

## NATURE OF SENTENCE-BHARTṚHARI'S VIEW

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### Introduction

The major text on semantics and Philosophy of grammar in the Pāṇinian school is Bhartrhari's Vākyapadīya. Bhartrhari composed Vākyapadīya in verses (kārikā) and divided in to three parts (kāṇḍa): the Brahmakāṇḍa also called the Agama samuccaya ('compendium of traditional teaching'), the Vākyakāṇḍa, and the Padakāṇḍa or Prakīṃḥakāṇḍa ('miscellaneous part'). In the second kāṇḍa of the Vākyapadīya Bhartrhari discussed the nature of sentence, its meaning, the relation between a sentence and its meaning and the causal aggregate that leads to the cognition of the sentence- meaning etc.

### Nature of Sentence - Different views.

A sentence is admitted to be a group of words. Gautama in his Nyāyasūtra defines śabda or verbal testimony as- 'āptōpadēśaḥ śabdaḥ'<sup>1</sup>. Vātsyāyana in his commentary on the Nyāyasūtra<sup>2</sup> states that a sentence consists of several units in the form of two or more words. Gaṅgeśa too in his Tattvacintāmaṇi considers the group of words to be a sentence<sup>3</sup>. Like the Nayyāyikās, generally, Mīmāṃsakā's accept that the group of articulate alphabetic phonemes is a word and the group of words is a sentence. But they maintain that the articulate phonemes are eternal, while the Nayyāyikās treat them as non-eternal. Śābara in his commentary on the aphorism of Jaimini says that the words which will serve a unitary purpose constitute one sentence<sup>4</sup>. From this it is clear that according to Śābara a sentence is a group of words. Kumārila too subscribes to the above view.

The Advaitin's and others reject the doctrine of Sphōṭa and admit that the letters which are the objects of recollection that results from the latent impressions born out of the cognition of each letter is the word or the sentence<sup>5</sup>. The Viśiṣṭādvaitins too accept that the

letters manifested in a single cognition constitute a word and the words manifested in a single cognition constitute a sentence. Vēdāntadēśika in his *Tattvamuktākālāpa* and in his commentary *Sarvārthasiddhi* thereon sets forth this view<sup>6</sup>. The Dvaitin's too subscribe to the view that letters constitute a word and the words constitute a sentence<sup>7</sup>. The final conclusion of the Grammarians is that an utterable linguistic unit which is indivisible is the sentence. The modern view about sentence is that, because a linguistic communication is primarily based on the meaning conveyed by a sentence, therefore it is the basic unit of the language, and words have no independent status and their meaning is determined by the position they held in the sentence.

#### **The Nature of sentence- Bhartṛhari's view.**

In the *Vākyapadīya*, Bhartṛhari makes a distinction between two types of meaningful unit of language: the word and the sentence. According to Bhartṛhari it is the sentence which is real as an indivisible unit; the words are unreal appearances. So both syntax and semantics of words are unreal. As words are unreal, Bhartṛhari cannot also hold that words are semantically related to objects. Words are useful fictions; but they are fictions. Any fictitious entity cannot be related to objects which are empirically real. Here Bhartṛhari says "the indivisible word expressing the meaning arises from [a certain number of] individual [phonemes]. Therefore the word [as an indivisible unit-śabda] whose nature is the meaningfulness goes to the state of being mixed together [with the individual phonemes as component parts of an audible word]."<sup>8</sup>

Another type of meaningful unit of language is the sentence. According to Bhartṛhari, the sentence would be the primary unit of language. He examines language always from the point of view of meaningfulness. The sentence is the primary meaningful unit; and the words as meaningful units, extracted from the sentence analytically, are only fictional parts. We understand the meaning as a single whole immediately after the speaker's utterance of a sentence. The meaning, in this case, is not brought forth by relating with each other the different meanings of individual words articulated one by one according to the arrangement of things in the external world.

Bhartrhari in his Vākyapadīya has set forth eight views regarding the nature of a sentence; and, they are as follows:

“ākhyātaśabdaḥ saṅghātaḥ jātiḥ sā ghātavartinī  
ēkō’navayavaḥ śabdaḥ kramō buddhyanusamḥṛtiḥ  
padamādyam pṛthak sarvam padam sākāṅkṣamityapi  
vākyam prati matirbhinnā bahudhā nyāyavādinām.”<sup>9</sup>

1. A word having a verbal suffix at its end is a sentence. (ākhyātaśabdaḥ)

According to this view certain cases where there arises a verbal cognition from the mere use of a verb<sup>10</sup>. For example the use of the word “shut”. Here, even without the noun expressive of the notion of a case (kāraṇa), there arises the cognition of the sentence -meaning, viz, shut the door. This does not mean that only the single word with a verbal suffix is a sentence, because that would contradict the common experience of viewing a sentence as the group of words terminating in either sup or tin.

2. A group of words is a sentence. (Saṅghātaḥ)

In this view the mere word “shut” is not a sentence. But there is the importation of the word ‘door’ and it is the group of these two words that must be viewed as a sentence.<sup>11</sup>

3. The universal, present in words is a sentence. (Saṅghātavartinī jātiḥ)

According to this view there is a universal or generic feature in a group of words; and it is a sentence significative of the sentence-meaning.<sup>12</sup>

4. An indivisible word is a sentence. (ēkō’navayavaḥ śabdaḥ)

In this view a sentence is one unit devoid of parts. And letters or words have no real existence therein.<sup>13</sup>

5. The order of words is a sentence. (Kramaḥ)

In this view, the letter is divisible and is generated by the group of words. The words in succession constitute a sentence.<sup>14</sup>

6. The imaginary aggregate of words in the intellect is a sentence. (Buddhyanusamḥṛtiḥ)

According to this view the division of words is only a conceptual construction in our intellect<sup>15</sup>. The real sentence is undivided and does not have words in it. The sentence as structured exists only in our minds.

7. The first word is a sentence. (ādyah padam)

In this view a sentence is divisible and is generated by a group of words. And the first word in the group is the sentence<sup>16</sup>. The other words of the group are helpful in identifying the significative relation of the first word to its meaning. For example, the expression 'sākṣāt kriyatē'. Here the word sākṣāt conveys the meaning of perceptual knowledge. And the word kriyatē is only indicative of the significative relation of the word sākṣāt to its meaning.

8. Each word having syntactic expectancy with the other word constitutes a sentence. (Pṛthak sarvaḥ padaḥ sākāṅ'kṣam)

According to this view a group of words each one dependent upon the other word for its meaning is a sentence.<sup>17</sup>

We discussed above Bhartṛhari's eight definitions of sentence. Of the eight definitions, those described under the heads 3rd, 4th and 6th treat a sentence as an indivisible unit; and those described under the heads 1st, 2nd, 5th, 7th and 8th as a divisible one. The indivisible sentence and its equally indivisible meaning are respectively called Pratibhā.

Bhartṛhari introduced the concept of Pratibhā (intuition) with a view to maintaining the idea that the sentence is an indivisible linguistic unit. Dr.K. Kunjunni Raja says that the meaning of a sentence is made up of the individual word-meanings and their mutual relation<sup>18</sup>. According to anvitābhīdhāna theory, both the individual word-meanings and their mutual relation are conveyed by the words themselves; but according to the abhihitānvaya theory, the words convey only the individual word-meanings; the mutual relation is conveyed by the word-meanings, and not by the words. The commonplace statement in modern linguistics that the sentence is the unit of speech is comparable to the anvitābhīdhāna theory.

According to Bhartṛhari words have no reality of their own. The entire sentence is to be taken as an indivisible unit; and its meaning

is also an instantaneous flash of insight (Pratibhā), or intuition, which has no parts. It is because of the indivisibility of Pratibhā, which the meaning of a sentence is, that the grammarians reject the abhihitānvaya and anvitābhidhāna theories of verbal comprehension, in both of which the meaning of individual words have an absolute reality. Bhartrhari says- the sentence - meaning is not only indivisible; it is also indefinable. Even when we have understood the meaning of a sentence, we cannot explain to another the nature of this understanding. In the second kāṇḍa of Vākyapadīya, Bhartrhari gives the following explanation:

Pratibhā cannot be explained (concretely) to others in the form 'this is that'. Though Pratibhā is accepted in common as being realized in every person, it is not defined even by its author.

Pratibhā, understood incorrectly, seems to make a combination of the meanings (of individual words).

Pratibhā, which appears to have all shapes (of the things denoted by the individual words), acts as object (of the cognition).

When we understand what to do, we cannot go beyond (the knowledge of) Pratibhā, that is either caused immediately by the language or formed according to the impression of regular practice (in the previous lives as well as the present life).

The whole world accepts Pratibhā as a reliable means for action (in everyday life). Even animals begin their activities by its force.<sup>19</sup>

A sentence produces an urge to do something, rather than creating an image of something in the mind; this urge varies with each individual and with each sentence. Punyarāja goes one step forward and says that even a man who does not know the exact meaning of words, feels an urge to do something, when he hears a sentence addressed to him. Punyarāja compares this intuition to the conscience of good people which is able to decide what is right and what is wrong quite instinctively. He quotes Kalidasa's famous verse:

“Satām hi sandēhapadēṣu vastuṣu  
pramāṇamantahkaraṇapravṛttayah”.

Bhartrhari treats Pratibhā as the same type of cognition as extraordinary perceptions. Aklujkar says “It is clearly stated in Trikāṇḍi

2.117 that Pratibhā arises out of all kinds of linguistic expressions, which implies that it does not depend exclusively on means of any special kind. There are also several other indications in the Trikāndi to the effect that, in the philosophy of Bhartṛhari, the domain of Pratibhā is not concomitant with the domain of the extraordinary. <sup>620</sup>

**Conclusion:**

Bhartṛhari grants primacy to the sentence as a unit of communication, it is nevertheless a fact that speakers- whether or not they are grammarians-also accept the reality of lower units such as bases, affixes and single sounds. In fact the Pratibhā and extraordinary perceptions share the characteristics regarding the process of cognition. The meaning of the word is extracted analytically from the meaning of the sentence. Therefore the understanding of the meaning of the word is a false cognition caused by the listener's illusion for Bhartṛhari. According to Bhartṛhari the sentence represents wholeness and reality. Pratibhā is the essential cognition of the world as a whole. In short, Pratibhā is the internal cognition of the world as a whole, that is to say the sentence as a meaningful unit.

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