

## **Mahimabhaṭṭa's linguistic thought: A brief Analysis**

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**Abstract:** *Mahimabhaṭṭa was an aesthetician who wrote a treatise on poetics 'Vyaktiviveka' by name. In this treatise, he demolishes the Dhvani theory and establishes the theory of inference in poetry. He stands on the south pole of the widely accepted view of three powers of word and says only about one single power of word which is called Abhidhā. He rejects the existence of more than one power in a word with various reasoning. Moreover, he says about anumeyārtha or inferred meaning where all the other meanings except the primary one are included. These linguistic thoughts of Mahimabhaṭṭa are discussed in this paper using analytic method.*

**Key words:** inference, probans, probandum, *Abhidhā*

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Mahimabhaṭṭa, most probably a Kashmirian writer as he used the title '*Rājānaka*' before his name, is known for his extant treatise '*Vyaktiviveka*' which was written mainly for demolishing the theory of *Dhvani*<sup>i</sup> established by Ānandavardhana in his '*Dhvanyāloka*' and for establishing the theory of inference in poetry. He describes himself as son of Śrīdhairya and disciple of *mahākavi* Śyāmala.<sup>ii</sup> His time is determined approximately towards the last half or the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century on the basis of the internal and external evidences.<sup>iii</sup>

The theory of inference which was applied by Śaṅkuka in regard to his expound of the *Rasa-sūtra*, Mahimabhaṭṭa spreads it out to the entire poetry including *Rasa* as the most necessary element in his definition of poetry.<sup>iv</sup> This theory about the inference of *Rasa* is further discussed in detail and well-established by Mahimabhaṭṭa followed by a deep linguistic analysis. As a poem consist sound

and meaning in itself, Mahimabhaṭṭa discusses in great detail the conception of sound and meaning, their power and relation between them.

## II. MAHIMABHAṬṬA'S LINGUISTIC THOUGHT: CLASSIFICATION OF SOUND AND MEANING

### Sound and its divisions:

*Śabda* or sound or parts of speech is an instrument of communication. *Śabda* is used generally for others to communicate with them.<sup>v</sup> Mahimabhaṭṭa divides sound primarily into two divisions --- word and sentence.<sup>vi</sup>

### Word:

There are three views regarding the types of words. According to the first one, words are of two types – noun (*nāma*) and verb (*ākhyāta*). The second one accepts four kinds of words admitting prefix (*upasarga*) and particle (*nipāta*) with the former two. And the third one classifies word into five types including one more that is adverb (*karmapravacanīya*).<sup>vii</sup> Mahimabhaṭṭa follows the third one. But in his view words do not have independent existence and own meaning, only sentence can carry a meaning of its own. These divisions are made on the basis of analysis only just as in the case of the splitting up of the word into stem and suffix.<sup>viii</sup>

As Mahimabhaṭṭa defines, that is called noun which refers to accomplished or existent objects,<sup>ix</sup> for instance -- pot, cloth (*ghaṭa*, *paṭa*) etc. Noun is also sub-divided into four categories as the basis of the employment of a word in a particular sense is also four in number. These facts are like generic attributes (*ghaṭatva* etc.) in common nouns like *ghaṭa* (pot), *paṭa* (cloth) etc., qualities in *śukla* (white), *nīla* (black) etc., action in *pācaka* (cook), *pāṭhaka* (reader) etc. and substance in *Daṇḍin* (one having a stick), *Viśāṇī* (one having horns) etc.<sup>x</sup> There is also another view as per which action, which consists of the attainment of the characteristic being (*sattā*) on the part of all objects, is regarded as the very basis of the employment of all nouns.<sup>xi</sup> Mahimabhaṭṭa also prefers this view.

Verb is that which is mainly denotative of action,<sup>xii</sup> for instance – read, eat (*paṭhati*, *pacati*) etc. Prefix modifies the meaning of a verb being placed in the

beginning of that verb,<sup>xiii</sup> for instance – ‘ā’ in ‘*āharati*’ which means ‘to collect’, but ‘*harati*’ means ‘to steal somebody or something’. Particle denotes the difference between verbs or nouns,<sup>xiv</sup> for instance – ‘*ca*’ in ‘*paṭhati pacati ca*’ which differentiates between these two verbs. And adverb denotes the relationship between cause and effect established through some action,<sup>xv</sup> for instance – ‘*anu*’ in ‘*japamanu prāvarṣat*’ (it rained immediately after *japa*) which denotes the relation between *japa* (recitation of related verses) and rain.

### **Sentence:**

It is already said that words do not hold their own meaning; only a sentence can bring its own meaning. Simply a sentence is a group of words.<sup>xvi</sup> In defining sentence<sup>xvii</sup> Mahimabhaṭṭa following the grammarians says that a sentence is a group of words where the words taken separately require one another (*ākāṅkṣā*) and as a whole they do not require any outside word (*yogyatā*). A sentence being mainly denotative of action with minimum one verb (*kriyāpradhānam*) and consisting of one or more cases (*guṇavat*) presents a unified meaning (*ekārtham*). This presentation of a unified meaning (*ekārthatva*) indirectly says about the quality ‘*sannidhi*’ (pronunciation of the words not being late). *ākāṅkṣā*, *yogyatā* and *sannidhi* – these three qualities of words should be fulfilled to make a sentence. No such classification is possible in the case of sentence as the principal element in it is always action or verb and main verb may be only one in a sentence.<sup>xviii</sup>

### **Meaning and its divisions:**

Mahimabhaṭṭa divides meaning into two divisions – expressed (*vācya*) and inferred (*anumeya*). That is called expressed meaning which comes within the range of word’s functions. This expressed meaning is regarded as the principal meaning.<sup>xix</sup> This principal meaning is cognized by the hearer on hearing the sound pronounced and that meaning is called secondary which is cognized through some extra effort.<sup>xx</sup> Mahimabhaṭṭa includes all those unexpressed secondary meanings in the inferred meaning.

That meaning which is cognized through the probans like expressed meaning or inferred meaning is called as inferred meaning. It is of three types – *vastu* (plot), *alaṅkāra* (poetic figures) and *rasa*. The former two may be types of expressed meaning also. But *Rasa* is always an inferred meaning.<sup>xxi</sup> Mahimabhaṭṭa classifies meaning into two divisions in another way also – meaning of word (*padārtha*) and meaning of sentence (*vākyārtha*) as he regards two types of sounds like word and sentence. It is necessary to have the relation of probans and probandum (*sādhyasāadhanabhāva*) for an inferred meaning and this relation is possible there only where there are more than one parts. That is why meaning of a word is always expressed and it cannot be inferred as there are no such parts in a word.<sup>xxii</sup> And meaning of a sentence may be expressed as well as inferred also.

### **The process of cognition of meaning in a sentence:**

There are two traditional views about the process of cognition of meaning in a sentence in the name of two different schools of the Mīmāṃsakas – one of the ‘prābhākaras’ and the other of the ‘Bhāṭṭas’. According to the view of the ‘prābhākaras’ which is called ‘*abhihitānvayavāda*’ each word in the sentence carries own expressed meaning and the concatenation of these expressed meanings becomes the meaning of the sentence. Hence, in this view the meaning of a word itself is the expressed meaning and the meaning of the whole sentence is said as ‘*tātpariyārtha*’ which is different from ‘*vācyārtha*’. And according to the view of the ‘Bhāṭṭas’ which is called ‘*anvitābhidhānavāda*’ the words in a sentence have no own individual meaning and the meaning of the concatenated words is the meaning of the sentence and that is the very expressed meaning itself.<sup>xxiii</sup> Mahimabhaṭṭa is seen as the follower of the latter view. He differs from it in this sense that he says about the inferred meaning also as well as the expressed meaning of a sentence.

### **Power of words:**

When we hear any word it gives us an idea about something. For this consequent idea we imagine about some power in the word. This power is said as ‘*vṛtti*’ in the philosophical treatises which is of three kinds – *śakti*, *bhakti* and *vyakti*. In poetics, these three powers of word are said as *abhidhā*, *lakṣaṇā* and *vyañjanā*

which are the powers of denotation, indication and suggestion respectively and the term '*śakti*' is used for all.

One thing here is noticeable that in '*abhihitānvayavādin*'s view each word has the power of denotation without putting in a sentence. But in '*anvitābhīdhānavādin*'s view a word do not sustain the power of denotation until becoming a part of a sentence.

### **Possibility of only one power in a word:**

The aforesaid traditional view of three powers of word is refuted by Mahimabhaṭṭa. According to him, only one power is possible in a word and that is the power of denotation or *abhīdhā*. A word does not sustain to expose more than one meaning at a time. When a word is pronounced it reveals only the primary meaning through its power of denotation and no scope has left there to present its secondary meanings like indicative and suggestive meanings. So the functions like indication, suggestion etc. cannot be the functions of the word, but they are the functions of the expressed meaning as there is no such evidence to prove word's ability to sustain more than one power in itself.<sup>xxiv</sup>

In refuting more than one power in a word Mahimabhaṭṭa argues that there are two facts wherein more than one power is considered ---

- (a) They are not dependant on each other for their functions.
- (b) No such sequence is seen in their functions.

For instance, burning and illuminating are the two powers of fire. Neither these two powers of fire do prevent each other nor help each other for functioning. And their functions have been seen mostly simultaneously. But in the case of indicative and suggestive power of word these two facts have not been seen. The indicative power depends on *abhīdhā* and the suggestive power depends on *abhīdhā* and *lakṣaṇā* both for own functions. Also, they always maintain sequence for their functions as *lakṣaṇā* operates after completion of *abhīdhā*'s function and *vyañjanā* operates as *abhīdhā* or *lakṣaṇā* finished own job. That is why it is not possible to sustain more than one power in a word. And so *abhīdhā* only is the

power of a word and the other functions should be accepted as the functions of the expressed meaning.<sup>xxv</sup>

**Inferential cognition of meaning: Inferential nature of all linguistic expressions:**

Mahimabhaṭṭa regards the cognition of meaning from the utterance of a word as an inferential cognition. That is why the relation between word and meaning is the relation of inferred (*anumāpya*) and instrument of inferential cognition (*anumāpaka*). The meaning is inferred and the word is the instrument of that inferential cognition.

One thing is noteworthy in Mahimabhaṭṭa's view that his theory of inference is not only concerned with poetic language, but with ordinary language also as in the all linguistic expressions there are two facts, one is that which is to be established (*sādhya*) and the other is that which is the mean of establishing that fact (*sādhana*) and these two facts substantiate the process of inference in the cognition of meaning.<sup>xxvi</sup> It is already said that sound is generally used for others. According to Mahimabhaṭṭa, language is a specific instrument of effecting some change in the hearer. We use language to bring forth some desired effect in the hearer. This effect may be either some positive action (*pravṛtti*) or abstention from action (*nivṛtti*). Both of these action and abstention from action are depended upon the cognition of meaning and that cognition cannot be perceptive, so it must be inferential. No one is capable to have the cognition of meaning hearing sound only without running through the process of inference.<sup>xxvii</sup>

It is here remarkable that in Mahimabhaṭṭa's view a word cannot bring own meaning itself, only a sentence is able to cognize the hearer about something. It has been said that sentence is mainly denotative of action as the verb is the principal element in it. Action is always to substantiate (*sādhya*). And all the words other than the verb in a sentence being a unit are working as the means of substantiating the action (*sādhana*). Thus *sādhya-sādhanabhāva* is possible only in a sentence as a sentence can be classified into two parts – subject and predicate. These predicate and subject are situated in a sentence in the form of 'vidhi' and 'anuvāda' respectively. 'Vidhi' is that which establishes the unknown facts<sup>xxviii</sup> and 'anuvāda' is that which

proves something through other *pramāṇas*.<sup>xxix</sup> The action part is included into the predicative part of the sentence which is to be established. For instance, ‘the mountain Himalaya is in the north’, in this sentence ‘the mountain Himalaya’ is the subject and ‘is in the north’ is the predicate part of this sentence. Here, it is said about the ‘being’ or ‘existence’ of the Himalaya and ‘being’ (*asti* or *bhavati*) is the action which is established through the predicative part. After establishing this *sādhyasādhanabhāva* the process of inference in the cognition of sentence-meaning is easily substantiated.

Mahimabhaṭṭa views *sādhyasādhanabhāva* of linguistic expressions at two different levels. One is the substantiation of a fact by another at the expressed level, and the other is the substantiation of a fact by means of the expressed facts at the unexpressed level. The first one is in the case of expressed meaning (*vācyārtha*) where *sādhyā* and *sādhana* are directly stated and the second one is in the case of inferred meaning where the unexpressed *sādhyā* is cognized from the expressed *sādhana*. The former is already discussed above in the sentence ‘the mountain Himalaya is in the north’. All other types of meaning accepted by other critics like metaphorical, suggestive, purport (*tātparyārtha*) etc. are included in the second level by Mahimabhaṭṭa.

Thus, though Mahimabhaṭṭa classifies the meaning as expressed and inferred, he clarifies that not only the inferred meaning runs through the process of inference, but the expressed meaning also is followed by this very process. Hence in his view all the linguistic expressions, whether it poetic or ordinary, are of the inferential nature.

### **Findings and Conclusion:**

The findings of this research are as follows ---

1. Mahimabhaṭṭa divides sound primarily into two divisions --- word and sentence.
2. According to him, words are of five types namely noun, verb, prefix, particle and adverb.

3. He regards all noun words as action word.
4. In his view, words do not have independent existence and own meaning, only sentence can carry a meaning of its own.
5. Mahimabhaṭṭa divides meaning into two divisions – expressed (*vācya*) and inferred (*anumeya*).
6. Inferred meaning is of three types – *vastu* (plot), *alankāra* (poetic figures) and *rasa*. The former two may be types of expressed meaning also. But *Rasa* is always an inferred meaning.
7. Mahimabhaṭṭa is seen as the follower of '*anvitābhidhānavāda*'.
8. According to him, only one power is possible in a word and that is the power of denotation or *abhidhā*.
9. Mahimabhaṭṭa regards the cognition of meaning from the utterance of a word as an inferential cognition.
10. His theory of inference is not only concerned with poetic language, but with ordinary language also.
11. Mahimabhaṭṭa views *sādhyasāadhanabhāva* of linguistic expressions at two different levels. One is the substantiation of a fact by another at the expressed level, and the other is the substantiation of a fact by means of the expressed facts at the unexpressed level. All other types of meaning accepted by other critics like metaphorical, suggestive, purport (*tātparyārtha*) etc. are included in the second level by Mahimabhaṭṭa.
12. According to him, not only the inferred meaning runs through the process of inference, but the expressed meaning also is followed by this very process.

There raised so many objections against this theory. The later theorists say that the probans in poetry cannot be the perfect one as their *vyāpti* cannot be formed. Moreover, the knowledge arising from those probans cannot be a valid one. But poetry is beyond these objections raised against it.

## End Notes:

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<sup>i</sup> anumāne'ntarbhāvaṁ sarvasyaiva dhvaneḥ prakāśayitum, vyaktivivekaṁ kurute praṇamya mahimā parāṁ vācam, (Dwivedi, Rewaprasad (1969) *Vyaktiviveka (with text)*, Varanasi, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, 1.1

<sup>ii</sup> śrīdhairyasyāṅgabhuvā mahākaveḥ śyāmalasya śiṣyeṇa, (Dwivedi, Rewaprasad (1969) *Vyaktiviveka (with text)*, Varanasi, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, 3.36

<sup>iii</sup> De, S.K. (1976), History of Sanskrit Poetics, Calcutta, Firma klm Pvt. Ltd., pp 140-142

<sup>iv</sup> kavivyāpāro hi vibhāvādisaṁyojanātmā rasābhivyaktyavyabhicārī kāvyamucyate, (Dwivedi, Rewaprasad (1969) *Vyaktiviveka (with text)*, Varanasi, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, p 101

<sup>v</sup> Śabdaprayogaḥ prāyeṇa parārthamupayujyate, na hi tena binā śakyo vyavahārayitum paraḥ,, (Dwivedi, Rewaprasad (1969) *Vyaktiviveka (with text)*, Varanasi, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, p 37

<sup>vi</sup> Dvividho hi śabdaḥ padavākyabhedāntu, (Dwivedi, Rewaprasad (1969) *Vyaktiviveka (with text)*, Varanasi, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, p 36

<sup>vii</sup> dvidhā kaiścit padam bhinnam caturdhā pañcadhāpi vā, (Dwivedi, Rewaprasad (1969) *Vyaktiviveka (with text)*, Varanasi, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, p 38

<sup>viii</sup> Apodhr̥tyaiva vākyebhyaḥ prakṛtipratyayādivat, (Dwivedi, Rewaprasad (1969) *Vyaktiviveka (with text)*, Varanasi, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, p 38

<sup>ix</sup> sattvapradhānāni nāmāni, (Dwivedi, Rewaprasad (1969) *Vyaktiviveka (with text)*, Varanasi, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, p 38

<sup>x</sup> tānyapi bahuprakārāṇi sambhavanti, jātiguṇakriyādravyāṇāmtatpravṛttinimittānām bahutvāt, (Dwivedi, Rewaprasad (1969) *Vyaktiviveka (with text)*, Varanasi, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, p 22

<sup>xi</sup> Kecit punareṣām kriyaikā pravṛttinimittamiti kriyāśabdatvameva sarveṣām nāmapadānāmupagacchanti, (Dwivedi, Rewaprasad (1969) *Vyaktiviveka (with text)*, Varanasi, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, p22

<sup>xii</sup> bhāvapradhānamākhyātam, (Dwivedi, Rewaprasad (1969) *Vyaktiviveka (with text)*, Varanasi, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, p 37

<sup>xiii</sup> asattvabhūtārthā upasargādayaḥ, kriyārūpātīśayapratinibandhanamupasargāḥ prādayaḥ, (Dwivedi, Rewaprasad (1969) *Vyaktiviveka (with text)*, Varanasi, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, p 37

<sup>xiv</sup> bhāvasattvayoḥ sattvabhedapratyāyananimittamavadhṛtarūpārthaviśeṣāḥ svarādayo nipātāḥ, (Dwivedi, Rewaprasad (1969) *Vyaktiviveka (with text)*, Varanasi, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, p 37

<sup>xv</sup> kriyāviśeṣopajanita-sambandha-vicchedahetavaḥ karmapravacanīyāḥ, (Dwivedi, Rewaprasad (1969) *Vyaktiviveka (with text)*, Varanasi, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, p 37

<sup>xvi</sup> padasamūho vākyam, Shastri Shrinivas (2008), *Tarkabhāṣā of Keśava Miśra*, Meerut, Sahitya Bhandar, 4.1

<sup>xvii</sup> sākāṅkṣāvayavam bhede parānākāṅkṣaśabdakam, kriyāpradhānam guṇavadekārtham vākyamiṣyate, Dwivedi, Rewaprasad (1969) *Vyaktiviveka (with text)*, Varanasi, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, p 38

<sup>xviii</sup> vākyamekaprakāram, kriyāprādhānyāt tasyāścaikatvāt, Dwivedi, Rewaprasad (1969) *Vyaktiviveka (with text)*, Varanasi, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, p 38

<sup>xix</sup> artho'pi dvididho vacyo'numeyaśca, tatra śabdavyāpāraṣayo vācyaḥ sa eva mukhya ucyate, Dwivedi, Rewaprasad (1969) *Vyaktiviveka (with text)*, Varanasi, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, p 39

<sup>xx</sup> śrutimātreṇa yatrāsyā tādarthyamavasīyate, tam mukhyamartham manyante gauṇam yatnopapāditam, Dwivedi, Rewaprasad (1969) *Vyaktiviveka (with text)*, Varanasi, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, p 39

<sup>xxi</sup> Tata eva tadanumitādvā liṅgabhūtād yadarthāntaramanumīyate so'numeyaḥ, sa ca trividhaḥ, vastumātramalankārāḥ rasādayaśceti, tatrādyau vācyavāpi sambhavataḥ, anyastu anumeya eveti, Dwivedi, Rewaprasad (1969) *Vyaktiviveka (with text)*, Varanasi, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, p 39-40

<sup>xxii</sup> Tatra padasyārtho vācyaeva nānumeyaḥ, tasya niramśatvāt sādhyasādhanabhāvābhāvataḥ, Dwivedi, Rewaprasad (1969) *Vyaktiviveka (with text)*, Varanasi, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, p 40

xxiii ākāṅkṣāyogyatāsannidhivaśādvakṣyamāṅasvarūpāṅām  
padārthānām samanvaye tātparyārtho viśeṣavapurapadārtho'pi  
vākyārthaḥ samullasati ityabhihitānvayavādinām matam, vācyā eva  
vākyārtha ityanvitābhīdhānavādināḥ, Sharma, Harishankar (ed.  
1978) *Kāvyaṅprakāśa*, Kāshi Sanskrit Series 49, Varanāsi,  
Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan, 2.6, p 9

xxiv yatpunarānekaśaktisamāśrayatvāt vyāpārāntaraparikalpanām  
tadarthasyaiva upapadyate na śabdasya,  
tasyānekaśaktisamāśrayatvāsiddheḥ, Dwivedi, Rewāprasād (1969)  
*Vyaktiviveka (with text)*, Varanāsi, Chowkhambha Sanskrit Sansthan,  
p 108-109

xxv tathāhi ekāśrayāḥ  
śaktayo'nyonyānapekṣapravṛttayo'pākṛtapaurvāparyānyamāḥ  
yugapadeva svakāryānkāriṅyo dṛṣṭāḥ yathā  
dāhakatvaprakāśakatvādayo agneḥ, na ca śabdāśrayāḥ śaktayaḥ tathā  
dṛṣyante abhyupagamyante vā, niyogato abhidhā śaktipūrvakatvena  
itaraśaktipravṛttidarśanāt, tasmād bhinnāśrayā eva tāḥ na  
śabdaikasamāśrayāḥ ityavaseyam, Dwivedi, Rewāprasād (1969)  
*Vyaktiviveka (with text)*, Varanāsi, Chowkhambha Sanskrit Sansthan,  
p 109

xxvi Sarva eva hi śābdavyavahāraḥ sādhyasādhanagarbhatayā  
prāyeṅānumānarūpo'bhyupagantavyaḥ, Dwivedi, Rewāprasād  
(1969) *Vyaktiviveka (with text)*, Varanāsi, Chowkhambha Sanskrit  
Sansthan, p 21

xxvii Tasya ca parapravṛttinivṛttinibandhanatvāt, tayośca  
sampratyaṅyāsampratyaṅyātmanoḥ anyathā kartumaśakyatvataḥ, nahi  
yuktimanavagacchan kaścid vipaścid vacanamātrāt

sampratyayabhāgbhavati, Dwivedi, Rewaprasad (1969) *Vyaktiviveka* (with text), Varanasi, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, p 21

<sup>xxviii</sup> ajñātārthajñāpako vidhiḥ, Mishra, Kameswarnath (2010) *Arthasaṁgraha of Laugākṣi Bhāskara*, Chowkhamba Surbharati Prakashan, p 48

<sup>xxix</sup> pramāṇāntarāvagatārthabodhako'rthavādo'nuvāda, yatha 'agnirhimasya bheṣajamiti', atra himavirodhitvasyāgnau pratyakṣāvagatatvāt, Mishra, Kameswarnath (2010) *Arthasaṁgraha of Laugākṣi Bhāskara*, Chowkhamba Surbharati Prakashan, p 194