DHVANI-THE CONTINUATION OF SPHOTA

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Abstract

There are many languages in the world. Among them, Sanskrit is one of the most important languages of the Indo-European family. After William Johns, the founder of the Asiatic society, know about the Sanskrit language, Comparative literature became a branch of study. Other languages cannot match it either in structure or in subject. There were many grammarians in Sanskrit, but Sanskrit grammar is known as Paninian grammar based on the Ashtadhayi of Panini. The language got structural stability by Katyayana’s vartika and Patanjali’s Bhashya for Ashtadhyayi.

There are many linguistic theories developed in Sanskrit language. Abhidha, lakshana, vyanjana, dhvani, and sphota were some of them. Among them sphota theory was discussed by both Sanskrit grammarians and philosophers. In his Ashtadhyayi, Panini refers to a scholar Sphotayana as his predecessor. Patanjali was the first one who mentioned about sphota in his Mahabhashya. But Bhartrhari’s Vakyapadiya made it a part of Sanskrit grammar and gave it a philosophical dimension. In his Dhvanyaloka, Anandavardhana established Dhvanisidhanta based on Sphota from Vakyapadiya.

Here we are discussing the sphota theory and Dhvani theory based on these facts.

Dhvani-The Continuation of Sphota

Sanskrit is one of the most important languages of the Indo-European family. After the west discovered the wealth of Sanskrit literature, comparative literature became a branch of study. Sanskrit as a language stunned the west by its depth and diversity. Other language cannot match it either in structure or in substance. It is a language which has retained its structure over centuries.

Language- Grammar and Aesthetics

As every other language, Sanskrit language also has its own grammar. Sanskrit grammar is known as Paniniya grammar based on the Ashtadhayyi of Panini. It contains around 4000 sutras. Katyayana’s vartika and Patanjali’s bhashya for the Ashtadhyayi, gave structural stability to the language. Sutrakara, varrikakara, and bhashyakara are together known as munitraya. There is a saying Yathottaram muninam pramanyam – According to the vaiyakaranas Katyayana compared to Panini and Patanjali compared to Katyayana are authorities in their respective fields. From ashtadhayyi Sanskrit grammar got stability.

In Sanskrit, the discussions on aesthetics and poetics were initiated by Bharata in his Natyasastra. These discussions on rasa, alamkara, guna, riti, dhvani, vakrokti, aucitya, and anumana reached the zenith in dhvanyaloka of Anandavardhana and culminated in the Rasagangadharma of Jagannathapandita. It can be seen by anyone who studied Bharatiya Kavyasastra that it was the discussion on rasa started in Natyasastra which in a zigzag way through poetics reached the study of dhvani. But any one who is interested in Sanskrit literature has to accept the fact that it was Abhinavagupta who gave importance to Natyasastra and...
dhvanyaloka that gave equal importance to the rasa and dhvani in Sanskrit poetics. Abhinavabhåratì and Locana are his interpretations of Natyasastra and dhvanyaloka respectively.

Patanjali and Bhartrhary

Sphota was the theory that was discussed by both Sanskrit grammarians and philosophers. As mentioned earlier though Ashtadhyayi is the basis of Sanskrit grammar it cannot be interpreted without Katyayana’s Vartika and Patanjali’s Mahabhashya. The roots of sphota can be traced in Patanjali’s Mahabhashya. Though Panini refers to a scholar Sphotayana among his predecessors in his Ashtadhyayi nothing more is known about him.

Though Patanjali was the first one to mentions about sphota it was Bhartrhary who made it a part of Sanskrit grammar and gave it a philosophical dimension in his Vakyapadiya. Anandavardhana started from Vakyapadeeya and established dhvanisiddhanta in his Dhvanyaloka again based on sphota.

Kavyasyatma dhvani

Anandavardhana who declared that dhvani is the soul of Kavya showed that dhvani and sphota distinct aspects of sabda.

Yatrarthah sabdo va tamarthamupasärjantrasvarthau
Vyangktah kavyavisesa sa dhvaniriti suribhih kathitah

‘In which kavya the artha makes itself unimportant and sabda also makes its meaning unimportant and enlightens its vyangya, that kavya is dhvanikavya according to the scholars.’

He further explains- suribhih kathitah. Who is suribhih? The term suribhih means scholars.

Suribhih kathita iti vidvadapajneyamuktihi, na tu yathakathanjit pravrtteti pratipadyate.prathame hi vidvamso vayakarananah,vyakaranamulatvad sarva vidyanam.

Te ca sruyamaheshu vanrcshu dhvaniriti vyavaharanti.tadhaiva anah tanmanatusaribhiv suribhiv kavyatatvarthadasibhiv vyavacakasammitrah sabdatma kavyam iti vyapadesyo vyjanakatvasamyad dhvanirityuktah.

Thus it was scholars and not by the ordinary men that the term dhvani was defined. The scholar means vaiyakaranas. Since grammar is the basis for all vidyas the grammarians are in the forefronts of scholars. The grammarians calls those sensations attained through ears and eyes as dhvani. The grammarians are most competent to explain sabdasakti.

Vidyate Anaya iti vidya. That which causes knowledge is vidya. Here what is implied is bhasatmakavidya (the knowledge about language). To master that, knowledge of grammar in essential.

Patanjali

In Indian Theories of Meaning Dr.K.Kunjunni Raja says Patanjali’s distinguishes between two aspects of words, the sphota and dhvani.  

Dhvanis sphotas ca sabdanam dhvanistu khalu lakshyate
Alpo mahamsca keshamcid ubhayam tat svabhavaiteh

The former is the permanent element in the word and considered the essential word, whereas the latter is the actualized and ephemeral element and attribute of the former. (Sphota sabdah,dhvani sabdagunah)
Abhinavagupta

It can be found from the Locana of Abhinavagupta that Anandavardhana followed Vakyapadiya of Bhartrhari in Dhvanisthapana.

The shrude vaiyakaranas called all the sabdas, all the words that could be clearly identified, dhvani. The sabdasaktis has accepted a very delicate sabdatatva called sphota as cause for dhvani. All the sabdas starting from the very soft to the ears breaking sounds are formed by combination of the sphota forms. Since these sabdas have dhvanitva, as they give rice to extra sensory sphota, as they are sphotavyanjaka, they are given the name dhvani.

According to Bhartrhari the sphota and dhvani can be differentiated as follows-

Yah samyogaviyogabhyan karanairupajayate
Sa sphotah sabdajah sabdo dhvanirityucyate budhaih

According to some scholars whatever is produced by the organs of sound production becomes sphota received through its sounds and forms. On the other hand dhvanis are those which are caused by the formal appearance of the word itself. In short the sphota is related to the primary sounds while dhvani is originated only after the manifestation of sphota.

For grammarians dhvani is vyanyak. It is not the sphota which is vyangya. On the other hand for the kavyamimamsakas dhvani is vyangya.

Bhartrhari continuous -

Pratyairanupakhyaeyairgrahanugunaistadha
Dhvaniprasitesabdeo svarupamvadhanyate

The real form of a word is fixed in our mind when that is pronounced as different phonemes or sounds. But this fixation of the word is possible only because we are already having some definite cognition based on certain unaccountable or unexplainable but still favorable signs.

Alpiyasaapi yatnena sabdamuccaritam matih
Yadi va naiva grhnati varnam vasakalam sputam

Even a simple sentence is either fully inconceived or fully conceived. There is no intermediate state, i.e., it is partially conceived.

Bhartrhari says the following about vaikrtadhvani –

sabdasyordhvanabhivyaktervrtibhede tu vaikrtah
Dhvanayah samupohante, sphotatma tairna bhidyate

After the manifestation of the word by way of sphota the secondary sounds cause variations in the perception, they themselves being intimately related to the mind. Thus they give a false impression of causing the variation in the sphota itself. But sphota being eternal itself does not respond to these variations and remains unchanged and undivided.
According to K.Kunjunni Raja the following words in the Vakyapadeeya defining the Prakrtadhvani and Vaikrtadhvani are considered by some commentators to be a quotation from Vyadi’s famous work the samgraha.

Varnasya grahane hetuh prakrto dhvanirishyate
Vrttibhede nimitatvam vaikrta pratipadyate

Thus the prakrtadhvani is defined as the cause of the perception of the letters and the vaikrtadhvani is considered as the cause for the differences in speed of utterance, vrtti.

According to Abhinavagupta the sphota and vaikrta are not different in principle. Based on this, alamkarikas accept sabdartha vyangyavyanjana and because the vyanjaka belong to the same class, kavya as dhvani.

Conclusion

We find that Abhinavagupta described the difference between sphota and dhvani based on Bhartrhari’s Vakyapadeeya. The dhvanitva finds place in poetics while sphotatvata in grammar. From the similarities between sphotavada and dhvanivada we can see how the grammatical structure of the language is interwoven with the aesthetics. Moreover the Indian aesthetics is structurally comparable with grammar. In other words it was formed on the foundation laid by the grammarians the aesthetics was constructed later by the Kavyameemamsakas.

REFERENCE NOTE:

1. Dhvanyaloka,1.13
2. ibid,p.131
3. Indian Theories Of Meaning,p.100
4. Vakyapadiya,1.102
5. ibid.1.88
6. ibid.1.77
7. Indian Theories of Meaning,p.101

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