



इच्छन्ति देवाः सुन्वन्तं  
न स्वप्नाय स्पृहयन्ति।



The *deva*-s love the performer of yajña,  
not the one who slumbers.

-*Rgveda* 8.2.18

*Swadeshi  
Indology*

# **The Science of Meaning**

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# Preliminaries

# Comparative Perspectives



Swadeshi Scholarship



Pollockian Philology

# Summary of (my) Approach

- A survey of **Philology** as it has evolved and practiced in the West is presented.
- The notion of language & meaning - the “**raison d’etre**” of Philology, is then discussed - this is the principal focus of this paper.

**It is proposed that the understanding of the nature of meaning drives its methods and its study.**

# Structure of (my) Paper - 1

1. Explore nature of Western Philology
  - a. Roots
  - b. Evolution
  - c. Goals , Motives
2. Pollockian Philology
  - a. Method
  - b. Goals
  - c. Motives
  - d. Influences

# Structure of (my) Paper - 2

## 1. Discussion of LANGUAGE

- a. Western theories of language
- b. Indian theories of language
- c. Computational notion of language

## 2. Discussion of MEANING

- a. Western notions of meaning
- b. Indian notions of meaning
- c. Computational notion of meaning

## 3. DISCUSSION

## 4. IMPLICATIONS & CONCLUSION

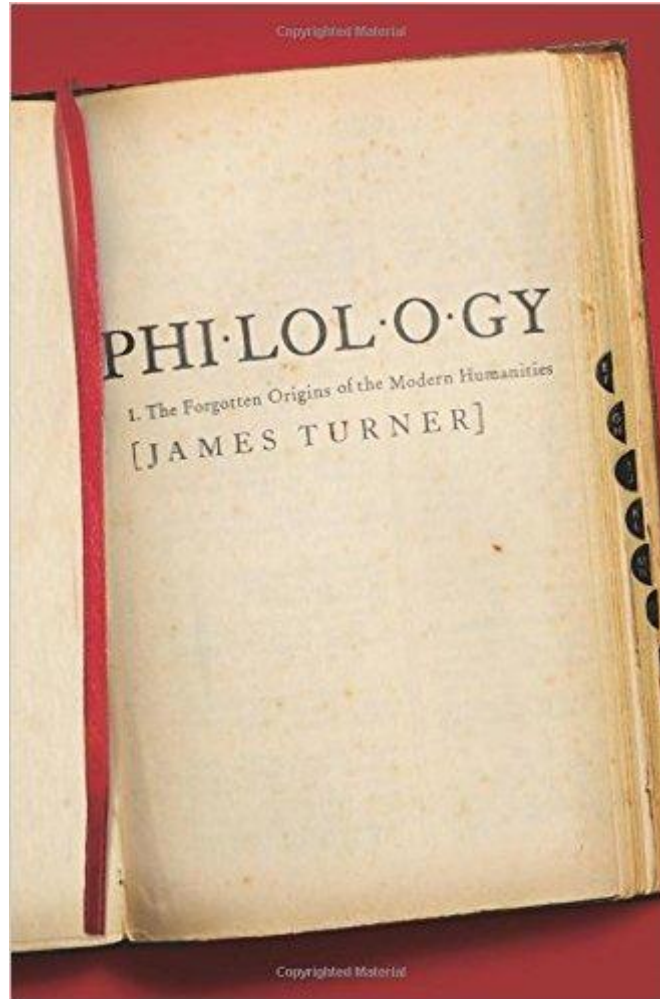
# **WESTERN PHILOLOGY**



# On Philology

1. **Winner of the 2015 Christian Gauss Award,**
2. **Phi Beta Kappa Society Honorable Mention for the 2015 PROSE Award in Language & Linguistics,**
3. **Association of American Publishers**
4. **Shortlisted for the 2015 Christian Gauss Award,**
5. **Phi Beta Kappa Society**
6. **The Times Literary Supplement's Books of the year 2014**

**Princeton University Press (4 May 2014)**



# Roots - 1

The many humanistic disciplines of today date only from the nineteenth century. **Trace their several origins, and the trail usually leads back to one big, old thing: philology**—the multifaceted study of texts, languages, and the phenomenon of language itself. [James Turner, 2013: ix]

The word philology in the nineteenth century covered three distinct modes of research: (1) textual philology (including classical and biblical studies, ‘oriental’ literatures such as those in Sanskrit and Arabic, and medieval and modern European writings); (2) theories of the origin and nature of language; and (3) comparative study of the structures and historical evolution of languages and of language families. [James Turner, 2013: x]

# Roots - 2

All philologists believed history to be the key to unlocking the different mysteries they sought to solve. **Only by understanding the historical origins of texts, of different languages, or of language itself could a scholar adequately explain the object of study.** Moreover, all breeds of philologist understood historical research as comparative in nature. [James Turner, 2013]

**Historicism** - with its insistence on comparison and genealogy, replicated itself in the DNA of the modern humanities.

## Roots - 3

Until the natural sciences usurped its throne in the last third of the nineteenth century, philology supplied probably the most influential model of learning. **The immense resonance of philology as a paradigm of knowledge is much less well known today than the parallel influence of natural science, because science won and philology lost.** [James Turner, 2013]

## **Sheldon Pollock's "role"**

Because philology's legacy survives in ways we build knowledge today, **the excavation of the philological past becomes an effort at once of historical reconstruction and present-day self-understanding.** [James Turner, 2013]

# Evolution - 1 [James Turner, 2013]

1. Greeks did beget the primeval ancestors of today's humanistic scholarship.
2. Greeks began systematic speculation about language;
3. Greeks **invented rhetoric**;
4. Greeks commenced **methodical scrutiny of texts**;
5. and out of all these materials they then **fabricated grammar**.
6. Greeks **gave birth to the European tradition of philology**.
7. And **philology eventually gave us our humanities**.

# Evolution - 2

[James Turner, 2013]

- Where **Plato** accepted as knowledge only a grasp of universal, timeless essences, **Aristotle** believed that awareness of particulars and of rough generalizations also qualified as knowledge. **Where dialectic proceeded from universally accepted opinions, he said, rhetoric started from individual ones.**
- Through the centuries to come, **this dichotomy appears again and again**, in one form or another: **philosophy arrives at universally valid generalizations**, whereas **philology interprets individual cases**. Here lies in **embryo the modern distinction between law-seeking ('nomothetic') natural sciences like physics and chemistry and interpretive ('hermeneutic') disciplines like literature and history**

# **from the Greeks to the 21st century** in 1 slide

1. Hellenistic needs
2. Serves Roman empire
3. Christian textual needs
4. Translating from Arabic and Persian
5. Christian Reformation (Philologists rarely roasted - biblical philology )
6. Begins to Serve Orientalism (Portuguese 1468 ) - study of the heathens
7. German , Spanish (Put to the job of Fulfilling National Identity needs)
8. Justifying modern nation-states in Europe through Philology
9. William Jones - Indology - Comparative linguistics - Europe grows up

**“Indology foreshadowed area-studies programs in post-1945 universities. In a broad, cultural view, Indology immensely expanded European perspectives on the history and civilizations of the world.”** [James Turner, 2013]



# Roots of Indological Scholarship

Out of the marriage of European philology and Indian texts, then, came **two new fields of knowledge: Indology and comparative philology** (or comparative grammar). *The first offered no new methods; earlier scholarship had forged the techniques there applied. Its novelty lay in opening to European eyes a civilization previously obscure.*

**Indology became the first field in which a self-perpetuating cohort of European scholars—not the odd missionary, merchant, or chronologer—worked systematically to uncover the riches of a non-European civilization across a wide front.**

[James Turner, 2013:99]

# Modern Critiques of Philology

*Nietzsche* registered his contempt for most philologists, whose work impressed him as an **absurd combination of inconsequentiality and hubris**. - 1874

both de Man and Said suggested that the origins of their own advanced practices were to be found in this **most traditional, indeed, regressive of all scholarly practices**. (philology) - *Edward Said* , *Paul DeMan*

**Philology became new or modern** when it found a way to conjoin a **limited empiricism to a speculative practice with no limits at all**, when it discovered **the route that led from the close study of the text to the language of the text, and from there to the author, the culture the author inhabited, other cultures, the origins of cultures, and finally to human origins and the mysteries surrounding those origins**. - James Turner

# **Pollockian Philology**

# Pollockian Philology (Motives)

*“Traditional domination as coded in Sanskrit is not "past history" in India, to be sure. Partly by reason of the stored energy of an insufficiently critiqued and thus un-transcended past, it survives in various harsh forms*  
“ [Breckenridge,1993:116]

*A salient point this book offers us is that the Western approach to Sanskrit is often weighed down by “political philology”—cultural biases, hegemonic filters.* [Malhotra,2015 :Review page] - H.H Devamrita Swami

*Sanskrit philology, he explains, was inextricably tied to the practices of power.Overlords were keen to ensure the cultivation of the language through patronage awarded to grammarians, lexicographers, metricians, and other custodians of purity, and through endowments to schools for the purpose of grammatical studies. They were also responsible for commissioning many of the most important grammars. For a polity to possess a grammar of its own was to ensure the proper functioning and even completeness.*  
[Malhotra, 2015: 232]

# Pollockian Philology (Method)

{ absolutely “free-style” intentional nature – many degrees of freedom }

1. *should be, the discipline of making sense of texts*
2. *it must have nothing to do with meaning or truth*
3. *It is not the theory of language—that’s linguistics— or the theory of meaning or truth—that’s philosophy— but the theory of textuality as well as the history of textualized meaning*
4. *three domains of history, or rather of meaning in history, that are pertinent to philology: textual meaning, contextual meaning, and the philologist’s meaning.*
5. *thus, no inherent contradiction between historical truth and application. It’s time we got clear on two things. Historical knowledge does not stand in some sort of fundamental contradiction with truth*

# Pollockian Philology (Influences)

**Giambattista Vico**, writing in 1710, *human truth is actually “like a Painting. “ that “painting . . . can persuade us through the most evident falsehoods that she is pure Truth.”*”

*“Just as divine truth is what God sets in order and creates in the act of knowing it, so human truth is what man puts together and makes in the act of knowing it. **The true is precisely what is made [Verum esse ipsum factum].**”*

**Vico’s** idea of making truth could easily be turned against itself, for how is made truth to be differentiated from invented falsehood? [Bull, 2013: Sec 16.4]

**Nietzsche** - Error is the precondition of thought, for **“we have need of lies . . . in order to live”**

# On Language



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# Western Theories - 1

- Primarily based on “discussions of origin”
- scholars wishing to study the origins of language must draw inferences from other kinds of evidence such as the fossil record, archaeological evidence, contemporary language diversity, studies of language acquisition, and comparisons between human language and systems of communication existing among other animals (particularly other primates).
- COMPARATIVE LINGUISTICS - The concept of language families formed by genealogical descent gave students of language a novel way to classify languages and track their development. This fresh approach retained philology’s central dogma of historical comparison.
- **Loose speculation about Adam’s language became rigorous science.**



# Western Theories - 2

As of 2017 - it is still unclear (according to western ideas) what language is ?

In a recent article [Ibbotson, 2016] in the Scientific American ***Chomsky's modern revolution in linguistics is criticized based on recent evidence.***

Recently, though, cognitive scientists and linguists have abandoned Chomsky's "universal grammar" theory in droves because of new research examining many different languages—and the way young children learn to understand and speak the tongues of their communities.**That work fails to support Chomsky's assertions.**

# Western Theories - 3

As with all linguistic theories, Chomsky's universal grammar tries to perform a balancing act. The theory has to be simple enough to be worth having. That is, it must predict some things that are not in the theory itself (otherwise it is just a list of facts). But neither can the theory be so simple that it cannot explain things it should. [Ibbotson, 2016]

Universal grammar appears to have reached a final impasse. In its place, research on usage-based linguistics can provide a path forward for empirical studies of learning, use and historical development of the world's 6,000 languages.[Ibbotson, 2016]

# Indian Theories

The Indian (theories) notions of language are deeply intertwined to the cosmology and worldview of the Vedas. This approach is fundamentally different from the Western approaches to addressing the phenomenon of language based on external structure. The role of language in establishing and upholding dharma (that which is vedic-cosmologically harmonious) is a principal concern.

*Among various systems of darsana, Vyākaraṇa, Purva-Mīmāṃsā and Nyaya are considered essential for the complete understanding of the concept of śabda and its different forms. They are called **Padaśāstra**, **Vakyaśāstra** and **Pramanaśāstra**. Any **scholar of language** is said to be have imbibed all these three śāstras - **pada-vakya- pramāṇajña** [Subrahmanyam Korada, 2008: vi]*

# Vyākaraṇa (Heliraja's Commentary on Bhartr̥hari's Vakyapadiya )

## 1. Śabdah (word)

- a. Prakṛti and Padhya
- b. Pada and vakya

## 2. Arthah ( meaning)

- a. Prakṛtipratyayārtha ( meaning of root and suffix)
- b. Padavakyaṛtha ( meaning of word and sentence)

## 3. Sambandah ( relation between śabda and arthah)

- a. Karya-karana-bhava ( cause and effect relationship)
- b. Yogyata ( capacity to render meaning)

## 4. Prayojanam (purpose)

- a. Arthajñana ( knowledge of meaning)
- b. Dharma ( leading to mokṣa )

# Comparisons

*Each and every unit in Indian linguistic science is defined clearly and unambiguously. No definition/rule is revised. They are impeccable solutions to all problems at both syntactic and semantic levels. [Subrahmanyam Korada, 2008]*

*On the other hand scholars of modern linguistic science are still searching for a definition of “**word**”. Scholars are divided on the concept of *discourse / text / sentence*. [Subrahmanyam Korada, 2008]*

# On Meaning



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# Western Theories of Meaning - 1

One sort of theory of meaning—a **semantic theory**—is a specification of the meanings of the words and sentences of some symbol system. Semantic theories thus answer the question, ‘What is the meaning of this or that expression?’

A distinct sort of theory—a **foundational theory of meaning**—tries to explain what about some person or group gives the symbols of their language the meanings that they have.

Either propositional (based on frames of reference and the context) or non-propositional (based on logical formulation via truth semantics).

# Western Theories of Meaning - 2

Still (2017) no clarity on as to how “meaning” arises using these semantic models.

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/meaning/>

**In the last fifty years, the dominant view about the foundations of meaning in analytic philosophy has been the mentalist view that the meanings of expressions in public languages are to be explained in terms of the contents of the mental states of users of those languages. [Speaks, 2016]**



# Indian Theories of Meaning - 1

- The notion of meaning is deeply embedded in the tight structure of the śabda and the vakya.
- Very little scope for ambiguity between śabda and its artha
- Vedic notions of sound as basis of meaning have different approaches to meaning that those seen in textual Sanskrit
- *Shiksha* (phonetics), *Chandas* ( prosody, poetic meters) and *Nirukta* (contextual etymology) are unique to Sanskrit and exemplify the influence of interpreting meaning in vedic Sanskrit

# Indian Theories of Meaning - 2

It is known that the tradition of interpretation begins in the RigVeda itself. There are in the Sakala recension of the Samhita , 1240 instances of *nirvacana* - a full exposition of meaning through the analysis of the word. Out of the 1240 *nirvacanas*, 675 help establish the meaning and also suggest derivation from a given exposition of words that are not obscure- the ***pratyaksa vrtti*** words

[Kapoor , 2005: 2]

# Notion of Adhikāra

- This imposes certain conditions on the interpreter. There is in the tradition the concept of **adhikāra** - **the concept of competence to interpret**. **“A process of saturation, must set in before the eyes are ready to see and the mind to grasp”**. This **“process of saturation”** involves mastering all the pertinent knowledge. The boundaries of this knowledge have been described by **Rajasekara. He lists 22.**
- Any learned man who takes upon himself the task of interpreting Śāstra, has to have mastered all this knowledge - twenty two science and the commentary literature - if he is to make an enduring contribution to the Indian tradition.

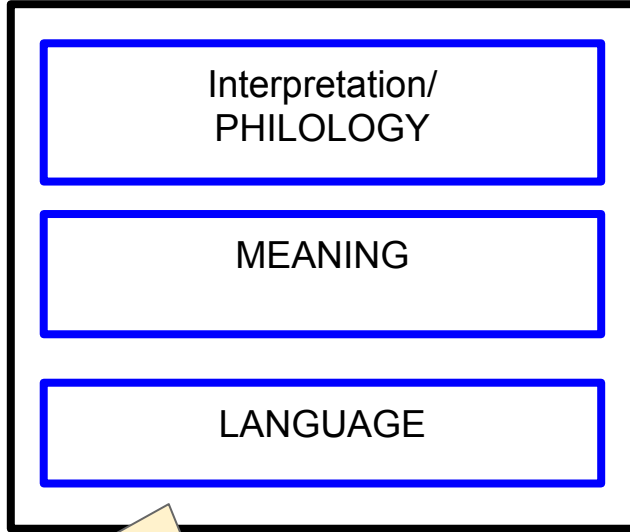
[Kapoor , 2005: 98,99,100]

## **WESTERN SCHOLARSHIP OF SANSKRIT**

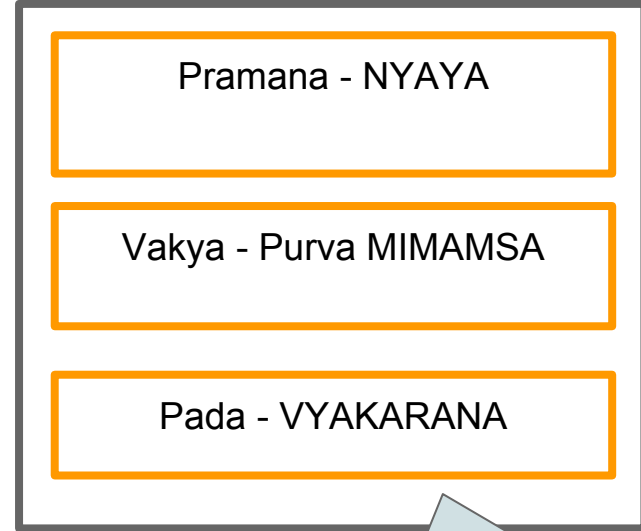
Whatever be the western scholar's saturation - it certainly is not anything close to the expected levels of competence of a traditional **Adhikāri**.

# SUMMARY of the COMPARISONS

Which of the two approaches would a SCHOLAR use, to interpret TEXT - leave alone *Sanskrit* TEXT ?



VERY WEAK BASIS ,  
NO FOUNDATIONS ,  
POORLY DEFINED



RIGOROUS AND  
UNAMBIGUOUS

# Implication of (my) Theses

1. The role of **language** as a (*dharmic*) liberator (*moksha*) has not been understood.
2. The role of (*śabda artha*) **meaning** in the pursuit of dharma has not been understood.
3. The role of *śastra-paddhati* in (Sanskrit) text **interpretation** has not been understood.
4. The empirical nature of ascertaining meaning in the western sense has also not been understood.
5. The principle of truth maximisation as an (western) approach to ascertaining meaning has not been understood.

# The NeScience of Meaning via Philology

1. Inventing falsehoods, aka Making of the truth,
2. Selective interpretation of text,
3. Misuse of quotes, Use of false chronologies,
4. Self-contradicting positions,
5. Stupendous hubris ,monumental disdain of Sanskrit and saṃskṛti - hallmarks of the Neo-orientalists - epitomized by Prof. Sheldon Pollock
6. Notions of Language **NOT** understood
7. Notions of Meaning **NOT** understood

# - PHILOLOGY -

**A very deeply flawed (*western*)  
Method built on yet more deeply  
flawed foundations of (*western*)  
Language and (*western*) Meaning**



**Characteristics of Scholarship  
based on  
Philology  
- SUMMARY -**

Unscientific & Baseless  
Rhetoric

**Call To Action**

# The Possible Future - WARNINGS - 1

- Directly discernible impact of the efforts of the Neo-Orientalists – the methods of Philology might be making a return academically with possible geo-political implications too.
- Recent efforts to analyze Persian works on the Indian traditions would possibly give us interesting “interpretations” of Islamic history of India. The distinct lack of a genre of Indology attributable to the Islamic colonizers of India is well known. From the looks of it - a possible **“Mughal Indology”** seems to be in the works

<http://www.perso-indica.net/about-editors>

# The Possible Future - WARNINGS - 2

- Another interesting dimension that is to be highlighted here – the academic attempts to “deny” and “negate” the “influence” of (hindu) India on European thought.
- The **Indian origins** of so-called European mathematics and science is slowly being revealed and albeit limited– is getting mainstream acknowledgement.
- The “Mughal” period can be used as a “wedge” (in ways similar to which the Neo-orientalists use Buddhism as a wedge against Hinduism) to negate “hindu” influence on Europe. Any such influence could possibly be ascribed to the Mughals (Persians) – who could then be connected to the Greeks

# The Possible Future - WARNINGS - 3

- The influence of Sheldon Pollock and his parampara of students (both western and the customary Indian “sepoy” academics), is non-trivial. It is something that swadeshi scholars need to be aware of.
- The multiple facets of this “**kurukshetra**” are to be studied and responded to appropriately. Philology is an extremely important “**front**” in the larger battles that Swadeshi Indologists have to pursue in the future.



**AfterWord**

**February 2017**

**Consequences of philology:** *arrogant expectations; philistinism; superficiality; overrating of reading and writing; Alienation from the people and the needs of the people. . . .*

**Task of philology:** *to disappear.*

—Friedrich Nietzsche, “We Philologists” - **Autumn 1874**

# TAKEAWAYS

- Is Pollockian Philology a scientific method for 21st century scholarship ?
- Can theses driven by these methods considered Scholarship ?

**A fervent call is made (on the basis of a need to RETAIN SANCTITY and RESTORE SANITY to scholarship) to question the existence of PHILOLOGY as a tool of twenty-first century scholarship.**



**CURIOUS FOR MORE ?**

CHECK OUT THE **MONOGRAPH** on  
**PHILOLOGY** to be released ... during this  
conf ...

.. more like a **SONOGRAPH** of Pollock's work !!

**THANK YOU**

