
UNIT 4 TESTIMONY

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4.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this unit are:

- to make clear the importance and significance of *Sabda* (Testimony) in acquiring valid knowledge
- to show the nature of verbal testimony
- to demonstrate the understanding of testimony in various Indian Classical systems like, Sāṃkhya, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsā, Advaita etc.
- To introduce the *Sphota* Theory.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Indian logic, true knowledge is *prama* and the means for valid knowledge are known as *pramāṇas*. The most distinguishing feature of Indian thinking on *pramāṇa* is the theory of *sabda* (testimony). The western epistemologies recognize one or more of the following sorts of cognition-perception, reasoning, introspection and memory. But of late, many more philosophies have come to emphasize on the decisive role that language plays in shaping our knowledge. But no one recognizes language or verbal utterance itself as a means of acquiring knowledge about the world. A lot of knowledge that we all have is linguistic as many contemporary philosophers say which is different thing from saying that language itself is a means of knowing something about the world. The Indian epistemologies consequently not only recognize *sabda* that is hearing the utterance of a competent speaker as a *pramāṇa* but as the decisive source of our cognitions about all those matters that transcend the limits of possible sensory experience.

Testimony (*sabda-pramāṇa*) is an important source of knowledge. Our experience shows that the major part of a person's stock of knowledge about the world is acquired from the oral or written testimony of other persons. The importance of testimony becomes obvious when we imagine a person deprived of all contact

with other persons and books in which case he would simply be reduced to the level of a brute. Testimony has been recognized as an independent source of knowledge by all Indian philosophers except the Carvaka, the Buddhists and the Vaisesika. The Carvaka rejects testimony in general because according to him, it does not give valid knowledge and scriptural testimony in particular because vedic knowledge in his opinion is all fraud, a device of the cunning priests to earn their living by cheating the ignorant masses. The Buddhist and the Vaisesikas recognize testimony but not as an independent means of knowledge. They reduce testimony to inference.

4.2 THE MEANING OF SABDA AND VARIOUS TYPES OF SABDA

Gautama defines *Sabda* as *āptopadēsa*, instruction from an apt or fit person and later on as *āpta-vākya*. The fit person is defined as *yathārtha vakta*, speaker of truth. definition of *sabda*: *āpatasya vacanam sabdah*. The reliability of a person making a statement is a condition ensuring the validity of the knowledge derived in this way.

There are two ways of classifying testimony. According to one classification testimony can be of two kinds that relating to perceptible object and that relating to imperceptible objects. The trustworthy assertions of ordinary, the saints and the scriptures about the perceptible objects of the world such as the statements of a reliable farmer about plants, the scriptural injunctions to perform certain rites to bring about rainfall etc. and the assertions of trustworthy persons, saints, prophets and the scriptures about super-sensible realities such as a scientists' assertions about atoms, ether etc., the prophet's instructions regarding virtue and vice, the scriptural texts regarding God, freedom, immortality etc. come under first classification.

According to another classification, there are two kinds of testimony, the scriptural (*vaidika*) and the secular (*laukika*). The Vedas are not impersonal but personal compositions of God, the omniscient person and are therefore perfect and valid. The secular testimony of trustworthy persons is valid while that of unworthy persons is invalid. The first classification is based on the nature of the objects of knowledge and the second on the source of knowledge. But the two classifications agree in implying that testimony must always be personal, that is, based on the words of some trustworthy person, human or divine.

In short, testimony may be verbal or non-verbal. Non-verbal testimony consists of gestures. But it is not important because it lacks precision. Gautama defines verbal testimony as the statement of a reliable person. Verbal testimony consists of verbal statements of people intended to express certain facts.

4.3 THE CONCEPT OF SABDA IN INDIAN CLASSICAL SYSTEMS

The different systems in India give different explanations for *Sabda* and demonstrate its implications differently. We shall discuss briefly the understanding of the concept of *Sabda* in those systems.

Sabda in Sāmkhya System

Sāmkhya does not recognize secular testimony as an independent source of valid knowledge since it depends on perception and inference. Valid testimony is true revelation. The Vedas are revelations of super-sensible realities, which are beyond the range of perception and inference to inspired seers (*r'sis*). The Vedas are *apaurusēya* (impersonal) because they are not composed by any human person, and not even by God. The Vedas embody the intuitions of enlightened seers.

Sabda in Nyaya System

According to Naiyāyikas the 4th means of valid knowledge is *sabda* (word). Knowledge of words is the instrumental cause, is the perception of words by the sense of hearing of verbal knowledge or the knowledge of words, which arises from seeing the script. The operation of the instrumental cause is the recollection of the meaning of words.

Gotama defines testimony as the instruction of a trustworthy person who has immediate knowledge of the Moral Law (*Dharma*) and who is competent to guide others in the performance of their duties and the abstention from sins for the attainment of good and avoidance of evil. Trustworthy persons are those who perceive objects as they exist in their real nature and communicate their right knowledge to others for their benefit out of compassion for them. They are free from attachment. The assertions of those who know truth but speak falsehood are not valid. The assertions of trustworthy persons which are not fit for guiding persons in the performance of right actions and non-commission of sins are not testimony. Untrustworthy persons are tainted with delusion. Testimony is an instruction which is expressed in a sentence or proposition. While the validity of verbal knowledge depends on its being based on the statement of a trustworthy person, its possibility depends on the understanding of the meaning of the statement. Therefore *sabda* as a source of valid knowledge consists in understanding the meaning of the statement of a trustworthy person.

The Nyāya definition presupposes that all verbal statements are made by persons. But the Mimamsakas have reason to disagree with it. At least in one case namely, the case of vedic statements, he holds that there are statements which are not made by any person. According to the Nyāya, vedic statements of God who is a supernatural person. We acquire knowledge of facts from verbal testimony more frequently than by the sense organs and inference. We acquire from verbal testimony not only a knowledge of facts but also of its validity. I perceive something and if I have any doubt about it I judge the validity of my perception by the statements of other perceivers. But this does not reduce perception to verbal testimony. Hence verbal testimony is an independent source of knowledge.

Knowledge based on testimony is of two kinds, one arising from the words of a person and the other arising from the words of impersonal origin as the testimony is secular and scriptural accordingly. Secular testimony is the statement of a trustworthy person and scriptural testimony is the statement of the Vedas. Scriptural sentences are eternal having no human or divine origin or authorship. A sentence uttered by a trustworthy person issues from a faultless source. There being no defect in the source, both the kinds of sentences are valid. Words are not created by any agency. A *pramāna* is invalidated by the defects of its source. The Veda,

as it has no author, has no cause or source. Therefore there is no possibility of its being invalidated by defects of the source.

A sentence is of two kinds, one which expresses some existing thing and the other which expresses something to be done. The former is the statement of a fact and the latter is that of a command. The former refers to such facts as 'this is a man' and the latter to commands such as 'do this' etc. We divide factual statements into affirmative, negative, hypothetical, disjunctive etc. An affirmative statement refers to the existence of something. But this something is not the universal directly denoted by the subject-word. It is rather the individual qualified by the universal. Regarding negative factual sentences, Kumarilla Bhatta says that they refer to non-existence, which is a fact like existence. Regarding a disjunctive statement Kumarilla says that it refers to a subjective attitude of doubt towards some fact. Reality is not disjunctive. When our knowledge of reality is not definite, we make disjunctive statements like 'this is a man or a post'.

The Logical Structure of a Sentence

Testimony is expressed in a sentence, which is a combination of words conveying a meaning. Its comprehensibility depends on certain conditions. A sentence consists of words, which imply one another. A word cannot by itself convey a full meaning. It must be related to other words in order to convey a complete meaning. For example, the word 'bring' does not make full sense. It produces an expectancy in the mind for some other word or words. The words imply one another and convey a complete meaning. A sentence consists of words, which have fitness for one another. Mutual fitness of words is another condition of the intelligibility of a sentence. A sentence consists of words, which have close proximity to one another. It means that the words constituting a sentence should be uttered in close succession without a long interval between one word and another. The comprehension of the meaning of a sentence depends upon the knowledge of the intention of the speaker. Hence a sentence in order to be intelligible, must consist of words which are interdependent on, compatible with, and juxtaposed to, one another and convey a meaning in conformity with the speaker's intention.

The distinctive cause of *sabdaprama* is *sabdapramāna*. The knowledge arising from verbal cognition is above contradictions. The *Vaisesikas* and *Buddhas* refuse to accept verbal testimony as a separate *pramāna* on the ground that it can be brought under inference. A sentence generates the cognition called *sabdi-pramāna* by four causes namely, expectancy, competency, proximity and cognition of purport. In other words, four conditions should be fulfilled for a sentence to have real meaning:

Expectancy (*Ākāṃsha*) is defined as the capacity of the word-senses which are mutually the contents of the desire to know. For example, the sentence "Fetch the pot" generates a cognition in the servant who is so ordered. The word 'fetch alone or 'pot alone' will not generate this cognition. Both of them must be there. When the word 'fetch' is 'uttered' the 'that' which is to be fetched is left as a question. When the 'pot alone' is mentioned, 'what to do with the pot' remains unsaid. Thus in a sentence there should be mutual affinity between the words. One cannot convey the full sense of the one without the other. The capacity of the words to serve the requirements mutually is very important. Any two random words will not have this expectancy.

Competency (*Yogyata*) consists in the non-sublation of a relation that is the content of a purport. The statement ‘moisten with fire’ is a case in point. There is no such property in the fire as is capable of being sprinkled on something else and moistening it. Thus there cannot be a connection between the fire and moistening. Where there is no fit and unsublated connection between words, there arises no verbal cognition. In other words, where there is no *tātparya-jñāna*, knowledge of the purport, there is no verbal cognition. There must be congruity between the subject and the predicate. Thus, the sentence “sprinkle the garden with fire” has no sense; sprinkle with water alone gives it sense.

Proximity (*Sannidhi*) is the cognition of the word-senses generated by words without any interval. The expression generated by words’ is intended to show that the syntactical relation is not cognized by any evidence other than *sabda*. The Prabhakara school holds that it is not the cognition of the word-senses generated by words that is the accessory of verbal knowledge, but only the mere cognition caused by perception of the sense through expectancy etc. of words. For a sentence to have sense, the predicate must be near the subject both in space and in time. After you utter the subject do not wait for many days to utter the predicate.

Purport (*Tātparya*) consists in the competency to generate that cognition. Thus the sentence ‘pot in the house’ generates knowledge in relation to pot and not in relation to cloth; therefore pot is its purport (Intention). When a word has two meanings, the speaker’s intention and the context clarifies it. For example, “Bring salt, horse) takes the first meaning.

Refutation of Prabhakara’s View

Prabhakara is unwilling to accord the status of *pramāṇa* to human statements though he recognizes scriptural statement as an independent source of knowledge. He maintains that human statements are apt to be falsified by the inherent defects of men. They are frequently found to be invalid so that no reliance can be placed on them. They simply convey what the speaker knows through other means of knowledge and depend for their validity on verification by other means. So they are not recognized as an independent *pramāṇa* in the world too. This view is criticized by Parthasarathi. If secular statements are not *pramāṇa* in their own capacity, then, how can scriptural statements be so? Both are words and if one is accepted to be *pramāṇa*, then the other too has to be accepted to be *pramāṇa*. The conclusion is that if *sabda* is not recognized to be a *pramāṇa* in the empirical sphere on the ground of its proneness to doubts or incoherence, then it will equally apply to the inference of the speaker’s intentions too. If secular statements are not *pramāṇa*, then inference of intention too cannot be so.

Check Your Progress I

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

1) What is the understanding of *Sabda* in *Nyaya* philosophy?

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2) Describe what is Sabda and point out the different types of testimony.

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***Sabda* in Vaisesika System**

The Buddhist and the Vaisesika do not accord the status of an independent *pramāna* to verbal testimony. The Buddhist maintains that the intention of a speaker finds expression in his statement. The intention is the cause and statement its effect. When a speaker utters a word, the hearer infers his intention as he infers the presence of fire from its effect, namely smoke. The Buddhist maintains that when a word is heard the hearer infers the intention of the speaker. But how can one infer the said intention unless he has already understood what the word means? Whatever the intention of the speaker may be, the meaning of the uttered word has already been cognised by the hearer without the help of syllogistic reasoning. The Vaisesika holds that the meaning of a word is cognised through inference, because just as the cognition of fire from smoke depends on the experience of a positive and negative experience of smoke-fire relationship.

Some people argue that verbal testimony is of the nature of inference because the validity of a sentence is inferred from the trustworthy character of the speaker. The meaning of a sentence is grasped exactly after it is heard for which no knowledge of the trustworthy or untrustworthy character of the speaker is needed. Even when a speaker of a sentence is not known at all, the meaning of the sentence is immediately grasped and it is only later that we have a recourse to inference when the validity of his assertion is doubted. Thus verbal testimony is independent of inference.

***Sabda* in Mimamsa and Advaita System**

Sabda-pramāna is given greatest importance in Mimamsa. Sabara defines testimony as the knowledge of an object which is not present to a sense-organ produced by the knowledge of words. Kumarilla divides testimony into human and superhuman. The former is the testimony of trustworthy persons while the latter is the testimony of the Vedas. The former is valid if it is uttered by persons of trustworthy character, while the latter is valid in itself. Authority may either give information as to the existence of objects or give directions for the performance of some action. The Mimamsa is primarily interested in the impersonal authority of the Vedas because the Vedas give directions for performing sacrificial rites. The Vedas are looked upon as the book of commandments.

According to most of the pro-vedic schools, the authority of the Vedas lies in their being the words of God. But Mimamsa, which does not believe in any creator or destroyer of the world, believes that the Vedas like the world are eternal. According to Mimamsa, the Vedas are eternal and authorless. It is not the work

of any person, human or divine. The sages are only seers and not authors of the Vedas. The Veda is not composed or spoken by God. According to the Mimamsakas there is no God and hence vedic statements are impersonal. Therefore the vedic commandments can never be contradicted by any source of valid knowledge. There can be no inner contradictions in the veda itself. Hence the vedic testimony is valid in itself. Prabhakara recognizes only the vedic testimony as the real testimony and reduces human testimony to inference because its validity is inferred from the trustworthy character of the person speaking.

The Mimamsa system furnishes several arguments to prove that the Vedas are impersonal. They argue that if the Vedas had any author, his name should have been known and remembered because they have been in constant use and have been passed down by an unbroken series of successive generations of teachers and learners from unknown antiquity. To defend the eternity and the authorless nature of the Vedas, the *Mimamsakas* put forward the theory that words and meanings as well as their relation are all natural and eternal. A word (*sabda*) is constituted of two or more letters and is a mere aggregate of letters and not a whole, though the letters must occur in a particular order. A *varna* is regarded as an articulated sound. It is eternal, omnipresent and integral. A *varna* is eternal and immutable.

The infallibility of the authority of the Vedas is founded on the fact that they are not vitiated by any defects to which the work of imperfect persons is subject. Although the testimony of the reliable person also is accepted by the Bhatta school as a valid source of knowledge, still the vedic authority has special credibility since it will never be contradicted by any *pramāṇa*. The order in which the words occur in the literary works is determined by their authors and therefore the works are subject to defects. But the order in which the words occur in the Veda is self-determined and therefore intrinsically valid.

Advaita Vedanta begins its theory of the criterion of knowledge by an examination of criteria of the other Indian systems. Sankara, following Nyāya, admits perception, inference and verbal testimony as means of valid knowledge.

4.4 THE CONCEPT *SPHOTA*

The Grammarians like Panini and Bhartruhari maintain that in the case of words, there is a supersensible entity called '*sphota*' manifested by the letters of the word. Or when itself is apprehended by the mind, it reveals the sense of the word directly. *Sphota* can be viewed either as the manifester or the maintained. The Grammarians hold that the eternal word called '*sphota*' is without parts, is the cause of the world. It is the Brahman (*Sabda-Brahman*). *Sabda* Brahman is the supreme word. He is the seed of all creation including language. The proof of the existence of *sphota* is perception itself. For example, there is one word 'cow' by which every one cognizes the meaning of it and cognizes the word distinct from the various letters composing it. The word *Sphota* simply means 'bursting forth'. According to this theory, the meanings of sacred texts are not man's findings, they burst forth (*sphota*) of themselves.

Criticism of the *Sphota* Theory

Is it supposed that the *sphota* conveys the meaning when it itself is manifested or unmanifested? Not the latter; because it would then follow that we should find

the effect of conveying the meaning always produced since *sphota* is supposed to be eternal and therefore the cause is always present, the effect cannot possibly fail to appear. Sankara refutes the *sphota* doctrine saying that the letters only are the word. The argument that letters are momentary is profitless because they are persistent in as much as they are recognized each time they are uttered. It is not that the letters are recognized only as belonging to a class because they are recognized as such (as individual letters).

Madana's Defence of *Sphota* and *Sabdādvaita*

With regard to *sphota*, Madana says that the letters cannot convey the entire sense of the word either individually or collectively. Individual letters cannot convey the meaning of the word as otherwise other letters will become useless. Nor can they convey collectively since they come in succession and do not exist together at the same time. There is neither simultaneity in time nor togetherness in space for them.

Madana believes as against Sankara that the Upanishadic texts '*OM iti Brahma*', '*OM iti idam sarvam*' should be understood as establishing the identity of *pranavas* with Brahman and as supporting the *sabdādvaita* doctrine. The word '*aksaram*' signifies that Brahman is of the nature of sound. It also signifies the negation of destruction for Brahman. No transformation is possible in Brahman who is of the nature of sound. That Brahman is of the nature of sound is borne out by such scriptural declarations as 'the higher and lower Brahman, that is *Omkāra*'. The word ending with the suffix '*kāra*' signifies that Brahman is not merely designated by the word '*OM*' but that *OM* is the very nature of Brahman. Sometimes it is suggested that *OM* is a symbol standing for Brahman to meditate on, since Brahman being beyond all specifications cannot be contemplated. This is similar to the practice of worshipping idols or images made of wood and stone as representing or symbolizing the various deities when the deities themselves cannot be worshipped directly. Or else, one might say that Brahman is to be contemplated by the name '*OM*' for *pranava* is its name.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) Which are the four conditions required of a sentence for real meaning?

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2) Write a short note on *Sphota theory*.

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4.5 LET US SUM UP

We have been making a general survey of the importance and implications of *sabda-pramāṇa* as a valid source of knowledge. The Indian epistemologies give sufficient attention to testimony especially for vedic testimony. The various explanations given in Nyāya epistemology especially in analysing the sentence and its syntax etc. show the precision with which Indian sages have worked out various systems. If western epistemologies give more importance to sense perception and inferences, Indian epistemology especially the classical systems, highlights more the significance of *sabda-pramāṇa* because of its heavy reliance on Vedic tradition.

The most distinguishing feature of Indian thinking on *pramāṇa* is the theory of *sabda* (testimony). Testimony (*sabda-pramāṇa*) is an important source of knowledge. Our experience shows that the major part of a person's stock of knowledge about the world is acquired from the oral or written testimony of other persons. Testimony may be verbal or non-verbal. Non-verbal testimony consists of gestures. But it is not important because it lacks precision. Gautama defines verbal testimony as the statement of a reliable person. Verbal testimony consists of verbal statements of people intended to express certain facts. The different systems in India give different explanations for *Sabda* and demonstrate its implications differently.

Sāṃkhya does not recognize secular testimony as an independent source of valid knowledge since it depends on perception and inference. Valid testimony is true revelation. Nyāya defines testimony as the instruction of a trustworthy person who has immediate knowledge of the Moral Law (*Dharma*) and who is competent to guide others in the performance of their duties and the abstention from sins for the attainment of good and avoidance of evil. The Buddhist and the Vaiśeṣika do not accord the status of an independent *pramāṇa* to verbal testimony. *Sabda-pramāṇa* is given great importance in Mīmāṃsā system as it is directly based on Vedas. Advaita accepts verbal testimony as the means of valid knowledge. The Grammarians hold that the eternal word called '*sphota*' is without parts, is the cause of the world. It is the Brahman (*Sabda-Brahman*).

4.6 KEY WORDS

Sabda-pramāṇa : Verbal and non-Verbal testimony; *Sabda* in various systems; the four conditions to be fulfilled for a sentence to have real meaning: expectancy, competency, proximity and cognition of purport.

4.7 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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4.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

- 1) According to Nayayayikas the 4th means of valid knowledge is *sabda* (word). Knowledge of words is the instrumental cause, is the perception of words by the sense of hearing of verbal knowledge or the knowledge of words, which arises from seeing the script. The operation of the instrumental cause is the recollection of the meaning of words. Gotama defines testimony as the instruction of a trustworthy person who has immediate knowledge of the Moral Law (*Dharma*) and who is competent to guide others in the performance of their duties and the abstention from sins for the attainment of good and avoidance of evil. Trustworthy persons are those who perceive objects as they exist in their real nature and communicate their right knowledge to others for their benefit out of compassion for them. They are free from attachment. The assertions of those who know truth but speak falsehood are not valid. The assertions of trustworthy persons which are not fit for guiding persons in the performance of right actions and non-commission of sins are not testimony. Untrustworthy persons are tainted with delusion. Testimony is an instruction which is expressed in a sentence or proposition. While the validity of verbal knowledge depends on its being based on the statement of a trustworthy person, its possibility depends on the understanding of the meaning of the statement. Therefore *sabda* as a source of valid knowledge consists in understanding the meaning of the statement of a trustworthy person.
- 2) The most distinguishing feature of Indian thinking on *pramāṇa* is the theory of *sabda* (testimony). Testimony (*sabda-pramāṇa*) is an important source of knowledge Gautama defines *Sabda* as *āptopadesa*, instruction from an apt or fit person and later on as *āpta-vākya*. The fit person is defined as *yathārtha vakta*, speaker of truth. definition of *sabda*: *āpatasya vacanam sabdah*. The reliability of a person making a statement is a condition ensuring the validity of the knowledge derived in this way. There are two ways of classifying testimony. According to one classification testimony can be of two kinds that relating to perceptible object and that relating to imperceptible objects. The trustworthy assertions of ordinary, the saints and the scriptures about the perceptible objects of the world such as the statements of a reliable farmer about plants, the scriptural injunctions to perform certain rites to bring about rainfall etc. and the assertions of trustworthy persons, saints, prophets and the scriptures about super-sensible realities such as a scientists' assertions about atoms, ether etc., the prophet's instructions regarding virtue and vice, the scriptural texts regarding God, freedom, immortality etc. come under first classification. According to another classification, there are two kinds of testimony, the scriptural (*vaidika*) and the secular (*laukika*). The

Vedas are not impersonal but personal compositions of God, the omniscient person and are therefore perfect and valid. The secular testimony of trustworthy persons is valid while that of unworthy persons is invalid. The first classification is based on the nature of the objects of knowledge and the second on the source of knowledge. But the two classifications agree in implying that testimony must always be personal, that is, based on the words of some trustworthy person, human or divine.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

- 1) A sentence generates the cognition called *sabdi-pramāṇa* by four causes namely, expectancy, competency, proximity and cognition of purport. They are the four conditions which should be fulfilled for a sentence to have real meaning namely Expectancy, competency, proximity and the purport. Expectancy is defined as the capacity of the word-senses which are mutually the contents of the desire to know. For example, the sentence “Fetch the pot” generates a cognition in the servant who is so ordered. The word ‘fetch alone or ‘pot alone’ will not generate this cognition. Both of them must be there. When the word ‘fetch is ‘uttered’ the ‘that’ which is to be fetched is left as a question. When the ‘pot alone’ is mentioned, ‘what to do with the pot’ remains unsaid. Thus in a sentence there should be mutual affinity between the words. One cannot convey the full sense of the one without the other. The capacity of the words to serve the requirements mutually is very important. Any two random words will not have this expectancy. Competency consists in the non-sublation of a relation that is the content of a purport. The statement ‘moisten with fire’ is a case in point. There is no such property in the fire as is capable of being sprinkled on something else and moistening it. Thus there cannot be a connection between the fire and moistening. Where there is no fit and unsublated connection between words, there arises no verbal cognition. Proximity is the cognition of the word-senses generated by words without any interval. The expression generated by words’ is intended to show that the syntactical relation is not cognized by any evidence other than *sabda*. Purport consists in the intention to generate that cognition. Thus the sentence ‘pot in the house’ generates knowledge in relation to pot and not in relation to cloth; therefore pot is its purport. When a word has two meanings, the speaker’s intention and the context clarifies it.
- 2) The Grammarians like Panini and Bhartruhari maintain that in the case of words, there is a supersensible entity called ‘*sphota*’ manifested by the letters of the word. Or when itself is apprehended by the mind, it reveals the sense of the word directly. *Sphota* can be viewed either as the manifestor or the maintained. The Grammarians hold that the eternal word called ‘*sphota*’ is without parts, is the cause of the world. It is the Brahman (*Sabda-Brahman*). *Sabda* Brahman is the supreme word. He is the seed of all creation including language. The proof of the existence of *sphota* is perception itself. For example, there is one word ‘cow’ by which every one cognizes the meaning of it and cognizes the word distinct from the various letters composing it. The word *Sphota* simply means ‘bursting forth. According to this theory, the meanings of sacred texts are not man’s findings, they burst forth (*sphota*) of themselves.