NEW SCHOLARS

ŚABDĀRTHARATNA OF TĀRĀNĀTHA ŚARMA
A Critical Study with English Translation

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The Śabdārtharatna of Tārānātha Tarkavācaspati is a remarkable work on the philosophy of language and this research study based on it includes two parts: The first part is a critical study of the text *Śabdārtharatna* and the second part gives its critical edition with English translation. There are four chapters in the first part: the opening chapter introduces the work and its author by giving the significance, context and content of the text, the second chapter explains the linguistic elements of the text, the third chapter gives a 'Lingo-Scriptural interpretation' to the concept of *śabdārtha* and the fourth chapter makes some critical observations and conclusions. In the second part, the text is given together with its English translation, in which the passage is subdivided into small units on the basis of logical division of the topic considered, and each unit has been numbered separately for easy reference. For a better understanding of

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the text, the translation is immediately followed by explanatory notes.

1. Relevance of the Study

Sanskrit literature is loved and respected throughout the world for its philosophical and spiritual wisdom, even though some of the literature still remains in the form of manuscripts, practically inaccessible to the penetrating enquiries of the scholars. The selection of the collection of *Ṛgvedic* manuscripts from the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (BORI) Pune, by UNESCO, for inclusion in the memory of the World Register, among the thirty-seven other international documentary selections, in June 2007, is its most recent testimony of worldwide admiration for ancient Indian heritage that is embedded in Sanskrit literature. According to the latest assessment, the manuscript wealth of India is estimated to be five million handwritten texts,[1] and the preservation and publication of these original works are a few of the prime concerns of contemporary Indological studies.

As a response to this pressing situation of Sanskrit research, this study is an attempt to explore and bring to light, a buried scholarly-labour in manuscript, namely the *Śabdārtharatna* of *Tārānātha Tarkavācaspati*. It explains the relation between sound and its meaning, basically from the Neo-Grammarian's point of view and through a study on the work, the inspiration that India has been bestowing on the various aspects of the philosophy of language can be further continued in contemporary linguistic circles. According to Kunjunni Raja, 'recently, the interest of Western scholars is spreading to the field of 'meaning'.[2] In the context of this development in linguistics, the Sanskrit works, which form the solid bed-rock of the comparative grammar of the Indo-European languages, have all the potentialities of being a stirring source and here the *Śabdārtharatna* has a unique relevance, as it specifically deals with the problem of meaning. However, as *Śabdārtharatna* is a Sanskrit work, it may not be directly accessible to the foreign scholars. Therefore, an English translation of *Śabdārtharatna* may give an opportunity to both the Sanskritists as well as the non-Sanskritists to learn more about the text and appreciate its linguistic merits. Hence, in this research-study, an attempt is being made for the first time, to do a critical study of the text along with English translation. Above all, as the year 2010 is the

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[1]B. N. Goswamy, *The Word is Sacred, Sacred is the Word – The Indian Manuscript Tradition*, p.8.
[2]K. Kunjunni Raja, *Indian Theories of Meaning*, 3.

125th death anniversary of its author Tārānātha Tarkavācaspati (1806-1885 A.D.), I do hope that such an academic celebration will be a befitting salutation to his memory. The manuscripts of the text are available in Bengal, Banaras and Orissa. Its Bengal version was already published from Calcutta by Vi Ela Yantre publication in 1902 but is long out of print and not available any more in any of the leading libraries. The present edition of the text *Śabdārtharatna* has been prepared on the basis of a manuscript procured from Banaras, along with the two damaged copies of the printed version, one of which I was able to procure from Pondicherry (EFEO) and the other from Kerala (from the personal collections of Dr. Surendran Nambair, Pilatara, Kannur).

2. Tārānātha and His Different Works

There is no question of any doubt, regarding the authorship of *Śabdārtharatna* as it is stated very clearly in the beginning, as well as, at the end of the work. The *maṅgalaśloka* or the benediction of *Śabdārtharatna*, obviously asserts the truth that it is written by Tārānātha:

"*abhivandya jagadavandyāṁ dēvīṁ vācāmadhīśvarīm |*
 śabdārtharatnaṁ krīyatē śrītārānāthaśarmaṇā ||" (Śa.Ra.1.0.1)

Moreover, the work is concluded by reaffirming it for the second time in the colophon, as follows,

"*iti śrītārānāthatarkavācaspativiracitaṁ śabdārtharatnaṁ samāptam |*"

According to J. N. Bhattacharya, Tārānātha, son of Sārvabhauma was an erudite scholar and was a Professor of Grammar and Philosophy at Government Sanskrit College, Calcutta. Lexicon and grammar are the two favourite fields of Tārānātha's writings. He is better celebrated for his monumental Sanskrit lexicon – *Vācaspatya.* It is a comprehensive Sanskrit dictionary in twenty-two parts, with ample quotations and references from the Veda and other branches of Sanskrit literature. *Śabdastoma-Mahānidhi* is another well-known Sanskrit dictionary by Tārānātha. He has also written a commentary called *Saralā* on the *Sīddhānta Kaumudī.* His *Aśubodha-Vyākaraṇa* based on the *Aṣṭādhyāyi* is another important contribution to Sanskrit. And lastly, he has written *Śabdārtharatna* with the object of "*vaiyākaraṇa-matajijñāsnāṃ vaṅgadeśīyānāmupakārārtham*", which is the subject matter of this study.

In short, as a lexicographer, in *Vācaspatya* and *Śabdastoma-Mahānidhi*, Tārānātha gives a complete list of Sanskrit vocabulary to aid the literary aspirants, whereas in *Śabdārtharatna*, as a philosopher, he

deals with the linguistic aspects of Sanskrit. Usually, in the Sanskrit tradition, lexicographers and grammarians are collectively called *śābdika* – 'language experts', because of the close association of these two branches of linguistics. In that case, Tārānātha Tarkavācaspati is a typical *śābdika* in the true sense.

3. The Content of Śabdārtharatna

Śabdārtharatna, as the name implies, reviews the problem of *śabdārtha*, which is basically an issue of the sentential-meaning, conveyed by the corresponding words in a sentence. As the concept of *śābdabodha* is related to the concept of phoneme, word, sentence, syntax and semantics etc., Tārānātha makes here, a detailed discussion on all these related topics. The text begins with a *Prasthāvanā* (*Granthāraṁbhaḥ*) and then moves to the *Vākyakāṇḍa* and the *Padakāṇḍa*.

3.1. The *Prastāvanā*

The *Prasthāvanā* is very short in size and considers some elementary points related to *śabda* and *akṣara* such as the nature and varieties of sound, the manner and places of the utterance of letters etc. Tārānātha also gives a precise account of the four levels of sound or utterance namely, *parā vāk*, *paśyanti vāk*, *madhymā vāk* and *vaikarī vāk*. As grammarians always uphold, *vāk* is a multi-faceted phenomenon and can not be considered as simple uttered and articulated speech. Its first and second stage namely *parā vāk* and *paśyantī* are absolutely free from all differentiation and sequence. It is beyond all notions of correctness and worldly usages and is indivisible. The third stage *madhyamā* is purely mental and is not audible to others. It is accompanied by the subtle function of breath (*prāṇa*) and so it appears to have sequence. The last one *vaikharī* is the word that is audible to others. *Prāṇa* plays a great part in it and so it has definite sequence and form. It is highly mixed-up or uttered in distinct phonemes.

3.2. The *Vākyakāṇḍa*

It is a discussion on sentence and its meaning. It begins with two kinds of meaning relations – *śakti* (the primary meaning) and *lakṣaṇa* (the secondary meaning). The primary meaning, which is termed differently as *śakyārtha*, *vācyārtha* or *mukhyārtha* is actually the direct relation between a word and its meaning. *Lakṣaṇa* or the secondary meaning of a word is an indirect or implied meaning. Afterwards, the author moves to the central theme of the text, that is, the sentence-meaning. The assessment of different ideas related to verbal understanding, such as, the denotative and indicative meaning of

sentence, associate causes of verbal cognition and *sphoṭavicāraḥ* offers a glimpse of the complex nature of the problem. Among the Indian philosophers of language, there are basically two approaches to sentence-meaning and in *Śabdārtharatna*, both these views are summarized. The first one is the theory of sentence-holism (*akhaṇḍapakṣa*), which believes in the indivisibility of sentence, whereas, the second one is the theory of atomism (*khaṇḍapakṣa*), which believes in the divisibility of sentence. Grammarians are the *akhaṇḍapakṣavādins*, and, according to them, words and word-meanings have no independent status in the communication of meaning through sentences. The discussion then proceeds to the *sphoṭavāda* and to '*ākāṅkṣā, yogyatā, sanniddhi and tātparya*', which are regulating conditions that give completeness and unity to sentence-meaning.

3.3. The *Padakāṇḍa*

Of the two chapters this is longer and deals with meanings of words and of parts of words. It begins with the definition of a word and then proceeds to other questions that are related to the understanding of words. A *pada* is a group of letters or *varṇas* arranged in a particular form, to express meaning and is technically defined as an inflected word or the stem of a noun in the middle cases and before some *taddhitas*. In other words, it ends with either declensional or conjugational affix (P.I.4.14). Thus, only an inflected word can be used in language and never can a base-word be used in language. A base-word, unless accompanied by inflections, has no standing at the syntactic level and therefore, cannot be used in language as a syntactic unit. According to this definition, a word covers three aspects: sound, letters and meaning. After defining 'word', the chapter explains terms such as the meaning of roots, tenses, moods, nouns, compounds, cases and so on. Roots, which can be considered as the atoms of language are explained with their definitions, various forms, suffixed roots, crude roots, meanings etc. The most important topic that this chapter deals with is the word meaning with its different cases and compounds.

4. The *Tattvārtha* of Śabdārtharatna

According to Indian linguistic philosophy, the whole exercise of interpretation (*vyākhyāna*) resolve itself into *artha-nirdhāraṇa* – the determination of meaning, in which, two aspects of meaning are to be clearly established: firstly, the *yathārtha* – 'the meaning as it is or as it means', and secondly, the *tattvārtha* – 'the philosophical significance'. Hence, this research study makes an attempt to do justice to these

two dimensions of interpretation. As the philosophic glances move from one side to the other, newer and newer relations are discovered and here, the 'Linguistic-glance' of the *Śabdārtharatna* (the '*yathārtha*' elements) are turned to 'Lingo-Scriptural Glance', (*tattvārtha* elements) for fresh insights. Just as one moves from import of words to import of sentences in linguistic philosophy, here, the import of sentences are in a way further moved or transcended to the import of scriptures and thus, the language of hermeneutics is converted to a language of scriptural hermeneutics.

In the inclusive ambivalence of Indian linguistic thinking, the bilingual symbols – *śabda* and *artha* has the competency to make a philosophical investigation into the sacred bi-traditional texts of *Śruti* and *Smṛti* literature. Looking with an eye of grace - '*darśana*', one can find some striking similarities between these two linguistic symbols and scriptural traditions. *Ṛgveda* reminds that "the ignorant man, seeing and hearing speech in their manifest forms, does not know their real nature. To the wise, Speech reveals her intrinsic nature, even as the loving wife does to her lord. Lost in appearances, we fail to penetrate to the deeper reality."[3] According to the Indian linguistic understanding, language is often interwoven with revelatory ideas. The grammarians use language as a metaphor for various metaphysical purposes to decipher and interpret the mysteries of the unknown realities and more precisely, to spark enlightening ideas on Brahman. And, in this context, it is relevant to recollect the words of Tārānātha from *Śabdārtharatna*:

> And, thus just as by seeing the unreal Arundhati, the real Arundhati is found or just as how by analysing the five-sheaths and rejecting them as false the indivisible Sacidānandabrahma is discerned, similarly it is to be known that it is through grammar, and by anaylsing the meaning of the unreal base and suffixes that the real indivisible knowledge is gained. And it is also said that "it is the knowledge similar to the five-sheaths that is dependent here." And it is also said that "truth is to be explained by standing in the untrue path. (Śa.Ra.2.10.6-8)

It is interesting to mark out the truth-seeking connection between the *Arundhatidarśana* and the concept of *śabdārtha* that Tārānātha is pointing out. Here the implied idea is that, the purpose of the division of sentences to words and further words to stems and suffixes are for the easy understanding of the indivisible sentential-meaning. Understanding the divisible meaning of a sentence is rather

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[3] *uta tvaḥ paśyan na dadarśa vācamuta tvaḥ śraṇavan na śraṇōtyānām |*
  utō tvasmai tanvaṁ vi sastrē jāyēva patya uśatī suvāsāḥ || (ṚV.X.71.4)

easy, just as finding the big star that is close at hand to the Arundhati. Similarly, in grammar with the help of the imaginary stems and suffixes, as well as the word-meanings the indivisible sentential-meaning (*akhaṇḍārtha*) is found out.

In linguistic philosophy, the term *śabda* is employed to denote not only a letter (*varṇa*), word (*pada*) or sentence (*vākya*) but also to a discourse (*mahāvākya* or *ekavākyatā*). The *śābdabodha* refers to the understanding of the essence of language and here, *śabda* is not treated as an individual *pada* or even a single sentence. In the technical sense, it is used to signify an integrated set of sentences subsumed under the term '*mahāvākya*' or discourse'. In this sense, perhaps, the whole Vedic corpus may be considered as a single sentence; the Mīmāṁsakās presuppose it for their hermeneutical endeavour in remarks such as "All the (text in the) Veda form one sentence (with no discordant constituents कृत्स्नो वेद एकं वाक्यम्।). Just as the sentence is considered 'a single integrated symbol' (*eko'navayavaḥ śabdaḥ*) which is revealed by the individual letters and the words that comprise it, the entire corpus of scripture also may be viewed as 'a single integrated symbol' which is revealed by the individual texts that comprise it. Just as the words have no reality of their own and only help the listener to arrive at the meaning, so also, different scriptures are only helpers to arrive at the true vision of revelation.

As the unique conception of *sphoṭa*, specifically deals with the meaning of words, it may better explain the link between what is heard and what is comprehended in the interpretation of the scriptures. The *sphoṭa* theory in its simple form, "maintains that a word or a sentence is not just a concatenation made up of different sound units arranged in a particular order, but a single whole, a single symbol which bears meaning."[4] It further describes language or sentence-meaning as partless and indivisible and as devoid of internal sequence. It is a unity, a whole, and not the result of joining together of smaller units called words. It is for the sake of convenience, as well as for facilitating the learning and understanding of a language that the whole is divided into parts and smaller units. Thus, ultimately, the *sphoṭavāda* puts forward a holistic framework for understanding the meaning of language. By a lingo-scriptural glance, it can provide some innovative insights in understanding the meaning of the *Śruti* and *Smṛti* texts, in favor of a holistic outlook.

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[4]B. K. Matilal, *The Word and the World*, 77.

Just as Brahman got bifurcated into *śabda* and *artha*, from a lingo-scriptural point of view, it can be argued that He also got bifurcated into the sacred texts of *Śruti* and *Smṛti*. As the form of language and the form of reality are identical, the essence of *Śruti* and the essence of *Smṛti* too are identical. There is no question of duality among *Śruti* and *Smṛti* scriptures; just as *śabda* cannot be separated from its *artha*, *Śruti* and *Smṛti* texts cannot be understood or interpreted independently of each another. Language is the ordinary consequence of the marriage of sound and sense: In *Rahuvaṁśa*, Kālidāsa makes use of this linguistic unity of *śabda* and *artha* to penetrate the divine unity of Śiva and Pārvati. Similarly, the linguistic unity of *śabda* and *artha* can also be attributed to the scriptural unity of *Śruti* and *Smṛti* texts.

As it is said in *Mahābhārata*, 'the Veda is afraid of him who has not studied the Epics and *Purāṇas*, for he would kill it with his ignorance of its truth propounded in them.' Thus, the applying of *śābdabodha* theory to hermeneutics or scriptural interpretation is a great challenge and a mission too, as it requires not just reading the line of words to make out the meaning of a text, but calls for transcending it and looking for the innumerable possibilities of meanings. The relationship between the internal and the external, and the relationship between the part and the whole can be effectively considered only if one understands the self and its role in establishing the relationship between language and reality. And, in this perspective *Śabdārtharatna*, is indeed an invitation to make a hermeneutical journey – a Lingo-Scriptural journey – to the new horizons of scriptural understanding.

6. Śabdārtharatna: A Creative Work on *Śabdārthaśāstra*

In general, there are two branches of the commentary works of Sanskrit grammar, *prakriyātmaka*, that is, 'word processing' and *dārśanīka*, that is, 'philosophical'. Sanskrit linguistics, as it was originally formulated in the *sūtras* of Pāṇini, was concerned more with the word-processing (*prakriyātmaka*). The second branch, that is, *dārśanīka* remained untouched for a long period and after a gap of seven hundred years, Bhartṛhari composed his *Vākyapadīya*, by which this branch started budding. Later, the Neo-grammarians such as Kauṇḍa Bhaṭṭa, Bhaṭṭoji Dīkṣita and Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa have written works on the speculative aspects of Sanskrit language and contributed immensely to this branch and preserved the philosophical tradition very sincerely and logically. The science of grammar in their hands, in debating with Naiyāyikas and Mīmāṁsakas, was no longer only a *Śabdaśāstra*; rather it grew to a level of *Śabdārthaśāstra*.

Moreover, the text *Śabdārtharatna* is the recent replica of such discussions in linguistics. It gives philosophically illuminating descriptions of the general features of Sanskrit language, and deals with the basic question of how the meaning of *śabda* is to be understood. To answer this question, the author makes a detailed investigation into the structure of language, the meaning of a word and the import of the meaning of a word, the relation between a word and its meaning, and the processes of comprehending the meaning of a sentence etc. Thus, *Śabdārtharatna* is a typical *Śabdārthaśāstra* work, and not merely a *Śabdaśāstra* work, which contributes to the linguistic philosophy in general and to verbal cognition in particular.

7. Tārānātha a Synthesizer of Modern Sanskrit Linguistic Philosophy

As a philosopher of language, Tārānātha may be acclaimed as a 'Synthesizer of Modern Sanskrit Linguistic Philosophy'. In *Śabdārtharatna*, the entire philosophies of Neo-Grammarians like Bhartṛhari, Kauṇḍa Bhaṭṭa, Bhaṭṭoji Dīkṣita and Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa on *śabdārtha* are summarized in a holistic jewel-form (*ratna*). The lines of the prologue itself testify to it more than anything else:

vaiyākaraṇasiddhāntō durbōdhō granthagauravāt |
alpāyāsēna tadbōdhāsādhanāya mamōdyamaḥ || (Śa.Ra.1.0.3)
śabdēnduśēkharē prōktaṁ yaccōktaṁ śabdakaustubhē |
bhūṣaṇādau ca yatprōktaṁ tanmūlaṁ likhyatēʃkhilam|| (Śa.Ra.1.0.6)
idaṁ maduktaṁ śṛṇvantu hṛdayē dhārayantu ca |
kalayantu nijaṁbhāvaṁ santaḥ satyēna yācitāḥ || (Śa.Ra.1.0.7)
prasiddhērmugdhabōdhasya tasya saṁjñānusārataḥ |
vyākhyātā pāṇinēḥ saṁjñā subōdhāya kvacinmayā || (Śa.Ra.1.0.9)
bahvāyāsasusādhyēbhyastēbhyaḥ sāratamāhṛtēḥ |
alpāyāsēna bōdhārthamidamāracitaṁ mayā || (Śa.Ra.1.0.22)

From these lines it can be reasonably concluded that *Śabdārtharatna* is formulated and shaped by a chain of earlier works. As it has been much enriched by the wisdom of the past thinkers, 'the Goddess of learning should definitely be smiling on *Śabdārtharatna*'.[5] Perhaps, the words of Abhinavagupta may express it more positively:

ūrdhvōrdhvamārūhya yadarthatattvaṁ dhīḥ paśyati śrāntimavēdayantī |
phalaṁ tadādyaiḥ parikalpitānāṁ vicārasōpānaparamparāṇām ||[6]

(Abh.Bhā.I.p.280)

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[5]"The Goddess of learning does not smile on those who neglect the past" VP.II.487).

[6] *Abhinavabhāratyām* (Gaikwad Oriental Series) Uddyota I, 280.

"If the intellect rises to new heights without any feeling of exertion and tiredness and is able to see the truth about various things or subjects, it is the fruit of the series of steps, leading to discrimination laid by the earlier thinkers." In *Śabdārtharatna*, Tārānātha accompanies the steps of his earlier thinkers and climbs to new heights, due to which the book enlivens the discussions of its predecessors on the word and its sense but with its own unique innovations.