

The Essence of Speech as the Highest Reality in Medieval Kashmir

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The concept of *spho a* undergoes drastic changes in the development of the linguistic philosophy in India. It was defined as the conceptual linguistic form in the discussion of how to pronounce and perceive a word by the ancient Grammarian Patañjali and the fifth-century philosopher Bhartṛhari. In medieval Kashmir, on the other hand, it appeared in the doctrine of Śaivism as the highest reality, being connected with *p a ś y a* the ultimate form of speech. Such combination between *spho a* and the levels of speech was adopted by the pre-modern Grammarians too. In Bhartṛhari's argument, *spho a* in the context of pronunciation is focused on the function of *n ā d* 'vocal sound' or 'bodily resonance.' And once related to *p a ś y a* adopted in Kashmir, *spho a* seems to have lost the aspect of perception. When we focus on the arguments on *n ā d* we find that another concept closely related to that, namely *bindu* 'drop (essence) of speech,' had also brought about complex theory in Kashmir.

In this presentation, focusing myself on the arguments which classify speech into several states including the highest reality, I will examine whether it is a unique aspect of the theories on speech developed in Kashmir.