

In search of a new Linguistics in the light of Sri Aurobindo.

I. Semantic levels of the Word and the functions of language

Modern Theoretical Linguistics recognises three levels of meaning in any word or text: Semantic, Syntactic and Pragmatic; and these three levels also constitute the branches of a new science called Semiotics. By defining a hierarchy of meaning, Semiotics also determines the functions of language in general.

The pragmatic level of meaning goes beyond the text itself, aiming at life and its objective context, of which the text is only an indicator. It reflects the most external function of the Word¹ and indicates its communicative aspect.

The syntactic level introduces a meaning of the text itself, its between-words semantic, and thus reflects the structural or grammatical function of each word and the text in general - a cognitive aspect of language.²

The semantic level of the word is oriented to its origin, an etymon, a simple root-sound, representing its creative function. However, the creative function of the etymon has not yet been recognised by modern science, which sees the creativity of a word as lying mainly in its communicative function.

In Vedic times (2000 BC) the creative aspect of speech was seen to be of major importance, so that the study of language was based entirely on this knowledge-experience and was therefore devoted mainly to this direction of thought³.

But in time this experience was lost and the memory of this knowledge no longer appeared satisfying to the intellect, which is always seeking new and authentic experience. So from the time of Yaska and Panini (6th century BC) onwards, a growing interest was taken in the cognitive and communicative aspects, which had not been studied earlier. This was a flourishing time in grammatical thought and the philosophy of language, when great treatises on Etymology and Grammar such as the Nirukta of Yaska (6th c. BC), Ashtadhyayi of Panini (5th c. BC), the Vartikas of Katyayana (4th c. BC), Mahabhashya of Patanjali (2nd c. BC), and Bhartrihari's Vakyapadiya (1st c. AD) were composed.

Here we would like to note briefly some of the important views on the problem of Semantics expressed in these treatises, because of their closeness to the Vedic period and thus to the old paradigm of the Word, which is even more significant for our studies than modern theories of language.

¹ By 'Word' we mean a creative and self-cognitive faculty of Consciousness, different from its other faculties: Mind, Vision and Hearing.

² (Concept of 'sign' of Saussure, or 'trace-structure' of Derrida).

³ Cf. RV 10.125

a) Yaska's discussion of the meaning of a word in relation to an objective reality:

The arguments of a critic are given as follows:

- 1) every being should be called by the same name when performing the same action, so if *aśva-*, “horse”, means “running”, than everyone who is running should be called *aśva-*;
- 2) every object should be called by as many names as actions are performed by it; for the designation of an object is anyhow not clear when it is determined only by its action, for it can perform any action, and exists in itself before and after the action;⁴

Yaska answers:

- 1) not everyone gets the same name by performing the same action, not everyone who cuts wood is called *takṣaka-*, “a carpenter”, but only one who does it often and regularly;
- 2) though one is involved in many different activities, one gets his name from a particular action only. There are even many things which get their names from their subsequent actions.⁵

What we see here is that a critic by his arguments is trying to identify the image created by a word as it functions in linguistic reality with the image of an object as it functions in objective reality. He wants to establish a true correspondence between these two levels of reality, one of which lies beyond time and space⁶, in the subjective realms, and the other - in the objective time and space. The critic seems to understand the problem very well when he says that an object cannot be defined by a word, for it exists before and after the action that the word indicates.⁷

But we may say that the word persists in its own reality beyond the reality of time and space. Since we live, act, see, understand the world using our linguistic reality, the name once given to the object, whether it was relevant or seemed to be relevant for a particular speaker, could remain for some time, even if it had very little to do with any action of the object. The reason why this or that name was given to the object was not in order to satisfy an objective reality but rather a subjective one; it was named by a speaker

⁴ Actually these arguments show that the understanding of the word was never ‘logocentric’, for the difference between the signified and signifier was clearly seen.

⁵ The relativity of a name is clearly stated here.

⁶ I think, that linguistic reality, the reality of structural semantic as well as of the ‘signified’, can be said to lie beyond time and space; “*signified*” is beyond actual time, ‘it is never there’ by Derrida’s definition, and the “*signifier* is always in time and space, but ‘it is never that’. For it evidently belongs to a different order or time and space than physical reality, though still it belongs simultaneously to the realm of ‘manifestation’, and exists in a subtle space and time.

⁷ The phenomenological treatment, see also Nietzsche’s levels of metaphors.

imposing his wish, opinion, knowledge, will on the object. Once the name has been used, it would persist in memory until a new name effaces or changes it.⁸

Yaska only emphasizes the difference between these two realities, as well as pointing to the corrupted and conventional character of the usage of words, without answering the critic's argument about the approximate character of definition itself. It is interesting to see these two views representing the transition from the Vedic understanding of the Word, based on transparent etymology⁹, which was now already becoming obscure and non-functional in the consciousness of a speaker, to the beginning of a new reasoning approach. The critic's arguments sound childish to the reason, because they are still focusing on the inner source of words, while the reason focuses on observing their outer applications.

Answering the question of how an object could be called by a certain name, when it is performing a different action than that indicated by the name, Durga, commenting on the Nirukta, says: "śabda-niyamaḥ svabhāvata eva loke", "in spoken language [in the world], the law of using the word follows its [the word's] own nature". According to him, this svabhāva- is an inherent characteristic of the word as a sound-meaningful entity. It has its own existence and can therefore be applied to any object at will by a speaker, thus creating a new contextual meaning, for the word in its semantic aspect continues to carry its own significance.

The word "carpenter" then, in the pragmatic sense, means a distinctive skill and style of living in a society. So when a speaker wants to denote this complex of knowledge-ability-life-style-activity by one word, he says: a carpenter. But in the linguistic reality this word does not refer to any particular carpenter, or a real person;¹⁰ it evokes only an idea of someone who cuts wood for his living (Pragmatic sense); at the same time it includes the formal semantic of the grammatical usage of the word (Syntactic sense) - that is, how the word is used in relation to other words structures;¹¹ and

⁸ Already in 1873, Nietzsche described metaphor as the originary process of what the intellect presents as "truth": "The intellect, as a means for the preservation of the individual, develops its chief power in dissimulation." (...) "A nerve-stimulus, first transcribe into an image! First metaphor! The image again copied into a sound! Second metaphor! And each time he [the creator of language] leaps completely out of one sphere right into the midst of an entirely different one." (NW III. ii. 373)

"that impulse towards the formation of metaphors, that fundamental impulse of man, which we cannot reason away for one moment – for thereby we should reason away man himself... (NW III, ii 381) Later he will give this drive the name "will to power". ... "the so-called drive for knowledge can be traced back to a drive to appropriate and conquer." "in our thought, the essential feature is fitting new material into old schemas,... making equal what is new."

⁹ When the etymology of the word is transparent then the other meaning is known: the meaning-sound, the meaning-power. Therefore in the old times the names were kept secretly, for they were a key to the essence of the being. Cf.: Kena Up., etc.

¹⁰ Cp. with 'a signified', a concept;

¹¹ Cp. with Chomsky's generative grammar.

above all it has its own hidden source of meaning - an etymon in the system of seed-sounds.¹²

When Durga says that a word lives and acts in the world according to its own nature, he implies that any word not only reflects an image of objective reality but also introduces and implements an image of its own. For the hidden system of etymons (Semantics) and the relation of the word with other possible words in the system of language (Syntactics) influences the general contextual meaning on the pragmatic level.

Therefore even on the purely communicational level the word acts as a meaningful entity, influencing and creating the society of man, which is nothing but a product of this communication.¹³

b) Patanjali and the Syntactic aspect of the word.

Patanjali in his Mahabhashya, the commentary on Panini's Ashtadhyayi, says that in order to know the meaning of a word one has to go not to the learned linguist, but to the market place, for the meaning of the word in its natural usage differs from the linguistic one.¹⁴ This was a new approach to the human tongue, in comparison to the Vedic theories of the origins of speech. Patanjali points out to a different value of speech, which had not been focused on before : a communicative aspect and the life of a 'signifier'.

Here I would like to quote one example, where Patanjali is discussing the topic of the simplest meaningful units, which is similar to the modern understanding of phoneme:

There are three words kūpa-, a well, sūpa-, a soup, yūpa-, a sacrificial post, which differ in their first phonemes; therefore, concludes Patanjali, the k-, s-, y- are meaningful units, for these words are distinguished by their initial phonemes. But at the same time the meaning cannot be learned from these in isolation : k-, s-, y-; while the part -ūpa- is also meaningless alone. Thus Patanjali admits that phonemes have a differentiating significance within the units which bear the meaning.¹⁵ Such a unit he considers as samghāta-, a single entity which is 'indivisible and one', it can be a word or a text. Patanjali here compares it to a chariot, as a single entity which consists of many parts that are incapable of moving, while the chariot as a whole is an entity which can move.¹⁶

¹² About which nobody speaks in the West, taking mistakenly the structural semantic, 'sign' or 'trace', for the meaning itself.

¹³ This much is obvious even to modern science, but not connected with the etymon level.

¹⁴ The life which the word as a 'signifier' has in the world is different from the conceptual or 'signified' part of it.

¹⁵ Saussure's fundamental discovery.

¹⁶ It is a clear example of introduction of semantic into syntactic use: Sphota.

The problem here is that Patanjali tries to discover the semantics of the word in a purely syntactic way, breaking up the semantic entity of the etymon. This approach does not help us much, although it brings some clarity about how the etymon is to be approached - as a syllable only. If we examine carefully the sounds of speech, we will see that k- is not a sound, but only an articulating device, which can be meaningful only when a vowel sound is there, forming it into a syllable¹⁷. Of course it reflects the significance of its place of articulation, but in itself it has no sound. So kũ- is to be compared, which differs from sũ- and yũ- not only in form, but also in sense, at the primal layer of meaning. Thus a premier root *kũ* has some parallels in other Indo-European languages: Engl., “cave” see also Lat.; Russ., “*ko-p-aty*” to dig; Engl. “cup”, etc. *Sũ*, is “to press out a juice”, so *sũ-pa-* is a “soup” in English, “sup” in Russian, etc., also *soma-*, the “ambrosia”, and *sũ-nu-*, the “son”, as a carrier of the essence. The root *yũ* thus gives us different meanings: *to unite* and *to divide*, in other words *to hold the two in one*. From this root we have many derivatives: *yuj*, to unite, to bind, to fix, to use etc., *yuga-*, “pair”; cp: Engl. “yoke”; *yoga-*, “union”; *yũpa*, “sacrificial post”, where the sacrificial animal is to be tied up.

The “single entity” of which Patanjali speaks should belong to the origins of the word, to its inherent and hidden semantic, - an etymon, and not to its conventional significance, supported by the mind examining the syntactic structure of the word.

c) Bhartrihari and the Theory of Sphoṭa

Developing the thought of Patanjali, Bhartrihari goes farther and makes an overall survey of what is “single entity” and how it works on all levels of speech. For Bhartrihari a sentence and not a separate word is a single undivided speech-unit. The whole world as it is has a Meaning which can be grasped only as an indivisible unity. This meaning is inherent in the consciousness of man from his very birth, with which he later finds its partial correspondence in his language¹⁸ and reproduces it through articulation, and that is Sphoṭa.

Sphoṭa, literally means “sudden opening”, “disclosure”, it is taking place in both speaker and hearer, through the process of articulation in both. The sound of the speech (*dhvani*) simply evokes the Sphoṭa in the hearer, as *varṇa-sphoṭa*, *pada-sphoṭa* and *vākya-sphoṭa*, the phoneme/morpheme-

¹⁷ Not all human languages function syllabically, or even vocally. Isolated and Hieroglyphic types are based on vision rather than sound. Languages of the numbers, geometrical figures or colors are of the sight origin.

¹⁸ Therefore a foreign language can be studied, for any language is only a particular access to the Reality, which is wider than any language.

articulation-cognition, the word-articulation-cognition and the text-articulation-cognition, respectively. The differentiation between sound and articulation is one of the fundamental features of the theory of Sphota. Sphota is not a sound we hear but the sound we articulate.¹⁹ According to Bhartrihari Sphoṭa operates within universal sounds whereas dhvani within a particular sound. The opposition between sphoṭa and dhvani is also presented as the opposition of class to individual. In modern terms Sphoṭa can be understood as having constant distinctive phonetic features, whereas dhvani is of phonic nature. Sphoṭa is that which is to be manifested (vyañgya-), and the dhvani is manifesting (vyañjaka-). Sphoṭa is not uttered but it is perceived by the hearer.

To make the distinction clearer Bhartrihari introduces two types of dhvani: prākṛta-dhvani, natural sound, and vaikṛta-dhvani, uttered out or distorted sound; where sphoṭa is revealed through the former one only. The secondary vaikṛta sounds are only to indicate the primary ones, and thus to kindle up the Sphoṭa, which with a help of pratibhā, the flash of insight, reveals the meaning of the text.

On semantic level, as it was developed by latter grammarians, Sphota makes the text correspond with a universal Text-Totality, śabda-brahman, and therefore the text can be easily understood as such. And once the inner perception (pratibhā) of the hearer flashes out, reflecting something from that totality, the Sphoṭa, the revelation of the meaning of the text, takes place in his consciousness.

So, the Sphota can be seen as a communication-device based on a recognition of the truth of existence through a word/text in the hearer-speaker, (sattā). It therefore is of a psychological nature, as any human speech is, for the recognition of the meaning of the text is perceived by a consciousness which lies beyond the analytic capacity of the external mind, and carries in itself all meanings.

Even today this theory is widely recognised among modern linguists as the most complete investigation into the profundities of language, making a considerable contribution to the Philosophy of Language, the Psychology of Speech, and especially Semiotics.

¹⁹ It is Saussure's definition of 'signifier'.

The creative aspect of a word.

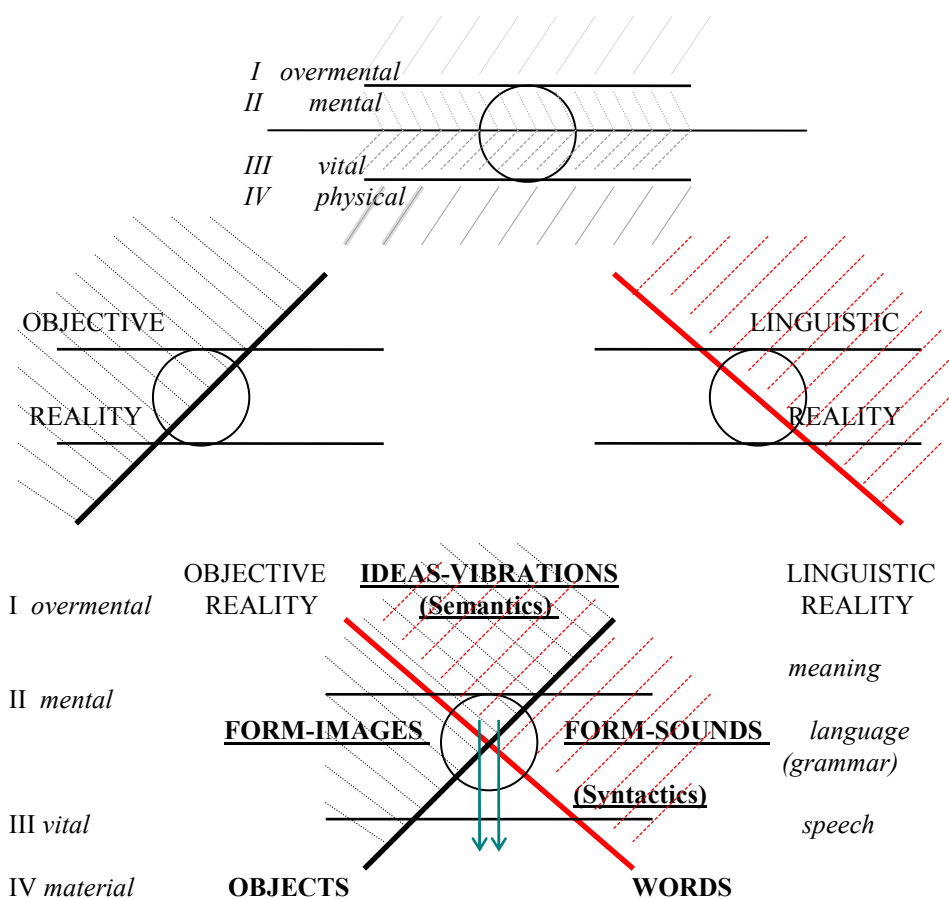
How does a word create the reality in which we live?

- by gathering into one entity and holding in the mind, sight and hearing, events and forms from different time, assigning to them the unifying significance, the purpose, the meaning and the aim of their existence. If the word were not there, the mind would not be able to deal with a reality, that is dispersed in time, space and causality, in a meaningful way, as one text.

Here we will try to observe some different aspects of the creativity of a word: philosophical, social, linguistic and psychological. These, we think, will give us a basis of data necessary for approaching the subject.

Philosophical aspects: the Word, Vision of the One

Here we give a diagram, which is meant to help us to imagine how speech can be connected with objective reality:



Here are two apparently different realities, interconnected in one complex objective-subjective reality of consciousness, with a double status of self-cognition (perceptive reality) and of self-power (active and self-objective reality). On the level of formation these are represented in Bhartrihari's terminology by *vācaka*, the expressive element, and *vācya*, the expressed

element, and in the modern theory of Saussure, by “a sign”, consisting of two parts: a meaning, “signified”, and an expression, “signifier”.

On the highest level of consciousness, where the power and the knowledge are one, there is no difference between the objective and subjective realities. The idea-force, the idea-vibration is identical for the word and the object it signifies. The semantic of both is one and the same. Here we are dealing with the word and the object as two equal manifested things, where each has its own form and meaning. So the semantic of the objective thing “book” and the semantic of the objective word “book” are the same.

It is on the level of formations (mental and vital planes) that we see the expressed and expressive elements being split into distinct forms: the form of the object and the form of the word. While still similar in their semantic, they differ in their shapes: an idea-form, as a thought-sound (a word), is not the same as a thought-image (a form of the object).

The circle (see the picture) is a symbol of formation and formulation, which includes all possible interactions: (1) oneness in meaning; difference in form-meaning (2) and (3) form-power, (cf.: nāma and rūpa in Vedantic tradition); and (4) on the material plane, word and object are completely separate things.

This diagram is meant only to help us to approach the subject. It is only a diagram, and should be understood only as such. The complexity of sense-relationships cannot be shown in one diagram.

Hearing and sight, śrotram and cakṣuḥ, together with speech and mind, vāc and manah, are considered in the Upanishads as four pillars upon which brahma-catuṣpād, “the Spirit on four legs”, stands firmly in the world (ChUp, BrhUp) as prāṇa, Life energy. It is only with the assistance of these nāma and rūpa, name and form, that Brahma, the Creator, can enter his creation and thus animate it (ShBrh). Thus name and form are actually representatives of śruti and dṛṣṭi, in the Vedas, or of Cit-Tapas, Consciousness-Power, in the Puranas.

So we can make a philosophical definition of what the Word is, in terms of speech, language and meaning.

Speech is a reality of sound, sign and meaning; where the sound is simply a vibration (inner or outer), and the sign is a form arising from this vibration in the mind, reflecting its vision of reality in the form of sound; the meaning is a truth of existence, something which exists before and after the form is created, inherent in the sound, beyond the mind.

Language is a reality of sign; as a form made out of sound by the mind as a sign, a form or a framework in the mind for the sound to fill in. Here the sound becomes a phoneme with a purely differentiating significance, for it is a product of mind’s differentiation: form-sound of the mind.

The sign consists of two aspects: the signifier and the signified. The former is a form-sound, while the latter is a form-vision of reality, both created by the mind. Thus the mind as a maker of Vision creates a form for the image and for the word, which thus reflects both the Knowledge and Power aspects of Consciousness.

Meaning is a reality of Idea-Force; where the Idea-Force should be understood as a representative of Knowledge-Power of Consciousness.

So, what we are trying to observe is always one and the same thing: the relation between the mind and the word, where the word is a reflection of the capacity of Shruti, the self-knowing, self-vibrating and self-conscious state of being, and the mind is a reflection of the capacity of Drishti, the self-perceiving, self-seeing, self-imagining, and self-forming state of the same conscious being.

The social aspect of the Word as a creator.

Observing social development of humankind, we can see that from the very beginning the Word has been creating the foundation for existence of a society: a myth, as a system of basic beliefs, or a system of coordinates for the mind and life of each individual in the community to fit in, determining the values of life and thus making communication between individuals possible.

The Solar Myth of Light and Darkness, where the representatives of Light conquer the representatives of Darkness, had become the very foundation of this perception of what is true for man. The great Vedic myths of the Dawn and other solar deities: Agni, Savitar, Surya, Mitra-Varuna etc., and about Indra conquering Vritra and releasing Light, are all created by this vibrant Word, which later in the epic forms of Ramayana and Mahabharata added to that Concept the vibrations of the psychic qualities: the virtues of Love, Truthfulness, Courage, Peace, Gratitude, Humility, etc., creating new standards of man's behavior. Thus these texts became the guiding force for people, the text-powers, text-symbols, text-meanings, the truths of which their inner mind was constantly seeking in the hidden streams of their meaning of life, in every text of their life-events. It became a kind of inherent quality-power, a belief, a basis of meaningful existence, as it were, determining all their actions in society²⁰.

Today it is absolutely obvious that the good is bound to conquer the evil. All world-religions are built on this concept of truth, developing on this basis other text-beliefs, text-foundations, concretizing and converting this vast basic idea into living situations of their specific cultural environments.

Thus the Word by revealing Truth assigns meaning to our existence. The concept of truth became so obviously dominant that even Falsehood has had to adjust itself and hide behind the mask of Truth.

²⁰ The culture itself is a result of its creation.

Furthermore, by interpreting the basic truths and applying them to the everyday life of man in the texts called Shastras, the Word has created a reflective reality, based on the relationships between men themselves: a cult, a culture. And finally, on the basis of this social reality, it has created an “objective reality” (the reality of objects), an art and means of existence for men: science, laws, technologies, machinery, property etc.

The semantic levels of speech are very subtle and in their depths reach the most comprehensive and global meanings of the reality of the world.

The simplest semantic of a word can only be fully perceived, when everything else related or unrelated to it is also perceived. For instance to perceive the semantic of the word “book”, we imply not only the materials (wood, earth, fire, water, metal, their production and existence, etc.), how and by whom they are made, but also what is “to be made”, who is “man” to whom and by whom they are made, what is “to read”, “to see”, “to understand”, and so on, till the whole picture is clear. So when we use the word “book”, we are consciously or unconsciously presupposing the knowledge or understanding of all this. This is a well-known problem in creating an artificial intelligence for a computer. In order to explain the semantic of one word to the computer, which has no comprehensive and apprehensive consciousness, one has to plunge into explanations of the semantic of what is “man”, “nature”, “mind”, “language”, “physical”, “spiritual” etc., and the more one explains the more is left to be explained.

The linguistic aspect of the Word as a creator.

The Word is a basis for the Mind to shape our language, as a system of thought²¹, a grammar, in which the word can be recognised in time and space, being an entity which is beyond time and space.²²

There is a well-known myth presenting Bṛhaspati, the first teacher of the Divine Word, and his student Indra, the King of gods, the Lord of the Divine Mind. Bṛhaspati was uttering the eternal Word, which had no end, since it is eternal. So, Indra could not complete his study of the Word. Therefore Indra broke up the flow of Brihaspati’s unending Speech and invented Grammar to master the Word. This was the beginning of Creation and of Language. Thus language is a product of mind, in which words have become vehicles for the mind and representative of it. The structural semantic, the grammatical meaning, gradually veiled the original eternal sound value, and words became fully dependent on the mind, serving its purpose.

²¹ The language is a product of a sound of the Word and a vision of the Mind .

²² The Word becomes a word, dependent on a language, a particular cultural context, and an environment of meaning.

In this way the mind has given rise to all kinds of different languages, such as for instance the languages of Science, Art, Philosophy, Psychology, etc. As a vehicle for mind words have penetrated and perpetrated all the complexity of human life, at the same time they still correspond to their own reality: the reality of Brihaspati, which is still valid, though less obvious to the mind.²³

The psychological aspects of the Word.

Sri Aurobindo writes in his essay on the Kena Upanishad: "...let us examine the relation of human speech to sound in general. We see at once that speech is only a particular application of the principle of sound, a vibration made by pressure of the breath in its passage through the throat and mouth. At first, beyond doubt, it must have been formed naturally and spontaneously to express the emotions created by an object or occurrence and only afterwards seized upon by the mind to express first the idea of the object and then ideas about the object. The value of speech would therefore seem to be only representative and not creative.

But, in fact, speech is creative. It creates forms of emotion, mental images and impulses of action. ... The theory of the Mantra is that it is a word of power born out of the secret depths of our being where it has been brooded upon by a deeper consciousness than the mental, framed in the heart and not constructed by the intellect, held in the mind, again concentrated on the waking mental consciousness and then thrown out silently or vocally - the silent word is perhaps held to be more potent than the spoken - precisely for the work of creation. The Mantra can not only create new subjective states in ourselves, alter our psychological being, reveal knowledge and faculties we did not before possess, can not only produce similar results in other minds than that of the user, but can produce vibrations in the mental and vital atmosphere which result in effects, in actions and even in the production of material forms on the physical plane.

As a matter of fact, even ordinarily, even daily and hourly we do produce by the word within us thought-vibrations, thought-forms which result in corresponding vital and physical vibrations, act upon ourselves, act upon others and end in the indirect creation of actions and of forms in the physical world. Man is constantly acting upon man both by the silent and the spoken word and he so acts and creates, though less directly and powerfully, even in the rest of Nature."

"Let us suppose a conscious use of the vibrations of sound which will produce corresponding forms or changes of form. ... Let us realise then that a

²³ Creative power of self-awareness and knowledge is still present, beyond the mind's grasp.

vibration of sound on the material plane presupposes a corresponding vibration on the vital without which it could not have come into play; that, again, presupposes a corresponding originative vibration on the mental; the mental presupposes a corresponding originative vibration on the supramental at the very root of things. But a mental vibration implies thought and perception and a supramental vibration implies a supreme vision and discernment. All vibrations of sound on that higher plane is, then, instinct with and expressive of this supreme discernment of a truth in things and is at the same time creative, instinct with a supreme power which casts into forms the truth discerned and eventually, descending from plane to plane, reproduces it in the physical form or object created in Matter by etheric sound. Thus we see that the theory of creation by the Word which is the absolute expression of the Truth, and the theory of the material creation by sound-vibration in the ether correspond and are two logical poles of the same idea. They both belong to the same ancient Vedic system.”

“Human speech is only a secondary expression and at its highest a shadow of the divine Word, of the seed-sounds, the satisfying rhythms, the revealing forms of sound that are the omniscient and omnipotent speech of the eternal Thinker, Harmonist, Creator.”

So the sound is a vibration which represents a particular action of consciousness in the perception and knowledge of its action and power on all levels of our existence. These vibrations create feelings, mental images, and even a will to act, which are the results of these vibrations of self-perceptive conscious power. Therefore we can say that:

any appearance of a word/text in a linguistic context at a particular time represents a sort of penetration of some new meaning into an environmental context, due to the deeper (creative) characteristics of the word. This meaning may be additional or contradictory or specific or even irrelevant according the mind, but its appearance will always have some effect.

It is because of time factor that the word, even a repetition of the same word, would carry a different meaning at a time, being itself unchangeable. Thus whenever a word/text is pronounced, heard within or thought, it immediately forms part of a linguistic environment, outwardly or inwardly, so that the environmental meaning is always changing, becoming the basis for a new word/text to appear.

Sri Aurobindo in his epic on Savitri, who, according to him, is the Divine Word, the Incarnation of the Divine Mother, depicts in “The Book of Birth and Quest”, Canto Three “The Call to the Quest” a wonderful experience of the transcendental Speech. It is the Power of Savitri herself.

*“This word was seed of all the thing to be.
A hand from some Greatness opened her heart’s locked doors
And showed the work for which her strength was born.
As when the mantra sinks in Yoga’s ear,*

*Its message enters stirring the blind brain
 And keeps in the dim ignorant cells its sound;
 The hearer understands a form of words
 And, musing on the index thought it holds,
 He strives to read it with the labouring mind,
 But finds bright hints, not the embodied truth:
 Then, falling silent in himself to know
 He meets the deeper listening of his soul:
 The Word repeats itself in rhythmic strains:
 Thought, vision, feeling, sense, the body's self
 Are seized unalterably and he endures
 An ecstasy and an immortal change;
 He feels the Wideness and becomes a Power,
 All knowledge rushes on him like a sea:
 Transmuted by the white spiritual ray
 He walks in naked heavens of joy and calm,
 Sees the God-face and hears transcendent speech:
 An equal greatness in her life was sown.” (S, 375)*

Sri Aurobindo writes in his notes about Mantra:

“A supreme, an absolute of itself, a reaching to an infinite and utmost, a last point of perfection of its own possibilities is that to which all action of Nature intuitively tends in its unconscious formations and when it has arrived to that point it has justified its existence to the spirit which has created it and fulfilled the secret creative will within it. Speech, the expressive Word, has such a summit or absolute, a perfection which is the touch of the infinite upon its finite possibilities and seal upon it of its Creator. ... the Mantra is the word that carries the godhead in it or the power of the godhead, can bring it into the consciousness and fix there it and its workings, awaken there the thrill of the infinite, the force of something absolute, perpetuate the miracle of the supreme utterance. This highest power of speech and especially of poetic speech is what we have to make here the object of our scrutiny, discover,...”(Sri Aurobindo, Archives and Research, April 1979, v.3, No 1, p.19)