Word - Meaning Theory of Logical Positivism and Advaita Vedanta

Gurmukh

Assistant Professor,
Deptt.of Philosophy,
Government Girls College,
Pokharan
&
Research Scholar,
University of Rajasthan,
Jaipur

Abstract

Knowledge of empirical world is word interwoven; this is accepted by Logical Positivism as well as Advaita Vedanta. This is explained by Logical Positivism through word and meaning theory, where as Advaita Vedanta explained this through Sphotvada theory of word and meaning. Logical Positivism emphases on language- object aspect, in which language consideration is more important. Logical Positivism uses logicality for language. According to Logical Positivism words have exact and definite meaning, which not changes from one person to another person or from one condition to another condition. For Logical Positivism word meaning for world is primary. They believe that there should be designate a concept of word, which have a definite expression for something. They said word should be tied in specific language 'L' and proper linked with another words for their meaning. They also give application criterion for word meaning theory.

In this paper, I criticize Logical Positivism's word and its meaning theory against their primary meaning for words, logicality related with language instead of subject and their definite-specific meaning for word. By showing that, the Logical Positivist theory of word and meaning trades on an ambiguity. And clarify this by Sphotvada theory of Advaita Vedanta.

Keywords: Logical Positivism, Advaita Vedanta, Bhartrhari, Rigveda, Sphotvada, Sentence, Propositions, State Of Affairs, Facts, Word, Names, Shabda, Conscient, Paschyanti, Madhyama, Vaikhari, Nimitta, Pratyayaka, Dhvani, Atman (Self), Pratibha, Apurva, Vivarta, Asatya, Buddhi, Avidya, Prana, Aprana.

Introduction

The Logical Positivism directly starts from word. They left behind the questions like, from where word formed, from where the elementary component of word (letters) comes. How these letters becomes word. They give emphasis on theory of meaning of word and to the criterion of meaning of word. They give emphasis whether the words are meaningful or meaningless. They completely focus empirical and logical factor. Various points checked out by Logical Positivism for meaning of word are:-

1. Empirical considerations: - in this theory they survey, sorts of combination of sounds on the basis of empirical criteria and find out distinctions between meaningful and meaningless.
2. Normative considerations: - which means regarding a standard of correctness in behaviour, speech, writing etc. They argue on traits, which have desirable characteristics in certain type of discourse.
3. Synthetic Apriori Grounds: - meaning by conditions of experience or by same similar standards.
4. Based on logical structure of a language L: - According to this meaning of a word is binding through the structure of language L. which means the word should proper fit in the script of language.

As the Logical Positivism puts two parameters, one is logicality and another is empirical verification for meaning of word. So positive and negative result by means of logical analysis becomes criterion, that tells metaphysics is nonsense and meaningless. If the result is positive, it will be in the domain of empirical science. But the words of metaphysics, all philosophy of value and normative theory yields negative result. So all these not comes under domain of empirical science. Further logical dimensions are not applicable on metaphysics, as they are not under empirical Sciences. A.J Ayer in his book Logical Positivism expresses that metaphysics statements are meaningless, because these are entirely sterile to assert or ask it. He explains by giving some examples like "what is the average weight of those inhabitants of Vienna whose telephone

number ends with '3'?" or quite obviously false statements like "in 1910 Vienna had 6 inhabitants". Or statements like "persons A and B are each a then the other" which are contradictory, logically false and also not justified empirically. Further Ayer said that as this type of statements are false and pointless, but are meaningful. As meaningful sentences may be fruitful and sterile or may be true and false. So if words are not within specified language, they are meaningless. On this basis, all the metaphysical statements are pseudo statements. Ayer describes these pseudo statement are of two types-

1. When word having meaning, that is erroneously believed.
2. When the words having meaning but they linked in erroneously syntactical way.

The above discussion of Logical Positivism can be answered in terms of Advaita Vedanta with Bharthari's Advaita theory. He was a language philosopher par excellence. His philosophy called as philosophy of grammar, philosophy of sphota, philosophy of world or word-Brahman and philosophy of word and meaning. It is philosophy of absolute word in Advaitic manner. Because it not works for clarify the concepts only, but also clears the vision of reality. Bharthari's work VakyaPadiya was as much important like as Badarayana's Brahma Sutra. His Advaita is known as Shabdadvaitvada.

As Bharthari also arouse problem of world and its meaning as the Positivists do. Bharthari also explains how meaning is related to the world and how we accept the meaning of word through our consciousness. He also speaks on true or false knowledge, which relates with knowledge of reality and unreality. According to Bharthari, knowledge is word interwoven. That knowledge which is not so, cannot be knowledge at all. Bharthari say all known through the world, whatever it may be. "There is no knowledge which is not in form of the word. The word is the only means of knowing even that which is absolutely unreal."[1]

Here in Advaita terms word can helps knowledge of real and unreal both. Everything known through word whether it is perceivable or not. So according to Advaita there is no statement or word, that are pseudo or meaningless, which helps to know something whether real or unreal. As Positivist give examples like "in 1910 Vienna had 6 inhabitants" or statements like "person A and B are each a year older than the other" which are contradictory, logically false and also not justified empirically. But according to Advaita Vedanta these are of meaning, because there may be contradictory or logical false but this gives knowledge that "it is not true" in statement "in 1910 Vienna had 6 inhabitants". Also statement "person A and B are each a year older than the other" gives knowledge of contradiction to us. As everything's knowledge is interwoven with word. All knowledge is known through the words. So if we understand something through word, how can we say that these words are meaningless or pseudo. These words make some understanding and this understanding is the knowledge. It does not Depends whether these words are true or false, contradictory or logically false etc.

According to Bharthari reality cognised through the unreal forms and the reality expressed by words indirectly is through unreal forms. To get meaning of statement, Bharthari use doctrine of upadhi or limiting factor. So Advaita shows that words are that, which give some knowledge. It may not be important that they tied in specified language or they linked with another meaning. But in Logical Positivism language the words that are not expressed in specified language, are erroneously believed. In Advaita Vedanta words have indirect meaning for phonemes. Further we will see the original application of words.

So in Logical Positivism terms knowledge contains only reality and that knowledge is true propositions. Non existing state of affairs has false propositions and that doesn't come under knowledge.

For meaningful word A, when used in elementary sentence, there must be answer to the following questions:-

1. "What sentence is A deducible from, and what sentences are deducible from A?
2. Under what conditions is A supposed to be true, and under what conditions false?
3. How is A to be verified?
4. What is meaning of A?"[2]

These four questions are asked for correct formulation, logic phraseology, phraseology of the theory of knowledge and with that of philosophy.

Again Logical Positivism determined meaning of word by criterion of application. So there cannot be more than criterion of application, for a word and no one takes meaning of word according to his own use. So meaning of word is not based on person's wish, which changes from one person to another or changes from one condition to another. Meaning means exact meaning, nothing less than the Criterion of application.

As Logical Positivism said there should be designate a concept of word, which have a definite expression for something. They claim that if meaning of word changes in due course of time, it means a pseudo concept arises. Also Advaita Vedanta said every word has a meaning, but according to them these meaning for worldly objects are secondary. It is not much important that in due course their meaning changes or not. Because as we generally see, who gave the meaning to word, that is human being. So what is reason, with which meaning is permanently stick to a specific word. As this problem was arose by later Wittgenstein in his book Philosophical Investigations and by other ordinary language philosophers. The Advaita Vedanta gives importance to, what is application of Word or vakyapada? According to them there should be only a meaning to word, with which something known to us. The archetype of word is as unreal as the ectype for the worldly objects. Original application of word is to know ultimate reality, which is Shabda Brahman. Advaita Vedanti Bharthari gives emphasis to know ultimate reality through word. For phenomenal worldly objects, words only express some meaning; their primary work is to know Shabda Brahman for oneself.

As we know human being can extinct, but words, sounds or dhvanis cannot. Where ever the sound waves found some medium like air, water or metal is needed for their propagation by oscillation of matter. Now we will see how in Bharthari's Advaita, the answers are given to word speech theory. Also we conclude and use Advaita theory to give answers to Logical Positivism questions, which they arouse in previous sections like from where a word A deducible from and what are deducible from A. How word A to be verified and what is meaning of word A. Now we see through Bharthari theory of sphota, how the word formed through speech or we can say where a word deducible form. What are deducible from word or in other words of Advaita, manifesting aspect is deducible from word. The word is verified when it put impressions on the cognitions and when this linguistic pathway realised the Brahman, is words primary meaning or its application criterion.

Bharthari is follower of Advaita philosophy who holds that the ultimate reality of sphota, which is free from all differentiation, differentiates itself into the subject, the object and the experience. The phenomenal world cognised by mind and expressed by words. Bharthari used word asatya for this phenomenal world. "According to Bharthari, dhvanis are the vivarta of sphota and words, and phonemes which are abstracted by grammarians from the sentence or unreal."[3] So words and phonemes relation with sentence is ectype relation. This ectype relation is same like a relation between self (atman) and universe. The archetype is as unreal as the ectype. In terms of application of word, we can say that verbal or direct meaning of all words is the self. That is highest Universal or genius, which is existence or being as such. The different universals are nothing more than this being as it exists in the various unreal things with which it is associated.

We clarify Logical Positivism through word and meaning theory of Bharthari's Advaita Vedanta. For further clarification, we check the whole Sphota theory of Bharthari. Because it seems that there was a lack of base in Positivism's word – meaning theory. That's reason, so many questions arouse on Positivism theory. Again in Bharthari's Advaita theory of Shabada Brahman, it seems a completely fit theory, have uncontradictory base. Now we will see the whole Sphota theory in deeply.

Bharthari pick Pashyanti, Madhyama and Vaikhari from Rigveda. These are different folds of speech given in Rigveda. These three folds of speech pashyanti, madhyama and vaikhari are also called the elaborated word, the middle word and the word respectively. Bharthari states that science of grammar is the supreme and wonderful source of knowledge of speech. The source of knowledge is of three fold words and consists of many paths. Now there are three stages of manifestation of word. The vaikhari or elaborate word uttered in distinct phonemes. It is used by speakers and listeners. The Madhyama or middle word is vaikhari's mental counterpart. It exists in the vaikhari (elaborated word). It seems to appear in sequence, but has no sequence. It is in the buddhi (mind). Pashyanti (conscient word) is the ultimate

reality. It is identified with Brahman. It is pure consciousness. It is eternal light that shines within. It is self Luminous. It is 'fons et origio' in Latin term. It is source and origin of ultimate reality, i.e Shabda Brahman. It is source and origin of all manifestations of world. It is the absolute word-principle. The journey starts with speaker's vaikhari word (elaborated word) and reaches to the pashyanti (concisent word) through an investigation into presuppositions of the elaborated word.

In Johan Nemec's 'The ubiquitous shiva' also view of somananda described the grammarian's view of three stages of word, there are consciousness, mind (buddhi) and Prana-cum-sense-organ. Where pashyanti is consciousness, madhyama is mind (buddhi) and vaikhari is prana-cum-sense-organ. We see how somananda described grammatical theory of manifestation of vaikhari from pashyanti "when pashyanti feels that it would express the world of ideas and objects, there arises a wave of sequence in its calm nature. That sequence immediately passes from it to madhyama which is a form of intellectual discourse between prana and aprana, technically called bindu and nada. Further, when the stage of madhyama is over, pashyanti comes up again through the medium of prana and aprana and touches the different sources of articulation. It is the stage of vaikhari where the discrete letters find their expression. Finally, when the stage of vaikhari is reached and the manifestation of the eternal word principle in the form of names is completed, pashyanti transforms itself into the different objects of the universe through avidya"[4].

In Logical Positivism meaning of word should be specific and definite, it cannot be changed. Meaning means exact meaning. In Advaita Vedanta that meaning of word is pashyanti (the conscient word), which is individual and imperishable. It is free from all differentiation and sequence. Here we seen that the Advaita Vedanta theory crossover the problematic theory of Logical Positivism. How word and meaning stick to each other, is not clarifies by Logical Positivism. What is the condition of meaning when word comes out from a speaker's mouth?

1. How meaning conjugates with the word?
2. Where meaning becomes counterpart of word?
3. What is expression and power of meaning?
4. How word and its meaning reached up to real self (atman)?
5. How one self consciousness manifests with meaning of word?

If this question arises, there is no answer given by Logical Positivism. These questions are well answered by Advaita Vedanta theory of Sphotvada. Further we will see how Sphotvada theory works and answers the above questions. Different fold of speech or we can say three stages of word are:-

Pashyanti (consciousness) - that is free from all differentiation and sequences. It is indivisible, imperishable and indescribable. In it word and meaning are not differentiated.

Madhyama (buddhi) mind - in it word and meaning are differentiated from each other. They are

still united. It is mental stage of word. Relation between word and meaning

It is like a relation of illuminator and illumined, cause and effect. It is called madhyama vak. Bharthari called it name of Sphota. Thus eternal unity of word and its meaning is called sphota.

Now we will see how sphota works. As we see sphota is soul of a word or in another words we can say it bearer the meaning into the word. Both the power of expression and the power of meaning are created or manifested by the sequence less pashyanti itself. Eternal and ephemeral are two kinds of word described in Bharthari's commentary on Mahabhashya. Eternal and ephemeral word is sphota and dhvani respectively. Again this eternal and ephemeral are universal and particular (individual) in their nature. So the individual words called ephemeral or dhvanis lasts for very short time. These are appearance (vivarta) of eternal word. Bharthari first used the word vivarta, later that becomes famous in the Advaita Vedanta philosophy. Further, the word and the meaning are the two faces of the same thing.

The sphota theory is the intuitionist theory of meaning. According to this theory, meaning of word is internal and with powers of word itself, it becomes external. Any sentence that conveyed meaning, knows through the sphota theory. So sphota theory is means of knowing of a sentence meaning. The bearer of meaning is sphota. It has two aspects:-

1. Nimitta (manifesting aspect) - it conveyed by dhvani's or sound.
2. Pratyayaka (revealers aspect) - it bears the meaning.

As sphota theory is one, indivisible and eternal. Its manifesting aspect called dhvanis or sounds are transitory. The sphota is one, individual and indivisible, but it's manifesting is many, in forms of letters, words and sentences. This manifesting of sphota is unreal, but itself sphota is real. For understanding the sphota, these manifestations are means only. We understand with an example that how sphota itself individual manifests many. For example a word lotus pronounced, letters l,o,t,u,s are all illusory manifestations of its meaning. As each single letter when grasp by listener, it makes impression differently on listener and generate different impressions upon hearer's mind. But when succeeding letters are uttered and understood by the listener, the whole meaning of word 'Lotus' completely clear to hearer. The previous error or different impression produced by each single letter is removed.

As the Logical Positivism arose question, how logical analysis is done of word and its meaning. They make language base, with which they try to give answer for word and meaning relation. And Advaita Vedanta theory make subjective base of oneself (atman) for logical analysis of word and its meaning theory. And further gives answer to another question also, which are not given by logical positivism. Advaita Vedanta theory clearly described that how a word bears a meaning, which was not done by Logical Positivism.

So sphota is inalienably related with pratibha or intuition. So sphota is not different from consciousness. It has infinite powers which explain all sorts of usages. If one distinguishes sphota from consciousness, the whole theory becomes absurd. It is the shabda Brahman, which means sphota is Atman itself. So sphota can be written as-

1. It is consciousness.
2. It reveals itself.
3. Revealed through every object, that is revealed by it.
4. It is revealed by every word, which has worldly object meaning.
5. It is revealed through every object, which is manifested by it.

We take another example of 'cow' word. When the word 'cow' spoken by speaker, it reveals 'cow' word meaning in form of words cattle cow. Sphota is not merely a word, it is above the letters c,o,w and combination of these letters 'cow'. It is eternal entity. It is way to know the reality of self. This realty of self is same to know the Brahman itself. This is not like as of logical corollary of Platonic realism. As Platonic universals (that are real) have not application like of Advaita Vedanta to know realty or real self or Brahman. But we can understand that sphota is real, somewhat like of Platonic real universals. Some recent Scholars also pointed out that Frege's theory of meaning is modern form of Sphotvada. So in Logical Positivism theory, language has given much importance and language is near to word and its meaning. Where as in Advaita Vedanta theory language is used as a tool only and language is near to subject, which is Atman itself. As language and word are near to objects of phenomenal world in Logical Positivism terms, so they consider empiricism as criterion.

On another side the Advaita Vedanta emphasis on ultimate reality that is base of empiricism. Through the self reality, one can go through all experiences. So according to Advaita Vedanta language is nearer to subject, as language is tool for know something. Language is criterion, which originates from the self Atman. Again this real self (Atman) is the Brahman. First we have to describe the real self or Brahman, and then there is any language, word and meaning. Because without real self (Brahman), the language, word and meaning is absurd.

Further in Mandana Mishra's Advaita Vedanta philosophy, the Bharthari's Sphotvada explained deeply. Mandana Mishra vindicates sphota theory through the refutation of Varna theory of Kumarila. Kumarila elaborates Upavarsa's theory of language which is called Varnavada. In "Sapota Siddhi" Mandana criticize is the Varnavada theory of language and supports further the Bharthari's theory of Sphotavada. The salient features of Varnavada are:--

1. That the cognition of the final phoneme which is somehow helped by the impression of the previous phonemes conveys the meaning of a word.
2. That the combination of each phoneme leaves an impression which is like apurva.

3. That the phoneme must be uttered by the same speaker and must have a sequence.

4. That the unity of the word consists in a certain number of phonemes which jointly convey the meaning of word.

Theory of Varnavada's, many principles are seems like that of Semantic theory and word meaning theory of Logical Positivism. Both consider that there should be same sequence needed. In the ' word' letters or in the ' sentence' words, there is a definite temporal and casual sequence. For the same temporal and casual relation's need is there, according to Kumarila's Varnavada theory. According to Kumarila and Logical Positivism the previous and next letters make sense to a word. According to Logical Positivism there is need of paraphrase in Semantic as well as Syntactical theories. Same need is found in theory of Varnavada.

Now Mandana criticises each feature of these four points in the Sphotasiddhi. In the first feature it can be said that people do not understand the final phoneme as expressive of the meaning which is understood by convention. The final phoneme cannot capable of conveying the meaning when this phoneme is not associated with previous phonemes impressions. Previous phonemes impressions range is beyond the senses, so previous phonemes not perceived directly. While learning language, the children cannot cognise phonemes. Hence point first is not true. With regard to the Varna theory made distinction between the two, the Impressions of the previous phonemes and Impressions which cause memory. They maintain that both are different. But according to Mandana possibility of peculiarity of these Impressions is zero. In nature of these Impressions, there is no peculiarity. Nor is it possibly acquired through association inasmuch as the previous phonemes happen in a fixed sequence and not simultaneously. On the third point Mandana says that If speaker is single, then it is not a cause. If meaning is taught, then it is not resorted. When the phoneme is learnt by speaker, then it is not experienced speaker. For a moment, let it is possible that cause of meaning is impression of previous phonemes, then it should arise in cause of many speakers also. But in actuality it does not arise. So cause of meaning is previous phonemes, it is not possible. They maintain that the phonemes our eternal. So there should be no need of phonemes. But if there is no need of sequence then there should be some meaning of 'PEEK' and 'KEEP'. And this 'PEEK' and 'KEEP' give one and same meaning. So Varna theory concept of sequence of phonemes is full of contradiction. Same thing will happened in Logical Positivist theory of word and meaning. Finally, with regard to last point Mandana notices that it is the fallacy of reciprocal dependence or interdependence is found in Varna theory. Unless the word as a whole is cognised, the units of meaning cannot be cognised and unless a unit of meaning is cognised, the multiplicity of such units cannot be cognised. So whole - parts and aggregate - components are relative terms. So there become two conditions:-

1. If there is no word over and above the phonemes, then there aggregate is impossible.

2. If there is a word over and above the phonemes, then there aggregate is useless in conveying meaning of word.

In either case the aggregate of phonemes cannot convey the meaning of a word. Now in another case, when phonemes are supposed to be produced instead of eternal, we cannot think about aggregate of phonemes, which are momentary and destructible. Mandana established the Sphota and cites the testimony of perception for the existence of Sphota. a vaguely apprehended object appears to be different from what it is, but through the progressively clearer Impressions of the previous cognitions of it, its reality is fully revealed. Mandana believes in perception of sphota. At first this perception is vague. This perception begins from starting place of phonemes and becomes clearer, when it reaches up to self (atman) it goes on becoming clearer and at the final stage it becomes perfectly clear. Mandana has given a sort of transcendental deduction of sphota in and through his criticism of the Varna theory. Here transcendental deductions of sphota means phonemes are digested in self (atman). The knowledge of sphota is a Priori and it cannot be shown to be a posterior. For sphota there can be no cognition of meaning, so the existence of sphota is undeniably established. Sphota is always in Alliance with subject or self (atman). That is basic condition for word meaning theory, on which logical positivism never said light. It is self luminous self evident, undeniable and irrepressible like this self (atman). An attempt to deny it or to reduce it to anything else is vitiated by a hysteron or palindrome. It is like a fallacious argument in which the preposition to be proved is assume as a premise.

So Logical Positivism defined two types of words one is meaningful and another is meaningless. Logical Positivism seems given much importance to a tool that is language and phenomenal objects. On another hand the Advaita Vedanta put emphasis on subjective approach. Advaita Vedanta theory uses language tool and object as mean and ultimate reality of self as end. Here it seems that Logical Positivism uses the empirical base and not goes beyond it and clarifies objection arouse on Positivistic theory. Whereas Advaita Vedanta theory of Sphotavada use empirical Vaikhari speech of word and goes ahead of Logical Positivism, which reaches up to ultimate reality. Like a distinction made 'being given' and 'being thought' by Hegelien theory, the Advaita Vedanta meaning envisages a mode of non sensuous 'given-ness' in a de-conditioned state of consciousness.

References

1. Paul Arthur Schilpp, The Philosophy of Rudolf Carnap (Open Court Publishing Company, LaSalle, Illinois, 1963).

2. A.J. Ayer, Logical Positivism (The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1959).

3. A.J. Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic (Dover Publications, New York, 2014).

4. N.K. Singh and A.P. Mishra, *Advaita Philosophy* (Global Vision Publishing House, New Delhi, 2011).

5. John Nemec, *The Ubiquitous Siva: Somanada's Sivadrsti and His Tantric Interlocutors* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

6. K.A. Subramania Iyer, *The Vakyapadiya of Bharthari with the Vriti* (Deccan College, Pune1995).

7. K.A. Subramania Iyer, *Bharthari: A Study of Vakyapadiya in the Light of Ancient Commentaries* (Deccan College, Pune, 1992).

Footnotes

1. [1] *Bharthari, Vakyapadiya: Brahmakanda,* 129.
2. [1] *A.J Ayer, Logical Positivism* (London: The Free University Press, 1959), 62.
3. [1] *Bharthari, Vakyapadiya: Padakanda,* 41.
4. [1] *Somananda, Sivadrsti,* 40-42.