



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

## Concept of “Time” (*Kala Shakti*) according to *Bhartrhari*

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*Bhartrhari* may be considered one of the most original philosophers of language and religion in ancient India. He belonged to the grammarian tradition of Panini and Patanjali. But he transcended the limits of grammar and language analysis set by his predecessors to develop a very original philosophy of language. He is known primarily as a grammarian, but his works have great philosophical significance, especially with regard to the connections they posit between grammar, logic, semantics and ontology.

*Bhartrhari's* contribution to the philosophy of language is very authentic and outstanding in nature. It is not an exaggeration to say that, *Vakyapadiya*, continued to be a guide book on the philosophical issues of grammar. In *Vakyapadiya* *Bhartrhari's* moves grammatical analysis squarely into the realm of philosophy, arguing that grammar can be considered a darshana, a “view”, or an official philosophical school, providing perspective and insight into ultimate reality. It is most unfortunately, however that he could not become the fountain-head of a school like Sankaracharya. But his sparkling originality of thought coupled with an amazingly compelling power of logic. Secured for his a position of great eminence with a host of outstanding philosophers belonging to rival school of thought. In this paper I have made the concept of time (*Kala-shakti*) and its comparison of Maya an attempt to focus on.

## **Shabdaadvaita (linguistic monism)**

*Bhartrhari* starts his philosophical exploration with the concept of *Shabda Brahman*. This, according to him, is the unique and ultimate Reality. The concept of existence, consciousness and; language-in-use, which are associated with our understanding of the empirical world exhibits the elements of plurality. Yet all these concepts are word-generated. So they are bound by a common essence. And this essence is called by *Bhartrhari*, *Shabdaadvaita*, the language principle. *Shabdaadvaita* (linguistic monism) occupies a central position in *Bhartrhari's Vakyapadiya*.. He declares that the attainment of *Shabda Brahman* is the ultimate goal of the study of grammar. It is not only goal to be attained, but it is the ultimate source of the very thing. It is, therefore, the source of *Vakya* (sentence) and *Pada* (the word), the two main subject of *Vakyapadiya*.. The first four verses of the *Brahmakanda* states the main idea of B regarding the unity of *Shabda* and Brahman. The opening verse of his treatise VP, with a statement of the transcendence as well as the<sup>i</sup> immense of the ultimate Reality in the system of his philosophy. It Says:-

“*anadinidhanam brahma Sabdatattvam yad aksaram  
vivartate r thabhavena prakriya jagato yatah*”<sup>1</sup>

As for its transcendence, he states a number of characteristics: *anadinnidhana*, Brahman, *shabdatattva* and *Aksara*. Besides these characteristics, many other verses of VP mention many other characteristics of the absolute.

One more important characteristic of the ultimate reality is its unrestricted independence (*svatantrya*). This independence of freedom is represented by what the grammarian calls *Kalasakti*,<sup>2</sup> the most important of many other powers known as *Kalas* that are exclusive of One another and lie embedded in the Absolute as identical with it.

### **Time (Kala-shakti)**

In India different schools mentioned and defined the concept of time power, *Bhartrhari* also touches this concept and discussed his *Vakyapadiya*.. He introduces time concept and explain another important dimension of the phenomenal world, i.e., the idea of “change” Explaining the idea of multiplicity is not enough for providing a correct analysis of the empirical phenomena. He conceives of the Reality as one and unchangeable. The Phenomenal world being characterized by change owes explanation in terms of the unchangeable reality. To explain this issue *Bhartrhari* introduces Time (*Kala-shakti*).

Sree Peri Sarweswara Sharma defines 'Time' in his *Kalasaduddesa* that

“all powers depending on their cases and having a starting point, are governed by creating power (Svatrantrya) called Time; they follow the modes of this time Power.”<sup>3</sup>

The concept of time has been discussed in detail in the third Kanda of *Bhartrhari's Vakyapadiya*., Where he devotes an entire section to Time (*Kala Samuddesa*). the concept of 'Time' can be summed up as follows:-

The reality called Brahman, is without any sequence and consists of True knowledge and it is not affected by Time. Under the influence of Nescience, it assumed sequence and appears as this or that. Thus, through the interventions of Time the phenomena appear in a temporal sequence and appears as this or that. Thus, through the interventions of Time the phenomena appears in a temporal; sequence to the individual; selves coming down from time immemorial. Because all differentiation consists of Nescience, all division of time adopted from difference points of view, are also the creations of Nescience. Once True knowledge draws, all differentiation disappears and, therefore, this division (of time) also disappears. Therefore to discuss whether it (division) is right or not would result in labour only.<sup>4</sup>

According to *Bhartrhari* the evolution of this cosmic world out of the ultimate reality with the help of *Kala-shakti* (time),<sup>5</sup> which works out phenomenal change in respect of time and space and this *Kala-shakti* (Time power) is considered as one of the Supreme powers among that all other power of the absolute.

The function *kala* in precise terms when Avidya as powers is in control of every kind of evolution in respect of time and space. Yaska in his *Nirukta* mentions six stages of cosmic evolution. They are it comes to life, it exists, it grows, it matures, it wanes and it passes out of existence. *Bhartrhari* accepts this six-fold evolution. It says:-

“*adhyhitakal yasya kalasaktimupsritah  
janmadayo vikarah sabdhavabhedasya yonayah*”<sup>6</sup>

*Bhartrhari* opines that the same is the matrix of difference among the evolutes. Evolution is controlled by *Kala-shakti* which holds its sway over the multiple *Kalas*. The *kalas* are all discrete identifies exclusive of each other but lie embedded in the Absolute completely identified with it. In clarification of the point that *Kala-sakti* exercises a supreme controls over thee activities of all other powers known as *Kalas*. And it controls the causes of different phenomena of the world in temporal

succession, and this control of *Kala-shakti* is not operatively simple with regards to the event of creation but also with reference to those of preservation and destruction.<sup>7</sup> It follows, therefore, that the universe comes into existence, continues to exist and ceases to do so only in obedience to the dictates of *Kala-shakti*. Unless *Kala-shakti* extends its helping hand the so called different causal powers cannot give rise to different effects. Even when effects are produced, both the causal powers and effects absolutely depend on *Kala-shakti* to preserve them in being. And it is only when *Kala-shakti* so chooses that they should die, that they ceases to exist. It is for this reason that *Kala-shakti* is looked upon as the efficient cause (*nimitta karana*) or the casual agent (*prayojaka Kartr*) of the phenomenal world in its manifold phases of creation, preservation and dissolution.<sup>8</sup>

In certain aspects *Bhartrhari's* description of *Kala-shakti* is similar to that of Sankara's conception of Maya. According to Adi Sankara Maya is the complex illusionary power of Brahman which causes the Brahman to be seen as the material world of separate forms. It has two main functions – one is to “hide” Brahman from ordinary human perception, and the other is to present the material world in its stead. Maya is also said to be indescribable, though it may be said that all sense data entering ones awareness via the five senses are Maya, since the fundamental reality underlying sensory perception is completely hidden. It is also said that Maya neither completely real nor completely unreal, hence indescribable. It shelter is Brahman, but Brahman itself is untouched by the illusion of Maya, just like a magician is not tricked by his own magic. Maya is temporary and is transcended with “true Knowledge”, or perception of the more fundamental reality which straddles Maya.

Both the concepts signify the power of introducing multiplicity and change at the phenomena level. Yet there is a difference between the conception of *Kala* and Maya. Maya is seen from two angles; in its projective form it is Maya, and in its negative form it is avidya. But for *Bhartrhari's kala* is conceived because of Avidya.. *Kala* itself is not avidya. Moreover *kala* is directly related to his explanation of every diversity at the linguistic level.

## Conclusion

*Bhartrhari* introduces time concept and explain another important dimension of the phenomenal world i.e. the idea of change. Time power is not a single power. It is considered as one of the Supreme power among the all other power of the Absolute. The evolution of this cosmic world out of the ultimate reality with the help of the *Kalasakti*, which works out phenomenal change in respect of time and Space. In this phenomenal world every action is different, and as *Kalasakti* is the determining factor of each and every action, it seems as though *kalasakti* were different in each case. *Kalasakti* exercises a Supreme control over the activities of all other powers known as *Kalas* and it

controls the cause of different phenomena of the world in temporal succession. And this control of *Kalasakti* is not operatively simple with regard to the event of creation but also with reference to those of preservation and destruction.

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### Foot Notes

- <sup>1</sup> V. P I – I
2. Avyahatah kala yasya kalasaktim upasritah. ( V.P, I – 3 )
3. Kalasamuddesa, P- 30
4. As translated by Iyer, Bhartrhari, p – 123
5. Kalaeva hi viswatma vyapara iti kadhyate 3-2-12
6. V.P 1
7. V.P III. IX. II
8. V.P III. IX. 3

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