

## Language And Meaning with Some Philosophical Context

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**Abstract:** Language is a means of communication, the meaningful signs, understanding through which communication is possible. Language is not like the logical constants; it evolves. In course of development of human society, the words acquire meaning because of human effort to give words the meaning. Language is a system of conventional signs and we have to learn the meanings of those signs in order to know language. In this paper I would like to focus what is the main function of language in Indian and Western Context?

Language is a means of communication, the meaningful signs, understanding through which communication is possible. The term ‘communication’ involves two primary factors: the communicator and the communicated, and the relation between the two is expressed through language. In order to communicate the speaker has to use such language that can be understood by the hearer. The gestures of a dumb person cannot communicate with an ordinary man who does not understand the meaning of such gestures; but such gestures are the language of the dumbs among themselves, since they are acquainted with such gestures and their meanings. Even in case of the same language shared by both the speaker and the hearer; the hearer may not understand what the speaker desires to express. Hence, meaning becomes an important issue.

Moreover, language is not like the logical constants; it evolves. In this context I would share the view that *Bhartahari* and *Shankara* both viewed Brahma in the evolutionary context. However, while *Shankara* view the worldly earth as the evolution of brahma, *Bhartahari* viewed *sabda* as the evolution of *Brahama*.

This is natural in case of the evolution of language and this situation makes the problem of meaning necessary to deal with. If there be no universal criterion of meaning it would be impossible to understand the sentences of the past in future. There is a central problem in the philosophy of language is that of meaning. How to determining the meaning of word and sentences, and what they mean are. Words are conventional signs, not natural which indicates that words do not bear meaning by nature; it is a convention that meaning is given to the words. That one and the same word can be used for different meaning and two different words can be used to mean the same thing justifies that man gives the words their meanings. In Sanskrit language the word ‘*saindhava*’ is used to stand for two different meanings - the horse and the salt. If the speaker is in dinner table and utters the word *saindhava*, it would mean salt; and if the speaker is in battlefield the word would mean horse. Meaning of words, therefore, have become vital for communication. The words without meaning are simply noises or hopeless signs.

In course of development of human society, the words acquire meaning because of human effort to give words the meaning. Language is a system of conventional signs and we have to learn the meanings of those signs in order to know language.

In the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein stresses centrally on language games where words are the instruments and they have meaning in their application by human being. In another way it may be said that words have meaning in their “use”. In order to determine meaning from this point of view, Wittgenstein states, “what we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use”. (Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Sect-116.) The uses are different in different cases. Wittgenstein clearly states the different uses cannot be assimilated ‘they are absolutely unlike’ (Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Sect-10). These different uses give different meanings to the words or signs. Now, the question is, what is the main function of language?

Gotlobb Frege holds that language is the primary vehicle of thought and the logical form of language expresses the logical form of thought. He is the first to hold that meaning or sense is involved in the logical structure of language. According to him, sense is the thought that is expressed in the logical structure of language. Frege made logical syntax and semantics the study of sense. Syntax studies the logical structure of the vehicle of sense, i.e. Language. Semantics studies the interpretation of language in the domain of external objects, i.e. the world. Thus, semantics brings the notion of reference as the method of interpretation of the syntactic structure, Frege’s famous distinction between sense and reference, therefore, arises, as the basis of logical semantics.

Frege points out that this relation is not only between word and meaning; rather a third entity arises which he calls the ‘sense’. Frege introduces the concept of sense as different from meaning itself. This sense is the mode of presentation of the object which is the designation of the expression. There are various ways of presenting an object before the mind and the way or mode in which object is presented constitutes ‘sense’ of an expression. For example, the meaning of ‘morning star’ is same with the meaning of ‘evening star’ as it is the same star meant. But the sense of ‘morning star’ is different from that of ‘evening star’. In this context sign is understood as figuring a proper name which has a definite object as its meaning. Everyone can comprehend the sense of a proper name provided he is sufficiently familiar with the language or totality of designations to which it belongs.

In Indian philosophy of language, *Mimamsakas* hold that the word and meanings have eternal relation. Due to this eternal relation, a word can express one and only one meaning with which it is naturally connected. There is no third entity relating word and meaning. According to *Jaimini*, the configuration (*Akriti*) is the meaning. *Akriti* is the real import of a word. *Jaimini* lay down the means and criteria to determine the meaning of a word (*Sabdartha*). In this connection they emphasize on what the immediate useful purpose the word serves and what the intention of the speaker is.

There may be several meanings of a particular word, but in a particular context, it will mean only one thing in the primary sense. Therefore, they give the criteria as “whatever sense is conveyed and is also. intended to be conveyed is the real signification of a word” (Devasthali, G.V. *Mimamsa: The Ancient Indian Science of Sentence Interpretation*, P-40.) Another criterion of determining *arthajndna* or knowledge of the meaning is the *sastrasthas* according to *Jaimini*. The *sastrasthas* are to be looked upon as the sole authority on the question of *sabdartha*.

The term ‘meaning’ has a lot of meanings used for different purposes in different contexts. There are some important ways in which the word meaning is used as pointed out by

John Hospers. The word ‘meaning’ is used in the sense of indication. The ringing of bell in the railway station indicates that the train is coming. A twister in the sky means (indicates) that a tornado is coming. In such cases the word ‘means’ or ‘meaning’ is used for indication. Meaning is also used for cause. When we ask the question “what is the meaning of this crack in the wall?” We generally search the cause. Dark clouds mean rain. In this sentence ‘mean’ is used to mean effect. The word ‘meaning’ is also used for intention. “I meant to wash the dishes” means the same as “I intended to wash the dishes.” The word ‘meaning’ may thus have the meaning ‘intention’. The verb ‘to mean’ also means ‘to explain’. The sentences “what do you mean by the word concept?” ‘meaning’ means explanation.

We have already stated intention as one of the meanings of ‘meaning’. Intention is the purpose related with animate objects like man. But purpose may also be attributed to inanimate things just like “the purpose of knife’, ‘the purpose of hammer’ etc. This purpose also constitutes the meaning of a ‘paper weight”, the meaning of knife etc. We express the purpose of them and nothing else. Therefore, ‘meaning may mean purpose also. Meaning is also used as synonymous with implication. Spending rupees five out of ten means that rupees five has been left.

This sentence can be properly expressed as spending five rupees out of ten implies that five rupees has been left. In other words, the first statement implies (or means) the second. The meaning of the warning ‘smoking is injurious to health’ is the same as its implication that smoking should be avoided. Thus, we see that in many cases ‘to mean’ is synonymous with ‘to imply’.

From the above discussion, it has been clear that philosophers have been trying to explore the various meanings of the term meaning. It must be admitted that ‘meaning’ is used to mean various things and ideas in different senses. The different meanings we get from the above discussion about meaning are indication, implication significance, intention, explanation, effect, cause, purpose, refer, cruel, etc. Moreover, it should also be admitted that there may be a lot of other meanings of the term ‘meaning’ and they might be primary in the days to come.

Language, therefor is language which is used for communication, it may be relative or it may be absolute sense. So, I think language, means word is vast in which we express our emotion, statement, thought and so on. It is because language is a conventional. According to *Bhartahari sabda* as the evolution of *Brahama*.

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