
UNIT 4 INDIAN HERMENEUTICS

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4.0. OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to familiarize the student regarding the hermeneutical growth in the Indian tradition. It is not a detailed exposition, however, the student is required to familiarize with the various schools of Indian thought who adapt different ways of interpreting their philosophies and world views. The student is required to have general framework of Indian philosophy that the notions presented become familiar to him.

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The diversity of Indian continent is not only limited to languages, religions, cultures but also to the philosophies too. Diversity in philosophic heritage can be attributed to the creative interpretations and re-interpretations of the classical Indian texts. A basic understanding of the various philosophical schools, both heterodox and orthodox, the literary genre of each tradition, religious outlook and spirit of Indian culture as a whole with its complexity will enable us to have some glimpse of the depth of Indian understanding of interpretation. An important point to note is that, there is an exchange of the wealth of knowledge between different schools, the basis of which is found in the use of different grammatical tools, rules of interpretation, made use by different authors to expose their own philosophical views. Therefore, the Vedangas which are the ancillary sciences which help for Vedic interpretations do play an important role in the hermeneutic trend in India. Starting from the Vedas, we can trace the hermeneutic development during different periods. They can be classified as, Vedic Period, Epic / Purana Period, Sutra period.

4.2. VEDIC INTERPRETATION

Vedas are at the basis of the Vedic culture which has its own tradition. Along the way, the Rg, Yajur, Sama and Atharva Vedas had influence on overall culture and society of India. Containing the divine revelation and are called *Apaurusheya*, they have been the chief texts of interpretation. Reaching its climax, the Vedic period, had developed a system of ritualism, acute sensitiveness for language and grammar, resulting in a very complex world-view. Since the Vedic texts contained in them the fundamental questions and orientation of human life, they have been interpreted differently based on different approaches to life. This had led to the emergence of *Darshanas*, specially *Astika* systems, who owe their allegiance to the Vedic authority.

After the Vedic period, we find the Epic period, where two important epics were compiled; Ramayana and Mahabharata. They are alive till today as they have been reassessed and reviewed to the changing contexts. At the end of this period we find the compilations in the form of *Sutras* / Aphorisms. It is through the *Sutras* all the traditional knowledge has been handed down till the present day. Hence, there arose a methodology which interpreted the *Sutras*. For the *Sutras* literally meant thread, yarn or string, that runs through and holds together different ideas and links up diverse interpretations within one tradition. They are the cues, the seminal ideas, often expressed in concise and cryptic ways. *Sutras* thus are characterized by,

- a. framed as to contain the least number of letters,
- b. to be constructed in such a way as to avoid ambiguity and doubt,
- c. are impregnated with the meanings,

- d. have widest applications,
- e. are free from all defects and are reasonable at the same time.

Sutras needed deeper explanations, which gradually led to the development of *Vedangas*. They helped in the Vedic interpretation. They are, *Nirukta* (etymology), *Vyakarana* (grammar), *Siksha* (phonetics), *Chandas* (metrical science), *Jyotisa* (astronomy) and *Kalpa* (science / art of rituals). The commentaries which were developed using these Vedangas are known as *Bhasyas*. *Bhasyas* are commentaries on *Sutras*. However, the further commentaries were developed on the *Bhasyas* too. They are known as *Vartika*, followed by *Vyakhyanas*, *Tikas* and *Vrtti* or *Tippani*, which can be considered as short notes. For a beginner to enter into any school of thought there are manuals which are known as *prakarana grantha*.

Schools Of Vedic Interpretation

Over the centuries the Vedas have been interpreted differently by different schools that focused on one aspect of Vedas. Some of the traditional schools of Vedic interpretation are:

1. Yajnika School / Ritualistic interpretation. The chief propounder of this school is Sayanacharya.
2. Aitihasikas / Historical interpretation. This school looks at the Vedic texts as historical happenings.
3. Vaiyakaranas / Grammarians. This school interprets Vedic text as authoritative texts for Grammar.
4. Nairukta / Etymology school. This school is propounded by Yaska, which uses root meanings to find the meaning of Vedic texts.
5. Parivrajakas / Mystical interpretation. This school interprets Vedas as mystical expressions.

Some of the traditional Indian interpreters are Sayanacharya, Skandaswamy, Bhattabhaskara, Mahidhara, Madhva, and in the modern times Dayananda Saraswati, R.M.Roy, Bala Gangadhar Tilak, Radhakrishnan, Aurobindo, Coomaraswamy etc. Even Western scholars have contributed immensely to the interpretation of Vedas. They are Roth, H.H. Wilson, Max Muller, R.T.H. Griffith, Maurice Bloomfield, Able Bergaigne, Raymundo Pannikar etc.

Principles Of Vedic Interpretation

Vedic interpretation requires the resourcefulness of the interpreter because the Vedic Sanskrit is different than the classical Sanskrit. An awareness of metaphors, similes, world view, mythology, knowledge of rituals is needed to interpret vedas. The knowledge of Metre, Padapatha and Samhitapatha too is needed to interpret Vedas.

The focus on Articulation / Sikska (accent, time factor and nasalisation of sounds) needed to be taken into consideration. The etymologies in Vedas have their own rules to derive the meanings. They are such as, regular words should be derived in a regular way, comparison can be made use and through meaning-considerations etymologies can be derived. The knowledge of various phonetic phenomena such as metathesis, syncope, haplology, and anaptyxis too is needed for Vedic interpretation.

4.3. INDIAN THEORIES OF MEANING

Language is not merely what is articulated, rather it has an inner nature which is the word-essence, known as the *Sabda-Brahman*, which is beginningless and endless. This *Sabda-Brahman* is conscious in all living beings through vibration in two ways: *Nama* (Name) and *Rupa* (form). In this regard the *Vak* / speech is understood at four levels in relation to the understanding of the centers of energy. The four levels are,

1. *Para vak* (Transcendent speech) at the *Muladhara Cakra*
2. *Pasyanti Vak* (Subtle speech) at the *Svadhastana Cakra*
3. *Madhyama Vak* (Inner Speech) at the *Anahata Cakra*
4. *Vaikhari Vak* (Manifest Speech) at the *Visuddha Cakra*

Sphota Theory

Sphota theory is propounded mainly by the Grammarians (*Vyakarana Darsana*). The origin of this theory is attributed to Spotayana Rsi by different authors. The word *Sphota* etymologically derived from the root *Sphut* which means to open, to unfurl, to develop. The same *Vyakarana Darsana* describes *Sphota* as the eternal word-symbol which is different from letters, manifested by letters, and indicative of meaning. The *Sphota* is different from *Dhvani* (sound). Bhartrhari, Nagesa Bhatta and Vedantins etc. have discussed on *Sphota* elaborately. *Sphota* theory holds detailed analysis of letter, word and sentence.

Basic Unit Of Language: Analysis Of Letter, Word And Sentence

There are different views on the basic unit of language. While Mimamsakas hold that it is the letter (*varna*), Naiyayikas hold it as word (*pada*), Vaiyakaranas hold it as sentence (*Vakya*).

Mimamsakas hold that the letters are the ultimate units of language. It is the combination of letters that constitutes a word and it is a combination of words that constitutes a sentence. Word or sentences have no independent entity apart from letters. They hold that individual letters are partless and indivisible; there is no potency of generating *Sphota* without letters. It is the letters who bear the meaning. Kumarila Bhatta expanded this view.

The Naiyayikas hold view that it is the word which is the real unit of language. They refute Varnavadins arguing that letters taken separately do not convey any meaning and all combination of letters are not meaningful. The potency of generating a sense lies in the terms as like when a word is made of some root, affix, case etc. The denotative capacity lies in the words alone.

The Vaiyakaranas hold that the real unit of language is a sentence. This view has been expounded chiefly by Bhartrhari in his *Vakyapadiyam*. The sentence is the fundamental unit of language because dividing it into letters and words is only an artificial approach for as a judgment, sentence is one integral whole which is really indivisible.

Analysis Of Word: Conditions For Words

In a wider sense *Sabda* is understood as sound (*Dhvani*) which is perceived by the auditory sense organ, in a restricted sense it is understood as a spoken word signifying something, and still more refined sense refers to testimony. Words are divided further into two types, *Varnatmaka* (articulate; further divided into *Sarthaka* or meaningful and *Nirarthaka* or meaningless) and *Dhvanyatmaka* (inarticulate). A word is that which is capable of meaning. The potency of a word to denote something is called *vr̥tti* i.e., the relation between word and meaning which gives rise to verbal cognition. This potency of a word is of two kinds namely, *Sakti* (*abhidha*) and *Laksana*. The *Rasa* schools add another kind namely *Vyanjana* as *vr̥tti*.

With regard to the meaning of the word and reference, it is generally held that word refers to *Vyakti*, *akrti*, and *Jati*, with the grammatical nuances. With regard to the derivation of the meaning of words, four kinds of *Saktis* are recognised. Classification of word is done based on this *Sakti*.

Analysis Of A Sentence A sentence is a combination of words with a mutual relation among the concepts. Therefore, any collection of words doesn't become a sentence. There are certain conditions which have to be fulfilled in order that it becomes a meaningful sentence. These conditions are

1. *Akanksa* (Expectancy): a word by itself may not convey the full meaning in a sentence. It needs other words in-order to convey the meaning. This mutual expectancy of one word to another is known as *akanksa*.
2. *Asatti* or *Sannidhi* (justaposition): the meaning of words in a sentence can be understood only if they are co-uttered (*sahoccarita*). The co-utterance of words is known by the name of *asatti* or *sannidhi*.
3. *Yogyata* (fitness / concord of words): the words in a sentence should be mutually compatible. They should be fit enough to be combined together.
4. *Tatparya* (intention of the speaker): the knowledge of the speakers' intention becomes more particularly necessary in the case of an equivocal expression and can be determinant with the help of various factors which determine the meaning of the words.

In the Indian hermeneutical tradition it is also discussed as how does the different words put together give rise to meaning. There is a synthesis of concepts. To answer this as how does the synthesis takes place, two theories have been put forward and are discussed in the wider circles. They are :

Abhitanvaya Theory

This theory is propounded by the Mimamsa School, Kumarilla Bhatta, Bhatta School. According to this theory, all words convey their meaning separately. The different words become related together by a synthetic construction (*samsarga maryada*). This takes place in accordance with the *akanksa*, *asatti*, *yogyata*, and *tatparya*. Thus meaning of the sentence arises from a synthesis (*anvaya*) of the words. Meaning is the concatenation of the individual items expressed by words. The individual words have in themselves meanings which can be comprehended separately. On hearing a sentence, we have first an understanding of the separate meanings of the words one after the other; then we put together these meanings according to the *akanksa*, *yogyata*, and *sannidhi*, and we arrive at the meaning of the sentence. Unlike the words, the sentence does not have its own independent meaning. Based on the psychological analysis of the process of learning a language, the meaning of a word is learnt by observing the use of words in actual contexts of situations. The meaning is recollected in similar situations. This view was held by Prabhakara and

Cidananda. But some others like, Parthasarathimisra, hold that the meaning of a word is conveyed by the primary significative potency of the word. The meaning is conveyed directly and not by reminder of former experiences.

Anvitabhidhana Theory

According to the *Anvitabhidanavada*, propounded by Prabhakara (Guru School), words in a sentence are synthesis of concepts. According to this theory, the words expressed are already related together and they collectively generate the meaning in an automatic way. It is not the case that the words are said first and the synthesis is made later on. Words are real and actual constituents of language and have definite meaning of their own, but the purpose of the words is to serve as part of the sentence. Unrelated words are only abstraction. Thus, both the individual word-meanings and their mutual relation are conveyed by the words themselves. The *anvitabhidhana* theory of sentence states that the sentence has a unitary meaning of its own; the constituent words possess meaning only as they are related to this unitary sentence meaning. In the language learning of the children, the Guru School holds that a sentence and behaviour produced out of it makes the children to learn the meanings of the sentences and act accordingly. Different schools of philosophy have responded differently to the question of the meaning of a sentence, largely depending on the metaphysical outlook they had and the aim they wanted to achieve against the rival schools. This theory of sentence meaning has been strongly criticized by the Bhatta School. Later on the views on both these theories are synthesized by Mukulabhatta into a combination called theory of *Samuccaya* for both these theories contain only the partial truth.

Check your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

What are the principles of Vedic interpretation?

What are the conditions of a sentence?

What is *Anvitabhidhana* Theory?

4.4. ANALYSIS OF RHETORIC LANGUAGE

Rhetoricians identify threefold *vrttis* in words. They are *Abhidha* (Primary potency of a word), *Laksana* (Secondary potency), and *Vyanjana* (Tertiary potency). These three *vrttis* produce three types of meanings. They are *Vacyartha* (Literary meaning), *Laksyartha* (Figurative meaning) and *Vyangyartha* (implied meaning).

Abhidha / *Vacyartha* (Literary meaning):

Vacyartha is the chief meaning or the fixed dictionary meaning. It is also known as *mukyartha*, *abhidartha*, *sakyartha* etc.

Laksyartha / *Laksana* (Figurative meaning):

When the chief meaning is hampered or obstructed in some way, it gives rise to the *Laksana* or the secondary meaning. It is some syntactical incompatibility or a hindrance to the intended meaning that necessitates *Laksana*. *Laksyartha* can take place when there is any obstruction to the primary meaning and also when substitution of another meaning is associated with the primary meaning. Sometimes convention or purpose necessitates *Laksana*. Differences are found in the classification of *Laksana*. But popularly accepted one is the threefold classification: *Jahat Laksana*, *Ajahat Laksana* and *Jahatajahat Laksana*.

Vyangyartha / *Vyanjana* (Implied meaning):

Vyanjana is that capacity of suggestiveness of implication which differs both from *abidha* and *Laksana*. The rhetoric school recognises two types of *Vyanjanas*, namely *Sabdi vyanjana* and *Arthi vyanjana*. The *vyanjana* is called *sabdi vyanjana* if the implication arises from some specific word. However, it can mean so if it depends on the primary meaning of the word (*abhidamula*) or it can also depend on the secondary meaning (*Laksanamula*). *Vyanjana* is called *arthi vyanjana* if the implication arises from the meaning of the sentence as a whole and not from any

specific word. For E.g.: the sun has set. It also depends on the nature of the speaker, nature of the bearer, the proximity of some other sentence, the place, time, intonations, gesticulations of the speaker etc.

Some Views on Poetic language

The poetic language too has been identified in the field of hermeneutics. Understanding them gives much wider light on the interpretation of text and the plays, their metaphysical outlook and how they have been employed in various ways. Some of the important questions that are dealt in these schools are: what constitutes the essence of poetry, what are its main elements, what are the characteristics of poetic language etc. These questions are discussed under the 6 schools of poetics.

1. The *Rasa* School : According to this school of thought the essence of poetry lies in *Rasa*. Bharata muni analyses three factors involved in the *Rasa* as *Vibhava*, *anubhava*, and *vyabhicari bhava*. Of the nine *Rasas*, the *Sringara Rasa* which pervades the most of the poetical literature.

2. The *Riti* School: According to this school of thought the soul of poetry is *riti*. Vamana Acarya is the chief propounder of this school. *Riti* means a specialised form of composition.

3. The *Vakrokti* School: According to this school, the essential feature of poetic expression is *vakrokti*. Kuntaka Acarya is the chief exponent of this school. *Vakrokti*, according to him is that kind of artistic expression which suggests something in an ingenious way. E.g.: Can a leopard change its spots?

4. The *Dhvani* School: This school of poetry considers *Dhvani* as the soul of poetry. Ananda Vardhana, the author of *Dhvanyaloka* is the chief propounder of this school. *Dhvani* according to this school is that in which the *vyngyārtha* (implied meaning) far excels the *vacyārtha* (literal meaning). The school propounds the idea that it is the aesthetic sensibility of the person, who enjoys the pleasures generated by the *Dhvani*.

Classification of *Dhvani* is done under various heads. However, the threefold classification is considered as common. They are: a. *Dhvani* arising from the force of the word (*sabda sakyuktha*), b. *Dhvani* arising from the force of meaning (*arthasakyuktha*) and c. *Dhvani* arising from the force of word and meaning (*ubhaya sakyuktha*).

The *Dhvani* Theory

Dhvani theory occupies a unique place in the rhetoric schools of Indian aesthetics. Grammarian school used this understanding of *Dhvani* in relation to phonemes, the uttered syllables. It was used by Bhartrhari to explain the language phenomenon where the literal meaning of the sentence is different from the intended sense. *Dhvani* literally means sound, tone, echo etc. but in the poetic schools it means evocation. Anandavardhana defines *Dhvani* as a specific arrangement of language wherein the primary meaning remains subordinate in order that the evoked significance shines prominently. The nature of *Dhvani* is explained in the metaphorical way like the charm of young woman (*lavanya*) which is much more than the sum of limbs, like soul to the body etc. Anandavardhana, based on the nature of *Dhvani* divides it into three types, namely, *Vastu Dhvani*, *Alamkara Dhvani*, and *Rasa Dhvani*.

It is important to note that *Dhvani* does differ from individual word meanings, *Abhidha*, or *Laksana*. It is much more than that. The evocativeness takes place not merely with the conditions of the word but is conditioned by factors such as the context, the relation between the speaker and the listener, the time, the place, the intonation etc. More than the author it is the reader who plays important role in the evocative meaning. The evocative meaning falls outside the realm of logical knowledge and therefore, it is *Alaukika* in the sense of appreciative realm. *Dhvani* in this sense brings together the experienced world of the author which lies beneath the text through the *Dhvani* to the experiencing world of the reader. Anandavardhana further states that the *Dhvani* is not limited to the language and its functions but goes beyond them to wider reality of gestures, music, etc. *Dhvani* theory therefore aims at bringing richer meaning to the text, delight to the reader (*camatkara*) and enables a process of discovery through sensitivity in perception by interpreting finer aspects of reality leading to newer perspectives.

5. The *Aucitya* School: This school considers the *aucitya* (propriety or fitness) as the life of the poetry. Acarya Ksemendra is the chief exponent of this school. The *Anaucitya* or the impropriety or discord of one thing with another gives rise to the *Rasabhanga* or the breach of aesthetic joy. This school considers *aucitya* as the sustaining life force of poetry.

6. The *Alankara* School: The *alankara* school of thought focuses on the decoration of language with the help of *alankaras*. Accordingly, poetry is ornamentation of expression. *Alankaras* embellish *Rasa*. There are two types of *alankaras*. They are, *Sabd alankara* (ornamental word) and *arth alankara* (ornamental meaning).

4.5. HERMENEUTICS IN HETERODOX SCHOOLS

Buddhist understanding of the language and its components differs from other orthodox schools of Indian thought. Keeping in mind the general framework of Buddhist metaphysics, specially the four noble truths, theory of

dependent origination, eightfold path, meditation and the community / *sangha*, *Ksanikavada*, *anatmavada* etc. the Buddhist hermeneuticians argue along the line of their metaphysics in order to establish their proposed views. Therefore, their analysis of word, meaning, sentence, in general the language differs from other schools. In the first place, Buddhist exegesis / interpretation is derived from *Abhidhamma*, one of the *Pitakas*. Buddhist hermeneutics lists matrices / *matrika*; the digests or exegetical guides, which maintain orthodoxy and also provide patterns for exegetical coherence. Nirvana or enlightenment being the ultimate aim of Buddhism, interpretation and the practical application of Buddhist scriptures needs to be taken into consideration.

Principles Of Buddhist Hermeneutics

1. The four reliance or strategies for understanding a text (*Pratisarana*)

According to *Pratisarana sutra*, there are four criteria of interpretations. They are:

- a. Relying on the teaching and not on the teacher
- b. Rely on the meaning and not the letter
- c. Rely on the definitive meaning and not the interpretable meaning
- d. Rely on (non-conceptual) wisdom and not on the (dualistic) cognition.

2. The four types of intentional and metaphoric language

There are several methods to understand the intentions of the texts. *Abhipraya* or contextual meanings are used for decoding the passage, while *Abhisamdhi* also is used in decoding the sacred text. The four kinds of intentions mentioned are

1. Introductory hidden intention - where the meaning is relevant only for the beginner
2. Metaphysical hidden intention – where the meaning is a statement on the nature of reality
3. Therapeutic hidden meaning – where the meaning is realized by following the instructions in combating unhealthy actions or states of mind
4. Metaphorical intention – where the meaning is not the literal meaning and often is paradoxical in character.

There are other two principles followed in the Buddhist hermeneutics. They are,

3. Four modes of reasoning
4. Use of analogies like dried ginger placed in medicinal powder, the canvas for painting, etc.

Apohavada

In the first place, the Buddhist logicians, hermeneutics consider that the essence of meaning is negative in character and that words have no direct reference to objective realities. They say it because for them words deal directly with the conceptual images, which are purely subjective constructions of the mind (*vikalpas*) and the connection is between the words and the mental images. Therefore, meaning of a word is a conceptual image (*vikalpa*). The essence of *vikalpa* is the negation of all its counter-correlates (*anyapoha*); which means the exclusion of all objects that are not the concepts.

The Buddhists on this line deny the existence of a positive entity called the universal (*samanya* or *jati*). Ultimately only the *svalaksana* or a particular at a point of time is the real. The existence of objective world is made up of succession of momentary particulars. These momentary particulars produce mutually different results, but since they produce same sensation they all appear as identical. Since the sameness is given importance and the relative differences are excluded, it gives rise to the same perception. The *pratyaksa pramana* for Buddhist logicians gives the unerring knowledge of the unique particular that is given directly to the senses. However, the name and the form is supplied by the mind which are cannot be included in the perception. Therefore, the perception is indeterminate for Buddhist hermeneutics.

The conceptual image of a thing has no direct correspondence with the real external things which are mutually different. The apparent identity of the image is produced by the identical efficiency of things. However, these conceptual images bring about purposeful action in daily life. A word cannot signify a 'unique particular' since the 'particulars' are momentary entities do not continue up to the time that conventional relation is apprehended. The universal is only an intellectual fiction without any reality. A word cannot denote a real positive thing because only the momentary particular (*Svalaksana*) is ultimately real. The meaning therefore, is a conceptual construction and not an objective fact. The word produces the purely subjective concept, which is negative in nature; excludes other concepts to make it distinct. Therefore, meaning of a word is the exclusion of everything other than the concept (*anyapoha*). This theory of *Apohavada* has been criticized by different schools on different grounds. The modified

version of the same theory is found in the works of Ratnakirti. He has attributed that the word consists of both the positive and negative meanings. It is important to note that, through this theory the Buddhist metaphysics of the unreality of universals is achieved. Later on Nyiyayikas have adopted the insights through their understanding on *Vyapti*. This is one of the contributions of defining meaning through negation.

Jaina Interpretation

Jainism is another significant school of heterodox system. It arose as a protest movement against Hinduism. It differs from the other systems in its religiosity, metaphysics and epistemology. Its metaphysical view holds that reality is pluralistic, expresses itself in multiple forms. All assertions of this pluralistic reality cannot be one view rather are relative and probable. Reality for the Jainas is complex web of many-ness (*Aneka*) and manifoldness (*anekanta*). Therefore, there are different points of view. The Jaina view of reality depends on the two main pillars, namely, *syadvada* and *anekantavada*. The contribution of Jainas to the field of interpretation is significant one because they admitted the possibility of multiple interpretations. To the language and methods of interpretation their contribution is very less. However, it is important to note their understanding of language as expressive (*vacaka*) or suggestive (*Jnapaka*). They hold that meaning is primarily rooted in the nature of reality and becomes conveyed through this expressive / suggestive capacity of words. It is important to note that, Jaina view altogether corresponds with the modern hermeneutical developments. The appreciation for variety and emergence of meaning and interpretations is what stands out in the Jaina view. Secondly, it is significant to note that interpretation is not merely limited to language, epistemology but also to ontology. Through this there is a relativistic view which is more consistent with their ontological commitment in pluralism.

Check your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1. What is *Dhvani* ?
2. Explain *Vyanjana*.
3. Explain Buddhist principles of hermeneutics.

4.6. INTERPRETATION IN ORTHODOX SCHOOLS

Two important schools which stand out in the Indian hermeneutic tradition are the Vaiyakaranas and the Mimamsakas. The analysis of words, sentences etc. belong to mainly the Grammarian school, however, it is not exclusively its right. Always contributions from other systems of thought in the form of criticism, correction, and innovation have contributed to the growth and refinement of their views.

The second important school in this regard is the Mimamsa School. The Mimamsakas are considered as a science of judicial interpretation of the sacrificial portion of Veda. Mimamsa School came in the context of Vedic texts, which were found to be contradictory. However, proper interpretations cleared the contradictions. Mimamsa in this regard is a science of interpretation or exegesis. It essentially differs from *Kalpasutra* and *Nirukta*, but has the characteristics of both.

Mimamsa Procedure of Understanding

Mimamsakas identify the five step procedure of understanding which is called *Adhikarana*. These are not absolute categories; there are differences of opinion regarding this. The five steps of *adhikarana* are the following:

1. *Visaya*: the text or the passage is the subject of interpretation which is being capable of having two or meanings.
2. *Samsaya* (Doubt): when there is doubt regarding the correct meaning of the text, it is known as *samsaya*.

3. *Purva-paksa*: is stand taken with one of the meanings and testing how far it stands reasonable.
4. *Uttara-paksa*: is the refutation of the *purva-paksa* or the suggested meaning.
5. *Nirnaya*: is the establishment of the true meaning.

Some of the conditions of understanding are found even in Uttara mimamsa. The conditions are: 1. The Beginning (*upakrama*), 2. The Conclusion (*upasamhara*), 3. The Repetition (*Abhyasa*), 4. Peculiarity (*Apurvata*), 5. The Object (*Phalam*), 6. The expectation or purpose (*arthavada*), 7. Suitableness (*upapatti*).

The further discussion on the Adhikaranas and the principles of textual interpretation are known as Nyayas. These are primarily linguistic and grammatical tools which contribute to the enrichment of the meaning of the textual exegesis. In order to understand the rituals prescribed in the Vedas Mimamsas developed a systematic theory of *Vakyabhodha*. This helps in the clarification and correct understanding of the various rituals. It is to be noted that the social, religious of context of the time, specially sacrifice based social and religious milieu is taken into consideration. It is also worth noting that Mimamsakas make use of the Nyayas in their hermeneutical strategy like that of *Kaka-taliya nyaya*, *kaka-dant-pariksa nyaya* etc.

The Mimamsa interpretation theory is based on some of the basic principles which will give the proper meaning of the Vedic sentences. These principles are of two types: a. principles that are primarily related to the interpretation of words and sentences; b. principles regarding the interpretation and application of sacrificial acts.

In understanding the meaning of the word, the following rules need to be taken into consideration. They are:

1. Meaning of words by current usage
2. Aryan usage of a word need to be taken into consideration against the foreign usage of the same word
3. Meaning of foreign words should be taken in their own sense
4. A word is to be understood in the sense suitable for the act concerned
5. If the literal interpretation of a word would make another word meaningless, the former should be interpreted in a qualified sense
6. One word must not have several senses
7. The peculiar feature of one leading object belonging to a class may give name to the whole class
8. If the meaning of the word is vague, it must be identified and made definite by the following passages
9. When a verb has more than one adjective used in the text, all these adjectives must be taken to refer to the same acting and nor to separate implied actions
10. When a word is used in a text having the nature of general clause, the singular number of a word includes the plural and the masculine the other two genders
11. A word occurring in an injunctive text / *vidhi vakyas* should be understood in the number and gender which it grammatically bears in that text

There are other rules too, which are grammatical in nature in understanding the text. Proceeding from this, Mimamsakas discuss the Rules for the sentences. They are broadly divided into four classes of rules as,

- a. Rules relating to determine syntactical units so far as the interpretation of injunctive text is concerned.
- b. Rules that relate to the construction of injunctive texts *Vidhi vakyas* and *arthavada* texts
- c. Those relating to the different clauses
- d. Those regarding the negation and conflicting texts.

Elaboration of each of these principles is a tedious task. Therefore, the three general principles governing the construction of sentences can be mentioned here: the principle of 'syntactical connection' or *Ekavakyatadhikarana*, the principle of syntactical split or *vakysbhedadhikarana* and the principle of elliptical extension or *anusangadhikarana*.

There are also general axioms of interpretation. They are:

1. *Sarthakya* : Every word and sentence must have some meaning and purpose
2. *Laghava*: when one rule or proposition would suffice, more must not be assumed
3. *Arthaikata* : to a word or sentence occurring at one and the same place a double meaning should not be attached
4. *Gunapradhana* : if a word or sentence which, on the face of it, purports or expresses a subordinate idea clashes with the principle of idea, the former must be adjusted to the latter or altogether disregarded
5. *Samanjasy* : contradiction between words and sentences is not to be presumed if it is possible to reconcile them

6. *Vikalapa*: when there is a real contradiction, any of the contradictory matters may be adopted as option.

Nyaya Interpretation

Nyaya School agrees to most of its content to the grammarian school. However, *Visayatavada* and theory of abhava are its unique contributions to the field of hermeneutics.

Visayatavada has its basic premise that knowledge is not empty but has content. It is not empty knowledge. The analysis of this knowledge through the universalisation leads to the understanding. The relation between the object and the knowledge possessor in its entirety with the universalisation is known as the *visayatavada*.

Avacchedaka and *avacchinna* also need to be considered in this context.

The theory of abhava (non-existence) is important in the Navya-nyaya analysis. It forms as an independent category in their metaphysics. Abhava is that cognition which depends on the cognition of its counter-positive. This theory has much similarity with the Buddhist apohavada. The three main components of the abhava are; a. Prati-yoga – that which is absent or the counter positive, b. Anuyogi – the locus or the substratum where the abhava is, c. Pratiyogisambandha – the relation of counter positive to the thing.

Check your Progress 3

- a. Use the space provided for your answer
- b. Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What is the role of Mimamsa in Indian hermeneutics?

2. What are the three Mimamsa rules of sentence construction?

3. What is *Visayatavada*?

4.7. LET US SUM UP

Sufficient attention was given to the classical texts and proper methods were developed and to that matter one of the schools of Philosophy namely Mimamsa laboured extremely to develop a proper methodology of exegesis of Vedas. Contributions of grammarians, the Logic school namely Nyaya etc are note worthy. The general metaphysical approach towards language and its role in human life, leading to action brings out the truth that Indian hermeneutics based themselves on a sonic theology which governed different aspects of their lives. Ultimately, the analysis and interpretation of text is the interpretation of life itself, for text and sound are the un-detachable parts of human life.

4.8. KEY WORDS

Akanksa (Expectancy): a word by itself may not convey the full meaning in a sentence. It needs other words in-order to convey the meaning. This mutual expectancy of one word to another is known as *akanksa*.

Asatti or **Sannidhi** (juxtaposition): the meaning of words in a sentence can be understood only if they are co-uttered (*sahoccarita*). The co-utterance of words is known by the name of *asatti* or *sannidhi*.

Yogyata (fitness / concord of words): the words in a sentence should be mutually compatible. They should be fit enough to be combined together.

Tatparya (intention of the speaker): the knowledge of the speakers' intention becomes more particularly necessary in the case of an equivocal expression and can be determinant with the help of various factors which determine the meaning of the words.

Dhvani : *Dhavni* literally means sound, tone, echo etc. but in the poetic schools it means evocation. Anandavardhana defines *Dhvani* as a specific arrangement of language wherein the primary meaning remains subordinate in order that the evoked significance shines prominently.

Vyanjana: *Vyanjana* is that capacity of suggestiveness of implication which differs both from *abidha* and *Laksana*.

Visayatavada: The relation between the object and the knowledge possessor in its entirety with the universalisation is known as the *visayatavada*.

4.9. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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