

## Nada—a study.

~~~~~BY GAURINATH BHATTACHARYA, M. A.

Bhartṛhari, the most celebrated philosopher-grammarian, opens his monumental treatise on Sanskrit grammar and its philosophy—the Vakyapadīya—by drawing a comparison between Śabda and Brahma<sup>1</sup> and happily does Bhaṭṭojidīkṣita in his Śabdakaustubha comment that by establishing such an analogy the grammarians seem to have found out a priceless gem in their quest of an insignificant cowrie.<sup>2</sup> Bhartṛhari wishes to point out that as Brahman undergoes formal transformation and we have the diverse objects of the universe which after all sink into nothingness with the dawning of spiritual consciousness, so does Śabdabrahma undergo transformation and the result is that we find the world of Śabdā, we mean the letters, the syllables and the sentences, and the world of Arthas, we mean the numerous senses or objects. It will be our business to enquire into the nature of Śabdabrahman in which both Śabda and Artha lie as two in one. And in

this connexion, it will be wise on our part to start with the conception of Śabdabrahma as discussed in the Āgamas and the Tāntric texts.

The Tantras speak of Śiva, the Supreme Entity, as having two aspects: Saguṇa and Nirguṇa. In his Nirguṇa aspect, he is the Supreme Changeless One; while in his Saguṇa aspect, he changes as the Universe. Now from this Saguṇa Śiva who is said to be invested with the wealth of existence (*sat*), consciousness (*chit*) and bliss (*ānanda*), there emanates Śakti, the unalienated conscious nature of Śiva with all its contents unmanifested.<sup>3</sup> Śiva is always associated with Śakti and she is described to be the nature of Śiva that enables him to comprehend his own self. Śiva is thus like a handsome prince who looks at his own self reflected in the mirror of Śakti.<sup>4</sup> Thus a modern scholar calls Śakti as one remaining in Śiva in a reflex relation of Self-Identity. It should be, therefore, borne in mind that Śakti is not different from

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1. Vakyapadiya, I. 1.

2. वराटिकान्वेषणाय प्रवृत्तश्चिन्तामणिं लब्धवान्.....

3. Saradatilaka, I. 7.

4. Kamakalavilasa, commentary under sl. 2.

Śiva, the *Śaktimat*.<sup>5</sup> It may be asked here how Śakti can be said to issue from what was already with Śakti. Rāghavabhaṭṭa in his commentary on the Śāradātilaka of Lakṣmaṇāchārya explains that there is hardly any difficulty if we refer to the Sāṅkhya principle of the appearance of realities from realities ( *Satkāryavāda* ).

Now we are told that the creative impulse of Śiva inseparably connected with Śakti, assumes the form of a Bindu, which is a highly subtle entity and comprises three guṇas.<sup>6</sup> Bindu is said to be that state of Śakti in which the germ of action increasingly sprouts and thus it has been viewed as the proper condition for creation.<sup>7</sup> Bindu, is again described as the consolidated state of Conscious Energy, that is Śakti.<sup>8</sup> Now Bindu in its turn divides itself into three aspects—gross, subtle and highly subtle, and these are Bindu, Nāda and Bija.<sup>9</sup> Now this Bindu is the conscious aspect while the unconscious aspect is represented by Bija. Nāda is the resultant of the conscious and the unconscious aspects.<sup>10</sup> Now when Bindu bifurcates itself, there happens to arise an indistinct sound which is in the opinion of the

masters of the Āgamas, called Śabdabrahma.<sup>11</sup> This Śabdabrahma has been identified with what is known as Parā Vāk. Nāgeśabhaṭṭa in his Siddhāntalaghumañjūṣā, points out that Śabdabrahma is identical with Nāda in which there is no distinction of letters and syllables, which is mainly in its nature a cognition, which is a particular state of Śakti suitable for creation and the resultant of consciousness and unconsciousness.<sup>12</sup> In the Tantras this Śabdabrahma is said to be the Kuṇḍalinī Śakti that lies in all individual living beings.<sup>13</sup> Now when Nāda becomes manifested a little the internal air which reveals it comes up as far as the naval region from the Mūlādhāra which is the seat of Parā Vāk or Nāda and this stage has been called the Paśyantī which can only be comprehended by the mind. Both Parā and Paśyantī are highly subtle stages and cannot be comprehended by ordinary mortals. It has been definitely said that it requires a great spiritual discipline in order that they may be cognizable. It is laid down that only Yogīs can comprehend Parā by means of indeterminate cognition ( *nirvikalpaka* ) while Paśyantī through determinate cognition ( *Savikalpaka* ). The next stage after Paśyantī is Madhyamā which becomes revealed as soon as the air comes up to the region of the heart. It is also described as being subtle in view of

5. 'शक्तिश्च नो शक्तिमतो विभिन्ना'  
Malinivijayottaravarttika.

6. Siddhāntalaghumanjūṣā, p. 142.

7. नादबिन्दु सृष्टयपयोगावस्थारूपौ  
—Com. under Sar. I. 7.

8. Prapanchasara, I. 41.

9. *ibid.*

10. Siddh. p. 142.

11. Sar. I. 11-12. Also, Prap. I. 43.

12. Siddh. p. 145.

13. Sar. I. 14.

the fact that it cannot be perceived by persons other than him who utters it and that also only when he has closed his auditory organs. This is known as the Anāhatadhvani in the texts on Yoga. The next stage is known as the Vaikharī which is the form of speech spoken by men. It is produced by the internal air passing through the throat and finally reaching the mouth. Nāgeśa has pointed out that the first three stages represent the minutest, minuter and minute forms of Praṇava.<sup>14</sup>

Parā Vāk, according to the Tṛka school of Kashmere, is identified with Vimarśa Śakti. Vimarśa is the conscious reflection of Perfect Egoity. Parā, therefore, is not the stage of Vāk in the sense of a manifested condition but it is so-called only to show her extremely subtle nature in comparison with the stages that follow. "As Vimarśa, Parā Vāk has the characteristic of an infinitely subtle kind of speech or something in the nature of an inner discourse (abhijalpa), having in her womb, as it were, the Nāda as the root-principle of all forms of uttered sounds."<sup>15</sup> The Parā stage has been happily compared by Tṛka writers to the liquid within a pea-cock's egg (mayūrāṇḍarasavat) where the different limbs of the bird with the variegated colour of its feathers remain in a form of total non-distinction. The entire body of Scriptures lie dormant

in her womb without any division of letters, syllables and sentences—the so-called elements of speech. Paśyantī is that particular condition in which the Supreme Energy stimulated by her *self-dependence* is willing to be externalized with the result that she as a self-luminous seer surveys the world of objects with the order of Vāchya and Vāchaka not yet clearly distinguished.<sup>16</sup> In the Madhyamā stage, this order of Vāchya and Vāchaka has not become fully expressed but the same can be comprehended by the intellect.<sup>17</sup> The grossest stage is called the Vaikharī which is so-called because of its being generated through vikhara or body. In this stage the order of Vāchya and Vāchaka becomes completely developed.<sup>18</sup> Bhāskara in his commentary on Lalitāsahasranāma illustrates the gradual evolution of Vāk in an admirable manner. The Parā form is mere sound (Nāda or Śabdabrahma). It is the potentiality of growth and development lying dormant in the seed. Paśyantī is the seed about to sprout. The Madhyamā is the particular stage when the seed has burst open and the two small leaves have just appeared and the Vaikharī is when the leaves are separated but joined at the root.

In course of our discussions here, we have observed that from Śakti emanates Bindu which again divides

14. एतद्वस्थात्रयमपि सूक्ष्मतमसूक्ष्मतरसूक्ष्मप्रणवरूपम् ।

15. Jayaratha's com. under Tantraloka, III. 236.

16. *ibid.* III. 226.

17. Anantasakti's Vṛtti on Vatulanatha Sutra. 7.

18. Jayaratha on Tantraloka III. 226.

itself into three aspects. But Śaradātilaka lays it down that from Śakti emanates Nāda and from Nāda evolves Bindu.<sup>19</sup> It has been said in the Tantras that out of the union of Śiva and Śakti arises creative ideation. And the union is called Nāda. Nāda, it has been pointed out by Rāghavabhaṭṭa, is a stage in the movement towards the revelation of the Self as the Universe. To be explicit, potency and readiness to create becomes for the first time active as Nāda and the more so as

Bindu. Thus Nāda and Bindu may be viewed as the growth and development of the germ of action. Rāghava states that there are authorities who do not speak of this Nāda and he further adds that the Śaradatilaka mentions it in order to indicate the seven-fold character of Tārā. He also says that writers who have spoken of Kāla have mentioned the Nāda state. To unfold the deeper significance of this Nāda is a problem that requires separate treatment.

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