines that there are two types of words viz. sound (*Dhvani*) and a meaning (*Artha*). The former is the sound-pattern which is the external aspect of the word, while the latter is the semantic aspect which expresses the meaning. The principal cause of the articulated sound (*Śabdānāṁ Nimittam*) is the sound-pattern which remains in the utterance of the word. This abstract sound-pattern with the time-sequence is called *Prakṛta-dhvani* and is the external aspect of the language. The internal aspect, which is directly attached to the meaning, is the *Sphoṭa* which is inseparable.

द्वावुपादानशब्देषु शब्दौ शब्दविदो विदुः ।

एको निमित्तं शब्दानामपरोर्धे प्रयुज्यते ॥ १.४४ ॥⁴

A sentence is to be considered as a single undivided expression⁵ and its meaning is an instantaneous spark of insight known as *Pratibhā*⁶. Thoughts have neither structure nor utterance. The central idea of Bhartṛhari's theory is that the words are imaginary abstractions. The sentence-meaning is also to be grasped as a unity. The divisions into words and word-meanings are only useful means for the study of language and have no realism in themselves.

Kunjunni Rāja remarks -

“According to Yāska, Audumbarāyaṇa held the view that only the sentence is really found in the minds of the speaker and the listener (*Indriya Nityam Vacanam-*

³ Bhartṛhari, *op cit*, p. 75

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 21

⁵ आख्यातं शब्दसंघातो जातिः संघातवर्तिनी । एकोऽनवयवः शब्दः क्रमो बुद्ध्यनुसंहतिः ॥ २.१ ॥ *Ibid*, p. 65

⁶ विच्छेदग्रहणेऽर्थानां प्रतिभान्यैव जायते । वाक्यार्थ इति तामाहुः पदार्थैरुपपादिताम् ॥ २.१४३ ॥ *Ibid*, p.

audumbarāyaṇa). Bhartṛhari says that Vārtikapakṣa also held the same view. This school of thought started by Audumbarāyaṇa may be considered as the forerunner of the *Sphoṭa* theory of Bhartṛhari”⁷

VI.2.Patañjali’s Theory of *Sphoṭa*

Patañjali also mentions two aspects of words i.e. the *Sphoṭa* and the *Dhvani*. According to him, *Sphoṭa* is the permanent and essential element in the word. The *Dhvani* is the actualized and ephemeral element and an attributive of the *Sphoṭa* - *Sphoṭaḥ Śabdaḥ, Dhvaniś-Śabdagaṇaḥ*.⁸ According to Patañjali, the *Sphoṭa* can be a single letter or a fixed pattern of letters. It remains constant and is not affected by the peculiarities of the individual speakers even when pronounced by different speakers with different tempos. The absolute vowel length and the individual peculiarities of the particular instances belong to *Dhvani* and it depends on the individuality of the speaker and the effort with which the words are uttered. The *Sphoṭa* is permanent and unchanging and is manifested by the listener.

The discussion between the virtual and permanent element in language and the ephemeral elements at the various instances of its actualization was known to Kātyāyana. Though he never applied the terms *Sphoṭa* and *Dhvani*, but it seems that he was aware of these two elements. While discussing Pāṇini’s aphorism *Taparas-tatkālasya* (I.1.70), he says that the letters are fixed and the style of diction depends upon the speech habits of the speaker. It was actually Patañjali who gives the term *Sphoṭa* to the letter or the letters taken as a time-series pattern and the term *Dhvani* to the actualized sound. This is illustrated with the example of a drum-beat. ‘When a drum is struck, one drum-beat may travel

⁷ Kunjuni, Raja K, *op cit*, p. 99

⁸ Patañjali, *op cit*, p.3

twenty feet, another thirty another forty; but the *Sphoṭa* remains the same throughout the journey of sound production. The increase in length is caused by the potency of the sound'⁹ Patañjali seems to have been influenced very much by the theory of Vedic Hermeneutics about the permanent nature of the letters. They distinguish the virtual and permanent sound-units, and the sounds produced and heard at the actual instances of their utterance. The latter are only the manifestations of the former. The rapid, medium and slow styles of diction are only for the manifesting agents and do not touch the nature of the letters.

Patañjali defines word as that which, when uttered, brings about the notion of the object meant by the speaker. In the beginning of the *MB*, he raises the question as what is the meaning of the word cow? The final answer given by him is – ‘it is that by means of which, when uttered, there arises an understanding of animals with dewlap, tail, hump, hooves and horns’. Thus Patañjali gives emphasis on the fact that a word is a word only when it has a meaning.

VI.3. The View of the Logicians

The logicians hold the view that a word is a linguistic utterance and is only a collection of sounds which are produced by the movements of the vocal organs of the speaker. The sounds vanish as soon as they are produced and so they are ephemeral. The logicians do not accept permanent letters like the Vedic Hermeneutics. According to them the meaning of a word is presented to the mind of the listener by the last sound aided by the memory impressions of the preceding sounds. Since the isolated sounds of a word cannot individually present its meaning, they must do it reciprocally. Since they come one after another into the mind, they are not perceived together as a whole. Each sound

⁹ भेरीमाहत्य कश्चिद्विंशति तदानि गच्छति, कश्चित् त्रिंशत् कश्चिच्चत्वारिंशत्. स्फोटश्च तावान् एव भवति, ध्वनिकृता वृद्धिः । Patañjali, *op cit*, p. 45

perceived leaves its impression behind and the apprehension of the last sound aided by the accumulated impressions of the preceding sounds presents the meaning of the word.

VI.4. The View of the Vedic Hermeneutics

Vedic Hermeneutics defines a word as the aggregate of the letters. Śabara says that the meaning is conveyed by the last letter aided by the impression produced in the mind by the previous letters. The main difference between the view held by the logicians and Vedic Hermeneutics is that the former considered the letters to be ephemeral whereas the latter believed that the letters are permanent. Letters emboss the impressions (*Samskāras*) in the mind in the form of experience and produce the recollection when needed of what has been experienced. The impression of the individual letters in a word can produce only the recollection of the letters heard and they have no power to express the meaning. So, Vedic Hermeneutics have to assume a special power for these impressions to convey the meaning.¹⁰ The order in which the letters are uttered is only for the act of utterance and not for the letters themselves. Kumārilabhaṭṭa says that even the individual letters should be treated as a word (*Śabda*) though they do not convey any meaning and that in the case of words also the idea of *Śabda* occurs to the hearer even before the meaning is understood.¹¹

VI.5. Classification of the *Sphoṭa*

¹⁰ यद्यपि स्मृतिहेतुत्वं संस्कारस्य व्यवस्थितम् । अर्थान्तरेषु सामर्थ्यं न तस्य प्रतिषिध्यते ॥ Kumānila Bhaṭṭa, *op cit*, p. 366

¹¹ तच्छ्रोत्रपरिच्छिन्नो यद्यर्थं गमयेन् न वा । सर्वथा तस्य शब्दत्वं लोकसिद्धं न हीयते । *Ibid*, p. 25

The later grammarians like Bhaṭṭojidīkṣīta¹², Kaunḍabhaṭṭa and Nāgeśabhaṭṭa enumerate eight different varieties of the *Sphoṭa*. The fundamental argument in all these cases is meaningfulness (*Vācakatva*) of a letter or a word or a sentence uttered. Thus, we may consider either the letter or the word or the sentence as the meaning-bearing unit, and we get respectively the *Varṇa-sphoṭa*, the *Pada-sphoṭa* or *Vākyasphoṭa*. Here we again come across the philosophical controversy as to whether *Śabda* is permanent or momentary (*Nitya* or *Kārya*). On the basis of the views of the different schools of philosophy, Kaunḍabhaṭṭa has classified the *Sphoṭa* element into following eight categories:

Eight Varieties of *Sphoṭa*

1. *Varṇasphoṭa*
2. *Padasphoṭa*
3. *Vākyasphoṭa*
4. *Akhaṇḍapadasphoṭa*
5. *Akhaṇḍavākyasphoṭa*
6. *Varṇajātisphoṭa*
7. *Padajātisphoṭa*
8. *Vākyajātisphoṭa*

Varṇasphoṭa

A letter plays very significant role in the language. When two or more letters are joined together (i.e. the combination of the vowels and consonants), they take the form of either a stem or a suffix. Letter is considered to be the first manifested form of the *Dhvani* or *Nāda*. In the system of grammar, these letters

¹² Bhaṭṭojidīkṣīta, *op cit*, p. 10

are termed as *Varṇasphoṭa*, because it is believed that each and every letter possesses an expressive power.

According to the view of logicians, the original should be accepted as the meaning of the *Varṇasphoṭa* e.g. in *Rāmaḥ*, the Nominative case suffix ‘*su*’ is substituted by ‘*ḥ*’ i.e. *visarga*. In the same way, in *Pacati*, *laṭ* is substituted by *ti*. In this, the *su* and *laṭ* are denotative of meanings. If substitutes only are taken as the denotative of meanings, then there will be many denotative functions because substitutes (*Ādeśa*) are more in number than the originals (*Sthānin*).¹³ In case of the word *Edhāñcakre*, the omission of the *liṭ* is the substitute and so it does not exist. As a result, it would not denote any meaning. Similarly, the *n* of *Brahman* is dropped by the strength of the aphorism *Nalopaḥ Prātipadikāntasya* (VIII.2.7). In the present example *n* being non-existent does not render any meaning. Therefore, it is irrelevant to hold the view that substitutes are the denotative of the meaning. Actually the originals which are recalled by substitutes are the denotative of meaning. Thus, *Su*, *L*, etc. possesses the power of denotation. In the present context logicians quote the aphorism of Pāṇini - *Laḥ Karmaṇi Ca Bhāve Cākarmakebhyaḥ* (III.4.69) to support their stand. According to this aphorism, affix *L* denotes the agent and the object in case of the transitive roots while it denotes the sense of the agent and the action in case of the intransitive roots. At this juncture, affix *L* is substituted by the conjugational ending *tip*, etc.

Kaṇḍabhaṭṭa does not have the same opinion as the logicians do. He opines that the substitutes are the denotative and not the originals.¹⁴ It is because, different schools of grammar take different originals e.g. *ḥ* of *Rāmaḥ* is the substitute of the original ‘*Su*’ according to the school of grammar. But the view of *Kālāpa*-school is different. They take *Si* as the original of the substitute i.e.

¹³ तेषां बहुत्वेन शक्त्यानन्त्यापत्तेः । VBS, p. 408

¹⁴ साधुशब्देऽन्तर्गता हि बोधका न तु स्मृताः । Ibid, p. 409

Visarga. In this manner, different schools of grammar have selected different originals in order to make the theoretical part uncomplicated and ambiguous. On the other hand, all schools of grammar do not assume different substitutes. This leads to the problem of the inconstancy of co-absence (*Vyatireka-vyabhicāra*).

It is observed that a person not having the knowledge of *L*, understands the meaning of the expression *Pacati* (he cooks). Here the perception takes place through the *tip* and not through *L*. So, it is evident that *tip*, not the *L*, denotes the sense of present tense. Therefore, the stand of the logicians that substitute *tip* denotes the meaning is improper since there is no evidence to determine that the conjugation endings such as *tip*, etc. express the meaning through the faculty of import (*Śakti*). Hence, the substitutes only are to be taken as the denotative for the sake of brevity. Secondly, there are eight different sources to know the denotative function of the word. They are –

1. *Vyākaraṇa* (grammar)
2. *Upamāna* (comparison)
3. *Kośa* (lexicon)
4. *Āptavākya* (statement of a trustworthy person)
5. *Vyavahāra* (usage)
6. *Vākyaśeṣa* (context)
7. *Vivṛti* (paraphrase)
8. *Siddhapadasya Sānnidhyam* (contiguity of a well-known word)

Among these eight sources, usage is taken to be the most significant mean to determine the faculty of denotation.¹⁵ In the usage, the substitutes like *tip*, etc. are heard and found universally. If originals are taken as the denotative, then *L*, etc. one may have the denotative knowledge from *L*, etc. when it is not

¹⁵ व्यवहारस्तावच्छक्तिग्राहकेषु मुख्यः । *Ibid*, p. 410

substitute by *tip*, etc. e.g. $\sqrt{\text{Bhū}}+L$. But, nobody have any denotation through $\sqrt{\text{Bhū}}+L$. On the contrary, the form *Bahvati* in which *L* is substituted by *tip*, is more expressive and clear. Therefore, it is better to accept the power of denotation in substitutes like *tip*, etc. and not in the originals like *L*, etc. At this point of discussion, Kaṇḍabhaṭṭa satirizes the view of logicians by saying that if logicians do not agree with grammarians at this point, then they have to accept both originals and substitute as having the power of denotation. But this view will lead to uncertainty.¹⁶

Moreover, if the originals are accepted as the denotative, then the distinction between a conjugational ending which denotes the action (*Kṛti*) and the present participial affixes *Śatr* and *Śānac* which denote the agent would become futile. Logicians hold the view that *L* is the original which denotes effort (*Kṛti*). *L* is accepted as the original of not only a conjugational ending but of the present participial affixes *Śatr* and *Śānac*. As a result logicians have to accept that both the conjugational endings like *tip*, etc. and present participial affixes *Śatr* and *Śānac* denote the sense of *Kṛti*. To avoid this fault, they are forced to assume a distinction between the conjugational endings and the primary affixes *Kṛti*. They again argue by quoting the aphorism of Pāṇini (III.4.67) which says that the former means the *Kṛti* while the latter renders the sense of agent (i.e. substratum).

Kaṇḍabhaṭṭa refutes this standpoint of the opponent. He says that the denotation of the originals is already determined through the rule of Pāṇini (III.4.69). Hence, there is no need to fix it on the basis of the aphorism of Pāṇini (III.4.67).

¹⁶ तादृशबोधे भवतीति समभिव्याहारोऽपि कारणमिति चेत् तद्व्यावश्यकत्वादस्तु तादृशसमभिव्याहारस्यैव वाचकत्वशक्तिः । अन्यथा तकारस्य वाचकत्वम्, समभिव्याहारस्य कारणञ्चेत्युभयं कल्प्यमिति गौरवं स्यात् । *Ibid*, p. 412

Logicians place another argument that the present participial affixes *Śatr* and *Śānac* may be accepted to render the sense of agent and the two nominal forms can be related to each other by the non-differential relationship in case of the two conditions 1) nominal forms have co-referentially and 2) they have the same denotation. In *Devadatta Pacamānaḥ* (Devadatta engaged in cooking), both *Devadatta* and *Pacamānaḥ* render the sense of agent. Thus, it can be assumed that both *Devadatta* and *Pacamānaḥ* are syntactically and non-differentially related to each other. But the same rule is not observed in the expression like - *Pacatitarām Maitraḥ* (Maitra cooks well), because the conjugational ending suggests the sense of *Kṛti* and not of agent. Here sense of agent is conveyed by the faculty of implication. Similarly, the expression *Pacatikalpam Maitraḥ* (Maitra is almost a good cook), has the same problem. Therefore, a faculty of implication has to be inferred here in order to get the sense.

Kaunḍabhaṭṭa doesn't agree with the view of logicians. He suggests that if the view of grammarians is not accepted, then in case of *Devadatta Pacamānaḥ* the opponent have to take support of the faculty of implication to convey the sense of agent. Secondly, the rule of Pāṇini (III.4.69) would be meaningless. The rule suggests that the term *L* instead of the conjugational endings *tip*, etc. should be used for the sake of brevity. Factually, the *L*, etc, are always substituted by *tip*, etc. So, only substitutes should be accepted as the denotative.

Padasphoṭa

Pada means a word. It is a combination of two or more letters. If each letter of a word be accepted as denotative, then all letters would become crude form (*Prātipadika*) by the strength of the aphorism *Arthavadadhāturapratyayah Prātipadika* (I.2.45). As a result, the omission of 'n' in *Vana*, *Dhana*, etc. would be unavoidable according to the rule *Nalopaḥ Prātipadikāntasya* (VIII.2.7)

which is not intended. So, only word and not the letter should be taken as the denotative. The proper sequence of the letters is also an important factor with regard to *Pada*. In *Rāmo'sti*, the word *Rāmaḥ* is a collection of letters. In this case, if the final letter along with the penultimate i.e. *aḥ* is spoken out after an hour of the utterance of word *Rāma*, then also it will generate the meaning since the earlier spoken word *Rāma* does exist in the mind of the listener.¹⁷

Another example is given by the author for more clarification. *Ghaṭena* is the form of Instrumental singular of the word *Ghaṭa* (a pot). The *Ghaṭena* is a combination of stem of suffix. But it is difficult to identify that whether *na* is enjoined to the stem *Ghaṭe* or *Ghaṭa* is the stem and *ena* is the suffix. In such cases, only grammarians can solve the problem by showing the process of *Ghaṭa* + *ṭā*. By the force of the aphorism - *Ṭāṇasiṇasāminātsyāḥ* (VII.1.12) the *ṭā* is substituted by *ena*.

But this is not case with the words *Naḥ* and *Vaḥ*. It is difficult to separate stem and suffix, because the rule Pāṇini *Bahuvacanasya Vasināsau* (VIII.1.21) says that these two substitutes should be used in place of the whole (i.e. in place of stem and suffix).

Vākyasphoṭa

Kaunḍabhaṭṭa, after describing the *Varṇasphoṭa* and *Padasphoṭa*, suggests that *Vākya* i.e. a sentence should also be taken as the denotative. He gives two examples *Hare'va* (O Hari, protect me) and *Viṣṇo'va* (O Viṣṇu, protect me). These are the examples of euphonic combinations of *e+a* (in *Hare* + *ava*) and *u+a* in (*Viṣṇu+ava*). It is an example of *Pūrvarūpa-sandhi*.¹⁸ In both the examples the single meaning is conveyed by the sentence. The segregation of

¹⁷ रामोऽस्तीति वक्तव्ये राम् इत्यनन्तरं घटिकोत्तरमोकारोच्चारणेऽर्थे बोधापत्त्या तादृशानुपूर्व्या एव शक्तावच्छेदकत्वौचित्यादिति । *Ibid*, p. 414

¹⁸ एङः पदान्तादति ॥ ६.१.१०९ ॥

words into stem and suffix is not taken into consideration for getting the meaning still the meaning is comprehended.

Logicians do not accept this view of grammarians. They argue that a sentence is combination of words and the power of denotation resides in the words and not in the sentence. According to them, a sentence performs the denotative function under the three necessary conditions of a word. The three conditions are *Āsattiḥ*, *Yogyatā* and *Ākāṅṣā*. *Āsattiḥ* means phonetic contiguity, *Yogyatā* means logical consistency and *Ākāṅṣā* means syntactical expectancy.¹⁹ Further, logicians explain that not only these three but the *Tātparyā* (Intention) also plays very significant role in the establishing the meaning of the sentence. They illustrate Intention in the following manner. The sentence *Saindhavamānaya* has *Āsattiḥ*, *Yogyatā* and *Ākāṅṣā* in it. But the word *Saindhava* has two meanings viz. a salt and a horse. Which meaning should be taken depends upon the power of *Tātparyā*. The intention of the speaker is important to get the exact sense of the sentence. If the speaker speaks this sentence at time of having a meal, then it should be taken in the sentence of 'a salt'. Otherwise if the speaker is ready to go somewhere and utters this sentence, it would suggest 'a horse' and not the salt. Therefore, Intention is very essential to have the proper meaning of the sentence. So, it is proved that the power to signify the meaning resides in the word and not in the sentence.

Kaṇḍabhaṭṭa doesn't agree with the view of logicians. He argues that it is not admissible to think that the power of denotation doesn't reside in the sentence. If it be accepted that the knowledge of the intention of the speaker determines the meaning of the sentence, then a person who knows the intention of the speaker in *Ghaṭamānaya*, will be able to know the meaning from unconnected words. But, unless a person is trained in such way, he cannot have the verbal

¹⁹ All the three varieties have been explained in the third section of the fourth chapter on p. 35.

cognition from unconnected words. Hence, the intention of the speaker cannot be taken as the cause of the denotation of a sentence.²⁰ Kaṇḍabhaṭṭa puts forward the view that there is a relation of cause and effect between the association and the verbal cognition. In the expression of *Ghaṭamānaya*, the nominal stem (*Ghaṭa*) has the suffix of the second case ending which suggests object-hood. This form of the accusative singular is connected with verbal form (*Tiñ*) which suggests the sense of *Si* i.e. second person singular. This knowledge of *Si* is the cause of verbal cognition.²¹

The logicians do not accept the stand of Kaṇḍabhaṭṭa. They argue that the faculty of denotation in a sentence cannot be accepted, because the denotation expressed by the sentence is not known formerly. Thus, the faculty of denotation can never be accepted in a sentence.

Kaṇḍabhaṭṭa does not agree with this argument of the logician. He says that if the faculty of denotation is not accepted in a sentence then it can't be accepted in word also. At this point of discussion, he takes the support of the canon of Vedic Hermeneutics that a word denotes not only its meaning but also its relation with the meanings of the other words in a sentence.²² They present the instance of *Gāmānaya* (bring the cow). In this example, the word *Gām* does not bring the sense of 'a cow' only, but also of the action of bringing. A word, being separated from the sentence has no meaning of its own. This theory of *Mīmāṃsakas* suggests that there is no significance of an isolated word. *Mīmāṃsakas* further say that if the power is considered in the word and not in the relational meaning of the sentence, then it will be like *Kubjaśaktivāda* i.e. 'the theory of lame' since it is not well planned and attention.²³ Kaṇḍabhaṭṭa

²⁰ अन्यथा 'घटः कर्मत्वमानयनं कृतिः' इत्यदौ तादृशव्युत्पत्तिरहितस्यापि बोधप्रसङ्गः । *VBS*, p. 417

²¹ तत्रैव घटकर्मकानयनमिति बोधे घटार्थप्रातिपदिकोत्तरं कर्मत्ववाचकविभक्तेस्ततो धातोस्तत आख्यातस्य समभिव्याहारः कारणमिति । *VBS*

²² Such is the view of *Prābhākara* school of *Mīmāṃsā* - पदानामेवान्वितपदार्थे शक्तिः । *Ibid*

²³ यदि च पदशक्तिः पदार्थांशे ज्ञाता, अन्वयांशे चाज्ञातोपयुज्यत इति कुब्जशक्तिवादः । *Ibid*

also opines that the power of denotation, though being unknown, resides in the sentence only. Besides this, *Mīmāṃsakas* take the behavior of elders as one of the means to know the denotation of word. Its example is *Gāmānaya* (bring the cow). When a grandfather asks his son to bring the cow, the son does accordingly. This act of bringing the cow is observed by the grandson. He learns about the cow from the behavior of his elders. He takes the meaning as a whole and not individually through each and every word. After a while he hears a similar kind of expression in *Aśvamānaya* (bring the horse). When a child compares both the sentences, he finds that latter portion i.e. ‘*ānaya*’ is common in both expressions. From this he concludes that the ‘*ānaya*’ means to bring something. Thus, a child learns the meaning of the words by the process of assimilation and elimination. At this point of discussion, Kaṇḍabhaṭṭa states that at first the denotation of a sentence as a whole is expressed by the faculty of denotation residing in the sentence then the denotation of words is known by the mental process of assimilation and elimination.²⁴

The opponent argues that both word and sentence do not have any power of denotation. Word is combination of two or more letters. When the first letter is uttered, the second does not exist when the second is uttered, the first doesn’t exist. They never take place simultaneously. The same is the case with the sentence. The sentence is a combination of words which also do not occur simultaneously.

Kaṇḍabhaṭṭa refutes this argument. He says as soon as the second letter is pronounced, the impression of the preceding letter is recollected and combined into the cognition of the succeeding letter. This process goes on till utterance of the last letter. In this way, the word, constituted by the sequence of two or more

²⁴ वस्तुतस्तु समुदितार्थे विशिष्टवाक्यस्यैव प्रथमं तद्ग्रहः । आवापोद्वाभ्यां परं प्रत्येकं तद्ग्रह इति बोध्यम् ।
Ibid, p. 420

letters, denotes the meaning. Similarly, the sentence which is constituted by one or more words can be understood to convey the sense of a whole.

Akhaṇḍapadasphoṭa and Akhaṇḍavākyasphoṭa

The grammarians assert that neither the word nor the sentence has any division. Moreover, it is also stated that words do not have any metaphysical existence. Bhartṛhari openly declares that the word is not comprised of letters.

पदभेदेऽपि वर्णानामेकत्वं न निवर्तते ।

वाक्येषु पदमेकं च भिन्नेष्वप्युपलभ्यते ॥ १.७२ ॥

न वर्णव्यतिरेकेण पदमन्यत्र विद्यते ।

वाक्यं वर्णपदाभ्यां च व्यतिरिक्तं न किञ्चन ॥ १.७३ ॥²⁵

He also suggests that the division of stem and suffix is done for the practical purpose only; it does not exist in reality.²⁶

The words and the sentence are inseparable and cannot be taken as different from letters because there is no evidence to postulate the infinity of letters. The naming of the letter as ‘*k*’ or ‘*g*’, etc. happens just by supposing diversity in the delimiting property of production of different letters residing in the conjunction. The wind generally accepted as giving rise to different sound. He says that it is conjugation of air with a particular vocal organ which brings into existence the auditory perception of a particular letter.²⁷ The listener identifies a particular letter such as *Kakāra*, etc. and not the movement of the inner vocal organ. Therefore, the letters which are actually heard should be accepted as denotative.

²⁵ Bhartrhari, *op cit*, p. 31

²⁶ उपायाः शिक्षमाणानां बालानामपलापनाः । असत्ये वर्त्मनि स्थित्वा ततः सत्यं समीहते ॥२.२३८॥ *Ibid*, p.136

²⁷ तत्तत्त्वर्णोत्पादकत्वेनाभिमतवायुसंयोगनिष्ठं तत्तत्त्वर्णजनकतायाः, व्यञ्जकताया वाऽवच्छेदकं वैजात्यमादायैव ककारो गकार इत्यादि प्रतीतिवैलक्षण्यसम्भवात् । VBS, p. 422

If not so then there won't be any comprehension of a word or a sentence or a letter as an inseparable entity. Letters are uttered differently by different speakers but they remain the same. Subsequently the letter like *g* is accepted as a single inseparable entity. A word can never be divided into either a stem or a suffix. Thus, being a partless, it expresses a single meaning. In the same manner, the cognition of a sentence should be understood. A sentence should be regarded as an inseparable unit of the comprehension. In this way, Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa has advocated the theory of *sphoṭa* with reference to various parts of a sentence. On this basis, he also argues that letters are also to be taken in denotative since *sphoṭa* is not cognized as a different entity from it.

Mīmāṃsākas argue that if a word is accepted as an inseparable entity, then the science of grammar would be of no use since the study of the stem and suffix is the central idea of grammar.

Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa rejoins by stating the *Upaniṣadic* passage. The *Bhṛguvallī* (III) of the *Taittirīyopaniṣad* narrates the discussion of Bhṛgu and his father on the *Ānandatattva*. Bhṛgu wanted to know about the *Brahman*. So he approached his father. His father did not teach him in a straight way. Initially, he preached him about *Anna* as *Brahman*. But Bhṛgu found it out perishable by nature. So he inquired more about the *Brahman*. Next time his father preached him about *Prāṇa* as *Brahman*. He also found it destructive by nature. He again asked about Ultimate Reality. In the same way he went on preaching about *Manah*, then about *Vijñāna* and then finally about the *Ānanda*.²⁸

By presenting this example, Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa wants to say that the Ultimate Reality is *Brahman* which is pure bliss. But its knowledge is not obtained directly. The father of Bhṛgu talks about the four sheaths in the initial stage and then finally comprehends him the concept of the Bliss. Similarly, the science

²⁸ *Eight Upaniṣads* Vol. 1, pp. 390-417

of grammar ultimately wants to teach about the *Sphoṭa* but in the initial stage, the analysis of stem and suffix is given just as means for knowing the *Sphoṭa*.

Mīmāṃsākas do not accept this explanation of Kaṇḍabhaṭṭa. They argue that science of grammar cannot be taken as the means of the knowledge of *Sphoṭa* since it is perceived through the ordinary observation.

Kaṇḍabhaṭṭa gives two examples to refute the view of the opponent.²⁹ The first example is given from the *Mīmāṃsādarśana*. According to their theory the recollection of the sacrificial materials can be done only through the help of *Mantras* e.g. the mantra - *Imāmagr̥bhñan raśanāmṛtasya* (they grasp the rein of the truth) and *Uruprathā uru prathasva* (spread the oblation wide) are intentionally placed to remind the priest of the rite of grasping the rein of the horse and of the rite of the spreading the oblation widely. But this recollection can be done in other way also. If any other means is used to generate the recollection of the sacrificial materials, then it will not help in producing the unseen result (*Apūrvā*). Thus, there is a distinct feature for the recollection of the sacrificial materials.

Kaṇḍabhaṭṭa gives the second example from *Vedānta*. He argues that the knowledge of *Brahman* is possible without practising the methods instructed by the Vedāntic text just as the Listening (*Śravaṇa*), Contemplation (*Manana*) and Meditation (*Nididhyāsaṇa*) of the *Vedic* text. But, the knowledge of *Brahman* attained through the method of *Vedānta* is marked with distinction. Similarly, the knowledge of *Sphoṭa* attained through method of the science of grammar, has distinctive feature than that is produced through auditory perception.³⁰ Therefore, the science of grammar should be regarded as a special means for the perception of *Sphoṭa*.

²⁹ मन्त्रजन्यमिवार्थस्मरणे । वेदान्तजन्यमिव ब्रह्मज्ञाने । VBS, p. 427

³⁰ व्याकरणाभ्यासजन्यज्ञाने वैजात्यं कल्प्यते । Ibid, p. 430

The Vedic Hermeneutics does not accept the argument of Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa that science of grammar is special means for the knowing of the Ultimate Reality. For, if it represents the study of stem and suffix which are unreal by nature, then how these unreal objects lead to the knowledge of Ultimate Reality?

Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa replies the opponent by presenting the maxim of *Rekhā-gavaya*. The *Gavaya* (an ox) seen in the picture is not real, but it provides the real knowledge a *Gavaya*. Similarly, the *Varṇasphoṭa* and *Padasphoṭa* are not real but are parts of a sentence. They enable a person to have a real knowledge of *Vākyasphoṭa*. He further argues that the knowledge of *Sphoṭa* is necessary for the purification of the body as the sacrificial rites required for the purification of the heart. The knowledge of *Sphoṭa* whether direct or indirect leads to the heaven, liberation.³¹ Bhartṛhari also opines that the science of grammar is the path to salvation. It is a remedy for the impurities of speech. It is the holiest and brightest of all sciences. It is a first step of ladle for attainment of liberation. It is the straight and the royal path to attain salvation.

तद्-द्वारमपवर्गस्य वाङ्मूलानां चिकित्सितम् ।

पवित्रं सर्वविद्यानामधिविद्यं प्रकाशते ॥ १.१४ ॥

इदमाद्यं पदस्थानं सिद्धिसोपानपर्वणाम् ।

इयं सा मोक्षमाणानमजिह्वा राजपद्धतिः ॥ १.१६ ॥³²

Jātisphoṭa

The term *Jātisphoṭa* belongs to *Varṇasphoṭa*, *Padasphoṭa* and *Vākyasphoṭa*. Mīmāṃsakas take letter as imperishable and its varieties such as acute, grave

³¹ तस्य च ज्ञानस्य यज्ञादीनामन्तःकरणशुद्धाविव शरीरादिशुद्धावुपयोगः, साक्षात्परम्परया वा स्वर्गमोक्षादिहेतुत्वञ्च । *Ibid*, p. 432

³² Bhartṛhari, *op cit*, p. 8

and circumflex belongs to the sound which produces air-waves. This can be illustrated when a person hears two different pronunciations of the same letter like *G* and *Gakāra*, he identifies the common letter (i.e *G*). If this view of Mīmāṃsakas is accepted then the expression like *Yo'yam Gakārah śrutah So'yam Hakārah* (the letter *H* is same as letter *G* which is heard), because the *Sphoṭa* manifested by both the letters is same. So, the expression *Yo'yam Gakāro'yam Na Hakārah* (the letter *H* is different from the letter *G*) is wrong. In order to avoid this fault, the opponent assumes that the *Gatva* which lies in *Sphoṭa* is identical with *Gakāra* because letters are eternal and their variations are invalid. Therefore, there is no stand to assume *Sphoṭa* as a separate entity over and above the letters; otherwise it would lead to the fault of prolixity. The opponent puts another argument that residence of *Gakāra*, etc. in the conjugation of air should be accepted. The difference in the conjugation of air is liable for the difference in the letters.

Kaṇḍabhaṭṭa does not accept this argument. He says that the conjugation of air being internal thing is not perceptible and so the different letters residing in it will also become imperceptible.

Mīmāṃsakas again try to defend their view by presenting example. They say that air can be taken as imperceptible, but the tactile quality which resides in it is perceived by its respective sense-organ. In the same way, the conjugation of air being imperceptible, the different letters can also be cognized by the auditory sense-organ. So, there is no need to assume *Sphoṭa* in the letters for their cognition. They hold the opinion that only the letters exist which are not denotative. If they are accepted as denotative then one needs to assume as many denotations as the number of letters existing in the word. This results into the fault of prolixity. They also believe that the word denotes the universal aspect

which represents the class of individuals.³³ Similarly the denotative function can be attributed to the universal aspect of the word which resides in the letter. In the expression *Idim Haripam*, the word *Hari* presents the class of the different utterances of the word. In this, the universal aspect should be accepted to be as an interpretative element of the word. In the case of the words having similar appearance like *Sarah*, *Rasah*, etc. different denotations are expressed due to the difference in the sequence of the letters.

Kaundabhaṭṭa argues that if it is accepted that the universal aspect lies in each letter, then each letter would itself be responsible for conveying the meaning separately. Hence, it is better to accept that letters are the means of revealing the *Sphoṭa*. Moreover, they should not be taken just as the meaning-bearing units in the language. Kaundabhaṭṭa mentions two aspects of every object *viz.* real (i.e. the universal aspect) and the unreal (i.e. the individual aspect).

सत्यासत्यौ तु यौ भागौ प्रतिभावं व्यवस्थितौ ।

सत्यं यत्तत्र सा जातिरसत्या व्यक्तयो मताः ॥

Brahman qualified by different individuals is *Jāti*. When it is associated with the unreal variegated elements, it is expressed by the word *Dravya*. It manifests itself through medium of different words. *Sphoṭa* is the process of communication which remains unbroken even when a word or a sentence is uttered by several speakers at several occasions in different tones. Thus, the *Sphoṭa* is the ultimate and the only entity which denotes the sense as a whole without any division.

In the present chapter, I explicated the essence of the arguments of Kaundabhaṭṭa with regard to doctrine of *Sphoṭa*. I also tried to clarify the view points of its opponents with the help of various illustrative examples. The

³³ आकृत्यधिकरणन्यायेन जातेरेव वाच्यत्ववद्वाचकस्यापि युक्तत्वाच्च । VBS, p. 435

varieties of *Sphoṭa*, the logic behind accepting this theory, arguments and counter-arguments of Kaṇḍabhaṭṭa and the philosophy of grammar associated with this theory that has been mainly propounded by great grammarian-philosopher Bhartṛhari, is discussed in brief. This will suffice for clear understanding the thoughts of Kaṇḍabhaṭṭa who has devoted an exclusive chapter on this theory.