

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

By
Dr. K. KUNJUNNI RAJA

Transaction No. 57

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF WORLD CULTURE
Bangalore 560 004

TRANSACTION

Many valuable lectures are given, papers read and discussed, and oral reviews of outstanding books presented, at the INDIAN INSTITUTE OF WORLD CULTURE. These Transactions represent some of these lectures and papers and are printed for wider dissemination in the cause of better inter-cultural understanding so important for world peace and human brotherhood.

TRANSACTION No. 57

Dr. K. Kunjunni Raja is currently Director of the Adyar Library and Archives at The Theosophical Society, Madras. Before, he was Professor and Head of the Department of Sanskrit at the prestigious University of Madras.

He was invited to deliver the Founder's Day Address in August, 1980. The theme he chose to speak on was language and culture. This paper based on Dr. Raja's talk brings into focus linguistic as well as philosophical aspects of the problem of Language and Culture.

© 1983, INDIAN INSTITUTE OF WORLD CULTURE
All Rights Reserved

Printed by W. Q. Judge Press, 97, Residency Road, Bangalore-560 025, and published by the Indian Institute of World Culture, 6 Shri B. P, Wadia Road. Basavangudi, Bangalore 560 004 Printed in India.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

By DR. K. KUNJUNNI RAJA

I have selected 'Language and Culture' because I have been taking a keen interest in the basic problems of language and trying to the extent possible for me to unravel the thoughts of Indian thinkers like Bhartrhari and Anandavardhana. I felt that it would not be difficult for me to discuss the inter-relation between language and culture; but when I began to sort out my ideas and arrange them in a cogent manner, I realized that the task is not so easy. Even the two terms in the title 'language and culture', though familiar to everybody, are so evasive of strict definition that all one can say about them is what St Augustine said of time: I know what it is if you don't ask me; if you ask me, I do not know.

si nemo ex me quaerat scio, si

quaeranti explicare velim rescio. (Confessions)

The term 'culture' is being used very frequently but in different senses in different contexts. The anthropological sense of the term is, the social heritage in a human society which is transmitted from generation to generation, mostly through language. One of the early usages of this term in this sense is found in the title of E.B. Taylor's book *Primitive Culture* (1871). It is still used in that sense in studies in anthropology and socio-linguistics. Scholars like Malinowski, Boas, Sapir and Whorf have shown the intimate interrelation between the culture of a society and the language spoken there, and used language as an important tool for the proper understanding of the cultural heritage of that society. In this wider sense culture stands for the entire human heritage, including not only fine arts, philosophy and religion, but also science and technology; it can be used for good as well as bad purposes: in this sense it covers the whole civilization.

Another sense in which the term culture is used is with reference to an individual in the sense of refinement, sensibility and wisdom, as in the case of Mathew Arnold's book *Culture and Anarchy*. Arnold himself spells it out as 'sweetness and light' the ideal way of life and an attitude of benevolent equanimity that one expects in a perfect gentleman. A third sense of the term 'culture' is with reference to the whole society and stands for the artistic, literary, philosophical and religious content of its heritage and is often contrasted with 'civilization' standing for the material content, namely scientific and technological achievements. Fine arts consisting of painting, sculpture, music, poetry and dance, as well as architecture and eloquence form part of culture, while crafts and sciences do not.

The term 'culture' is also used for 'world culture' the sum total of all that is best in the artistic, literary, philosophical and religious content of human heritage throughout the world. The Indian Institute of World Culture, Bangalore is more interested in this sense of the term, and the original name 'Indian Institute of Culture' given to it when it was founded in 1945 was changed to the present one to remove confusion and to emphasize this point. Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru used to find fault even with the expression 'Indian Culture', saying that culture is one and impartite and cannot be compartmentalized. It is as meaningless as the term 'my god'. The idea of one humanity and a universal culture is reflected in the well-known Sanskrit saying '*Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*' and the Atharvavedic statement '*mataprthivi, putro aham prthivyah*'. In whatever sense we take the term 'culture' its relation to language is intimate.

Language in the widest sense of the term is generally taken to mean 'communication between living beings'. Normally it is communication in a context of situation in a social set up, but it is possible that the communication is between people separated by time or space. Even though lower animals too have various means of communicating information and

feeling language in its developed form is decidedly a human characteristic and has often been taken as a distinctive mark of humanity. It is language that has made man a man; no human race, not even the most primitive tribe, lacks language. We can say that it is the development of language that helped man to ascend higher and higher in the evolutionary process in quick succession and outdistance the anthropoids. For the transmission of a culture and its maintenance there is no safeguard more reliable than a language. To have a rich literary language implies to have the means for the maintenance and transmission of its culture. It was language that helped man to transmit the knowledge acquired by each generation through its own experience, to the next generation. Thus language is responsible for the remarkable acceleration in the progress of human civilization and culture. Abhinavagupta puts it in a beautiful way in his *Locana* commentary on the *Dhvanyloka*;

ऊध्वेध्विमास्त्य यदर्थतत्त्वं धीः पश्यति श्रान्ति मवेदयन्ती !

फल तदाहैः परिकल्पितानां विवेकसोपानपरम्पराणाम् !!

Rising higher and higher, if the intellect, without rest, is able to see the essence of things; it is certainly the result of the regular steps of the staircase built by our ancestors.

In the animal world it is instinct that prompts and regulates activities. The singing of a cuckoo in the spring season, the building of nests by birds, the knitting of the cobweb by a spider or the building of anthills by the ants, all these no doubt, are wonderfully great achievements. But all these are produced through the instinct of animals. There is no progress from generation to generation. The nests, cobwebs and anthills that we find today are of the same type and size and quality as those ten thousand years ago. It is only man who has been able to transmit the result of his experience to succeeding generations, and thereby build up, a rich cultural heritage, and to subordinate the role of instinct to that of culture. This is definitely due to the power of language. It is true that some Indian thinkers like Bhartrhari considered even instinct in animals and human beings as a subtle form of the linguistic principle, calling it *Pratibha* or an intuitive flash of insight. The *Vakyapadiya* says :

स्वरवृत्तिं विकुरुते मधौ पुस्को किलस्य कः !

जन्त्वादयः कुलायादि करणे केन शिक्षिताः !! (II. 151)

In India the earliest available literature, the *Rig-Veda*, contains glowing tributes to the power of speech. To the Vedic seers who were struggling with the problem of communicating their mystic experiences through the medium of language, language was naturally an object of wonder and reverence. One entire hymn (X. 125) is put in the mouth of the Goddess of speech, *Vak*, who declares that she will endow her favourite devotees with wisdom, intelligence and poetic talents :

यं कामये तं तमुग्रं कृणोमि
तं ब्रह्माणं तमृषिं तं सुमेधाम् !!

The view that was later advocated by Bhartrhari, identifying the Supreme Reality, Brahman, with the speech principle *Sabdatattva*, is already there in a subtle form in the Vedic texts. In the hymn *Asyavamiya* of Dirghatamas, *Vak* is called the One Real *ekam sat* (1.164.46). *Vak* was divided into four parts; these are known to the Brahmins with insight; three parts which are hidden, mortals do not activate ; the fourth part they speak :

चत्वारि वाक् परिमिता पदानि

तानि विदुर्ब्राह्मणा ये मनीषिणः !
गुहा लीणि निहिता नेङ्गयन्ति
तुरीयं वाचं मनुष्या वदन्ति !!

(1.164.45)

Professor Norman Brown has pointed out that the riddles in the hymn can be solved by taking it as referring to Goddess Vak. “Vak is presented by Dirghatamas as the Supreme authority in the universe. She is the mistress of the *aksara* of the *rk*.” The highest knowledge is the knowledge of her and understanding her utterance. Not merely understanding one part which mortals speak, but also of the other three parts which mortals do not employ. Vak is also vaguely identified with the Goddess Sarasvati, the heavenly stream, who is asked to present her inexhaustible breast to be sucked (49). In later literature Sarasvati becomes a synonym for Vak. There are several passages in Vedic literature proclaiming the greatness of the Goddess of Speech.

‘वागेव विश्वा भुवनानि जई वाच इत् सर्वं ममृतं यच्च मर्त्यम् !’
‘वागेवार्थं पश्यति वागू ब्रवीति वागेवार्थां संनिहितं संतनोति!
वाचैव विश्वं बहुरूपं निबद्धं तदेतदेकं प्रविभज्योपभृङ्के !!’

(Q. Vrtti, Vakyapadiya 1.110)

Uddalaka’s teaching in the Sadvidya passage of Chandogyopanisad refers to the role of vak or language in the manifestation of the world.

वाचारम्भणं विकारो नामधेयं मृत्तिकेत्येव सत्यम् ! (6.1.3)

In clay products, clay alone is satya or real, while the products such as a pot or a bowl is the creation of Vak (in its double role of name and form, *namarupe*,—the. appearances). Vak represents one of the aspects of Brahman as the powerful and creative word.

Bhartrhari proclaimed that the First Principle of the Universe is the transcendental speech essence (*Sabdatattva*) and that the whole phenomenon of material existence is only an appearance (*vivarta*) of that speech principle, Brahman. The entire world of things whose individuality consists only in names and forms (*nama & rupa*) has its source in this Speech essence. This speech essence which is the Ultimate Reality and is of the nature of consciousness has neither beginning nor end and is unchanging ; but on the basis of its various powers, such as Time, which though in essence identical with it seem to be different, the phenomenal world appears as evolutionary and pluralistic.

अनादिनिधनं ब्रह्म शब्दतत्त्वं यदक्षरम् !
विवर्ततेऽर्थभावेन प्रक्रिया जगतो यत्: !!
एकमेव यदात्मनातं भिन्न शक्तिभ्य व्यपाश्रयात् !
अपृथक्त्वेऽपि शक्तिभ्य पृथक्त्वेनेव कृते ! (VP.I.1-2)

According to Bhartrhari the speech principle has three stages in the course of its manifestation ; namely *Pasyanti*, *Madhyama* and *Vaikhari*, The subtlest form of speech, namely *Para*, is hinted at as the Absolute reality about which nothing can be stated definitely, being beyond the range of speech and thought.

वैखर्या मध्यमायाश्च पश्यन्त्या श्रुतैतद् भ्रुतम् !
नेकतीर्थमेदाया स्तय्या वाचः परं पदम् !! I.144

The Pratyabhijna school of Kashmir Saivism accepts clearly four different stages in the

manifestation of Brahman; adding the fourth stage called Para which seems to be identical with the Pasyanti stage in Bhartrhari's system. So also in the Tantras. Vrsabhadeva says in his commentary on *Vakyapadiya* 1.14 that according to Bhartrhari *Pratibha* is identical with *Pasyanti*.

प्रतिभामिति – येयं समस्त शब्दार्थ कारण भूता बुद्धिः, यां पश्यन्तीत्याहुः !

Ksemaraja too says that according to Vaiyakarnaas *Pasyanti* is the same as sabda Brahman: (*Pratyabhijnahrdaya*, p. 18)

शब्दब्रह्म मयं पश्यन्तीरूपम् अत्मातत्वमिति वैयाकरणाः !

In the *Sivadrsiti* Somananda confirms this view (II.2).

ईत्याहुस्ते परं ब्रह्म यदनादि तथाक्षरम्!
तदक्षरं शब्दरूपं सा पश्यन्ती परा हि वाक् !!

As Gopinath Kaviraja pointed out, “Bhartrhari holds Sabda Brahman to be independent and self-subsistent, while the later Agamas make it a power subordinate to the substance with which it is identical (*Abori*. 1924, p. 114).

To Bhartrhari any complete utterance is a Vakyasphota, an integral indivisible symbol, and its meaning is a flash of insight which *in* also instantaneous and indivisible. At the *Pasyanti* or *Pratibha* stage no real distinction can be made between speech and thought. There is no linguistic difference at this stage. The next stage in the evolution or manifestation of speech is called *madhhyama*, or the intermediate since it lies between *Pasyanti* and *Vaikhari*. This is the utterance in its phonological structure, the sound pattern of the norm. All the elements linguistically relevant to the sentence are present at this stage, in a latent form. Unity and sequence, though mutually conflicting, are there at this stage. This corresponds to the *Prakṛta dhvani* in the sphota theory. The meaning is conveyed by sphota which is revealed by the *Prakṛta dhvani*. At this stage the -language is distinct, though the temporal sequence is not felt clearly. The last stage is *Vaikhari*, the actual sounds uttered by the speaker and heard by the listener; this corresponds to *Vaikṛtadhvani* of the Sphota theory.

It must be remembered that by language or speech principle (*sabda-tattva*) Indian thinkers meant, not merely the utterances made by the speakers and understood by the listeners—which is only the *Vaikhari* form, being part of the real speech, but also the entire thought processes behind it, and ultimately pure consciousness or *Cit* itself which is identified with the Supreme Reality, Brahman. The entire world is a manifestation of this linguistic principle. As W. B. Pillsbury puts it (‘Meaning and Image’ *Psychological Review*, 1906, p. 156). “We then come to the conclusion that meaning is practically everything; we always see the meaning as we look, think in meaning as we think, act in terms of meaning when we act. Apparently we are never conscious of anything but meaning”. The whole discourse being in terms of our conceptual images and the words symbolizing them, it seems that there is no knowledge free from linguistic association. Bhartrhari exhorts language as the only means of our understanding the world and the sole means of knowledge:

न सोऽस्ति प्रत्ययो लोके यः शब्दानुगमाहते !

अनुविद्धिमिव ज्ञानं सर्व शब्देन भासते !! I 115

(All knowledge is interpenetrated with language) The Buddhists, of the Vijnanavada school, holding the Apoha theory of perception, stated that language deals with conceptual knowledge which cannot touch the indeterminate reality which is fleeting, and therefore language has only the value of a convenient means of communication, without directly

grasping Reality.

Dandin praised the role of language saying that the entire world would have been submerged in darkness, if the light in the form of language had not been shining throughout:

इदमन्धंतमः कृत्स्नं जायेत भुवनत्रम् !
यदि शब्दाह्वयं ज्योति रासंसारं न दीप्यते !! (Kavyadarsa, I)

But even our ancient Seers have sometimes spoken about the absolute reality being beyond the range of language and mind to bring out the inadequance of language to reveal Reality in wholeness.

यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते अप्राप्य मनसा सह !

Anatole France makes one of the, characters of his work *Revolt of the Angels* speak about language thus: “What is human language but the cry of the beast of the forest or the mountains complicated and corrupted by arrogant anthropoids?” The Malayalam poet Kumaran Asan complains that God has not given man a means to reveal his heart; language is imperfect and liable to err.

Tannatilla paranullu kattuvan onnume naramupayam isvaran;
Innu bhasayitapurnam innaho vannupom pizhayum arthasankayal.

(*Cintavistayaya Sita*)

Thus we find that there are two approaches to the problems of language and its role as a means of communication: one praising language to the skies, emphasizing its importance and potentialities and the other decrying it and pointing out its limitations. How far can language help man to communicate to his fellows his immediate experiences? What is the relation between language and reality as experienced by each individual? What is the exact role played by language in communicating intimate human experience, in conveying one's thoughts, attitudes and feelings to others? Does it act as a barrier or as a bridge? Is language a veil put on the face of Reality which we must break asunder before we can see her face to face? Or does it act as a telescope or microscope helping our vision? Or is it a sort of colored lens which partly helps us in seeing reality, but at the same time, partly distorts our vision? Questions like these have been agitating the minds of thinkers, poets and philosophers in India, as well as elsewhere, even from ancient times.

We have to admit that in a sense the ultimate Reality is beyond the range of language. Even those mystics who had immediate vision of Truth have found it almost impossible to grasp it fully and to communicate their ecstatic experience faithfully and effectively, and hence the different and opposing interpretations of many a mystic utterance, unfortunately resulting in religious intolerance and fights. Even in the case of poetic vision the problem is the same. Here even the primary experience of the poet is often vague and hazy, and the poet may not have grasped it fully ; at the time of communication he is trying to remember, and revisualize the original vision and then to present it by means of language. The emotional experience, when recollected in tranquility, may not necessarily be as powerful and clear as the original one; and, the natural limitations of the linguistic medium and the lack of mastery over the technique on the part of the poet may stand in the way of proper and accurate expression.

On the other hand it must be noted that the potentialities of language are far-reaching and wonderful. As Bergson points out in his *Introduction to Metaphysics*, even if language is incapable of apprehending and expressing reality, it may be used in another way, “not to

represent, but to bring the hearer to the point where the hearer may himself transcend language and pass to incommunicable insight. It is a dialectical ladder, which when we have ascended, may be kicked away

What cannot be expressed directly may often be suggested indirectly. There are two levels in the working of a language: the level of information and the level of culture, the former is the work-a-day level dealing with social communication of day to day affairs, while the latter is the level of culture, imposing certain patterns of thinking, feeling and will on human experience. At the former level words act as signs and give their literal or even metaphoric meanings; at the latter level, the words or key words may act as symbols carrying the cultural content. Often people think that language is only a sign system meant for pragmatic and empirical communication, forgetting the more important role as the storehouse of the cultural content.

Is the language of poetry different from the ordinary language of every day life? The cleavage between the ordinary language and the language of poetry is very remarkable in many literatures and attempts are being made to bring them closer so that poetry is brought within the grasp of the ordinary readers. Often the poetic language is archaic and loaded with conventional terms and expressions which have lost their significance in the everyday language. Indian thinkers even from the time of the *Rig-Veda* have emphasized the importance of selecting the words and expressions from the popular spoken language and using them properly. The language of ordinary life is the raw material out of which the poet has to Choose his tools of expression. The Vedic Seer says:

सक्तमिव तितउना पुनन्तो
यत्र धिरा मनसा वाचमक्तत !
अत्रा सखायः सख्यानि जानते
भद्रौषां लक्ष्मीर्निहिताधि वाचि !! X.71.4

The great poets select their words, winnowing away the chaff from the grain and creatively compose their poems; people of like temperament are able to see this beauty; Goddess of beauty lives in their words only. Composing a poem is sometimes compared in Vedic literature to the construction of a chariot; this also shows the need for carefully selecting the words. Many words would have accumulated through usage shades of meaning; the poet has to be careful in selecting the proper word out of many possible synonyms. The emotional aura around a word can be used with profit. Some words which have become blunt by constant usage can, by a subtle suppletion, be brought to life—this is the case with faded metaphors. Wisemann says (*Language strata*, *Logic and Language* p. 13). “We Seem at times to glimpse behind a word another sense, deeper and half hidden and to hear faintly the entry of another meaning, in and with which others begin to sound and all accompany the original meaning of the word like the sympathetic chimes of a bell. Hence that deep and sonorous ring which is lacking in artificial and invented languages; and hence also the multiplicity, the undefiniteness, the strange suggestiveness and evasiveness of so much poetry”.

Regarding the importance of selection in poetry. Anandavardhana says,

सोऽर्थस्तद्व्यक्तिसामर्थ्ययोगी शब्दश्च कश्चन !
यत्नतः प्रत्यभिज्ञयौ तौ शब्दार्थौ महाकवेः !! I

The expressions and their literal meanings of a great poet are those with suggestive potentialities and must be carefully identified and selected.

The literal meaning of an utterance, especially in poetry and mystic writings, is only a part of its total meanings, and those who try to analyse the literal meaning of a mystic utterance or a piece of inspired poetry may completely lose sight of the real significance. Professor Gardiner says in his *Speech and Language* (p. 61). "A curious position sometimes confronts commentators of letters or ancient texts. The sentences hang together and yield a sense which is satisfactory and certain up to a point, but no further." To the audience addressed by the author the background of the facts is known so that he could see what was meant; but the interpreter is left perplexed and baffled, because for him the background is unascertainable. This is especially true in the case of symbolic poetry. In the *Rig-Veda* itself there are many symbolic passages whose significance must have been ignite dear to the contemporary audience, but which is only a riddle for the modern interpreter.

The use of images and symbols is one of the means of extending the range of meaning. By symbolizing one situation by means of another, a situation can be fused with the feelings belonging to another, and an aura of feeling in the one case pervades the other. 'A rosy cheek' means much more than the rose colour of the cheek. The feeling of happiness and joy at the sight of the blossoming rose flower and even its fragrance and beauty may be suggested by that expression. The feelings induced by the symbol will depend on the cultural context of the linguistic community. The statement of a lover "you are the cream of my coffee" has no significance for a community which drinks coffee black. The terms *hamsa* and *garuda* may produce an attitude in India which their English equivalents *goose* and *vulture* cannot produce in an English audience. The expression 'the village on the Ganges' may suggest coolness and sanctity in the mind of a pious Hindu, but the foreign tourist may get the suggestion about boating facilities and the availability of cheap fish. Hence the need to understand the cultural background for interpreting images and symbols. 'The sharp arrows from the blue lotus' may be easily understood by the Indian readers as the sidelong glances of a beautiful girl, but may be a riddle to the western audience. Poetry can be fully enjoyed only by understanding the cultural background.

Expression is only one aspect of communication. Comprehension on the part of the bearer is equally important. We have discussed the difficulties in expressing through the medium of language, religions and aesthetic experiences of great thinkers and the various means by which attempts have been made to overcome the difficulties. Even if the expression of the message is not clear enough, it may be understood by the listener, if he is sympathetic and attentive and observes the extra linguistic features of the context.

In India the Seers have pointed out that the mystic utterance can be understood only by the select few blessed with spiritual enlightenment. Others see, but do not comprehend, hear but do not understand; ultimate Reality yields completely, like a loving wife to her husband, only to the deserving man.

उत त्वः पश्यन् न ददर्श वाच-

मुतत्वः शृण्वन् न शृणोत्येनम् !

उतो त्वस्मै तन्वं विसस्ते

जायेव पत्य इशती सुवासा :!!

The idea that communication of an intimate nature is easy only between people of similar temperament and cultural background, is suggested in the Vedic time

सखाय : सख्यानि जानते !

The Indian concept of a *Sahrdaya* stresses this need for empathy on the part of the reader. A *Sahrdaya* is one who is a man of sensibility and who by his continuous training in appreciating classical works has the capacity to rise to the level of the poet, setting aside his own prejudices and predilections, and is able to understand, appreciate and evaluate the aesthetic vision contained in the poem he is reading. Communication is easy between persons who have similar cultural background and education. The late Malayalam poet K. K. Raja, an uncle of mine, has put it beautifully thus: when two Veenas are tuned to the same pitch and kept nearly, the sound produced in one will produce sympathetic vibrations and a similar sound in the other Veena also.

*samanasamskaram iyanna vantu
vinayku samipyam ezhumna paksam
onninkal untam calanam pakarnnu
mattetilim nadam udikkwnallo.*

It has been shown by philosophers and poets of the world that with the help of suggestive and symbolic language a lot could be conveyed which normally lies beyond what can be said definitely. In fact they have tried, and many of them successfully, to communicate the incommunicable, to speak about what lies on the fringe of silence and beyond. However imperfect our language may be, it is still a very powerful and useful means—perhaps the only handy means we have of approaching reality, through not actually grasping it.

In *The Philosophy of Symbolism*, Ernst Cassirer says: “The chaos of immediate impression takes on order and clarity for us only when we name it and so permeate it with the function of linguistic signs, the world of impression itself acquires an entirely new intellectual articulation. This differentiation and fixation of certain contents by words, not only designates a definite intellectual quality through them, but actually endows them with such a quality, by virtue of which they are now raised above the mere immediacy of so-called sensory qualities. Thus language becomes one of the human spirits basic implements, by which we progress from the world of mere sensation to the world of intuition and ideas”. This statement may be compared to Bhartrhari’s view that the whole phenomenon of material existence is only an illusory appearance or *vivarta* of the speech. Principle of which symbol and meaning are only two aspects.

Many ideas which are beyond the grasp of the mind can be handled by using proper language. The square root of minus one (-1) is not imaginable, but can be represented by a symbol $\sqrt{-1}$ and used in mathematics. Similarly the fourth dimension quantities can be mathematically grasped, though they cannot be mentally conceived.

It is a matter of common experience that an utterance often means much more than its literal sense. The logicians and the lawyers, the Naiyayikas and the Mimamsakas, who are more interested in accuracy and precision in the use of words in a sentence which they want to analyse objectively than in the fullness of expression and the possibilities of extending the range of meaning to the domain of the inexpressible, may be satisfied with the normal, literal sense of words ; but poets and critics, as well as the mystics who deal with the totality of human experience cannot neglect vast areas of human behaviour. Professor Brough says; “most philosophic discussions of meaning confine themselves to a relatively small portion of language behavior, namely statements which describe or report a state of affairs—the propositions of the natural sciences, or more generally, such statements as are traditionally handed by logic.” Thus Wittgenstein dismisses the subject of colloquial language by saying, “The silent adjustments to understand colloquial languages are enormously complicated” (*Tractatus*, 4.002). In his *Philosophic Investigations* he again says “It is only in normal cases

that the use of a word is clearly prescribed; abnormal cases are exceptions". This view is on the basis that every word has a definite and fixed meaning and that this is all that need be considered.

The Indian thinkers like Bhartrhari and Anandavardhana who have considered the problem in detail do not deny the existence of fixed literal meanings to words and sentences. But they believe that though the core of the meaning may be clear, the fringes and boundaries are often vague and conditioned by the syntactic and situational context, and that apart from the literal meaning of an utterance, there is a suggested socio-cultural meaning which varies from context to context.

Anandavardhana's Dhvani theory stresses the importance of suggestive meaning in literature. His basic postulate is that utterances possess a literal meaning, and can also convey a further meaning in the socio-cultural meaning. This includes everything other than the literal meaning and the metaphoric senses. Under the term meaning he includes not only information conveyed, but also the figures of speech like simile suggested and most important of all, the emotions induced. This naturally necessitates accepting the suggestive power for language, for even the logicians cannot argue that emotions induced by the language of poetry are the direct meaning of the expressions. Again Anandavardhana did not confine himself to the words and sentences as indicators of this meaning; he included all the contextual factors, including the social background and cultural environment, as well as the literal sense as indicators of the full meaning of a poetic utterance.

Language may be considered not merely as an expression of thought or a human method of communicating emotion, thought, etc., or even as an outlet for his intensive feelings, but also as a social activity. Modern sociolinguistics is based on this assumption. Even de Saussure had pointed out the need to analyse language within a social context; his distinction between *parole* and *langue*, or speech and language is quite significant. Sturtevant says in his *Introduction to Linguistic Science* that language is a social science because language functions in society and society requires language for its successful existence. Malinowski the anthropologist, explained it at length in his paper on "*The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages*" given as supplement to the *Meaning of Meaning* by Ogden & Richards. Meaning is a how and not a what; it is a function, not a thing. Malinowski was an anthropologist who studied language as a tool for understanding culture ; later linguists like Professor Firth wanted culture to help understanding meaning.

Malinowski says: "In a primitive language--the utterance becomes intelligible only when placed within its context of situation. A statement spoken in real life is never detached from the situation in which it has been uttered.....utterance and situation are bound together inextricably with each other, and the context of situation is indispensable for the understanding of the wordsthe utterance has no meaning except in the context of situation" (p.307).

He uses the term *phatic communion* to the use of language in free, aimless social intercourse. A mere phrase of politenessfulfills a function to which the meaning of its words is almost completely irrelevant. Enquires about health comments on weather, affirmation of some supremely obvious state of things—all such are exchanged; certainly not in order to express any thought. This new type of linguistic use is phatic communion—a type of speech in which ties of union are created by mere exchange of words.

Prof. Firth took the term *Context of Situation* from Malinowski, but used it in a wider sense to cover all situations, linguistic as well as social. An expression 'How is

hat?’ takes the reader, to the cricket ground, while ‘Say when’ takes him to the bar, where the drink is being diluted. In the Madras City ‘Hold on’ will immediately remind one of the strap-hanger’s requests to stop the bus.

Social scientists are showing interest in linguistic data as a means of studying behavior and linguists have begun to see that many important questions of language—change can be solved only by studying the social background. Importance of language in social behavior is recognized. Communicative competence in language study implies the need .for taking into consideration the cultural background; for this competence is what a speaker needs to know to communicate effectively in culturally significant settings. The use of honorific plural, special terms of politeness while speaking to superiors, the proper use of the angular and plural of the second person pronoun, and the proper form of address depending on the person addressed—all these linguistic behavior-patterns are culturally conditioned. I published a paper on this topic 20 years ago “Language of Social Hierarchy.

Some scholars like Whorf are of the view that there is a direct relationship between the language one speaks and the way of his thinking. The view that all conceptual development is language-linked has been challenged, but the mutual influence is generally accepted. Experiments have shown that the deaf have difficulty in logical thinking, but can easily describe concrete events this mental retardation is intrinsically related to their lack of- language experience. More language experience makes concept formation more efficient. The contention is that visual memory strengthened by verbal descriptions. Whorf’s view that language determines thought is corroborated by the works of Greenfield, Reich and Olver(*Language in Thinking*, Penguin Books, ed. Parveen Adams, 1972).

By analyzing the vocabulary of a language, we can often find out the pattern of the life led by the people. The Eskimo language contains several words for snow; even in English there are many words like fog, mist, snow, ice and smog in the field; but Tamil contains only few words. Similarly Sanskrit contains several words on dairy products: *navanita* for butter got from the milk directly, *haiyangavina* for butter got by churning yesterday’s milk curdled; and different words for butter milk containing different proportion of water. The existence of several, words connected with gambling suggests the popularity of gambling among the people at some time. Here it must-be remembered that a language contains vocabularies pertaining to different cultural strata; even when certain social behavior pattern has been abandoned by the people, its earlier existence will be reminded in the vocabulary still existing.

One interesting piece of information is found in the September, 1980 issue of *The American Review* Moral Dilemmas of Modem Biology’ by Albert Rosenfeld, (p. 78).

“The proponents of structural linguistics are convinced we are born with a built up capacity to understand all human languages—which they further believe, share a universal grammar Some of their contentions are in dispute: some have been widely accepted. Consider the observation carried out by child psychologists in which movies were made of infants responding to their mother’s talk. Meticulous, frame by frame analysis of the films have shown that the babies’ movements, while listening; are far from random. They make specific movements tuned with the specific sounds made when the mother is talking .It looks as if these babies’ responses are *programmed*, in fact for all human sounds. as if they, begin to

learn to speak with their bodies before they do with their tongues”.

Before concluding I would like to consider the proper form of speech a man of culture is expected to adopt. The Sanskrit term for culture is *Samskara* or *Samskriti*. *Samskrita* is the language of culture, not only in fact, but also in name. Panini derives the term by a sutra : *samparibhyam karotan bhusane* indicating that the phoneme *s* is added between *sam* and *kr* when the idea of polish and beauty is intended. It is well-known that the magnificent cultural heritage of India is enshrined in Sanskrit literature and that the golden key of this rich treasury is Sanskrit language. The importance of Sanskrit for maintaining the cultural unity of India and checking the fissiparous tendencies thrown up by selfish political interests is also well recognized. Sanskrit is one of the most ancient literatures of the world, with a continuous history of more than four thousand years from the time of the *Rig-Veda* to the present day. In richness of vocabulary it is second to none. Even the minutest nuances in meaning can be indicated in Sanskrit clearly and precisely because of this richness. The careful and proper use of this language by the great master poets has left an aura of suggestive tones around many of the terms to help the serious writer to convey his intuitive experiences, without any difficulty. No wonder that Sanskrit has been the main vehicle of India’s literary and cultural traditions from time immemorial.

Polished way of speaking is possible in any language even though the term polished or *Samskrita* is given only to Sanskrit. It is the selection of expressions and the way of speaking that is important. The ideal of good breeding and aristocracy includes proper speech as one of its principal elements. Not only the words but even the tone of voice and its modulations is equally important. Even silence could be used as an eloquent language. In *Pygmalion* Bernard Shaw has described the successful experiments of a linguistics Professor in converting a country girl to a polished girl by giving her proper phonetic training. Kalidasa refers to polished speech making the man who uses it himself polished and sanctified. Referring to Himavan, at the birth of his daughters, it is said.

संस्कारवत्येव गिरा मनीषी
तया स पूतश्च विभूषितश्च !!

Kumarasambhava I.

Bhartrhari says in his *Subhasita* that a polished way of speaking is an ornament to a person.

वाण्येका समलंकरोति पुरुषं या सस्कृता धर्यते !

The general rule about the way of speaking by a man of culture is given in the *Manu-smṛti* (4.138):

सत्यं ब्रूयात् प्रियं ब्रूयात् सत्यमप्रियम् !
प्रियं च नामृतं ब्रूयादेष धर्मः सनातनः!!

‘Speak the truth ; Speak what is pleasing ; do not speak an unpleasant truth, neither should one speak a pleasant untruth ; this is the eternal law’ Valmiki refers to Rama as always speaking with a smiling face: स्मितपूर्वाभिभाषी .The *Kṛsnayajurveda* (III.2.2) contains the statement मधु वदिष्यामि. ‘I will speak only sweet things’. Altruism is a trait in the character of a cultured man; this applies in speech too. आत्मनः प्रतिकूलानि परेषा न समाचरेत्! The social and cultural background has to be taken, into account in every case, and a cultured man must certainly have communicative competence in the true sense of the term.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

K. A. Subramanian Iyer : *Bhartrhari*, Deccan College, Poona, 1969.

Bhartrhari. *Vakyapadiya*. ed. Wilhelm Rau.

K. Kunjuni Raja: *Indian Theories of Meaning*, Adyar Library, Madras, 1977 (3rd edn).

Language of Poetry, Kamatak University, Dharwar, 1978.

W. Norman Brown : *India and Indology*. Selected articles, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1978.

Dr. K. Krishnamoorthy : *Dhvanyalakoka* with English Translation, Dharwar.

Gardiner, A. H., *The Theory of Speech and Language*. Oxford, 1951.

E. Cassirer : *The Philosophy of Symbolism*.