

## THEORETICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SPHOTA DOCTRINE

by

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The most important feature in Bhartrhari's Linguistic theory is the *Sphota*. He introduces the term *Śabda* and the concept *Śabda* in very technical senses.

Firstly Bhartrhari divides the concept of *śabda* into two aspects as follows:

1. **Anvākyeya śabda** Linguistically relevant unit
2. **Pratipādaka śabda** The exponent<sup>1</sup> of linguistically relevant *śabda* through which the former is realized.

A major part of Vol. I, of the *Vākyapadiya* is devoted to the discussion of *śabda* with regard to these two aspects. *Śabda*, for Bhartrhari, since he calls it *upādāna śabda* ('linguistic element which is inseparably associated with meaning'),<sup>2</sup> is a meaningful concept. This implies that only meaningful units are employed in language. In this *upādānaśabda*, two aspects are distinguished by linguists, namely:

3. The **nimitta** or the conceptual base of *śabda*,
4. The **Śruti** : that which conveys the underlying meaning in terms of serially-ordered articulated sound sequences.

*Vrtti* defines these two terms as follows :

"The **nimitta** is the base on which the speech sounds (*śrutayah*) convey meaning. The other one, (i.e. *śruti*) is the audible speech sounds distinctively produced by the articulatory organs, and which as the conveyers, always depend on the meaning to be conveyed."<sup>3</sup>

Of these two divisions, **nimitta** corresponds to **anvākyeśabda** while **śruti** corresponds to **pratipādakaśabda**. Accordingly the two aspects of *śabda* for Bhartrhari are :

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1. See F. R. Palmer, 1965 : 5,10,30
  2. V P I : 44; *Vrtti* : 100; of. J. Brough, 1951 : 37 who translate *upādāna śabda* as Language
  3. "eko nimittah śabdānām, yad adhiṣṭānā yad upāśrayā yad ādhārah śrutayah pratyāyam artham pratiapdyante tasya nimittāntaratvam ; aparo' rthe. Kramavyāpārāt tu pratilabdhavikriyaviśeṣaḥ srotanupati prakasaka bhāvena nityam pratyāyāparatantro 'rthesu prayujyate" *Vrtti* : 102. cf. Iyer, 1965 : 52-53.

- A. The underlying aspect which is connected with the notion of meaning, and,
- B. The phonological aspect which is connected with speech sounds.<sup>4</sup>

A clear understanding of this division is vital in an attempt to investigate the postulation of the concept *sphota*.<sup>5</sup>

### **DHVANI AS THE (SURFACE) REALIZATION OF SABDA, THE UNDERLYING PHONOLOGICAL STRUCTURE.**

Bhartrhari introduces the *sphota* first in his discussion of *sabda* as a mentalistic concept (i.e. the aspect which is connected with the notion of meaning,). He also says that the speech sounds which reveal the underlying *sabda* are called by the terms *sruti*, *nāda* or *dhvani* (*prākṛta* and *vaikṛta*). Bhartrhari gives a comprehensive description of the phonetics of speech sounds referring to various views of phoneticians and philosophers, while his main stress is on the description of speech production in terms of articulatory phonetics. When these views are taken together, it appears that three things are involved in the analysis of speech, namely : knowledge, "Rpulmonic air" and "distinctive features"<sup>6</sup>. The *jñāna* knowledge transforms itself into its surface form and makes it audible through speech sounds produced by passage of pulmonic air through the articulatory organs. The sounds so produced can be analysed into *anus* 'atoms' i. e. distinctive features.<sup>7</sup> This, in other words, is an illustration of how the speaker's knowledge of a certain meaning is revealed through the *dhvanis*. Bhartrhari has not specified 'the atoms' into which the speech sounds are analysable. Nagēsa<sup>8</sup> says that 'atoms' in this context refer to *sabda tanmātras* of the "sankya philosophy". *Sabdatanmātras* are subtle sound features, bundle of which constitute a sound unit<sup>9</sup> (i.e. a phoneme). Although this definition of sounds is similar to the modern view of distinctive features, no evidence is

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4. A=1 and 3, B=2 and 4. above.

5. All the translations of V P I : 44, it seems to me, have taken (A) to be the surface phonological concept and the latter (i.e. B) as the one that bears the meaning. This seems contrary to Bhartrhari's view, for *Vrtti* clearly distinguishes the two, as seen in the present translation. The mistranslation of this stanza has led scholars like K. K. Raja even to consider *prākṛtedhvani* as the *nimitta* of *sabda*. See K. K. Raja, : 1963 : 117; Iyer, 1969 : 157.

6. *Vāyoraṇūām jñānasya śabdatvāpattir isyate kaiscid darsanabhedo hi prāvadesvanavasthītaḥ* (V P I : 107).

7. For a similar usage of the term 'atom' see Bolinger, 1965.

8. Iyer, 1969 : 148.

9. *svaśaktāu vyajyamānāyām prayatnena samiritāḥ abhṛāniva pracīyante śabdākṛtāḥ paramānavāḥ* (V P I : 111).

available to prove that Bhartrhari made a distinctive feature analysis of phonetic sounds. Nevertheless it is important that he mentions that the *dhvanis* or *śrutis* which reveal the *sphota* are analysable into such features according to others. The *dhvanis* thus produced and analysed in terms of knowledge, speaker's intention, pulmonic air and distinctive features, are the conveyers of the underlying meaning. The *śūksmaśabda* 'subtle sabda (i. e. the *sphota*) is not perceptible, it can only be revealed through its revealers (i. e. the *dhvanis*) just as the existence of air is revealed by a fan (V P I : 116). It is only when revealed through *dhvanis* that the difference of the musical notes *Sadja*, *daivata*, *niśāda* etc., are distinguishable, otherwise they remain unperceived. Thus every type of expression depends on the revealing *dhvanis* which represent the underlying meaning (V P I : 118 - 123). This makes it clear that *dhvani*, *nāda* or *śruti* are the means by which the meaning is conveyed. It is not possible to isolate these *dhvanis* in language because they are inextricably bound up with the other aspect of *śabda* i. e. the *sphota*.<sup>10</sup> Bhartrhari makes it clear that *śabda* and *artha* ('revealing *dhvanis* and meaning) are two aspects of the same thing. These *dhvanis*, as has been seen, have various properties. Primarily there are two types of *dhvanis* which Bhartrhari distinguishes as *prākṛtadhvani* and *vaikṛtadhvani* (V P I : 75 - 77). One property of *prākṛtadhvanis* is *kāla* 'temporal distinction', because they are produced in a temporal sequence. Among the speech sounds so produced, some are 'short' in duration, some are 'long' and some are 'still longer'. This length of duration belongs to *prākṛtadhvani*. Since they are so produced in a linear order they share the property of space as well. *Vrtti* says: that :

'the *sphota* will not be manifested without the *prākṛtadhvani*. The restriction of the *sphota* (as consisting of a particular meaning) to a particular sequence of sounds is made by these sounds. In other words *prākṛtadhvani* is the representation of the *sphota*. The sentences of equal length uttered by Garga<sup>11</sup> and others for instance, are recognized differently because of their specific arrangement of items. Some are recognized as having many recurrent patterns of utterance and some as having few recurrent patterns, and also the utterance with shorter and longer duration are all recognized at this level of *dhvani*.<sup>12</sup>

10. ekasyātmano bhedaḥ śabdārthau aprthak sthitau (V P II : 31).

11. An ancient grammarian referred to even in the *Nirukta*.

12. "iha dvividho dhvaniḥ prākṛto vaikṛtasca. tatra prākṛtam nāma yena vina spho-  
tasvarupam anabhivyaktam na paricchidyate. Vaikṛtastu yenābhivyaktam spho-  
tarupam punah punah avicchēdēna pracitataram kalam upalabhyate.....  
tatra yatha sanniveśa viśesāt tulyamātrvibhāga parināmini gārgādi vākyaṇi kānicid  
uccārānavrttipracaya grāhyāni kānicid apacita rupvrtti grahyāni" (*Vrtti* 142) cf.  
Iyer, 1965: 79 - 80; S.D. Joshi, 1967 : 22.

*Theoretical Significance of the Sphota*

This seems to mean that **prākṛtadhvani** is the abstract realization of speech sounds, because the difference between items having many recurrent patterns and that have few recurrent patterns is realized on this level. It is unfortunate that **Vṛtti** does not quote the sentences that it refers to as those of Gārga and others, which would have been of immense importance to illustrate this point. When two or more individuals utter sentences of equal length there may be differences in the taxonomy of their sounds. Some may be short, some may be long, these variations relate to a given structure<sup>13</sup> at this level. Therefore, it can be inferred that **prākṛtadhvani** is the abstract phonological system of a given language. This discussion makes it clear that the phonological structure has a two way relation. It is an output of the **sphota** on the one hand, through which it relates to the notion of meaning, and it is the input, on the otherhand, to the phonetic utterance.<sup>14</sup> Accordingly **prākṛtadhvani** is a bundle of distinctive features produced by articulatory organs and shares the prosodic features of spatio-temporal distinction (which belongs to the whole phonological structure and not to individual phonemes). For example; the sequence of discreet sound segments/bhavati/ 'becomes' is the phonological representation of an underlying semantic element.

*Vṛtti* (143-144), explains the other aspect of **dhvani** i. e. **vaikṛtadhvani** as similar to a light. When the light is lit, it makes the objects such as a jar etc., perceptible. As long as the light exists the objects are also perceptible. The qualities that belong to the light are not attributed to the objects. Similarly the **Vaikṛtadhvanis** are the speech sounds with all individual variations (i. e. the idiosyncratic features of individual speakers). As long as these phonetic utterances last, they reveal the underlying structure i.e. the **sphota**. But the idiosyncratic features are not part of the **sphota**, because these speech sounds do not represent the **sphota** but only reveal it. When these **vaikṛtadhvanis** reach the ears of the hearer, he understands the meaning that the speaker intends to convey despite all the idiosyncratic features that are carried by the sound sequences. These sound sequences are distinguishable as not contributing to the phonological structure of a given language. That is to say, a speaker makes an utterance *ghatah* ('a pot') for instance, which may be heard with all **vaikṛtadhvanis** associated with it which may be 'ghatah' or 'gatah' etc., with or without aspiration of the first plosive, or with a slight aspiration as in 'ghatah'; the vocalic element (a) may be a lowered, centralized or raised variety ; the intervocalic [i] may be a retroflex [ɨ] or an alveolar [i] etc.).<sup>15</sup> Yet the hearer grasps the underlying semantic content in spite of all such idiosyncratic features.<sup>16</sup> Even though this is uttered at a fast, medium or slow speed, the hearer grasps

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13. Structure here implies any possible combination of C V.

14. cf. "primary sounds cause the perception of the **sphota** as well as the secondary sounds" S. D. Joshi, 1967, 22 - 29.

15. The section within brackets is to clarify the point at issue.

16. V P I : 77-80; *Vṛtti* : 145 - 146.

Bhartrhari mentions a few views on the perception of speech sounds where he says that according to some these sounds prepare the ear to perceive the meaning conveyed by them by purifying the ear and awakening the sense of perceptibility.

the **sphota** through which he conceives the intended meaning.<sup>17</sup> Consider the example *tacchisya* 'his pupil'. The phonemes of this utterance are identified within the phonemic system of Sanskrit as/tat - śisya/, which are the **prākṛtadhvanis**. The final/-t/ and the initial /ś-/in/tat - śisya/are phonemes or abstract units. /-t/ has a phonemic variant (-c) in the environment of /ś-/and/ś-/ has a phonemic variant (ch-) in the environment of (-c).<sup>18</sup> All this amounts to saying that the hearer reconstructs in his mind the phonological structure of the language concerned when he hears the utterance with all variations.

According to the foregoing discussion it appears that the two kinds of **dhvanis** correspond to the two types of phonological structure of the generative phonologists, that is to say, the **vaikṛtadhvani** is similar to the 'Systematic phoretic structure' which is a sequence of discrete segments of sounds. **prakṛtadhvani** is similar to the 'systematic phonemic structure' where the representation is more abstract.<sup>19</sup>

### SPHOTA AS THE (UNDERLYING) SYNTACTIC - SEMANTIC STRUCTURE OF ŚABDA

Having made it clear that **dhvani** with all variations is the (surface) phonological aspect of **śabda**, it is necessary now to investigate the exact status of the **sphota** in Bhartrhari's theory. the term **sphota** occurs only nine times in the **Vākyapadiya** and of these at least five are references to the views of others on the subject. By a close scrutiny of the term where it refers to Bhartrhari's own view, it was concluded that the term is used to refer to a concept connected with the notion of meaning.<sup>20</sup> In the previous section it was assumed that the terms **anvākhyeyaśabda**, **nimitta**, and **sphota** all refer to the same concept i.e. the linguistically relevant unit that underlies all meaningful utterances and this is represented by the phonological structure of a given language. This implies that the **sphota** is a linguistic universal. Bhartrhari in his discussion of different views on "the sentence" gives three views that belong to "the school of sentence meaning theory",<sup>21</sup> namely :

- I The sentence is an indivisible unit.
- II The sentence stands for a generic or universal meaning (jāti)
- III The sentence is a mentalistic concept.

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17. cf. D. Jones. (temmins sem) = 'ten minutes to seven'.  
see. Jacobson and Halle, 1956 : 6.

18. /-t/ → (-c) -/ś-  
/ś/ → (ch) -/c ; tat - śisya → tac - śisya → tacchisya  
cf. elektrik + iti → elektrīs + iti;  
spesifik + iti → spesifis + iti.

19. See S. Schane, 1973 : 6-7; Chomsky and Halle, 1968 : 11 ff.

20. cf. ".....Its fundamental attachment is to the other side (not sound) of the linguistic situation, namely : the meanings. In its non-technical sense **sphota** means simply 'a bursting - a splitting open' and it is normally defined in its linguistic sense as 'that from which the meaning bursts forth, i.e. shines forth. J. Brough 1951 : 33 ff.

21. see Chapter 1.3.2. Bhartrhari's linguistic theory as represented in the **Vākyapadiya**.  
Dr. K. Mahanama

*Theoretical Significance of the Sphota*

Punyarāja (67;81), says that these views refer to the **sphota** which is an indivisible unit. In describing the third view, Bhartrhari says that, “that mental concept (antahśabda tattvam) is an abstract unit and is revealed by **nāda** ‘speech sounds’. Others call this mental concept by the name **śabda**. Thus both the terms refer to the same concept in the sentences”. Although Punyarāja makes it explicit that this is a description of the **sphota**, he does not comment on the term **śabda** in this statement. But as noted above, Bhartrhari uses the term **śabda** that refers to the mentalistic concept as a synonym of the **sphota**.<sup>22</sup> Accordingly the sentence is an abstract concept called the **sphota** and it exists in the mind of the **pratipatrs** (‘interlocutors’). It is a unit with no parts, a universal revealed by speech sounds. This description of “the sentence” is compatible with what Bhartrhari says about the **sphota** in that it is a universal and is revealed by **nādas** or **dhvanis**. This it seems is substantial evidence for the argument that the **sphota**, for Bhartrhari, is an abstract concept (i.e. the underlying structure of sentences which resemble “the base” of the standard theory.<sup>23</sup> Patanjali uses the term **samghāta** to refer to the unit in which all semantic information is contained.<sup>24</sup> The same term is used by Bhartrhari in this context to refer to a union of lexical morphemes (in a given order) and states that the **sphota** is what underlies this union of lexical morphemes.<sup>25</sup> Patanjali and Bhartrhari agree that the meanings of these lexical morphemes cannot be assigned to them individually. For Patanjali it is in the **samghāta** that meaning lies, while for Bhartrhari it is the **sphota**. This **sphota**, Bhartrhari explains, is like a reflection. The reflection of a mountain in a pool of water is different from that of a mirror, or the blade of a Chinese dagger, or any other such reflector. The reflection, although it is realized according to the reflectors, is independent of them. Similarly the **sphota** is revealed in different patterns of **dhvanis** (in different languages) (V P I. 49). According to Bhartrhari the yolk of an egg or a Seed in which all the substances exist and which matures into a developed bird or a tree respectively is similar to the **sphota**. That is to say, all the syntactic and semantic information of a well-formed and acceptable utterance is available in the **sphota** (V P I : 51). Just as the well formedness of a bird or a tree is the property of the yolk or the seed respectively, the well-formed conditions of an utterance are in the **sphota**, and hence it is generative. Although the **sphota** consists of all the syntactic and semantic information it is not the semantic content (artha) of the utterance,

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22. yadantaś śabdatattvam tu nādairekam prakāśitam tam āhur apare śabdān tasya vākye tathāikatā  
(V P II : 30 ; PR : 64,81).

23. Cf. Also, G. N. Sastri, 1959 : 85-89; Iyer, 1969 : 161  
Katz and Postal, 1964 ; Chomsky 1965 ; 1969.

24. “.....samghātarthavatvāc ca manyāmahe arthavanto varno’ ti.” Mbh. Vol. I : 181; see S.D. Joshi, 1957 : 2,20.  
Patanjali does not identify **samghāta** with the **sphota**.

25. Punyarāja, in a different context identifies **samghāta** with the **sphota** in that **samghāta** (‘union’) is revealed by parts whereas the **sphota** is revealed by **dhvanis**. (PR :173).

but rather the bearer of the latter. For Bhartrhari **śabda** and **artha** are two distinct units of language. **Artha** (**grāhya** 'to be perceived') is the "meaning" or the semantic content where as **śabda** (**grāhaka** perceiver) which bears the meaning is the underlying structure of the utterance (V P I : 5;II 123, 188).<sup>26</sup> It is obvious that Bhartrhari refers to three distinct notions of language, viz :

- I Artha 'meaning or semantic content'.
- II Śabda 'the underlying structure'
- III Dhvani 'the phonological structure'.

There are two types of relations between these notions.<sup>27</sup> The relation between :

**artha and śabda is vācya and vācaka**

the conveyed and the conveyer', while that between **śabda** and **dhvani** is **vyangya** and **vyanjaka** 'the revealed and the revealer'.

The relation between 'meaning' or semantic content and underlying structure is not specified by Bhartrhari. But he gives a good account of how the **sphota** is mapped on to the surface phonological structure, and this is mainly in terms of similes. The **sphota** is like a painting, unitarily perceived in the mind of the painter. He paints this in a particular order beginning from a certain point and going on to complete the picture. There exist a number of stages between the first stage and the last. The painting is acceptable as well-formed only after the last stage has been completed. The intermediate stages neither belong to the unitarily perceived original painting nor to the terminal one resulting from the completion of the last stage, and these intermediate stages are inexpressible (V P I : 51 - 52). Similar examples are the process of milk turning into curd or a seed maturing into a tree in a number of stages (V P I : 91). The process of mapping the **sphota** onto **dhvanis** is similar to this. There is a specific order through which the **sphota** becomes revealed in terms of **dhvanis**. The stages in between them are **anupākhyeya** 'inexpressible',<sup>28</sup> in that they are neither **sphota** nor **dhvani** but are in the process of undergoing transformations, just as in the process of milk turning into curd and to similar phenomena referred to above. Those intermediate transformations (i.e. the derived structures) which are the result of the application of a set of rules in a sequential order, transforming each derived structure gradually into its surface form, are only a helpful device to arrive at the phonetic structure which is its final realization. Accordingly it is reasonable to assume that the **sphota** which is the underlying structure of sentences is mapped on to the surface structure in terms of a set of grammatical transformations (which Bhartrhari calls **āvrtti** (V P I : 85), that are applied in a particular order. Unless this set of transformational rules is properly operated the output will be an ill-formed string, just as a rope

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26. See also Nagesa's *Sphotavads* : 5; Kayyata's *Pradipa*

27. cf. K. K. Raja. 1963 : 145; Iyer, 1969 : 148 ff; 16J-161.

28. cf "The cardinal fact about the manifestation of the **sphota** is that before it takes place one cognizes (sic.) certain verbal elements which are unreal and appear to be part of the **sphota**" Iyer, 1969 166.

### *Theoretical Significance of the Sphota*

may appear like a snake due to a blurred vision or darkness, or a tree may be mistaken for an elephant at a distance or under conditions that obstruct proper vision (V P I : 89-91; *Vrtti* : 185).

Some later grammarians and philosophers have tried to explain this process of mapping the sphota onto dhvanis in a way similar to the "differentiation/theory" developed by Buddhist philosophers.<sup>29</sup> The well-known example given by Śeṣakṛṣṇa<sup>30</sup> is the realization of the utterance *kamalam* 'lotus'. When a person utters the sound *ka*, it differentiates all the other possible combinations such as *pa*, *ta*, *ga* etc., and when he proceeds to the next syllable (ka) *ma* all the other possibilities such as (ka) *pa*, (ka) *ta* etc., are excluded. When the last syllable is reached (kama) *lam* the sphota *kamalam* becomes revealed by ruling out all the other possibilities such as \**kamanam*, \**kamaram*, *gananam* etc. According to this view the gradual building up of the higher unit (i. e. the morpheme) by the syllables is the way that the Sphota is conceived.<sup>31</sup> This seems to be a description of a phonemic make-up of an utterance built up from the syllables of a given language, but Bhartrhari's conception of the manifestation of the sphota goes deeper than just a surface phonological arrangement of phonemes.

### THREE COMPONENTS OF LANGUAGE

#### (PASYANTI, MADHYAMĀ, VAIKHARI)

Bhartrhari introduces three components of language which are also the components of Brahman. Since these seem to be playing a major role in Bhartrhari's theory a brief account of them will be in order here. These components literally mean :

- I Paśyanti 'the seeing one'
- II Madhyamā 'the intermediate one'
- III Vaikhari 'the externalized (articulated) one.'<sup>32</sup>

The commentators and later grammarians quote these three, in their discussions of the philosophy of speech production, not in the linguistic sense, but as a description of mūrtivivartavāda ('the revelation of the śabdabrahman') of monistic philosophy.<sup>33</sup> This has sometimes resulted in confusion as to the aims of Bhartrhari in establishing these components. Bhartrhari

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29. For a detailed account of this theory see Dhirendrasarma 1969 : 19-46

30. *Sphotatattvanirupana*, p. 10 ; see also K. K. Raja, 1963 : 129

31. K. K. Raja. Loo. cit. Iyer, 1969 : 168-169.

32. V P I : 142; *Vrtti* : 213 - 221 ; Iyer, 1969 : 144; Limaye, 1965:213-216.

33. Krisnamācarya, 1946 : 18-28.

cf. also. Nāgesas interpretation. P. C. Cakravarti, 1933: 48.

33. See footnote 3 of K. Mahanama 1973.



does not elaborate on these points apart from saying that grammar is an account of language which consists of these three components (V P I : 142). *Vrtti*, however, gives a detailed account as follows :

**Pasyanti** 'It is sequenceless, and though indivisible has the potentiality to produce sequence. It is static as well as non-static (*calācala*). It is where the speaker's intentions are met with (*pratilabdha samādhāna*). It consists of standard as well as non standard forms. It is difficult to pinpoint, because of its subtleness and quasi formlessness (*pratiḷinākāra*). It appears as limited or unlimited (*samsiṣṭa*) meanings. It is where all meanings have ended (i.e. all semantic information is included in this). Some think that this meaningfulness exists at all levels of linguistic analysis and that is what distinguishes the well-formed from the ill-formed expressions. The semantic information contained in this, guides the speakers to use the well-formed expressions. Others, however think that *paśyanti* is free from ill-formed expressions, or non-standard forms and is beyond ordinary usage. This aspect of language is understood through correct knowledge of grammar or through the *śabdapūrvayoga*'<sup>33</sup>

**Madhyamā** 'Madhyamā is that which exists in the mind (of the speaker before the expression is produced by articulatory organs). It appears as if it has specific order, and the mind is its source. That is to say *Madhyamā* is a set of intermediate stages that appear in a specific order resembling the mental transformations in the derivation of an expression up to its articulatory production (i. e. surface arrangement of morphemes). According to another view, in *Madhyamā* the specific order is not obvious. Nevertheless it is associated with subtle breath-force, as opposed to *Vaikhari* which is associated with gross breath. force'.

**Vaikhari** 'Vaikhari is understood by hearers because it can be heard as a specific sequence of sounds that occur in successive morphemes (*anupūrviniyatam*), of an expression.<sup>34</sup> It is connected speech, which represents in distinct phonemes well-formed and (sometimes) ill-formed expressions. (*bhrastasaṃskāra*). It is infinite in its varieties in that even the sounds of the axle of a cart, a drum, a flute or a lute are also its representations.'<sup>35</sup>

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34. cf. J. F. Staal, 1967 : 28,32 for the use of the term *anupūrvī*.

35. *Vrtti* : 214 - 216. This translation is mainly based on Vrsabhadeva's *Paddhati*, for a somewhat different translation; Iyer, 1965 : 125 -126, Limaye, 1965 : 213-214.

*Theoretical Significance of the Sphota*

Following the above description in the *Vrtti* it is not unreasonable to conclude that these three aspects are the three components of language. The domain of grammar, according to Bhartrhari is these three components. Later grammarians<sup>36</sup> have also accepted that these three components represent three stages of speech production, and have developed a philosophy of *śabdabrahman* which explain the process of the manifestation of the "Supreme Reality" (i.e. *Brahman*)<sup>37</sup> through various stages and appears finally as "Speech". In this philosophy the three components correspond to the three stages of *śabdabrahman*, revealing itself through the speech. These *śabdabrahman* philosophers have also developed the "śabdapurvayoga theory"<sup>38</sup> as a means of realizing the Supreme Speech Principle. According to this theory the speaker starts from *Vaikhari* and develops his mind through *Madhyamā* to *Pasyantī*, and becomes identical with *pasyantī*. Grammar, on the other hand, starts from *Pasyanti* and arrives at *Vaikhari* through *Madhyamā*.<sup>39</sup> Some modern scholars are of the opinion that Bhartrhari himself develops a Monistic philosophy which is represented by these three aspects.<sup>40</sup> It is, however, difficult to make such judgements alone, because the text of the *Vākyapadiya* does not elaborate on these points. On the other hand, the fact that the introduction of these components immediately follows the statements on the importance of grammar, shows that these three components for Bhartrhari, are linguistic rather than philosophical concepts. The characterization of *Pasyanti* in the *Vrtti* as, "the province where speaker's intentions are met with, and that which consists of standard and non-standard forms where the restricted and general meaning is accounted for, and as the deepest level of semantic analysis which is understood by the correct knowledge of grammar etc., shows that this level corresponds more closely to the semantic component in the system of Generative grammar although it is obviously more than that. *Madhyamā* according to the definition of the *Vrtti*, is a set of stages through which the meaning at the deepest level is transformed into *Vaikhari*. This stage is purely mental and is characterized as the stage preceding the surface phonological form of the expression. It assumes sequence ; in the sense that it operates in an ordered manner. The function of this aspect is to map the semantic contents onto its phonetic representation. This, in other words, is the domain of all grammatical transformations. Since all these transformations are mental<sup>41</sup> they are intermediate between the semantic relation connected with the deepest aspect of mind and the surface realization. This description corresponds to the characterization of the syntactic component of Generative grammar as the domain of a system of recursive transformational rules<sup>42</sup> that apply cyclically to generate the surface phonological form of an expression.

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36. Jayaratha (1170 A.D.) Rāmakānta (950) A.D.)  
G.N. Sāstri : 1959 : 66-82
37. Loc. Cit.
38. See foot note 33
39. Iyer, 1969 : 145.
40. See K. K. Raja, 1963 : 146-148; G. N. Sastri, 1969 : 1-82;  
see also J. F. Staal, 1969 : 520.
41. of Chomsky, 1968 : 25.
42. Chomsky, 1965 : 128 ff; Katz & Postal, 1964 : 6-12

**Vaikhari**, on the other hand, is characterized as the domain of articulatory and auditory phonological sound units in which the temporal sequence is distinctive.<sup>43</sup> In this structure the sequence of phonemes is arranged in an innumerable variety of shapes which are the representations of well-or ill-formed utterances. This structure represents the fully externalized human speech.

The above description of Vaikhari is in keeping with the characteristics of the phonological component outlined in Chomsky, 1957, 1965 and other Generative models.<sup>44</sup> Accordingly, these three aspects **paśyantī**, **madhyamā** and **vaikhari**, correspond roughly to the semantic syntactic and phonological components respectively of Generative grammar. This comparison, however does not suggest that Bhartrhari's theory is a comprehensive and well developed model of Generative grammar. What this in fact suggests is that the insights of a Generative grammatical system can be traced from Bhartrhari's statements by following the line of arguments that has been extended so far in the present work.

It is accepted as in the present discussion that Bhartrhari's grammar incorporates these three components, the crucial point, however, is to specify the status of the **sphota** within his theory. As is evident from the information given so far, the **sphota** does not belong to **Vaikhari**, because the former is definitely not a surface phonological unit, but a syntactic semantic unit. Whether it belongs to **Madhyamā** or **Paśyanti** or whether it has any relation to these components at all remains to be seen. As was pointed out before Bhartrhari establishes three distinct notions of language, i.e. **artha**, **śabda** and **dhvani** (the total meaning or semantic content, the underlying structure and the phonological structure respectively). It is obvious that **artha** relates to **paśyanti**, since the latter is where all semantic information (linguistic as well as extra-linguistic) is restored. **Dhvani**, on the other hand, shows a direct relation to the contents of **vaikhari**, because both appear to have phonological structure as their domain. If this symmetrical order is followed, the **sphota** then has to be related to **madhyamā** or the syntactic component. The correspondence can thus be illustrated as :

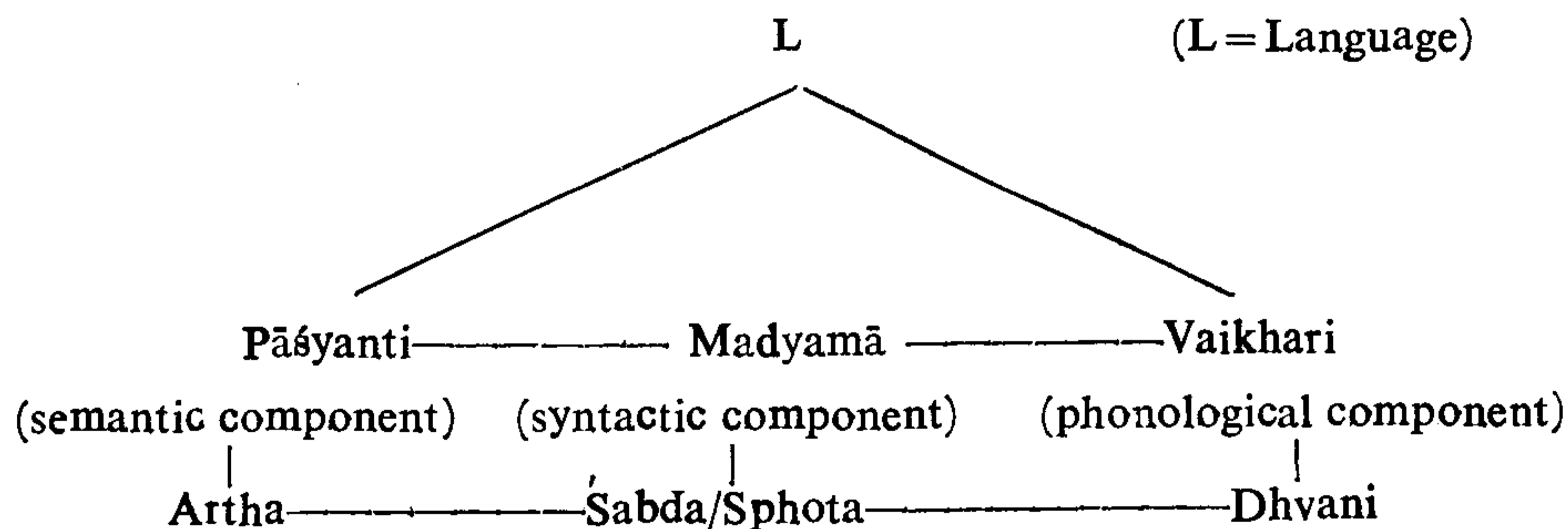


diagram I.

This observation seems to claim that the *sphota* corresponds to a sub component of the syntactic component of Generative grammar, but its justification needs further observation.

43. Iyer, 1969 : 66; Ramakanta, Vivrti 4, 18; Limaye, 1965 : 214.

44. Chomsky, 1957, 1965, 1968; Katz, 1970: 31 Schane, 1973 and others.

*Theoretical Significance of the Sphota*

The characterization of **Madhyamā** in the *Vrtti* as the domain of a set of sepecifically ordered intermediate rules which gradually transforms each stage into well-formed-ness in the derivation of an expression does not, however substantiate the above claim since, the **sphota** is not a set of transformations but it is what underlies a set of transformations. In this sense, the **sphota** resembles the "underlying base" that generates structures similar to base phrase markers, which are transformed into a string of morphemes that can be represented as :

$$S. \text{ ————— } T_1 \text{ ————— } T_2 \text{ ————— } T_3 \text{ ..... } T_n.$$

Where S=the sphota (base) and  $T_n$  is the surface structure.  $T_1 \text{ ..... } T_m$  are **anupākyayas** 'inexpressible structures' (derivable by the operation of a set of transformational rules called *āvrtti*). These inexpressible stages are not regarded as well-formed utterances because the well-formed-ness depends on the culmination of these transformations (*āvrttiparipāka*).<sup>45</sup>

It is also important to notice the difference between **madhayamā** component of Bhartrhari's theory and the syntactic component of the standard theory. In the latter the syntactic component consists of two sub components the base and the transformational component. The generative capacity is a property of the base components. **Madhyamā** on the other hand does not consist of two such sub components, but only a set of transformational rules. Consequently **sphota** which is the nearest equivalent of "the base of the standard theory, cannot be assigned to **madhyamā** of Bhartrhari's theory. Accordingly the theory illustrated in diagram I needs to be revised so that **paśyanti**, the semantic component comprises both artha, the total meaning and **sphota**, the underlying base that represents the semantic and syntactic information that is linguistically relevant. The function of **madhyamā** then, is to transform the output of **paśyanti** to **vaikhari**. This revised theory can be illustrated by the following diagram.

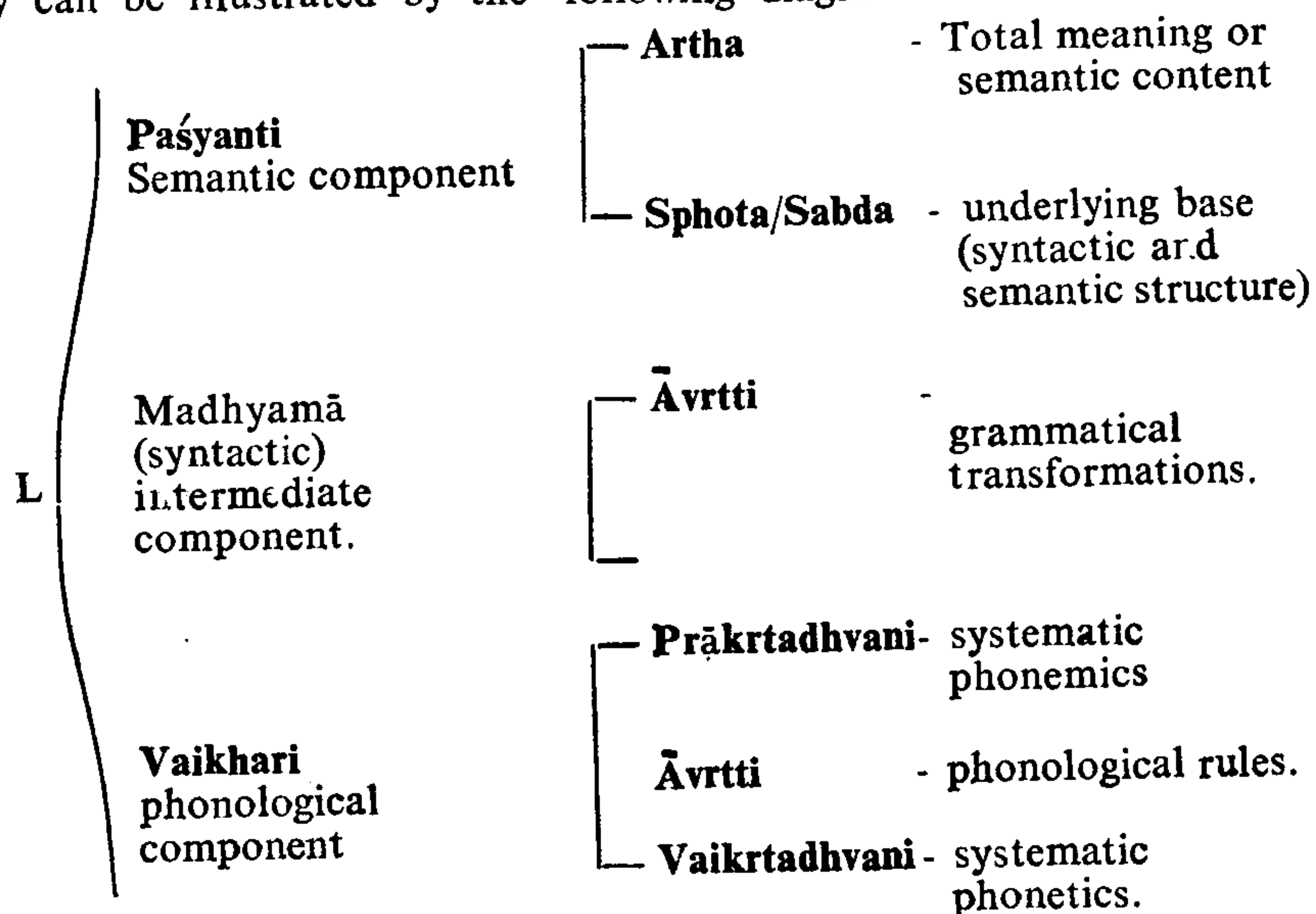


Diagram II

45. *āvrttiparipākāyām buddhau Śabdovadhāryate* (V.P.I; 84).

Bhartrhari's theory differs from the standard theory in that the former assigns the *sphota* to the semantic component, whereas in the standard theory its equivalent (i.e. base) is a sub component of the syntactic component.

The evidence that has been adduced serves to confirm that the *sphota* according to Bhartrhari, is an underlying structure which represents the semantic and syntactic structure of an expression, which seems to be more a kin to the "semantic representations" of the Generative semanticists theory.<sup>46</sup> This underlying structure is mapped on to the phonetic representation via an intermediate set of transformations.

### RELATIONSHIP OF SPHOTA AND PRATIBHĀ

G. N. Sastri identifies the *sphota* with *pratibhā*, in that *pratibhā* and the *sphota* are not two different entities (1959 : 91). Commentators like Punyarāja, use the term *pratibhā* as an equivalent of *pasyanti* (2.3.2.), which is the ultimate meaning of verbal propositions, and is considered as being an unbroken intuition.<sup>47</sup> The term *pratibhā* literally means 'correct or proper understanding'. In the literature of poetics it is defined as "the knowledge or the intuition that generates ever increasing aesthetic senses".<sup>48</sup> It is through *pratibhā* that the speaker understands a linguistic proposition. Bhartrhari uses the term *pratibhā* to refer to innate, and effortlessly inborn intuition of the *pratipatrs* (interlocutors) which is an essential factor in understanding and producing meaningful sentences.<sup>49</sup> He mentions six types of *pratibhās*, viz :

- I Innate.
- II Achieved by behaviour or performance.
- III Achieved by physical experience.
- IV Achieved by psychological experience.
- V Achieved by unspecified causes.
- VI Achieved by specified causes.<sup>50</sup>

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46. cf Mascawly, 1968 : 165 ff: 1970 : 168 ff : Lakoff: 1971 : 232 ff.

47. G. N. Sastri, 1959 : 251 - 252

48. i. *Pratibhā navaṅavonmesa sālīni prajñā* -  
ii. *apurva vastu Nirmānakṣamā Pratibhā* - Abhinavagupte  
cf S. K. De 1960 : Vol. II : 41 - 42: Krsnachaitanya, 1965 : 17, 57

49. V.P.I. : 118 : J.F. Staal, 1969 : 522.

50. *Svabhāva caranābhyāsa yogadrstopapādita*  
*viśiṣṭopahitā ceti pratibhām śadvidham viduh* (V P II : 152)  
See also V P II : 143 - 152; PR : 141-143.

### *Theoretical Significance of the Sphota*

These are in fact, six ways of describing how the intuition of the interlocutors is achieved. Bhartrhari's **pratibhā** is not restricted to human beings and their capacity for language. It is an innate capacity of other species as well. For example the capacity of Cuckoo to sing in the spring, and birds to fly, spiders to weave their nets etc. In this sense, **pratibhā** covers a wide range of capacities.<sup>51</sup> Helārāja, identifies **pratibhā** with consciousness (V P III :1) *Naiyayikas* and *Vaiśesikas* think that it is the only valid source of knowledge<sup>52</sup>. This term has its philosophical connotations developed in different schools of philosophy. It is not, however proposed to give such details in the present study.<sup>53</sup>

Bhartrhari's use of the term **pratibhā** as "the intuition of the interlocutors which is innate as well as achieved and developed through psychological and physical experience" shows that it bears some similarity to the concept of "competence"<sup>54</sup> of the speaker without which the understanding and producing of meaningful expressions would be impossible. Since **pratibhā**, in this sense is the underlying capacity that understands the **sphota** they cannot be identical. It is therefore, difficult to agree with Śāstri. Purnyaraja's account on the other hand, implies that **pratibhā** includes total semantic information together with the environmental factors (i.e. contextual and situational), in Dell Hymes's sense.<sup>55</sup> However an exact comparison of **pratibhā** with "competence" requires a thorough and a comparative study of both the concepts, Suffice it to say here, that Bhartrhari's **pratibhā** and the modern notion of "competence" though not the same, have similarities to a great extent.

Although **pratibhā** plays a considerable role in understanding the **sphota**, the relationship of the two has to be dealt with in a separate level of discussion i. e. in a theory of language acquisition.

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51. Whether the mode of communication of other species also has the same innate principles or whether they have only a limited range of capacities, is a question that has been widely argued by Behavioural psychologists, Socio-linguists and Biologists, See B. F. Skinner, 1957, Rodger Brown, 1970, Lenneberg 1964, 1967. J. C. Marshall 1970, and many others.

52. G. Kavirāj, 1924 : 1-18.

53. For a detailed study, See G. Kavirāj, 1924 : 1-18; 1926: 113-132; P. C. Cakravarti, 1933. 112 ff.

54. See Chapter 1.3.2., footnote 51. - K. Mahanama, 1973. cf Chomsky, 1965 : 2-10; 1968 : 23ff. 1972 : 115 ff: Cambell and Roger Wales, 1970 : 242 - 260,

55. Dell Hymes, 1970. See also, also, Halliday; *Loc clit.* Campbell and Roger Wales, *Loc. cit.*

## CONCLUSION.

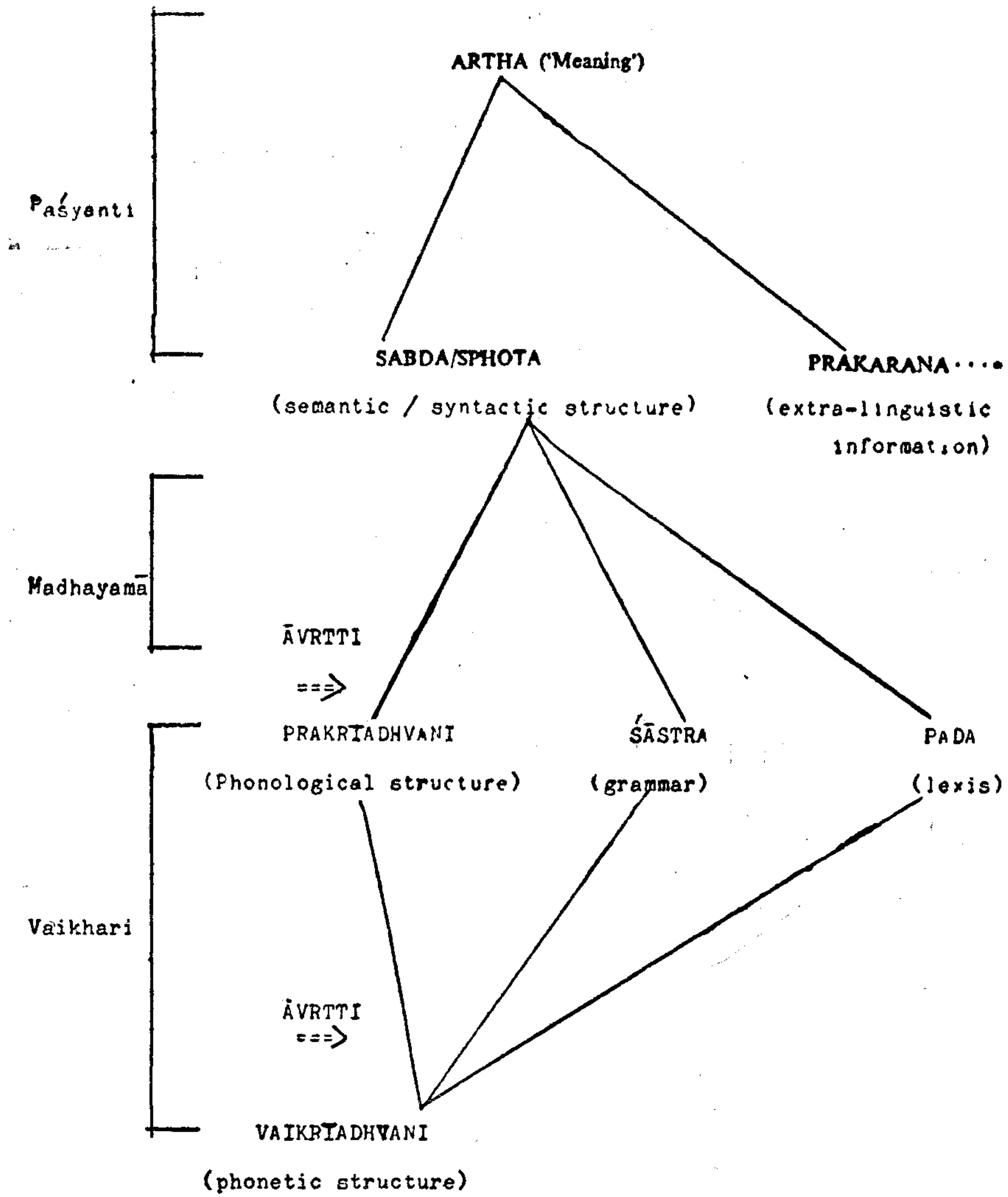
Considering the facts given above, it is possible to deduce the following conclusion :

Language, which comprises three components technically called **Paśyanti Madhayamā** and **Vaikhari**, is meaningful in its account of both internal structure and external correlates such as contextual information. The total meaning thus conveyed is referred to as **artha**, 'meaning' which in this sense is more like the meaning in its "every day sense"<sup>56</sup>. **Artha** consists of a Linguistic base component as well as extralinguistic material. The linguistic base component which has both semantic and syntactic implications (that is to say which is more or less the equivalent of the Generative Semanticists "deep structure), is called **śabda** or the **sphota**. **Śabda** and **sphota** have been used synonymously to mean the linguistic deep structure abstracted from the overall pattern of language in order to distinguish it from extra-linguistic criteria which are equally relevant to communication. **Śabda/sphota** consists of syntactic deep structure, and phonological deep structure as well as lexis. The term for phonological deep structure is **prāktadhvani**. The term **vyākaraṇa** or **śāstra** ('grammar' has been used loosely within the theory but seems to have a major part to play as a sub-component of **śabda/sphota**. The term for lexis is **pada**. The syntactic, phonological and lexical structures are derived from **śabda/sphota** through Certain transformations technically called **āvṛtti**. Although the rules themselves are not explicitly stated it seems to be the case that the concept of **āvṛtti** is very similar to the modern concept of transformations in Generative grammar. The phonetic structure of speech is like wise derivable from the phonological, grammatical and lexical structure, by the application of **āvṛtti**, (which are similar to phonological rules). The nature of the theory and the position of the **sphota** within the theory may be stated in a rough diagrammatic sketch as follows:

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56. Cf. J. Lyons, 1966 : 299.

Theoretical Significance of the Sphota





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