

## **LANGUAGE, THOUGHT AND COMMUNICATION**

### **An Appraisal of Bhartṛhari's Theory of Language.**

The basic feature of 20th century philosophy is the gradual dominance of the problem of language and meaning. Different facets of language in its relation to facts, meaning, convention, syntax, pragmatics have been discussed and debated in the philosophical literature of our times. This trend in philosophy is still going strong. However, it is interesting to note that approximately in 450 A. D., an Indian philosopher Bhartṛhari advanced a very comprehensive theory of language. He belonged to the Indian school of thought, which is known as the school of grammar. But this school of thought did not discuss grammar as the primary subject matter, their chief concern was the philosophy of language. Bhartṛhari, as is evident from his treatise on language — *Vākyapadīyam*, delved deep into the problem of language to unfold its multiple nuances. His theory of *śphoṭa* is one of the oldest theories of meaning; yet its importance in the contemporary philosophic background, in no way, appears outdated and obsolete.

The term 'language', as the modern philosophers understand it, stands not only for the uttered sounds or a collection of written words guided by certain grammatical rules and conventions, but also is conceived essentially as a vehicle of human communication. Once the communicative role of language is accepted certain crucial questions automatically arise, such as — Does the task of the philosopher end with an analysis of language as it is used or should he go beyond the level of uttered language to

understand how the speech is understood? Whether the meanings of the utterances are conveyed from the speaker to the hearer independent of any logical ground of communication? If not, which concept can serve as the logical ground of communication? It is a common experience that sometimes we fail to communicate what we intend to speak and sometimes we fail to communicate what the utterer wants to convey through his utterance. In such cases communication fails. This shows that language as a tool of communication points to certain residual concepts which are to be explained if we are to view language as a communicative apparatus. Bhartṛhari's theory has a special appeal in the sense that he anticipated these issues and made an elaborate discussion on these problems. He examines language in its two dimensions – as the uttered speech and as the bearer of meaning. His main problem is : how the meaning is communicated. So he transgresses the level of uttered language to find its connection with thought and ultimately its connection with the universal ground of meaning. In this paper, I intend to explore Bhartṛhari's line of analysis and the way he explains the concepts that are involved in the communicative aspect of language. Besides, I venture to compare notes with some of the modern views regarding this line of analysis with special reference to Frege<sup>1</sup> and Davidson<sup>2</sup>. I choose to discuss Frege and Davidson in this paper because Frege's notion of 'Thought' and Davidson's notion of 'Interpretation' seem to point to the same direction as Bhartṛhari has been trying to locate in his notion of *sphoṭa*.

Before we go on with our task of examining the language – thought relation and the logical ground of communication as propounded by Bhartṛhari, I deem it proper to say a few words about the concept of *śabda*. This term is used profusely in the Indian philosophy of language. But the term has a special significance in case of Bhartṛhari's philosophy, for *śabda* is not only

the key concept of his epistemology but also of his metaphysics. *Śabda* in its ordinary sense implies sound, but philosophically the term implies the sound which can be used as a symbol for the expression of meaning. The essential nature of *śabda* lies in its significative power. For Bhartṛhari,<sup>2</sup> the term has still deeper significance. *Śabda* does not mean for him just a collection of uttered sounds accompanied by a meaning; it also stands for the universal unit of speech and meaning, which is manifested through the uttered sounds. In the opening chapter of the *Vākyapadīyam* Bhartṛhari discusses the nature of *śabda* by recognising two elements in each significant word<sup>3</sup>, i.e., the element of sound and the element of logos or the real word which possesses significance of its own. The logos or the real word (in modern idiom we may also call it the 'content' of utterances) is revealed by the uttered sounds *dhvani*. This real word is ever present in our thought and as such cannot be apprehended unless it is conveyed by appropriate sounds. The *śabda* which Bhartṛhari identifies with *sphoṭa* is the ultimate ground of meaning and can be manifested through different forms of uttered sounds. The variations in language and the variations in speaker's intonations, accents and pitch do not affect the 'meaning' or the 'real word'. So Bhartṛhari's philosophy of language deals with the analysis of uttered sounds along with the role of grammar, convention, uses of language in this level of language, as well as the communicative power of language and the logical conceptions involved in the process of communication.

Bhartṛhari undertakes an triadic analysis of meaning where he makes a distinction between the language, referents and thought, which in actual practice we often obliterate. For him the study of meaning involves the interrelationship between the uttered words and thoughts on the one hand and the interrelationship between the words and the referents on the other. It

should be noted here that in the pre-Wittgensteinian and Wittgensteinian era the philosophers have focussed too much attention on the language-referent relationship. This is the reason why some of the philosophers viewed the concept of 'thought' and the terms associated with it as smacking of some sort of psychologism. The concepts like 'thought', 'idea', 'understanding' are warded off either as verbal dispositions or else have been interpreted as non-significant. However, in the last two decades philosophers have started taking interest in language-thought relationship, as is evident from the writings of Quine, Davidson, Guttentplan and others. Bhartṛhari, surprisingly enough, took this quite seriously and made interesting contributions to this subject matter. He highlights that if meaning is understood to be communicable then thought must be taken as significant phase of the process of communication.

Bhartṛhari emphatically makes it clear that "The meaning of an utterance is that which is conveyed to the listener by uttering it; there is no other definition of meaning" (*Vākyapadīyam*-II-328).

This definition is the corner-stone of his philosophy of language. But this process of uttering the sentence and conveying the meaning to the listener is not that simply explainable. One of the peculiarities of the uttered speech is that it is not presented as a whole. We utter word : syllable by syllable and each syllable is no more heard the moment the next is uttered. So, if language is to be taken as a vehicle of communication then the explanation of meaning in terms of speaker, hearer, intention and belief of the speaker, the context of utterance, etc., are not enough. In fact, Bhartṛhari discusses all these factors while analysing the empirical level of language. But he shows that there is a need for explorations into the depth analysis of communicability,

which can be done by enumerating the connections between the uttered sentences and thought and further by showing their connection with the ultimate unity of meaningfulness. So 'thought' is to be presupposed as a relevant phase of understanding the language. The unity of uttered words and ascription of meaning to them involves further unification on the level of thought. Of course, it may well be argued that what Bhartṛhari is offering is a psychological process through which the succession of uttered letters are united. But Bhartṛhari does not analyse thought in terms of memories, ideas and associations. He insists that meaning is not conveyed from the speaker to the hearer, rather the spoken words serve only as stimulus to uncover or reveal the meaning which is already conceptually existent in the mind of the hearer<sup>4</sup>. Sometimes though the full sentence is not uttered, the hearer understands what the utterer wants to convey. So, Bhartṛhari is not analysing the psychological process of uniting the letters through words or words through sentences. Nor does he interpret 'thought' in terms of ideas, for he explains communication in terms of sharing the common content of meaning both by the speaker and the hearer.

Bhartṛhari shows that thought is a definite phase involved in the logical explanation of the communicability of language. Language needs thought and thought needs language. He says: "There is no thought or concepts without the operation of words; all cognition is shot through and through by words; all cognition is illuminated through words" (*V. P. I.* 114). Again he emphasizes, we cannot be aware of anything if we take out the name. If name or word is extracted from the cognition, it ceases to be a cognition since it lacks illumination and consequently its knowledge remains latent and inert. (*V. P. I.* 125). So our thought and conceptionalization lacks significance without the terms expressive thereof. Thought presupposes language. What-

ever is conceivable is nameable and describable, and whatever is not describable in terms of words is not thinkable. It may be the case that we may sometimes grope for the right word, yet there cannot be any thought totally devoid of linguistic expressibility.

Some traditional Indian philosophers have raised objections to this sort of interpretation of knowledge and thought. Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, a Nyāya philosopher, in his book *Nyāya Mañjari*, argues that there can be thought as well as cognition without words and names. According to him we first of all cognize objects, then attach names to it. Prof. G.N. Shastri provides an answer for such a criticism by pointing out that this would lead to an infinite regress in an attempt to explain why a particular word should be used in response to a particular object<sup>6</sup>. Moreover, it is evident that Jayanta Bhaṭṭa's analysis, in this case, is more about the temporal sequence of cognition than the logical sequence of cognition. It has also been argued by Jayanta Bhaṭṭa that if thought is to be interpreted in terms of language then a child who does not know the language cannot think. But Bhartṛhari's answer would be that a child does not think about things; he is just aware of them and bare awareness is not thought. Moreover, it may as well be argued that for Bhartṛhari thought does not mean actual thinking but rather implies the linguistic potency.

If thought is interpreted in terms of linguistic expressibility, the immediate conclusion may be that 'thought' does not have conceptual autonomy and it is just equivalent to "speech-disposition" as it has been put forward by Willfrid Sellars<sup>7</sup>. Bhartṛhari, however, does not go to this extent in his interpretation. According to him uttered speech and thought are only inter-dependent stages of the same process. Speech principle, as Bhartṛhari states, manifests itself in three levels — they are *Vaikhari*,

*Madhyamā* and *Paśyānti. Vaikhāra* is the actual utterance, expressing the intention of the speakers and understood by the heart. *Madhyamā* is mental and conceptual in nature. It represents the manifestation of meaning-essence on the level of thought. All the elements linguistically relevant to the uttered speech are present in this stage in the latent form. The same meaning is revealed by different forms of *Madhyamā* depending on the language adopted. These two stages correspond to the two aspects of linguistic situation i.e., *Vaikṛta dhvani* (the individual utterances in purely phonetic terms) and *Prākṛta dhvani* (the phonological structure, the sound pattern of the norm). The *Vaikṛta dhvani* is the actually spoken language accompanied by the variations in intonations, accent and pitch etc., whereas *Prākṛta dhvani* is marked by the absence of all non-linguistic personal variations. However, both the speaker and the hearer are conscious of the normal phonological structure. The time sequence which is the characteristic of the uttered speech is present at this stage. It is well-known that according to Bhartṛhari the linguistic communication is made possible because of the identical meaning essence or *sphoṭa*. The meaning-essence is the same though the language adopted for its communication may vary. The *Prākṛta* and the *Vaikṛta dhvanis* are the external aspects of language, and the internal aspect, which is directly attached to meaning, is *sphoṭa*. This is the sequenceless, partless integral linguistic symbol which is manifested through sequential utterances along with rules of convention, parts of speech etc. at the *Madhyamā* stage and *Vaikhāra* stage. This accounts for the possibility of translation of one language into another language without the alteration of meaning. *Sphoṭa* or the universal meaning essence is the same but languages may be different. (V. P. I. 95). According to Bhartṛhari, speech and thought are only two aspects of the same speech principle (V. P. II. 31). He all along highlights that sentence is the fundamental linguistic fact,

words or concatenation of words does not give us meaning in true sense of the term. The division into words and word meanings is only useful means in the study of language. *Paśyānti* is the stage of grasping the unity in meaning of the sentences.

Our brief discussions on the nature of *Vaikhārī* and *Madhyamā* and the aspects of language known as *vaikṛta dhvani* and *prākṛta dhvani* reveal that speech and thought are not conceptually reducible to one another. There is no scope for dismissing thought as "verbal disposition". Similarly spoken language is also not a copy of our thought. One and the same thought can be expressed in different forms even in one and the same language.

The interdependence of thought and language and their further reference to the ultimate ground of meaning brings us to the central concept of Bhartṛhari's philosophy, viz., *sphoṭa*. This is *śabda* in the true sense of the term. *Sphoṭa* is a term which cannot be accurately translated into English. It has been translated as "meaning essence" or "word-essence"<sup>7</sup>, implicit speech element<sup>8</sup>, 'integral linguistic symbol'.<sup>9</sup> Prof. G. N. Shastri, however, is of the opinion that the Greek conception of *logos* can best convey the meaning of the term *sphoṭa*. According to him "The fact that *logos* stands for an idea as well as a word wonderfully approximates to the concept of *sphoṭa*".<sup>10</sup> *Sphoṭa* comes from the root *sphut* which can be translated as 'bursting-forth'. Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa in the *sphoṭavāda* describes *sphoṭa* as that from which meaning bursts forth and also as an entity which is manifested by spoken letters. Philosophically, *sphoṭa* is the symbol standing for the unity of spoken syllable and conveyed meaning. Meaning is clearly distinguished on the one hand from the words and on the other from the denoted objects. *Sphoṭa* stands for the universal meaning essence shared both by the speaker and the hearer so that the communication



of verbal manifestation can be possible. This linguistic potency and the meaning-essence remains unaffected by the peculiarities of the spoken language. It is grasped both by the speaker and the hearer. So though the uttered sounds die after they are pronounced the whole sense of the sentence is conveyed by the speaker and understood by the hearer. Often in the books on Indian philosophy the concept of *śabda* is unnecessarily mystified, and its epistemic significance is overshadowed by the metaphysical interpretation of the term.

## II

On the background of one of the oldest theories of meaning and language, outlined briefly above, it will be quite interesting to compare notes with the views advanced by two modern thinkers, Frege and Davidson. I discuss their view-points with reference to two of their papers – "Thought – A Logical Inquiry" by Frege and "Thought and Talk" by Davidson. It is to be noted that the thought-language issue, in recent times, has gained tremendous importance. Largely as a result of Frege's work it has been brought to the light that some concepts which are necessary to describe language are also an integral part of the description of the mental attitudes. Frege's most significant discovery in the field of philosophy of language is the distinction between the sense and reference. In addition to the name and reference, he adds a third element which he calls the *sense*, which implies the meaning or the descriptive content of the word. So he undertakes a triadic analysis of language in terms of words, referents and sense. This is very akin to Bhartṛhari's analysis of language. Frege extends this distinction from the singular and referring expressions to the predicate expressions and to the whole of sentence. He points out that sentence (which can, at least, be true or false) expresses a *thought*. Frege, in his paper, "The Thought – A Logical Inquiry"

makes a detailed analysis of the concept of 'thought'. He says : "I call a thought something for which the question of truth arises. So I ascribe what is false to a thought as much as what is true. So I can say : *thought* is the sense of the sentence without wishing to say as well that the sense of every sentence is a thought. The thought, in itself immaterial, clothes itself in the material garment of a sentence and thereby becomes comprehensible to us. We say a sentence expresses a thought".<sup>11</sup>

It may seem that there is striking similarity between the Fregean view of language-thought relation and that of Bhartṛhari's view on this issue. Yet the difference in their approaches to the problem is quite easily detectable. Coming to the points of similarity. We may note that Frege's admission of thought as being immaterial, but comprehensible through the material garment of the uttered speech points to the similar distinction made by Bhartṛhari between *dhvani* (the verbal and empirical manifestation of language) and *śabda* (the unempirical principle of speech). Similarly, while defining thought as immaterial, Frege does not concede to the view that thoughts are subjective 'ideas'. Bhartṛhari also does not interpret *madhyamā vāk* in terms of ideas because he assumes that the intention of the speaker to say something and understanding of the utterance by the hearer is based on the common grasping of the content of speech. But there is a basic difference between Frege's and Bhartṛhari's approach. Frege does not start with the assumption that language is communicative in nature and language can have multiple facets. He takes up the analysis of thought to locate the content of the sentences in order to locate the status of truth. This is evident from his analysis of the phases of thought-language relationship, i. e.,

### 1 Apprehension of a thought – Thinking

2. Recognition of a truth – Judgement

3. Manifestation of judgement – Assertion

Frege makes a distinction between the thought and the assertion of thought. We may however, say that Frege's notion of thought stands for the propositional content, which can be expressed through various sentences and in various languages. So the apprehension of thought may be similar to *paśyanti vāk* of Bhartṛhari. The judgement and assertion may be comparable to the *Madhyamā* and *vaikharī* stages. But this sort of comparison is quite misleading. The concept of truth is the focal point of Frege's thought-language analysis. The conception of 'truth' works as the connecting link between the level of thought and assertion. Consequently, on the level of language assertions occupy the unique position. Frege excludes imperatives, exclamations, poetics, etc., from the scope of thought.<sup>12</sup> At some points he wants to retain the conceptual autonomy of thought, yet it is the logic of assertion and truth-conditions, which becomes the determining factor of meaning.

Davidson in his paper "Thought and Talk" retains Frege's basic insight but avoids Frege's commitments to 'thought' and truth-values as platonic entities. Davidson makes further developments on Fregean thesis by modifying Tarski's notion of truth. Regarding thought-language relation, however, he clearly maintains that thought is not a speech-disposition. According to him: "... the parallel between the structure of thoughts and the structure of sentence provides no argument for the primacy of either, and only a presumption in favour of their interdependence".<sup>13</sup> This is the primary premise from which he concludes that "a creature must be a member of speech community if it is to have a concept of belief. And given the dependence of other attitudes of belief we can say more generally that a creature that can interpret speech can have the concept of thought".<sup>14</sup>

This interpretation, again, seems fairly close to Bhartṛhari's analysis of thought-language relationship. But as we have noticed in case of Frege, Davidson also makes the concept of 'truth' the central point and consequently highlights the role of assertions on the level of language. The conception of truth as the key-concept leads to the importance of assertions on the level of language and of belief on the level of thought. So Davidson describes thought as the inter-locking system of beliefs which can be held to be true, though he admits that thought can be autonomous in respect of belief. He says " ... although most of thoughts are not beliefs, it is a pattern of belief that allows us to identify any thought; analogously, in the case of language, although most utterances are not concerned with truth, it is the pattern of sentences held true that gives sentences their meaning".<sup>16</sup> The attitude of holding a sentence to be true relates belief and interpretation (understanding of an utterance) in a fundamental way.

So, in case of Frege as well as Davidson the notion of truth has a vital role to play in the explanation of meaning. This obsession with truth and assertion may be due to the fact, as it has been observed by Prof. D. M. Datta, that "In English the word knowledge implies a cognition, attended with belief".<sup>16</sup> However, Prof. Datta tries to adjust the notion 'belief' in the typical setting of the Indian philosophy of language. He is of the opinion that "... a *vākya* (sentence) asserting a fact produces a belief in the fact which forms its objective intention (*tātparya*). A *vākya* comes, therefore, to be a source of knowledge about facts".<sup>17</sup> I, on my part, would prefer to disagree with Prof. Datta's interpretation of the role of belief and nature of statements in the Indian philosophy of language. Though there is no unanimity of opinion amongst the Indian philosophical schools of thought regarding the nature of language, source of language,

the unit of meaning, etc., yet *vākya* is not defined in terms of factual and assertive sentences alone. Nor is belief understood in the sense of objective intention. Imperatives, interrogatives, metaphorical and suggestive use of sentences are also analyzed by the Indian philosophers in the context of *vākya*. John Brough correctly observes that in the west "most of the philosophic discussions of meaning confine itself to a relatively small portion language behaviour, namely, statements which describe or report a state of affairs – the propositions of the natural sciences, or more generally, such statements as are traditionally handled by logic".<sup>18</sup> This obsession still continues. Though in recent times some philosophers have devoted their attention to the logic of imperatives, aesthetics and other forms of language but an integrated study of language along with its multiple forms of expression are not quite often undertaken. Wittgenstein in his *Philosophical Investigations* highlights this multiplicity of linguistic uses and reacts against Fregean analysis of language in terms of truth. But his non-essentialistic stance makes him concentrate more on the functions of language than on the explorations into its structural basis. In post-Wittgensteinian era communication-intention theorists, have made further examinations of the basic concepts of communication, viz., the pragmatics of language, the role of intention, belief, the speaker-hearer relationship, etc. But by doing this, they have most often concentrated on the level of uttered speech. Here Bhāṭṛhari seems to score over his modern counterparts in the sense that not only does he examine the language at the level of the uttered speech but probes also deeper to bring out the ultimate logical ground of meaning. He elaborates with equal zest the role of usage, convention, syntax, speaker-hearer relationship, the context of the speech, when he analyses language at the level of the verbal manifestations or speech. But he, at the sametime, is of the opinion that we must go beyond the level of the uttered speech to find out how the

meaning is conveyed inspite of the variations in the form of language adopted and the peculiarities of the speaker. I feel, Frege as well as Davidson are also in search of this ultimate basis of meaningfulness, which I propose to take up in the concluding part of my paper. But for the time being our problem is : can we fit the Indian notion of language in the model of assertions ?

Prof. Datta, in order to show that in the Indian philosophy of language the role of belief and truth are equally accepted, tries to highlight that the two of the conditions of meaningful sentences admitted by some schools of Indian philosophy, at least, refer to belief and truth-conditions. The *Nyāya*, *Mīmāṃsā* and *Vedānta* schools of philosophy accept four conditions for the meaningfulness of a *vākya* (sentence); they are – *Ākāṅkṣā* (syntactic expectancy) *Yogyatā* (logical compatibility), *samīdhi* (phonetic contiguity) and *tātparya* (intention or the general purport of the sentence). According to Datta *tātparya* refers to the belief of the speaker. But *tātparya* is understood in terms of the intention of the speaker. This is an additional qualification of sentences besides *Ākāṅkṣā*, *Yogyatā* and *Samīdhi*. The intention of the speaker, according to some, is to be recognised in order to discern meaning when a sentence is ambiguous. But 'intention' and 'belief' are not identical concepts. They have different implications. So *Sāparya* does not refer to 'belief' at all. Similarly, *Yogyatā*, in the true sense of the term, does not "compatibility with facts", as it has been interpreted by Prof. Datta. Prof. K. K. Raja correctly observes : " It is necessary to distinguish between inconceivable combinations like 'the circular square' and the conceivable combinations which are against our experience such as 'the rabbit's horn'. Strictly speaking it is the inconceivability of mutual association of word-meanings that renders the whole sentence non-sensical; it is not the lack of

correlation with the actual facts, but impossibility of connecting the word-meanings that stands in the way of verbal comprehension" <sup>19</sup>. So, neither the concept of belief is accepted as one of the conditions of knowing the sentence meaning nor the factual statements the compatibility with facts) is the only type of statements. Bhartṛhari does not emphasize the role of belief for he holds that the content of speech is not transmitted by the speaker to the utterer, rather the spoken words serve as a stimulus to reveal the meaning which is already present in the mind of the hearer.

Bhartṛhari strongly holds that it is the sentence which is the primary unit of meaningful speech, and there is certain self-sufficiency and completeness about its expressive capacity when the meaning is understood along with the intention of the speaker. He also is of the opinion that there is a natural fitness (*yogyatā*) between the language and meaning. It is by learning the connection through the convention that we can decipher the meaning connoted by words. But our utterances as such have a meaning potency. So truth does not come in between meaning and language. Bhartṛhari accepts the self-validity, which is metaphorically called as self-illumination of language. He, of course, talks of truth and falsity of the utterances by admitting the distinction between the primary meaning i.e., the denoted object and secondary meaning i.e., the mental status of the conceptions in relation to meaning. Words, according to him, are concerned with the secondary meaning and within this realm can convey meaning whether they have anything corresponding to them in the outside world or not. The basic point is that as soon as meaning is cognized it has a cognitive meaning. The sentence "Tree exists" is true if corresponding to it the external object called 'tree' exists, but the sentence "tree exists" is false if the sentence has a conceptual status on the level of thought but nothing corresponding to it exists in the outside world. <sup>20</sup> So, in a sense, speech



in its conceptual level points to something which is either true or false. But on linguistic level he does not confine his analysis to assertions only. I do admit that both Frege and Davidson accept that language can have other uses too. But they prefer to concentrate on the logic of assertions. This may be convenient for the formalistic explanation of language. But when language is viewed as a vehicle of communication we may find that the study of language is much more complicated and excavating the logic of language through the concepts of 'belief' and 'truth' do not solve all the problems. The basic approach to the language-thought relation in case of Bhartṛhari is different from that of Frege and Davidson. Bhartṛhari explains 'thought' and 'language' from the stand-point of communicability. But Frege does not proceed with the assumption that language is essentially communicative in nature. He makes a distinction between the 'thought' and 'language' to show the distinction between the propositional content and the sentence. Bhartṛhari also tries to locate the content of speech. But it is not the content of the speech only with which he is exclusively concerned; he also tries to trace further unity of all our meaningful utterances. Davidson, on the other hand, tries to locate the counter-part of assertions on the level of thought to locate the mental attitudes that are accompanied by sentences like I believe, I feel, I think, I doubt etc., which he does ultimately in terms of belief.

Our problem does not end with showing the difference of approach to the problem of language-thought relationship as envisaged by Bhartṛhari on the one hand and Frege and Davidson on the other. It will not be too much out of context to say that both Frege and Davidson are in search of the logical ground of meaning as has been done by Bhartṛhari. This logical ground can be located in the concept of 'thought' in case of Frege and concept of 'interpretation' in case of Davidson.



Frege holds that "'thought' belongs neither to my inner world as an idea nor yet to the outer world of material, perceptual things".<sup>21</sup> So "Thoughts are by no means unreal but their reality is of a quite different kind from that of things. And their effect is brought about by an act of the thinker without which they would be ineffective, at least as far as we can see. And yet the thinker does not create them but must take them as they are. They can be true without being apprehended by a thinker and are not wholly unreal". Even then, they could be apprehended and by this he means that they could be brought into operation.<sup>22</sup>

This sort of explanation of the concept of "thought" comes closer to the concept of *spṛśṭa*, the ultimate ground of meaning unaffected by the speaker and the objects of the world. For Frege 'thought' implies 'truth' self-evident in the sense that "It is not true for the first time when it is discovered, but is like a planet, which, already before any one has seen it, has been in interaction with other planets".<sup>23</sup> The word 'true' is here used by Frege definitely in a different sense than it has been used as a characteristic of assertions. Here "thought" stands for the logical ground of language and meaning. Is not Frege's description of 'thought' approximating the Bhartrhari's concept of *spṛśṭa* which is self-expressive and self-valid? Frege further observes, "one sees a thing, one has an idea, one apprehends or thinks a thought. When one apprehends or thinks a thought one does not create it but only comes to stand in a certain relation, which is different from seeing a thing or having an idea, to what already existed before-hand".<sup>24</sup> Bhartrhari conceives *spṛśṭa*, also, as the meaning-essence or the implicit principle of meaning neither definable in terms of objects nor in terms of the words used. Here I do not intend to claim that

Frege's views are nothing new but have already been anticipated by Bhartrhari. I have already indicated the differences of their approach to the problem of language. But once language is analysed in its depth it is apt to direct us towards some sort of unity, which Frege locates in the concept of 'thought', whereas Bhartrhari conceives it through the assumption of the concept of *sphota*.

Davidson, while trying to do away with Frege's entitative commitment to 'thought' advances the theory of interpretation. He says, "we usually think that having a language consists largely in being able to speak, but in what follows speaking will play an indirect part, what is essential to my argument is the idea of an interpreter, someone who understands the utterances of another".<sup>25</sup> Here is a thesis which interpretes both thought and speech in terms of communicability. But what is the ground of interpretation? Davidson's answer is that the method of interpretation "puts the interpreter in general agreement with the speaker, according to the method the speaker holds the sentence true under specified conditions, and these conditions obtain, in the opinion of the interpreter, just when the speaker holds the sentences to be true".<sup>27</sup> So, for Davidson, ultimately holding a belief to be true is the central point of communication. But on what ground does the interpreter judge an utterance to be true? Is it because of its relation to the facts and referents? Davidson again clarifies: "this notion of truth is not a semantical notion: language is not directly in picture... it is a part of the frame. For the notion of a true belief depends on the notion of a true utterance, and this in turn cannot be without a shared-language".<sup>28</sup> So from the notion of communication he comes to the concept of truth to return again to communication. In any case, it seems that we cannot escape the

universal 'meaning-essence' or in other words, the logical ground of meaning, if language is to be interpreted in terms of communicability.

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### NOTES

1. Frege, G. : "The Thought : A Logical Inquiry" (translated by A. M. and Marcelle Quinton) in *Philosophical Logic* ed. P. F. Strawson, Oxford University Press, 1967.
2. Davidson, D. : "Thought and Talk" in *Mind and Language* ed. S. Guttenplan, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1976
3. Bhartṛhari, : *Vākya padīyam* I. 44  
Dvau upādānaśabdeṣu śabdau śabdavidō viduḥ  
eka nimittaṁ śabdānām aparōrthe prayujyate
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