

Workshop on Tattvabindu of Vacaspatimisra

Concept Note

Vacaspatimisra is one of the towering personalities in the history of Indian Philosophy. He has written commentaries on all the six systems of Vedic thought and tradition. Therefore he is known as 'Sarvatantrasvatantra' i.e. 'Master of all Sastras'(lit. Free in all shastras). He flourished in the middle of 9th C.A.D.

Tattvabindu is a short treatise on Mimamsa wherein the author in powerful language elucidates five traditional views about Sabdabodha (Verbal Cognition). These views were in vogue among the scholars in the field of philosophy on the important question that what actually constitutes the Karana or the efficient Cause in Verbal cognition. Vacaspatimisra presents all five theories and refutes four of them. He agrees with fifth one. These five theories are :

1. First view presented and refuted by Vacaspatimisra is theory of Sphota of Vaiyakaranas viz., Bhartrhari and Mimamsaka Mandanamisra. (Anavayavameva vakyam anadyavidyopadarsitalikavarnapadavibhagamasya nimittamiti kecit.T.B.P.6.)

Grammarians hold that the वाक्यस्फोट conveys the meaning of sentence (वाक्यार्थ). Sphota is devoid of parts (निखयव). We experience it as having parts due to eternal Avidyā- ignorance.

2. Second view is of Naiyayikas. Naiyayikas hold that the cognition of last varna (letter) coupled with the impressions produced by the experiences of the previous words with their meanings, is the cause of वाक्यार्थज्ञान. (Paramarthika purvapurvapadarthanubhavajanitasanskarasahitam antyavarnavijnanam ityke.T.B.P.6.)

3) Third view is of some old Mimāmsakas such as Upavarsa and others. They hold that the group of letters (varnas or varnamala) which are reflected in the mirror of recollection produced by the family of impressions generated by the experience of each varna, pada is the cause of arthapratiti.

(Pratyekavarnapadapadarthanubhavabhavitabhavananicayalabdhanmasmrti darpanarudha varnamala ityanye.T.B.P.7)

4). Fourth view is of Anvitabhidhanavada of Prabhakara Mimamsakas including Salikanatha (Padanyevakanksita-yogya-sannihitapadarthantaravitasvarthabhidyayityapare. T.B.P.7) According to them, cause of Vākyārthapratipatti (cognition of meaning of sentence of the sentence) is cognition of padas (words) themselves which convey meaning related to one another on the basis of आकांक्षा, योग्यता, संनिधि

5. Fifth view is Abhihitavayavada of Acarya Kumarila whom VM closely follows in this work and says that – words convey their meanings (पदार्थ) which in turn (while mutually related) generate शब्दबोध – cognition of word meaning (वाक्यार्थ). It is view of Kumarila, Sabaraswami and view of Vacaspatimisra himself (Padaireva samabhivyaharavadbhirbhihitah svarthahakanksa-yogyata-asattisadhricina vakarthadhihetavah ityacaryah. T.B.P.8.)

Vacaspatimisra's presentation and refutation of these theories are briefly given below:

1. Vacaspatimisra reviews Grammarian's Doctrine of Sphota mainly as expounded by Bhartrhari and Mandanamisra in this text. He, here, amplifies and reaffirms Kumarila's criticism of Sphota Doctrine. Vacaspatimisra, though great Advaitin, does not support Sabdadvaita of Bhartrhari. He supports Kumarila's view towards the Doctrine of Sphota in his Slokavartika. Vacaspatimisra in this book dealt with and refuted the Sphotavada in most elaborate and inimitable manner. He anticipates and replies to many charges made by Mandanamisra in his Sphotasiddhi against Kumarila.

First he takes up the Grammarians' concept of Sphota, which is considered as the efficient cause of Sabdabodha (Karana of Sabdabodha). He refutes on the lines already enunciated by Kumarila in his Slokavartika.

Grammarians hold that, the 'Vakyasphota' conveys the meaning of sentence. They describe the Sphota as devoid of parts, though it is experienced as possessing parts through our Avidya or Ignorance.

. Vākyasphota is devoid of parts (अखंडवस्तु) and properties. It is efficient cause of शब्दबोध. Division of sentence into words and letters is not real but based on superimposition caused by eternal Ignorance (अनादि अवधि).

The Grammarians explain the theory of Sphota by stating that it is commonsense that individual letters in the word or in a sentence cannot convey the meaning. They also cannot do it in conjunction because the letters have a momentary existence and hence cannot combine. For example, the word "Kamala". Here the problem is how the word gives us the sense of lotus. It is obvious that the letters k, a, m, a, l, a, cannot give us the meaning either individually or jointly. Nor can one say that the last letter helped by the impressions left on over mind by the previous letters conveys the sense. For, there is no guarantee that the impressions of the previous letters will be recollected in exactly the same order. The Grammarians, therefore believe that a 'shabda' has two forms viz., 1. the non-eternal i.e. the letters and 2. the eternal i.e. sphota. This Sphota is principal and is revealed by the non-eternal form i.e. by the letters. This Sphota is responsible for conveying the meaning of the word or sentence.

The Sphota is revealed by the comprehension of the last syllable of every word helped by the impressions left by preceding syllables. As it is eternal, it is without parts [niravayava]. For, whatever is having parts [savayava] has necessarily to be non-eternal [anitya]. As it is without parts there can be no idea of order or krama or division with reference to it . It is whole or Akhand or kramatita. By accepting this Sphota only, difficulty can be overcome.

The word sphota is thus explained etymologically : 1. sphutyate vyajyate shabdaih varnaih va, 2. Sphutayati prakashayati artham or sphutati pradurbhavati arthah asmat.

The Grammarians apply the term 'Dhvani' to this non-eternal form of the word, because it is suggestive of the suggested sense in the form of Sphota

As the word which suggests or reveals the sphota is designated dhvani. Dhvani is thus explained dhvanati vyanakti prakashayati sphotam, dhvanyate vyajyate sphotah anena iti va dhvanih.

It is important to note that the Sphota theory of Grammarians is very old. Panini refers to a predecessor called Sphotayana in vi.1.123. Bhartruhari in his Vakyapadiya 1.44. explains the sphota theory at length. Mandanamisra wrote separate treatise to defend Sphota known as Sphotasiddhi.

It was evidently developed in opposition to the Naiyayikas and Mimamsakas who believe in the expressive power of the letters. While these latter are 'Varnavacakatvavadins, the Grammarians are Varnavyanjakatvavadins.

Vacaspatimisra extensively describes and refutes the theory of Sphota in Tattvabindu.

The debate is mainly between Varnavadins and Sphotavadins. Against Sphota Varnavadins argue extensively and conclude by stating that since the sense or meaning of the sentence or word can be well cognized from the knowledge of the words in the combination of varnas, it does drive one to the necessity of establishing the akhandapadatattva viz., sphota, devoid of any parts and properties.

2. The Varnavadins argue that the cognition of the meaning of sentence arises from the cognition of the last varna in it by the sensory organ-ear. Impression produced by the cognitions of words and their meanings help ears to do its function.

Vacaspatimisra refutes this theory by arguing that– does the last varna generate the knowledge of meaning of sentence after producing the recollection of the relation between the last word and its sense?

(1) If it is accepted – then at the time of mental impression ready to produce its effect, viz. recollection of the word meaning (पदार्थ); perception of the word (पद), the cause of impression all these does not exist.

(2) And no one can explain the existence of the cognition of the last varna in a word or sentence, when one recollects the relation between pada and Padārtha.

(3) It also cannot be said that (वाक्यार्थप्रतिपत्ति) knowledge of meaning of sentence arises from the cognition of last syllable/letter even without the recollection of the relation between the Pada (word)

and पदार्थ (word meaning); because the experience of पदपदार्थसंबंध is of no use, if it does not produce a recollection (of the same).

(4) Also cognition of the last varna, impression of पदार्थ and recollection of पदार्थ are not simultaneous. Cognitions arise in Atma only one after another

(5) Cognition of the last varna does not arise again at the time of recollection of for want of its cause – संस्कार impression of last varna is as fleeting and transient as flash of lightening, which means it wan't stay longer.

3. Some old Mimamsakas argue that through group of letters (वर्णमाला) in one mirror like recollection is the cause of अर्थप्रतीति - understanding of meaning. Relation between word and its meaning depends upon time honoured usage. Elders have used sentences for inter communication of ideas and thoughts. It is Varnas. When it becomes object of one recollection, it produces the verbal cognition of sentence (वाक्यार्थ). The पदार्थस्मृति arising from the knowledge of padas in a sentence is an accessory to this group of letters in the production of वाक्यार्थप्रतीति.

Refutation – (1) First defect is 'Gaurava'. If वर्णमाला is accepted as the cause of the knowledge of meaning of a sentence, then, difference sentences have different words. Different sentences have different words and different group of letters. Then one has to accept different powers of the sentences to understand the meaning of the sentence. Thus, numerous powers are to be imagined. This is Gaurava' fault.

(2) Second defect is 'विषयाभाव'. वर्णमाला is not capable to express relation between word and its object (पदार्थ संसर्ग). Object (अर्थ) is संसर्गिन i.e. object related to the word. The object should be known before the relation (संसर्ग) is cognized. The cognition of word (पद) and its meaning (अर्थ) as expressed by the word (पद) is necessary for the cognition of relation between word (पद) and its meaning (अर्थ). This knowledge of relation of word and its meaning produces the knowledge of sentence and its meaning. Therefore, group of letters is said to be superfluous.

(3) Group of letters in a long sentence become object of continuous knowledge letters. Therefore, theory of Varnamālā is untenable.

(4) अन्विताभिधानवादिन – follower of टीकाकार प्रभाकर – According them words themselves convey their meaning and their mutual relation, so that the word meanings (पदार्थ) conveyed by words (पद) do not convey the meaning of sentence.

Sentence meaning is said to be one and specific (विशिष्ट). It is related to many subordinate ideas conveyed by words in that sentence. Which means and words convey themselves along with their meaning and their mutual relation with one another. They are related to one another on the strength of आकांक्षा (verbal expectancy) योग्यता (congruity) and संनिधि (proximity).

Vacaspatimisra discusses at length Tikakara's view of the Anvitabhidhanavada. He considers Prabhakara's (Tikakara) and his disciple Shalikanatha's view from all points and refutes them systematically.

Objections put by अभिहितान्वयवादिन्

(1) when a word in a sentence conveys its idea and the relation to other ideas expressed by other words in the sentence, are the other ideas conveyed or not by their own expressions?

(a) if other ideas are not conveyed by their own expressions, then it should be accepted that ideas that are to be generally conveyed by words in a sentence, are conveyed by the first word it self, so there is superfluity of the second and other words.

(b) if other words also convey their own ideas and that all words convey them and their relation as conveyed by other words, then fallacy of Interdependence occurs (परस्पराश्रयदोष)

2. (a) The argument that first words convey their ideas (पदार्थस्वरूप) and then those पदार्था as related (अन्वितार्थ), so that there is no fallacy

of interdependence. (It being consecutive) It involves two powers (अभिधानशक्ति) for words. It is untenable.

It also cannot be said that 'words convey only ideas with their relation (अन्वितपदार्थ) but those ideas were first recollected by their mere juxtaposition (साहचर्य) and not by words themselves with any significant potency. So that there is no dual power in the words. For memory of the meanings of words is to be based on experiences, which present them as not isolated but as related to one another.

In the example 'गामानय' word 'गो' is related to the action of 'bringing' (आनयन). Thus it produces recollection of cow connected with the action of bringing in the listener and not of a mere cow. This explanation would create difficulty, that the same 'गो' शब्द in the sentence 'गां पश्य' would not convey दर्शनान्वित (cow as related to the action of 'seeing' since 'cow' was related to the action of bringing. This would remove the possibility of explaining the पदार्थ and वाक्यार्थ in all verbal proposition.

3. 'Go' word generates a recollection i.e. 'cow' of its meaning only in the listener on the basis of अव्यभिचार (invariability). It does not generate the recollection of meaning of other words. It is not correct, since, अव्यभिचार. Is not recognized as the cause of recollection.

It is भावना (mental impression), which when deep rooted due to strong and constant previous experiences (अनुभवपौनः पुन्य), is roused and produces स्मृति (recollection). अव्यभिचार has no place among the causes of भावनोद्बोध साहचर्य is accepted as one of the cause of स्वार्थ and पदान्तरार्थ (word's own meaning and meaning of other words. these both arise from the अन्वितपदार्थ.

Thus, अभिहितान्वयवादिन्स् say that words convey their own meaning. Those meanings are incomplete and incoherent in their isolation. When related to one another completing the conditions आकांक्षा, योग्यता and संनिधि in a sentence, they convey meaning of a sentence.

अन्विताभिधानवादि – answers all charges.

(1) There is no fallacy of Interdependence. For words through power (अभिधानशक्ति) convey their meaning and their mutual

relation. Meanings of other words are not invariably recollected from one word due to lack of अभ्यास. Recollection of own meaning of a word (स्वार्थ) and its relation (अन्वय) arises from a pada (word). Thus words invaluablely convey their own meaning along with their relation and not the meanings of other words.

5. The Abhitanvayavadins refutes Anvitabhidhanavada stating that it is general rule that in the absence of any strong objection [badhaka] ,that which stands very near to the effect becomes the cause of it; hence the recollection of the padarthas which are nearer to the vakyarthajna than, padas, can be well considered as the cause of the vakyarthjnana. They argue that one would never know vakyartha from the mere knowledge of the words without recollecting the padarthas therefrom, but knows it invariably after recollecting the padarthas from the juxtaposed words.

On the basis of this observation, Vacaspatimisra puts forth his view namely Abhitanvayavada, that the recollections of the padarthas associated with one another become the cause of the vakyarthajna, on the strength of the three accessories- expectancy (akanksa), congruity (yogyata) and asatti or sannidhi (proximity). All objections raised by anvitabhidhanavadins are answered. In the conclusion, it is argued that the capacity of words to convey the ideas(abhidhatrtva) cannot be satisfactorially explained if anvitabhidhanavada is accepted.It is therefore appropriate to say that on the ground of laghava(saving labour) vakyartha is known from words by their secondary significative potency in that it is generated by the padarthas recollected by the means of words co- uttered or juxtaposed and associated with the accessories like expectancy. Vacaspatimisra concludes his arguments by stating that ' it has been well said that words convey their ideas (concepts) and refrain from any other functioning ; and then the padarthas being cognized produce the cognition of the vakyartha.

Vacaspatimisra further elaborates his own view, i.e. 'Abhitanvayavada'. According to this, words while uttered convey the Padarthas which in their term convey the Vakyartha

(meaning of the sentence), the cognition of which is the Vakyarthajana (knowledge of meaning of a sentence), otherwise known as the Sabdabodha. The cognitions of the word are not the efficient cause of the Sabdabodha, but Padarthas which conveyed by the Padas do become the Karana (efficient cause) of the Sabdabodha.

This is important text of 9th CAD which is valuable from the linguistic philosophical point of view. It is not given due importance and not studied and translated. Each scholar or resource person will be given to study different theories and prepare paper on this. So, gist of Tattvabindu will be brought on the basis of textual study.