

BOOK REVIEW

Bhate, Saroja and Bronkhorst, Johannes (eds.); *Proceedings of the First International Conference on Bhartṛhari*, University of Poona Jan. 6-8, 1992; *Asiatische Studien*, XLVII-I-1993, Peter Lang, pp. 1-273.

This book is a collection of 15 papers presented in the conference and a bibliography on Bhartṛhari's (B) *Vākyapadīya* (VP) appended to it. Since the text of the VP is not studied properly as a coherent text so far, there is a lot of misunderstandings about it. So, I cannot use a frame of reference to say what is the right view. To overcome this difficulty, I propose first an outline of the necessary conditions of the possibility of intelligible communication or the meaningful use of language. (In this connection I have made use of an unpublished paper by Prof. K.J. Shah, presented in the Prof. D.P. Chattopadhyaya Felicitation Seminar, New Delhi, April, 1993, titled : "World and Sentence: Two Perspectives").

In the VP, B is discussing a theory of meaning - the relationship between language, thought and reality i.e., the conditions of the possibility of meaningful use of language. The book has three *kāṇḍas*. In the first *kāṇḍa* called *Brahma Kāṇḍa*, B follows the traditional method-the *prasthāna trayī* - of knowledge, theory and practice as is found exemplified respectively in the *Upaniṣads*, the *Brahma sūtras* and the *Bhagavadgītā*. There is no knowledge without theory and practice (implicit or explicit), there is no theory without knowledge and practice, and there is no practice without knowledge and theory. In each case one is stressed (*pradhāna*), though the other two are not absent. In the first 42 *Kārikās* of the first *kāṇḍa* the experience of language is stressed, in the 43-117 *kārikās* the theory of language is stressed, and in the *kārikās* from 118 to 146 the practice of language is important. The last nine *kārikās* contain a theory of error. I am giving below the conditions of the meaningful use of language based only on the theory part; but the considerations of knowledge and practice are

also implicit here. In the second *kāṇḍa* B applies the theory of meaning to sentences, and in the third *kāṇḍa* the same theory is applied to words.

Now, what are the conditions of the meaningful use of language? B argues in the first 44 *Kārikās* thus : those who know the words (*śabda* means word, sentence or language, but the contexts are clear) know that in the word in use, there are two words (words in use is two-fold). One is the cause of many words, while the other is employed to refer to the meaning. Here, we have the word in the intellect (*paśyanti*), which is the cause of many words and the word employed to refer to the meaning. Meaning is an object connected with an action. The given examples are : bring the cow, eat the curds. Besides the word in the intellect and *vaikhari*, the spoken word, there are the *madhyamā* (the word which is the middle one--word in the mind) and *parā* (though there is dispute whether B accepts *parā* or not). It is important to consider these connections when one is considering *paśyanti* and *vaikhari*. The word in the intellect is not the word in the mind. The word in the intellect involves self-consciousness. The relationship between the physical and mental is built into the meaning of the word.

Then, a question is raised in I.45 as to whether these are two words or one word with two functions on account of the difference in point of view. Then comes the important phrase: 'whether the understanding is one or the other' (this phrase is repeated many times in the VP) when the relationship of the internal to the external exists. This phrase is important in understanding the relationship between grammar and philosophy according to B. The question as to how much does the form of language (grammar) reflect the form of meaning or negatively, how much important is the grammatical distinction of the forms of language without reference to the question of meaning, is also important.

One can think of both the kinds of words being associated to sound, if one looks at VP I.47 - that which is first thought of in the intellect and which is made the name of some meaning, is turned by the articulatory organs into sound - to be the view accepted by B and is understood properly. The process of adaptation of the

sense of hearing and the word to the sound is described later in the VP. I. 77-79.

What is *sphoṭa*? One understanding of it is 'the word in the intellect' (also see VP. I. 102). 'Others have declared that whatever is produced by the organs of articulation, through the contract and separation, is the *sphoṭa*, while the sound produced by the initial sounds are the *dhvani*s'. Even if the second view is accepted, the relationship between the sequential and sequenceless remains. Whatever is meant by the word--the word in the intellect, *madhyamā* or the *vaikhari*--the relationship of the sequential and sequenceless will remain. Or, if we mean only the spoken word, which on the one hand refers to the word in the intellect and on the other to the meaning, the relationship of the internal to the external remains.

The Revealed and the Reavealer : VP.I. 55-56. A light is similar to the word (in the intellect or spoken word). It reveals and is revealed; but the attention is focussed on that which the light reveals, and not on the light itself. Like the light, the words have two powers--to reveal and to be revealed.

Now, according to this account the necessary conditons for the meaningful use of language are : (1) the word in the intellect - *paśyanti*, (2) the spoken word - *vaikhari*, (3) the *madhyamā* the mediating word between the *paśyanti* and *vaikhari*. This differs from person to person according to the intellectual ability - *pratibhā*. (4) The object connected with an action: the examples are - bring the cow and eat the curds. Thus, the meaningful use of the word is the meaningful use of the sentence. The *anvītabhidhānavāda* and the *abhihitānvayavāda* are different from this.

In the absence of any one of the four conditions mentioned above there cannot be meaningful use of language. (1) If *paśyanti* is not there, then it is not clear that the speaker and the hearer are referring to the same thing. (2) In the absence of the spoken word, there is no communication. (3) *Madhyamā* is necessary because no thought is possible without language. Here, in *madhyamā*, *paśyanti* definitely comes in contact with *prākṛta dhvani* - primary sound. (4) In the absence of the object being connected with an

action, there will be no knowledge, no thought and no action. All these four conditions are jointly absolutely necessary to have a meaningful use of language.

When a seminar is held on a particular author like B, one expects that his text is to be studied and the important issues, conclusions and perspectives concerning it are articulated and discussed. Thus considered, in the context of the present seminar it turned out to be bad luck for B. Nobody cared to study the issues in the VP, except the study of some concepts falling outside the issues discussed therein. When relevant issues are not studied, perspectives cannot emerge. Therefore, this seminar on B ended unfortunately without a perspective. The readers do not even see a statement in the whole collection that B is proposing a theory of meaning. B does, however, bring out issues and perspectives in the VP, which are comparable to different systems of thought in Indian or Western tradition. But since issues and perspectives were not brought out, the whole seminar remained, by and large, irrelevant as far as the Indian and Western thought are concerned.

Since the theory of meaning of B is not considered, each concept discussed by the authors is out of context. The concepts which are discussed do not seem to have any definite function in the context of B's theory of meaning. Therefore, each paper in itself and the whole collection of papers together are without any orientation. Neither the organisers nor the contributors put forth any orientation. Indian thought, when presented without a perspective, is prone to lapse into Indology, while Indology with a perspective is likely to lead to the emergence of proper Indian philosophy. In this collection each author took one or the other concept from B or some historical account of B or both, and wrote the paper. The papers can be classified into three groups : (1) poor Indology, (2) glaring misrepresentation of B's thought and (3) papers irrelevant to B's thought. I will illustrate with examples each of them and offer some further comments.

1. Poor Indology : The book begins with an 'An Introduction to the study of Bhartrhari' by Prof. Ashok Aklujkar, University of British Columbia. On p. 11 he says that B's work is a work on grammar. When one is discussing the nature of the relationship

between language, thought and reality surely grammatical issues also will be involved. When one discusses the nature of the sentence, nature of words also will be involved. From this it does not follow that VP is a work on Pāṇiniyan grammar. It is a theory of meaning as I have shown above, though the discussion is based on the pāṇiniyan tradition. Prof. Aklujkar says (p.12) that B had himself *indicated* as the basic modes of his theoretical reflection: *jñāna*, *śabda* and *artha*. If one knows the text, it is not Prof. Aklujkar's *discovery*. The whole text is about it as I have explained above. But again the relationship between *jñāna śabda* and *artha* is not the same in B and modern Western thought. Nor do our Indologists know what can be the relationship between Indian and Western thought. On p. 19 Aklujkar sees linguistic philosophy as just the dissolution of problems and B as a man interested in documentation [*Ibid*, p. 18, (3.5)]

Prof. Aklujkar further claims that he has chosen the main concepts in the VP for his dissertation. How can one decide what is the main concept in the VP without seeing the theory of meaning which is discussed in it? In this whole book there is no mention even about the theory of meaning of B, its important tenets or perspective. The whole thought in Aklujkar's dissertation as well as in the introductory paper is, broadly speaking, scattered, unconnected concepts. Concepts are discussed, not the issues. Without the issues, the concepts themselves are not clear. For example, see his dissertation on *Prākṛta dhvani* and *vaikhṛta dhvani* (pp. 11-13). Such gimmicks can hardly show what is meant by them. One is the sound associated with the *madhyamā* and the other, *vaikhari*, is related to the necessary conditions of manifesting word. The problem discussed there is the relationship between the sound and the *śphoṭa*.

Then he speaks about the need for a critical edition of the VP with full application of the principles of textual criticism. But different kinds of texts may need different approach. When more than one word can be used, the decision to use one and not the other is made on the basis of the issues under discussion. The issues give meaning to the text. A coherent interpretation of the text and clarity regarding the issues are the basic condition for a critical edition, which Aklujkar unfortunately does not seem

to see. His emphasis is on the methodology that needs to be followed, not the issues under discussion.

On p. 18 (3.4) Aklujkar says that B's original ideas cannot be distinguished on the basis of the study of the VP because B did not say anywhere 'I think', 'I propose' etc. B's thought is a system. Each concept's meaning is articulated in the system. How can one hope to study B's ideas independently of taking into account his conceptual framework, issues discussed, interconnections between them together with the sort of rationale by which they are backed ?

On p. 27 (5.10) Aklujkar seems to present a totally misleading understanding of the form and content of the VP. It is a characteristic piece of misunderstanding coupled with a tinge of arrogance because the first *kāṇḍa* discusses the necessary conditions for the meaningfulness of words and this includes *Brahma*, as also sentence and word. The relationship of all these is brought out in the first *kāṇḍa*. The second *kāṇḍa* discusses the issue of the primacy of the sentence and its relationship to the words. The third *kāṇḍa* brings out how different kinds of words fit into this sort of understanding. Aklujkar's confusion seems to stem from the fact that he does not see the issues in the VP and their interrelationships. Likewise, the further conclusions he draws from his misconceptions concerning the context of the three *kāṇḍas* are not borne out by the text. The basic issue is not what we may be pleased to read in B, but rather what B intends to put forth and which is consistent with his conceptual framework.

2. A Glaring Misrepresentation of B's Thought : Prof. Saroja Bhate has contributed a *prima facie* bold article : "B on Language and Reality" (pp.67-73). She draws a conclusion that according to B language is fictitious and it cannot represent reality. Language is not at all connected with the external world (p.73). To draw this conclusion she quotes from the VP. But what is surprising is the fact that : (1) all the quotations from the *Saṃbandhasamuddēśa* (3.3.33 onwards) which the learned authoress refers to are given to articulate the views of the Vijñānavādins (Buddhists) which B refutes from 3.3.71 onwards. (2) The quotations from 3.14.15 etc. are from the views of the opponents of B, which B answers from

3.14.42 onwards. (3) All the quotations from 3.11.5,6 etc. are the views of the *Vaiśeṣikas* which again B refutes. All these passages are quotes by the authoress without distinguishing between the *pūrvapakṣa* and the *uttarpakṣa* - the rejected views and the accepted views. The quotation from II-251 is outside the context. In II.119-134, B describes 12 views regarding the meaning of the sentence. Each one of them, in his view, is partial because of the stressing on one or the other aspects of the four conditions of the meaningful use of language without the others. She has mistaken them for the opinion of B. In the VP II. 135-142, B is describing the ordinary man's understanding which is full of mistakes because he fails to see the truth. The seer's vision is not the basis for ordinary transactions. Therefore, one has to be careful even while taking the sense-perception to be true. One has to carefully examine various instances of it. The given examples are hare's horn and sky-flowers etc. The authoress does not pay careful attention to the meaning of the text, and instead prefers to jump to conclusions not borne out by the text. Her translations are so distortive that they do not sustain even her wrong interpretations. To conclude, it must be said that such writings as this, where one does not understand even the issue under discussion and disregards the distinction between the accepted and the rejected views need to be despised. A text cannot be studied in a free-style way and yet hoped that it would bring forth illumination.

3. *Papers irrelevant to B's Thought* : Prof . Johannes Bronkhrost, Lausanne, writes a scholarly article (pp. 75-94) on *Bhartrhari* and *Vaiśeṣikas*. His attempt is to throw light on *Vaiśeṣika* system from the study of the VP because in B's writings, especially in the *Samuddeśas* the *Vaiśeṣika* categories play a role. Secondly, he wants to draw more information concerning *Vaiśeṣika* system from B's VP, especially pertaining to the pre-*Kātaṇḍi* period of the former.

First of all, let me hasten to point out that historical information regarding the origin and growth of philosophical ideas in Indian philosophy and religion is extremely scanty, especially when there are certain categories and expressions used by adherents of different schools. Often, the same concept used by different schools means differently. The meaning of it needs to be determined through

taking into account the function of the concept in the theory or thought of the system. When I apply soap for washing the cloth, I see foam there. When I apply shampoo to wash the hair the foam appears on the head. When the boat moves on the backwaters, there is foam behind the boat in the water. When rice is cooked in water, foam is formed. From this I cannot claim there is soap on head, or in the backwaters or in the rice pot. Similar is the relationship of ideas shown by Prof. Bronkhorst in the VP and Vaiśeṣika texts. It proves nothing. Even when some of the details are similar, the directions of the details are different.

The author has a remarkable knowledge of the VP. He quotes from the VP. II. 8-9. Then he comments that for B sentence is the real unit of language and the individual words are the result of artificial analysis. Yes, this is the view of B. But what he quotes from (II.8-9) is the *Mīmāṃsaka* view, not B's view. In the above quotation individual words are said to be meaningful. Therefore, what he says about the nature of the sentence and word, must have been gathered from elsewhere in the VP or from hearsay.

The article ends without a perspective. When a perspective is missing the very understanding is in doubt. Such studies do not add anything worthwhile to the thought of the VP which is a system of thought or a treatise; not a random *saṃgraha* in the sense of a careless collection of ideas. The VP is not akin to a vegetable market where different ideas are collected for their being sold. When one fails to interpret the VP coherently, one may escape saying that the VP is a *saṃgraha* in the sense of a collection (see John D. Kelly, p. 172). It is being guided by such consideration that persons like Prof. Aklujkar, John D. Kelly, Prof. Bronkhorst etc. go in to study the VP for collection of materials, build an inventory and documentation with the sense of a big shopper and hope to sell the goods so collected to all and sundry, in short whoever pays and is prepared to be fooled.

The introducer (Aklujkar), the organizers and editors (Profs. Bhatte and Bronkhorst) do not seem to have succeeded even in mentioning the issues raised and discussed in the VP. Instead, they seem to spread the net of misunderstandings and misconception

wide open. The other articles in this collection too are not better. To illustrate the point I give another example.:

Akihiko Akamatsu, Fukuoka, presents a paper on *pratibhā* and the meaning of the sentence in B's VP (pp. 37-43). He at least states the problem clearly and intelligibly. However, the author does not seem to be clear about the relationship between the meaning of the sentence and that of the words. If one knows B's opinion properly, he would first try to see the place of *pratibhā* in the use of the sentence. Given this, one can see that the rest of the discussion becomes redundant. For instance, he says (2.1) "In the VP, B makes a distinction between two types of meaningful units of language : (1) the word and (2) the sentence. Where is it said ? Nowhere. He quotes as B's opinion VP II.45. Again, it is the *Mīmāṃsaka's* view : words and sentence as meaningful units of language is also the *Mīmāṃsaka* view. Instead of following the issue in the VP, he goes to Dharmakīrti and makes confusion worse confounded.

If one knows what the VP is all about, different issues should have been assigned to various contributors for being discussed. Instead, here each one has taken one concept or another for the paper, without considering whether it has any important bearing upon and relevance to the VP. Since almost each concept considered is out of the context, the whole exercise has unfortunately culminated into a prolonged irrelevance. In almost all the articles their contributors mix up the text of the VP with the history of (mis)understanding of it in other authors in the grammar tradition or in other traditions. They almost freely mix up the ideas and make a confusion at the cost of coherent understanding of the text. When one discusses a text, every word of it may not be considered; but the concerned issues cannot be left unconsidered. There seems to be utter lack of any logic behind the choice of the themes which are considered.

In consequence, the seminar under consideration appears to have given rise to four-fold consequences : it brought (undue) publicity to the organizers, entertainment for the participants, ignominy for B, and woe to those who may use these articles as the secondary sources on B and thus may come to share the sort of confusions and misunderstandings contained in the contributions. Can we hopefully

look forward to another (inter) national conference on B's VP where his text will be coherently studied?*

CASS, University of Poona
Pune - 411 007.

J. OUSEPARAMPIL

* We are given to understand that some papers contributed to the seminar under consideration though were invited, submitted sufficiently in advance and were presented as well as discussed, are not included in the published proceedings of it, while others never invited, announced or contributed to the seminar are included. The rationale, if any, of such discrimination could best be known to the Editors of the volume.

EDITORS