Creative Communication
Language and Reality in Indian Tradition

Sunil Sondhi

Tagore National fellow

Indira Gandhi National Center for the Arts

Abstract

The unifying vision of reason and intuition in Indian linguistic tradition as established in the Vedas, Upanishads, and the works of scholars and sages like Panini, Patanjali, Bharatmuni, Bhartrihari, and Abhinavagupta, embraces levels and structure of language, objective reality, and the absolute reality. The search for general rules underlying the diversity of languages is ultimately an exploration of the very nature of human mind and its relation with reality. It reveals the interconnections between language, thought and reality. Panini's grammar, Bharatmuni's view of dramatic performance as an integrated entity, and Bhartrihari's view of sentence as a meaningful unit reveals the unifying relationship of the parts and the whole, between the objective reality of the world and the Absolute Reality, and between reason and intuition. The essential message of Indian classical texts with regard to language and communication is that there are different levels of language between the two extremes termed as Vaikhari and Pasyanti, which correspond to different levels of consciousness of the Absolute Reality. The Absolute Reality lies outside human perceptions of space and time and is, therefore, is not expressible in ordinary language. The experience of that reality can only be indicated by words that try to go beyond words. Meaningful thought and communication requires constant interplay of lower and higher levels of speech, symbolizing constant interplay of the relative and Absolute Reality, and reason and intuition.

Keywords: *Veda, Upaniṣads,* Cultural linguistics, Indian culture, Intercultural communication

Introduction

Today, fury and incomprehension of words have eroded the minimum standards of discussion and debate in communication, specially in the cyberspace. We seem to be increasingly unwilling to even try to find a common ground with which to engage with people whose views differ from ours. Such violent language achieves its impact by denying any complexity, conditionality, or uncertainty. It exaggerates wildly to make its point. It is built on a presumption of bad faith on the part of the other person. It accepts no responsibility to anyone to explain anything to anybody, but instead treats the facts as they were a matter of opinion. (Thompson, 2016, p. 17).

In still many more cases, when the words are not violent or offensive, they are still inane. People merely gossip and chat. Though they talk so much they have little to say. This is true particularly of academicians and journalists in urban India. They speak compulsively, mechanically, in jargons. They use many and big words for few and small things. The television debates that we see so often these days, and seminars and conferences are often nothing else but words reacting to words with little sense of relevance and reality. (Ram Swarup, 2001, p. 91.)

A healthy language knits people together, and ultimately leads to better and more inclusive society. But when communication loses its power to explain and engage, it endangers the bond of trust between people. The critical risk from bad communication is not only in the realm of culture, but also in legitimacy and sustainability of social and political cohesion. When public discourse of a country gets vicious and partisan, democratic society as a whole starts to fall apart. The loud-mouthed rhetoric based on half-truth instead of bringing people together breeds anger, hatred and division in society.

The Indian view of communication on the other hand is one that joins, links, coordinates and brings people together. Not in the sense of monotonous uniformity, and not in the sense of erasing all the differences, but in the sense of unity in diversity, shared commonalties along with differences. One way we can frame integral communication is to describe it as holistic, innermost and multidimensional exchange. That is, communication that originates from all dimensions of being – physical, emotional, rational, cultural, and spiritual, and seeks to reach out to as many aspects as possible of the listener. Inherently, then, integral communicators will use inclusive approaches and language that evolve out of a clear understanding of the wider social and universal context of the speaker and the listener. Integral communication could be the bridge between the traditional and modern idioms of Indian and society.

A primary assumption of this view is that the *Sahridyata* or connection we so earnestly seek does exist in all exchanges. (Mishra, 2005, p.93). Our ideas, feelings, and beliefs spring from the rich foundation of our common humanity and cosmic identity; at the most fundamental level, we are part of the same fabric of being amidst all existence. Conflict may therefore be due to misperception between different manifestations of the same unmanifest reality, and communication can be viewed as coordination to connect and integrate multiple manifestations of the ultimate reality. However, regardless of how that accommodation and coordination is defined, the commonality principle has been understood and practiced by very few, and there is instead a strong tendency to put people into different, hierarchical and even opposing categories. The objective of integral communication is to understand and appreciate the universal aspect of being, and the interdependent nature of everyone and everything.

The objective of the present article is to state the general principles of India's linguistic tradition and their contemporary relevance. The present context of communication studies and practice in India is the primary reason for studying India's linguistic tradition. India's tradition and culture have too often been treated in a historical way, as things which have been and are gone, and as wholly unrelated to, and without value for,

for the present context. The Indian tradition and culture, therefore, have not received the attention and consideration which is due to them. It is an unstated assumption of this view that values and content of tradition are impediments to modernization. It is the argument of this article that India's linguistic tradition is essentially in conformity with the most advanced scientific and rational thought in the field of linguistics and communication today. 'India is one country in the world, best exemplifying and ageless, unbroken tradition of speculations about language and communication' (Padoux, 1992, p.1). Tradition and modernity are not contradictory. This two-valued orientation is a Western construct. In the Indian tradition of multi-valued orientation, tradition and modernity are connected and complementary.

It is the argument of this article that the negative trends in communication in India stem from a complex web of social, political, and cultural factors that go beyond any individual, ideology or situation. To find a solution to this problem we need to look within and examine the disconnect between the roots of language in the Indian society and the use to which language is being put by people who are unaware of the India's linguistic tradition of discipline of words. It is in this context that the classical texts on communication in India need to be explored and relevant ideas adopted for integrative and creative communication. Exploration of Indian knowledge tradition in communication is also relevant in the context of the emerging trend of scholars' challenge from the non-Western world against the appropriateness of Eurocentric paradigm of communication being used in non-Western societies. (Miike, 2002; Servaes, 2000; Dissanayake, 2003, 2009; Yadava, 2008; Chen, 2003).

The explorations of modern science into the world of atoms in the twentieth century have confirmed the relational or contextual view of language and reality. At the ultimate core, at the heart of the world and the universe, there is no fixed form, no solidity. There are only relationships and dynamic patterns of vibration (*spandan*), shadows dancing in pure rhythm (Leonard, 1978, p.34). A few types of elementary particles or waves combine together like the letters of the cosmic alphabet to tell the story of galaxies, stars, light, heat, earth, and life (Rovelli, 2017, p.150). These insights of science have far-reaching ontological and epistemological implications for our understanding and active expression of the world around and within us, as highlighted by several Noble laureates, renowned physicists, and social scientists (Bohr, 1958; Heisenberg, 1962; Schrödinger, 1962; Charon, 1977; Bohm, 1980; Spariosu, 1989; Smith, 2014; Capra, 2015; Wendt, 2015; Burgess, 2018; Tagore, 2018).

Application of new scientific knowledge in social sciences, and particularly in linguistics, communication, and psychology, emphasizes the social and contextual character of the language. Language is not a machine that can be put together on an assembly line. It is a complex system that develops with thought and action. 'Like the mythical suit of armour which was 'in-born' with Karṇa in the *Mahābhārata*, thought and language are born together' (Matilal, 2017, p.123). In the ultimate analysis, language, thought and action may be seen as connected, inseparable and complementary. Language is therefore essentially uncertain, probable, emergent, and always in a state of making or 'languageing' even when it appears to be formal and definite. Contextual factors are inextricably bound together with language in ways that are enriching, complex and

dynamic (Massip, 2011, p.57). Words do not have autonomous, objective identities prior to their use in language and communication. Every word we use in real-world situations usually has several synonyms or related words in grammar which have a similar meaning and which could have been used in the same context. In recent years, a growing mass of research in linguistics and allied fields of psychology, neuroscience and anthropology has begun to probe in the sub field of cultural linguistics. (Evans, 2010; Leavitt, 2011; Lee, 1996; Ho, 1995; Lucy, 1992; Sharifian, 2011; Wilce, 2017; Laszlo 2017; Chopra, 2017).

This article explores the complementarity between the Indian communication model and modern science in what may be termed as a quantum turn in linguistics. In quantum mechanics, observation is what brings about objective and measurable reality. It is inherently a contextual process that involves first deciding what particular aspects to observe in nature and then preparing the perceptual means in such a way that observation can be made. If these steps are done differently, then different results will be obtained. Similarly, in language what brings about the transformation of ideas or impulses from potential meanings into an actual one is the speech act, which is intentional, an act of will. Language emerges from the speaker's intention to try to communicate one meaning rather than the other out of the several meanings in the mind. While the intention to communicate determines the effect in a certain way, the meaning that is actually communicated depends also on the listener whose comprehension will depend on how what is said is interpreted in the context of listeners' memory and experience. So, the idea common to the Indian communication system and quantum mechanics is that intention and cultural context relate to language in an apparently similar way as observation and measurement devices in physics relate to quantum reality.

The essential message of Indian classical texts with regard to language and communication is that there are different levels of language between the two extremes termed as *Paśyantī* and *Vaikharī*, which correspond to different levels of consciousness of the Absolute Reality. The Absolute Reality lies outside human perception of space and time and is therefore not expressible in ordinary language. The experience of that reality can only be indicated by words that try to go beyond words (Varma 1961; Kapoor, 2019; Matilal, 2014; Sastri, 2015; Ranganathananda, 2015; Tagore, 2018; Tripathi, 2017). In this context, the present study of the concept of *Sabdapurvayoga* as a cultural idea that straddles across various levels of language in an integrative and continuing flow can be helpful for a better understanding of cultural roots of language and communication in India and also in recognising its role in promoting intra-cultural and intercultural communication as it is.

Cosmic System

The concept *ṛta* or cosmic order is the basic foundation of the Vedic culture, and Indian linguistic tradition. *Ṛta* is a multidimensional concept which is connected to other fundamental concepts like *sat, satya, dharma, brahma,* and *atma,* in the *Veda,* Epics*, Upaniṣads* and the *Dharmaśāstra*. In its most fundamental sense*, ṛta* is the law, order, system, harmony underlying all natural phenomena. *Ṛta* is the all-pervasive universal

order that is same at all levels of existence, and the objective world is the expression of that order. The field of *ṛta* is physical, mental, spiritual, and ethical. Nature as it is known to us is not seen as a chaotic occurrence of events and objects. While it may appear as random and disorganized, the fundamental processes of nature that underlie all objective, and subjective realms too, function as a complex system in which all parts are coordinated and integrated into a larger whole.

Vedic sages and scholars realized the overarching presence of a cosmic order that held together in a complex and adaptive system at the different levels, forms, and phases of all the objects and processes that comprised the cosmos. All the forms of being existing and developing in harmony within an interconnected web of relationships were seen as organized in a system which integrated all the parts into an undivided whole in flowing movement. The cosmic order which extended to all levels of existence from the infinite to the infinitesimal was seen as inviolable, never to be broken, even by the Vedic divinities who were in fact considered as the guardians of *ṛta*.

This universal principle of creative unity is revealed in some of the earliest stages in the evolution of multi-cellular life on this planet. A multitude of cells were bound together into a larger unit, not through aggregation, but through a marvelous quality of complex inter-relationship maintaining a perfect co-ordination of functions. The larger co-operative unit accommodates greater freedom of self-expression of individual units, to develop greater power and efficiency in the organised whole. It is not merely an aggregation, but an integrative inter-relationship, complex in character, with differences within of forms and function. There are gaps between the units, but they do not stop the binding force that permeates the whole or the dynamic identity of the units. The most perfect inward expression of such organization has been attained by man in his own body. But what is most important of all is the fact that man has also attained its realization in a more subtle body outside his physical system in the universe. (Tagore, 1931, p.2).

The question how a particular entity functions as a coherent whole sub-system within a coherent system has exercised generations of biologists and physicists dissatisfied with the mechanistic approach. Since the twentieth century, concepts of quantum coherence and the related systemic intercommunication have been used to convey the wholeness of the organism, where the whole and the parts are mutually integrated, and every part is as much in control as it is open and responsive. This internal coherence of energy underlies the unity of activity and the identity of the particular organisms. Every single organism from the tiniest quark to the largest quasar in the infinite cosmos seems to be able to exist and work autonomously while perfectly keeping in step and tune with the whole. There is no choreographer orchestrating the dance of the particles and waves in all the systems. Ultimately, choreographer and dancer are the same (Ho, 1997, p.360).

Īśa Upaniṣad brings out the systemic aspect of cosmic order most succinctly and clearly. It says that the Absolute Reality is both universal and particular. The creation of the particular from the universal does not affect the integrity of the universal. The principle or quality of wholeness and integration is prior to the principle of particular and diversity. Oneness becomes many in the image of the oneness. That is whole, this is

whole, taking out a particular whole from the absolute whole leaves the absolute whole integrated and creative as before. Every particular entity has to be an integrated whole to maintain its identity amongst an integrated system of infinite entities. The wholeness or integrity of each part is the bedrock of the wholeness of the universe and the order of the cosmos, and the order of the cosmos is the bedrock of the wholeness of the particular (Radhakrishnan, 2007, p. 566).

Ṛta is the principle whereby the Absolute Reality becomes manifest and perceptible to human senses. In *Ṛg Veda* it is said that, 'heaven and earth exist in close unison in the womb of *ṛta*'. (*Ṛg Veda,* 10.65). *Ṛta*, thus, is the one single system that embraces the cosmic order. The concept of *ṛta* explains the course of the evolution and sustenance of the natural and human world in terms of rhythm, time cycle, seasons, and biological growth. It refers to three basic elements of birth, growth, and transformation as the components of the complex cosmic system which functions according to its own self-organizing principles and law. Scholars, scientists, and poets in all ages have always found it amazing that the Absolute Reality is so well-ordered.

Ṛta is closely connected to the later concepts of *satya* and *dharma*. While *ṛta* may be seen as the structure of the cosmic reality at its both manifest and unmanifest levels, *satya* is the practical and operational aspect which is integrally connected to the Absolute reality. It is because of these two principles that in Indian tradition the cosmos is considered as ordered and not disordered or disorganized. These two concepts also connect the cosmic level of order to the human and social levels of life. At the human level, moral and legal order is expressed through the norms of truth, non-aggression, freedom, and ecological alignment of human existence with the cosmic order. Thus, *ṛta* and *satya*, or *dharma*, uphold the essential unity of the immanent and transcendental reality of the cosmos.

Indian conceptualizations of *ṛta, satya,* and *dharma,* are not comparable with Western principles in the sense that they provide specific ethical permissions or prohibitions. Truth in the Western sense is the sum of what can be isolated and counted, it is what can be logically accounted or what can be proved to have happened, or what one really means at the moment when one speaks. While the Indian conception of truth is marked by an inner realization of the wholeness of reality, the Western view of truth is better described in English dictionaries as truthfulness or veracity of individual explicit statement. In Indian tradition, on the other hand, truth is best defined in *Mahābhārata* when it says, '*Satya* is *dharma*, *tapas* (austerity) and *yoga*. *Satya* is eternal *brahma*, *Satya* is also the foremost *yajna*, and everything is established on *Satya*', (MB, V, p.497). In an illustration of this principle, *Mahābhārata* says that speaking truthfully to a criminal is not acceptable as the truth. Verbal truth is only one side of the concept which is much more general. Truth is signified by virtue of conformity to the order of righteousness, interdependence and harmony on which the cosmos is supposed to be founded.

In Indian tradition, only the language that conforms to *ṛta, satya,* and *dharma*, is possessed of special powers. Inappropriate language can bring adverse results. This is a fundamental difference between the Indian and Western conceptualization of language

and communication. In *Ṛg Veda,* it is repeatedly stressed that only insightful speech delivers well-being, and harmony. The *Vāg Sūkta* makes it explicit that only the speech that originates from the depths of the ocean of creation, and which is blessed by the cosmic order of the five elements of fire, sky, air, water, and earth, is worthy of achieving success and benefits. Insightful speech in faithful persons is considered as an unseen, all-pervading, creative and liberating energy, producing, sustaining, and extending all creation. It defends the cause of righteousness and freedom, removes ignorance, confronts and overcomes evil, and rewards the meritorious with riches (*Rg Veda*, 10.125).

Similarly, *Gyan Sukta* speaks of the excellent and spotless treasures hidden in speech which are disclosed when there is knowledge and faith in the utterances. People with wisdom use speech that wins them friends. Only those who make effort can speak and understand insightful speech. A person who has not understood the essence of speech can only utter words that are hollow. Good speech comes to those whose action is good and who do not disown friends. People have similar eyes and ears but they do not have similar comprehension and expression. People who are neither knowledgeable nor experienced can only have meaningless speech. An energetic, and knowledgeable person succeeds in society and wins praise in society. (*Rg Veda*, 10.71).

In Indian communication theory only the language that conforms to *rta, satya,* and *dharma*, is possessed of moral and social value. Inappropriate language can bring adverse results for both the individual and the social order. This is a fundamental difference between Indian and western conceptualization of language and communication. In *Rg Veda* it is repeatedly stressed that only insightful speech that conforms to natural and social order delivers well-being, and harmony.

आ प॑वस्व दिशां पत आर्जी॑कात्सोम मीढ्वः । ऋ॒तवा॒केन॑ स॒त्येन॑ श्र॒द्धया॒ तप॑सा सुत इन्द्रा॑येन्दो॒ परि॑ स्रव ॥

Seers of cosmic and social order, faithfully following the righteous path through truthful speech and action pay homage to the lord of four regions. (RV, 9.113)

ऋतं वदन्नृतद्युम्न सत्यं वदन्त्सत्यकर्मन् । श्रद्धां वदन्त्सोम राजन्धात्रा सोम परिष्कृत इन्द्रायेन्दो परि स्रव ॥

Speech that is truthful and faithful, and is purified by truthful action, flows in radiant magnificence to uphold the cosmic and social order. (ibid.)

The *Asya Vāmīya Hymn* of Ṛṣi Dīrghatamas in Chapter 1 of *Ṛg Veda* states that the ultimate abode of language is Brahma. Language is described as being the peak of the universe. It also says that 'Speech has been measured out in four divisions, the Brahmans who have understanding, know them. In that three divisions are of hidden speech, men speak only the fourth division.' Here language is related to the cosmic order and is understood as the idea of the word as distinct from the spoken word. The spoken word is a limited manifestation of the inner word that reveals the truth. Thus, it says

that 'the vibration of speech creates or fashions out the manifold forms out of the waters of the infinite ocean of the ultimate Reality.' (Agrawala, 1963, p. 150).

Levels of Reality

Indian communication theory recognizes that the absolute reality that underlies all particular manifestations, all names and forms, manifests itself in human language as a form of communication. The underlying foundation of manifest thought and speech lies in fundamental process of nature which is outside space and time but generates activities and objects that can be located in space and time. As the eternal, timeless essence that underlies everything that exists, *Brahma* the Absolute Reality is the essence of all language and communication that produces diverse names and forms. "The Brahman who is without beginning or end, whose very essence is the word, who is the cause of the manifested phonemes, who appears as the objects, from whom the creation of the world proceeds" (VP, 1.1).

The scientific view of language in the Indian tradition as established in the *Veda, Upaniṣad*, and the works of Pāṇini, Patañjali, Bharatmuni, Bhartṛhari, and Abhinavagupta, embraces structure and rules of language, objective reality, and the absolute reality. The search for general rules underlying the diversity of languages is ultimately an exploration of the very nature of the human mind and its relation with reality. It reveals the interconnections between language, thought and reality. Bharatmuni's view of dramatic performance as an integrated entity, and Bhartṛhari's view of the sentence as a meaningful unit reveal the relationship of the part and the whole, and is seen by both as a reflection of the relationship between *Brahma* the absolute reality and the objective manifestations in the world.

The relationship of the general and the particular was recognized as early as in Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*. During Pāṇini's time, there were two classes of schools, one holding that word connotes only the general category and the particular unit is derived from it, the other held that word connotes only the particular and the general cannot exist away from the particular. Pāṇini clearly showed in his work that he held both the views, former in one context and the latter in another (Sastri, 2015, p.41). Language thus has the flexibility and creativity to connect different levels of reality through its insightful use. Pāṇini's unique contribution to the science of linguistics lies in devising a logical structure and system of language which remains unequalled in its brevity and practical validity. Pāṇini's work, in particular, and Sanskrit grammar, in general, showed the way to the development of modern linguistics and communication through the efforts of scholars such as Franz Bopp, Ferdinand de Saussure, Leonard Bloomfield, and Lee Whorf.

Panini's grammar describes language as a little drama of life consisting of an action with different participants, which are classified into role types called *karakas*, which include: actor, goal, recipient, instrument, locative, and source (Kiparsky, p.16). Panini's system envisages the structure of language as an evolving hierarchy of inter-category and intra-category relations, from the base of physical reality, the materiality of language, the intermediate levels of increasing consciousness till one reaches the highest level of

consciousness - *Brahma*- where the linguistic phenomena lose its autonomy and merges in the Absolute Reality. Paninian grammar symbolizes the perfect blending of science and spirituality in India's linguistic tradition (Kapoor, p. 86). All words and meanings are different aspects of one and the same thing, strung together to form a beautiful garland of letters.

The relationship of the whole and the parts is a complex one and may be seen an adaptive process in which both are dynamic and evolving. In *Brahma* as the essence of all language and communication, all possibilities of expression are inherent. By virtue of its dynamic energy the absolute is charged with creative powers to express itself in diverse activities and forms. The true nature of Brahma is beyond all imagination; in itself it is unified but manifests itself in all possibilities of visible and invisible forms and parts. "Who has been taught as the One appearing as many due to the multiplicity of his powers, who. Though not different from his powers, seems to be so" (VP, 1.2).

In *Brhadaranyaka Upanisad* conceptualization of speech as the abode of Absolute Reality or *Brahma* is most clearly spelt out. In Chapter VI. 2 speech is considered as the abode of *Brahma*. The Absolute Reality resides in speech, it is supported by space, and it is worshipped as intelligence. This world and the other and all being are communicated through speech. All the *Vedas, Upanisads*, commentaries, and all material things are communicated through speech. The Absolute reality is, in truth, speech. By recognizing and imbibing the true value and energy of speech, one can even become godlike and be in the company of divinity. (Radhakrishnan, p 246).

The integral unity of the manifest and the unmanifest world, and its communication through presentation is the core content of the Bharatmuni's *Natyashastra*. It integrates the Absolute Reality, the world of reflection and feeling, with that of structure and grammar. In *Natyashastra,* universality and specificity, abstraction and generalization, the structured and flexible are seen as interdependent and interpenetrating levels of communication. It considers a presentation good if it can communicate at varying levels to different audiences in culture specific and at the same time transcultural contexts. While being in finite time and place, it must have power to communicate beyond time and place and beyond the immediate performance (Vatsyayan, p. 89-90).

In *Natyasastra* the presentation of the theatre was compared in with the performative act of Vedic *yagna*. It treats the subject of language and communication, like Panini, as rules, and each section of the text is detailed in analytical manner. The whole concept of theatre is analyzed into parts and each part is examined in depth with a view to recreating an interconnected and interpenetrated whole. The mention of *sattva* as mindfulness, and the importance of musical sounds, during the presentation, are instance of drawing upon the living and vigorous tradition of Vedas at that time. The language of *Natyashastra* shows an understanding of the use of different languages and dialects by different groups of people and throws light on recognition and acceptance of diverse languages and dialects.

Abhinavagupta's conceptualization of language and reality in *Tantraloka* makes it abundantly clear that unity and diversity are the aspects of same integrated wholeness which is in a state of constant vibration or pulsation (*Spandau*), and change. In verse III.100 of *Tantraloka*, Abhinavagupta explicitly says that if the Absolute Reality did not manifest itself in infinite variety, but remained enclosed in its own singular unity, it would neither be the supreme power nor awareness. It is the nature of Absolute Reality, as the essence of language, to expand and diversify in infinite forms. Incessant creativity or consciousness is the essence of its absoluteness, and this is the eternal source of all linguistic forms and constructions. (Siva Sutras, p. xxi, Pandit,1991, 1997)).

This view of language seems somewhat similar to the present-day view of language and reality in quantum physics. Language may be seen as a coherent wave that represents the potential of all outcomes that exist simultaneously in superposition or overlapping state, as a field of potentialities (Wendt, p. 217). While language as a whole, with all its levels from *Para* to *Vaikhari*, is in a sort of quantum coherent state, meaning is actually communicated at the level of its decoherence or *Vaikhari*, or speech. What brings about the transformation in language from a field of potential meanings into actual ones is the will and act of speech. It is speech as interaction that puts language into a context, with other words and particular listener. Words are stored in consciousness not as isolated entities, but as nodes in a network of connected or entangled words. They communicate meaning when intentionally and wilfully used in a certain chosen order in particular context. Thus, "human consciousness can coordinate and correspond the 'motion of the atoms' in the functioning of speech at different levels according to the laws of nature at different levels of reality" (Schrodinger, p. 93).

Language, speech, sound, vibration, energy, as manifestations of *Brahma* or Absolute Reality, are not disorderly or disparate movement of its subtle constituent elements and forms. Both in thought and language, letters, words, and sentences are not randomly flying off in different directions, not even in insane beings. There is always a pattern, an order, which can be identified on closer consideration. The underlying pattern in Indian languages is integrative and accommodative and the objective is always interaction, coordination and sustenance. Language is creative and evolving on the hand; on the other it connects, unifies and upholds. The power of language to connect and comprehend the incessant flow of our sense perceptions and uphold the Absolute Reality is nothing short of a miracle, a divine gift.

From the foregoing it is evident that the primary concern of Indian thought on language and communication has been its cosmic and orderly origins and discerning use to support, sustain and strengthen all existence in the world. The cosmic energy is seen in this perspective as the essence of phonic energy, which is eternal, indestructible, subtle, and illimitable, which however evolves and unfolds through different stages and forms, and brings forth, names, or identifies, minutely and precisely, all the various kinds and dimensions of objects. Language, then, is inherently endowed with creative energy. The creative energy precedes the forms and names, it is the creative energy of the Absolute Reality in the form of speech that defines and upholds the objects, their relations, and the entire order of nature. "The manifestation of the word which one with the spirit in everybody is for the purpose of communication what is within" (VP, 1.1, p.1).

The complex relationship between language, thought and reality is quite clearly visible in the connection between grammar and philosophy in India's linguistic tradition. The structural analysis of the roots and affixes in Sanskrit grammar, into a hierarchy of levels of increasing abstractions culminating in the most general abstraction of *Brahman* is an illustration of the philosophical approach wherein the visible, multi-dimensional world of reality is seen to be manifestation of the one un-manifest Absolute Reality.

The explanation of the empirical facts or reality would be an abstract and general concept or image. The visible and perceptible world would be considered as manifest appearance of the highest abstraction. In Indian linguistic tradition the innumerable linguistic forms of the empirical reality of language are successively classified into a hierarchy of increasingly general and abstract notions and finally merged in the single notion of *Sabdabrahman*.

The goal of Indian thought on language and communication is not mere rational knowledge but also experience of the Absolute Reality or *Brahma*. The knowledge of language resulting in correct speech not only communicates meaning but also enables one to experience the Absolute Reality. This is the meaning of the Indian term darśana, which literally means 'vision' and which corresponds to the highest level of language termed as *paśyantī*. It is this feature that sets the Indian linguistics apart from the modern western perspectives on language. From the early Vedas and Upaniṣads, the Indian approach to language and communication has never been limited to composition and transmission of information about the objective world. All aspects of human experience, including the spiritual, were regarded as open to expression through language. Linguistics in India always had and continues to have both phenomenal and metaphysical dimensions.

It is evident that Indian scholars and sages saw that communication has both phenomenal and metaphysical dimensions. Etymologists like Yaska, and grammarians like Panini, Patanjali, and Bhartrihari, and playwrights like Bharat Muni were clearly concerned with the context of real-life situations, but they did not overlook the umbilical relationship of the empirical and the spiritual. Bhartrihari began with a metaphysical inquiry into the nature and origin of language in relation to *Brahma*, but also explored technical grammatical points in popular language.

By using correct speech, the mind becomes free of all subtle impressions of incorrect speech, and it gradually rises to the level of *Pratibha* or direct and pure awareness. Such awareness is the essence of all phenomenal creation and in such a state all the differences and contradictions in the relative world are seen in the wider context of the Absolute Reality (Bhattacharya, p.34).

Layers of Communication

Indian communication theory focuses on the creative energy of language emphasized in the Indian tradition that connects and integrates the highest and lowest levels of

abstraction seamlessly, gracefully, and holistically, not losing touch with reality at different levels. Unless human life, thought, speech and action, is in harmony with the all-embracing order and system of the Absolute Reality (*Rta*), it remains deprived of the real nourishing energy and its serene essence or bliss, by which all creation lives and is sustained. It is based on the structure of language as an ascending hierarchy of conceptual abstraction between the base level of physical reality, through intermediate levels of abstraction, to the highest levels of abstraction - *Brahma* – where linguistic form merges with formless Absolute Reality beyond language and thought. While the connection of the basic linguistic terms with sense perceptions of everyday experiences is of fundamental importance, comprehension of the connections between our sense perceptions in their totality require logically derived concepts at different levels of abstraction.

Indian classical texts indicate that the eternal mystery of the reality and its comprehensibility is a miracle and a real external world would be senseless without this comprehensibility. In speaking here of comprehensibility, it implies the production of some sort of order among sense perceptions, this order being produced by the creation of linguistic concepts, connections between these concepts, and between the concepts and sense experience. Language therefore creates our world for us. Thus, language is always abstract, uncertain, fluid, contextual, emergent, and connected, but this uncertainty is its creativity and competence to straddle across time and space and make the dynamic reality comprehensible to human mind and enable meaningful and effective action. As the human mind works with the objective reality the changed reality has to be comprehended anew to enable successful orientation and action on the part of human civilization. In this sense language is coexistent with reality, it defines reality and also creates reality as known to us. It spans, connects, and integrates different levels of objective reality to make it meaningful and complementary.

According to Bhartrihari, nothing can be said in advance concerning the manner in which the linguistic concepts are formed and connected, and how they are coordinated with sense perceptions. The linguistic concepts are emergent and dynamic and in guiding us in the creation of such a conceptual and linguistic order of sense perceptions, contemporary relevance alone is the determining factor. All that is necessary is to formulate a set of rules of structure and function of language, since without such rules the use of language for acquisition of knowledge in the desired sense would be impossible. One may compare these rules with the rules of a game in which, while the rules themselves are constructed, it is their rigidity alone which makes the game possible. However, the structure will never be final. It will have validity only for a special field of application and will be subject to modification to fulfil its function.

Bhartrihari also emphasized that the connection of language and thought with the complexes of sense perceptions can only be comprehended intuitively and it is inadaptable to formal and logical determination. The totality of these connections– none of which is expressible in conceptual terms–is the only thing which differentiates the living language from an empty scheme of concepts. By means of these connections, the purely conceptual propositions of language become general statements about complexes of sense perceptions. Primary linguistic concepts are directly and intuitively

connected with typical complexes of sense perceptions. All other concepts are possessed of meaning only in so far as they are connected with the primary notions. The aim of language is, on the one hand, a comprehension, as complete as possible, of the connection between the sense perceptions in their totality, and, on the other hand, the accomplishment of this aim by the use of a minimum of primary concepts and relations.

In its first stage of development, language does not contain anything else other than very basic concepts directly related to sense perceptions. The first level, *Vaikhari*, in the evolution of abstraction and language is the formation of the concept of bodily objects of various kinds. Out of the multitude of our sense experiences we take, mentally and arbitrarily, certain repeatedly occurring complexes of sense perceptions and we correlate to the concept of the bodily object. Viewed logically this concept is not identical with the totality of sense perceptions referred to; but it is a creation of the human mind. On the other hand, this concept owes its meaning to the totality of the sense perceptions with which it is associated.

Bhartrihari says that the everyday thinking of most people is satisfied on the whole with this level. Such a state of affairs cannot, however, satisfy a philosophical mind; because the totality of concepts and relations obtained in this manner is utterly lacking in logical unity and consistency. In order to overcome this problem, a system retaining the primary concepts and relations of the "first layer" is logically constructed. This new "secondary system" at *Madhyamika* level pays for its higher logical unity by having concepts of the second layer which are no longer directly connected with complexes of sense perceptions.

At this level, we attribute our concept of a bodily object a name and meaning, which is to a high degree independent of the sense perceptions which originally give rise to it. This is what we mean when we attribute to the bodily object an identity. The justification of such a process rest on the fact that, by means of such created concepts and mental relations between them, we are able to orient ourselves in the chaos of sense perceptions. These notions and relations, although our mental creations, appear to us as meaningful and more stable than the sense experience itself, the character of which is little more than fleeting impressions. On the other hand, these linguistic concepts and relations, have justification only in so far as they are connected with sense perceptions.

Further striving for logical unity brings us to the level of *Pasyanti,* still more general in concepts and relations, for the deduction of the concepts and relations from the secondary and so indirectly of the primary layer. Thus, the story goes on until we have arrived at a system of the greatest conceivable unity at the *Para Vac* level of the greatest universality of concepts of the logical foundations, which is still compatible with the observations made by our senses. The supreme essence of speech at this level is like pure light which is free of the forms it takes in diminished light (VP 1.18, p.23).

The levels of language discussed above correspond to the several stages of progress which have resulted from the struggle for logical unity in the course of development of knowledge of reality. The language levels help to explain in a consistent manner the fluid boundaries between language and consciousness. As regards the final aim, intermediary levels are only of secondary nature. We have to deal, however, with the

language of the day, in which these strata represent problematic partial successes which support one another but which also threaten one another, because today's system of concepts contains deep-seated incongruities.

These levels of abstraction and levels of speech are not clearly separated and may even overlap in practice. It is not even absolutely clear which concepts belong to the *Vaikhari* layer. As a matter of fact, we are dealing with freely formed concepts, which, with a certainty sufficient for practical use, are intuitively connected with complexes of sense experiences in such a manner that, in any given case of experience, there is no uncertainty as to the validity of an assertion. The essential thing is the aim to represent the multitude of concepts and statements, from a basis of fundamental concepts and fundamental relations which themselves can be chosen freely (axioms). It is a matter of faith that the cosmic system – as it is perceptible to our five senses– takes the character of such a well-ordered reality. The successes achieved by language do give a certain encouragement for this faith in the comprehensibility of the infinite universe.

The Indian linguistic tradition adopts a consistent and holistic view which encompasses various levels of language thought and reality. While Panini's grammar tells us about the structure of plurality of words, it also reveals the interrelatedness of individual entities and thereby illustrates common structures within language, cognition and real-world phenomena. Pāṇini's grammar is valued more because it reveals the spirit of Indian tradition. (Feddegon, 1963, p. 68). The Pāṇinian system symbolizes the perfect blending of science and spirituality in India's linguistic tradition (Kapoor, 2010, p. 86). All words and meanings are different aspects of one and the same thing, strung together to form a beautiful garland of letters.

In *Natyasastra,* Bharatmuni brought into one-fold the cosmic order of the *Vedas,* the speculative thought and philosophy of the *Upanisads,* and the structure of the rituals of the *Brahmanas*, as also the state of knowledge of the disciplines of astronomy, mathematics, and medicine. The use of the concepts of *Yoga* and *Yajna* were contextually loaded in Bharatmuni's treatise. The text moves concurrently at the level of the physical and the metaphysical, the terrestrial and the celestial, the purely biological and the physical, the sensuous and the spiritual, with a single integral vision "to use the very language and vocabulary of name and form (*nama* and *rupa*-of identity and specificity of form) to evoke that which is beyond form or without form (*pararupa*), and all this through the vehicle of senses and sense perceptions and feeling, not intellection" (Vatsyayan, p.57).

Bhartṛhari's *Vākyapadīya* begins with metaphysical enquiry and then goes on to empirical study of phenomenal language. In the first section of the work called *Brahmakāṇḍa,* are given the basic ideas concerning the concept of *Śabda Brahma.* In the second section called *Vākyakāṇḍa,* the fundamental idea of the integral nature of the sentence is discussed. The third section is the largest, in which grammatical topics mostly concerning words and their meaning are discussed. This section is called *Prakarankāṇḍa.* All the sections are interrelated and connected and form an integral whole. Bhartṛhari's enquiry into the relationship of word and meaning in the

Prakarankāṇḍa includes a clear analysis of the limitations and inadequacies of ordinary or secondary words to communicate all dimensions and levels of the Absolute Reality.

The common words are unable to express the nature of Absolute Reality. Words express the reality of any object or event in a manner that is only an interpretation and representation of the reality of the object or event. Words are based on cognitions which do not reveal the full reality and so present things in another form, not determined by their real form. Bhartrihari emphasizes that in ordinary cases of language use, the literal form may not convey the intended meaning. In such cases, a thorough understanding of the context is required to avoid confusions and misunderstanding in communication. In practice, the words are used on the basis of bounded sense perception and rationality. Common people may not be able to reach the level of consciousness that may have been reached by scholars and sages. They understand things in a limited manner and engage in communication on that basis.

Bhartrihari says that when speech is purified by the adoption of grammatically correct forms and all deficiencies in the form of incorrect structure and pronunciation of words is removed, there results linguistic perfection which makes the attainment of worldly success and happiness possible. However, one must practice *Sabdapurvayoga* for achieving the state of oneness and harmony within and with the world. By constant practice in *Sabdapurvayoga*, all parts and sequences are connected into an undivided whole and the speaker reaches the level of consciousness where the words and sentences are transcended and speech becomes a flowing movement of integrated language. *Sabdapurvayoga* is a kind of meditation aimed at raising the level of consciousness to the highest stage of Absolute Reality. (Iyer, 1992, p. 143). Bhartrihari equates language with yoga because it makes us aware of a fusion of insightful speech with its linguistic foundation that lies beyond words in the Absolute Reality, or *Brahma*.

Rational Intuition

The concept of *Sabdapurvayoga* seems to be closely related to Bhartrihari's theory of *Pratibha* or intuition, and the *Pasyanti* or visionary aspect of language. For Bhartrihari, grammar appears to be not only an academic undertaking, but also a contemplative and meditative act that allows an intuitive insight in to the nature of *Brahma*, and the unman fest wholeness of meaning. (Wilke, p.628). Through the knowledge and practice of *Sabdapurvayoga* one can learn to transcend the plurality of names and forms and see the unitary cause of all. This consciousness of the unitary cause helps one to place all language and communication in the holistic perspective of the cosmic order.

Bhartrihari's theory of *Pratibha* or intuition connects with his differentiation of different levels of language. Intuition which emerges like a flash of light does not appear out of the blue. Coming up with sudden enlightenment without ever having been closely involved with an area of study and contemplation is very improbable. A seeker has to examine the question from all sides, including new creative perspectives. To do that, one must have a good knowledge of the primary concepts. The more one knows, the easier it becomes to develop deeper insights for connecting the elements which may not seem to have anything in common. *Sabdapurvayoga* is rigorous and time-consuming practice

through the intermediary stages of *Vaikhari* and *Madhyamika* to reach the level of *Pasyanti* where one can 'see' everything in its place in the coherent flow of the Absolute Reality.

The concept of *Pratibha* seems to be more effective in communicating the nature of the Absolute Reality than the concepts of scientific language, which are derived from only limited groups of phenomena. In the scientific process of experimental verification and definition the integral connection with the multidimensional and multilevel reality may be lost. On the other hand, natural language may represent some parts of reality much more clearly than by the use of scientific language, because it can influence thought in ways which arenot always logical and analytical, and also because of inherent limitations of logical reasoning (Heisenberg, p.139). An indirect and secondary meaning of the word which passes through the mind only momentarily may contribute essentially to the understanding of its meaning. The fact that every word may cause many such diverse movements in our mind can be used to correlate different aspects of the reality and get a clearer understanding than is possible by the use of strictly and narrowly logical reasoning (ibid., p.115).

Poets have often objected to the emphasis on logical reasoning which makes language less suitable for its purpose. Rabindra Nath Tagore, Nobel laureate in literature, believed that all poetry is full of symbolic expressions which communicate through suggestion all that is ineffable. If language were merely for expressing grammatical rules, then using such a language would be fruitless pedantry without a spirit. Since language has for its ultimate purpose the expression of ideas, our minds gain freedom through it, and the knowledge of grammar is a help towards that freedom. "When a man is exclusively occupied with the search for the links of causality, his mind succumbs to the tyranny of law in escaping from the tyranny of facts. In learning a language, when from mere words we reach the laws of words we have gained a great deal. But if we stop at that point, and only concern ourselves with the marvels of the formation of a language, seeking the hidden reason of all its apparent caprices, we do not reach the end—for grammar is not literature, prosody is not a poem. When we come to literature, we find that though it conforms to rules of grammar it is yet a thing of joy, it is freedom itself" (Tagore, p.67).

When language assumes the harmony of forms and the balance of flow it hints at the limitless that transcends words, "like a lamp revealing light which goes far beyond its material limits, proclaiming its kinship with the sun" (Radhakrishnan, p. 944). Creative and ingenious thinkers, like the Rigvedic and later Upanishadic sages, employed poetic language to break open and extend the boundaries of expression to successfully communicate the hidden dimensions and levels of the ultimate reality (Matilal, p.151-155). The insightful speaker delights in accepting limitations, and does not seek to evade them, for in each word he sees the manifestation of an infinite creative energy. Though speech conforms to rules of grammar it is yet a thing of infinite creativity. The creativity of speech accepts limitations of words, yet it transcends them. Only those who know that the infinite expresses itself through words can transcend the words. Words are the wings of creative speech, they do not keep it weighed down, they carry it to freedom. Words are the form of speech, creativity is its spirit. Words are the steps towards creative

freedom, and creative speech or writing is the sculpture which stands on the pedestal of words.

In recent years, researches in neuroscience have further confirmed the importance of broad concepts of natural language, rather than more logical and precisely composed definitions, in providing insights into the nature of reality. Neurological evidence has shown that when listeners encounter a word or concept, a semantic field related to the word is activated in the brain in which features properties and associations of that world are connected. In the left hemisphere of the brain a relatively smaller semantic field of associations is strongly activated which closely relate to the dominant interpretation or the current context. On the other hand, the right hemisphere weakly activates a relatively broader semantic field that includes associations distantly related to the word or context. In this way, semantically distant words needed to understand metaphors, draw inferences and appreciate the many nuances of discourse, can be accessed and integrated (St. George, p. 1324).

The broader semantic relationship in the right hemisphere has one big advantage: The less sharply each word's meaning is specified, the more likely it is to connect with other words and concepts. This is a key ingredient for drawing inferences, extracting the essence, and comprehending symbolic language, and for insight and awareness of wholeness and integrated nature of reality (Kounios and Bemman, p. 6). Harmony between the „left brain‟ and the „right brain‟ provides an overall grasp of what is known in formal, logical terms, and also intuitively, in vision, feelings, and imagination etc. (Bohm, p. xvi). Original and creative ideas emerge from coordination of well-structured language and concepts contained in the field of empirical study with less sharply defined words and concepts in the field of philosophy and arts. Science and spirit are then in harmony, as they are different yet complementary ways of considering the ultimate reality which is an undivided wholeness in flowing movement (ibid. p.33).

Conclusion

The central feature of Indian communication system is the concept of levels of language which dates back to the *Rg Veda*. The levels of *Para, Pasyanti, Madhyamika,* and *Vaikhari,* are not wholly separate and mutually contradictory, but are a graduated series which is suited to different types or grades of mind-different intellectual capacities and temperaments. To each is given his stage of effort. Each stage, when reached opens the way to the higher level of speech and thought. The relation between the levels is not temporal but mental and logical. The mind, rewired and transformed in its continuing advance, moves towards higher and truer understanding and speech as manifestation of infinite creative energy of the cosmos.

In Indian communication theory, meaningful speech and clear thinking which are inseparably inter-connected, require constant interplay of higher and lower levels, and the constant interplay of the verbal and cognitive levels. This is a logical process, hypotheses being checked against factual information, and predictions against results. If statements lose touch with the reality, they will be hollow abstractions characterized by vagueness, ambiguity, and even utter meaninglessness. Similarly, lower-level speech

which does not rise above the wide assortment of facts without ever drawing any general conclusions leaves the listener with no directions as to what to do with the narration of facts and events.

The knowledgeable person who connects with people through his communication, and who achieves merit in life is the one who can integrate all levels of speech, moving coherently and timely from *pasyanti* to *vaikhari,* and from *vaikhari* to *pasyanti* in smooth and graceful manner. It would be something like the coherent flow of the goddess of speech *Vagdevi* in the *Rg Veda,* which rises from the waters in the ocean, breaths strongly like the wind, penetrates Earth and Heaven, speaks to Gods and men alike, holds together all existence, blesses the faithful and the thoughtful with well-being and wealth, and in her mighty grandeur touches the heaven with her forehead.

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