Testimony as a source of knowledge

Testimony is deemed valid source of knowledge. Verbal statement, verbal testimony or the knowledge of objects derived through words is also known as sabda. It is also defined as valid testimony, i.e., the testimony of a trustworthy person (apta) who knows the truth and conveys it correctly. Sabda literally signifies sound (dhvani) but epistemologically it means a meaningful sound or a word (pada). It is an important source of knowledge because a major portion of our knowledge of the objects of this world is derived from words. Knowledge comes through words when these are communicated by one person to others. Words or sentences constitute verbal statements but; all verbal statements are not valid. Sabdabodha originates from sabda or pada. In other words sabda is the karana or cause for sabdabodha. Testimony is verbal cognition and is derived from the meaning of words which compose sentences. Sabda is to be deemed valid when its meaning has been properly and carefully understands.

Epistemologically Sabda refers to a source of knowledge namely verbal testimony (sabda pramana). A verbal statement is valid when it comes from a person who knows the truth and speaks the truth about anything for the guidance of other persons. Sabda signifies sound (dhavni) and stands for word (pada). There are many sentences of letters in pada. Words are vehicles of thought. Sabda-Prama is knowledge derived from the authority of words. Verbal testimony is a valid means of knowledge. Sabda or word is called to be an instruction given by one that can be trusted (aptopodesa). This one that can be trusted being for the Vedantists the Veda, but for Samkhya and other systems, any other person also endowed with authority and therefore considered as trustworthy.

Verbal testimony is the assertion of a person, who is trustworthy noble, wise and free from evil habits, whose perception runs unimpeded, and the truth of whose words is never called in question. Sabda when used as a source of knowledge means aptopadesa or the assertion of a
reliable person. The person communicating the words has the direct knowledge of an object and is motivated by the desire of communicating the words to another one who employs it.

**Upadesa anusasanam - Manu**

Manu understands *upadesa* only in the sense of an instructive statement of assertion. The authority of verbal testimony depends on the veracity and infallibility of the speaker. An infallible person (*apta*) is one who has direct intuition of all objects, comparisons and desires to speak with authority. Verbal testimony consists of verbal statements of people intending to express certain facts. The Sanskrit term ‘*Sabda*’ in its widest sense, denotes sound, articulate, and inarticulate, called *varna* and *avhāni*, respectively. Some Navya-Naiyayikas used the word *Vakya* in place of the word *upadesa* in the context of defining *sabda*, *aptavākyam* *Sabdah*. Vācaspati regards *sabda* or Verbal testimony as capable of generating only mediate knowledge. According to the *vivarana* view, verbal testimony is capable of generating immediate as well as mediate knowledge. In Mimamsa, there is much importance of *sabda pramana*. It is the knowledge of supra-sensible defects which is produced by the comprehension of the meanings of words. The Purva-Mimamsa school lays great emphasis on *sabdapramana*, because in their opinion, dharma, which is their principal object of enquiry, can be known from scriptures alone.

Knowledge is born out of sentences spoken by reliable individuals and reliability is attributed to those who see the object in its real form. According to Vedanta *sabda pramana* is verbal testimony. It is also called ‘*aptavākyas*’ (statement of a trustworthy person) and agama (authentic word). A verbal statement uttered or written is man’s most potent instrument for transmitting knowledge. According to Advaita, the verbal knowledge or the knowledge obtained through a sentence (*sabda prama*) is defined as the knowledge of the relation between the meanings of the different words together with the knowledge of the relation between them. Orthodox schools of Indian Philosophy accepted *sabda* as a source of knowledge.

*Sabda* or verbal testimony is the fourth means of acquiring knowledge (*pramana*) employed by Nyaya. Sabda is accepted as a measure of valid knowledge only under certain conditions as a
Pramana. It is the knowledge of objects derived from words or sentences. According to Nyaya philosophy, testimony is a reliable statement. A sentence is a group of words and word is a distinct entity which has the power to express some meaning. According to the ancient Nyaya system, this power of being is due to God, while according to the Nyaya philosophers it is endowed by tradition. Sabda is also defined as the statement of an apta or a person who speaks and acts the way he thinks, a person whose mind, action and speech are in perfect harmony and is therefore accepted as an authority. It underlies the importance of Verbal testimony, providing authentic and authority of the relevant knowledge as the meaning of words and sentences (pada and vakya) which constitute verbal testimony. Vedanta Paribhasa states that a sentence is the unit of Sabda pramana which has been defined as a means of valid knowledge in which the relation among the meanings of its constituent word (which is the object of its intention) is not contradicted by any other means of knowledge. According to the Mimamsakas ‘Sabda as pramana consists in the true knowledge of objects, derived from the understanding of the meaning of a sentence. According to Prabhakara non-Vedic Verbal cognition is of the nature of inference. Only the verbal cognition produced by the Vedas stands for Valid Verbal testimony but it is not in consistency with the theory of self validity of all cognitions.

The Samkhya Karika defines verbal testimony as the statement (sruti) of the reliable (apta).

Aptasritiraptavacanantu. Gaundapada, divides the compound word ‘Apta Srutih into two sects; the reliable form and the scripture. But Vacaspati Misra takes it as a single group the scripture of reliable person. Sabda consists in providing knowledge of certain events or things through the utterance of a trustworthy person. The sutra which deals with the classification of proof mentions, verbal authority next to comparison. Hence, the author of the Nyaya-Sutra proposes to define verbal authority just after the definition of comparison. Sabda as a pramana is defined in the Nyaya as “the assertion of a trustworthy person.” It consists in understanding its meaning. Gautama defines testimony in Nyaya Sutra (I.I.7) as the instruction assertion of a reliable person “Aptopadesah Sabdah” (N.S.1.1.7). It may be interoperated in two ways depending on whether
one takes the compound as relational (*aptohtsyaupadesha*), meaning thereby the words of a ‘Reliable person’ and ‘reliable works’ respectively. The latter interpretation has been accepted by the Samkhya and is favored by the Mimamsa and Vedanta schools because it is a simpler supposition of the two of course. The atheistic learning of the Samkhya and Mimamsa systems also might have contributed to their understanding of ‘Sabda’ as a ‘reliable statement’ rather than a statement of a reliable person.

According to Vacaspati Misra the word ‘Upadesa’ stands for the advice for the benefits of others. So the advice of the apta is regarded as *Sabda paramana*. Annambhatta has rightly said that *sabda* is a source of valid knowledge consists in understanding the meaning of the statement of a trustworthy person. Hence the special cause of *sabda* is the knowledge of words which lead to the knowledge of objects through its function of recalling the meaning connected with words or sentences. In *Nyaya Darsana* testimony is the direction of an apta, i.e. of the one be he a seer or a man of culture or a savage, who possesses true knowledge and is truthful. An apta is one who has in the habit of speaking the truth (*YatharathaVakta*). Vatsayayana says that an authority is one who as direct knowledge of something and is both desirous and capable of speaking about it; he adds that authorities need not be sages, and may even be foreigners. Vacaspati goes even further saying that an authority need not even be morally sound; e.g. a robber after he has taken everything, may provide accurate information about the way to the next town. Mimamsa states ‘*Sabda* (word) as *Pramana* means the knowledge that we get about things (not within the purview of our perception) from relevant sentences by understanding the measuring of words of which they are made up.

The Bhatta Mimamsa theory holds that word independently signifies their own separate meanings and subsequently their isolated meanings combine again to produce the single meaning of a sentence. Thus a sentence sense is a latter cognition coming from the construction of the meanings of the words (which express one connected idea). One first remembers the isolated meanings of the words and then a simultaneous collective memory gives the same a collective meaning. Kumarila defines verbal testimony as a statement which produces in the mind of the hearer, who knows the meaning of words, knowledge of facts that lie beyond the range of his
perception. Explaining his definition, Parthasarathi says that a verbal statement gives the knowledge of fact through an understanding of the statement depending on the meaning of words which the statement is composed of and that it is an independent means of valid knowledge in so far as the assertion contained therein is already known by other means to be true or false. This latter qualification is added because whatever is a pramana must give a new knowledge. A sentence is composed of words.

Apta Vacana or “Valid Assertion” is the third valid knowledge accepted by Samkhya. The Samkhya holds that a word primarily refers to a particular (kevalavyaktau saktih) when we utter a sentence like ‘ Gama Naya’ or being a cow, the intention is that a particular animal is to be brought on observing this. This assumption is confirmed when next the observer sees the cow being taken away. From this it is admitted that the denotation of the word ‘go’ is a particular (go-vyakti) cow as otherwise the hearer would not bring or remove the particular cow. Isvarakrsna does not explain the word aptasruti himself, but later on it was interpreted by his successor. Sabda is described as it constituted by authoritative statement (aptavacana) and gives the knowledge of object which cannot know by perception and inference.

Words have been divided into classes according to the meaning to the object. Division of Testimony (sabda) according to Gautama it is of two kinds namely Drstartha or that relating to perceptible objects and Adrstartha or that relating to imperceptible objects. The former objects are found in this world. The latter are found in next world, such as heaven, hell, transmigration, etc. According to Vatsayayana, Valid Knowledge is of this kind namely, the word as an instrument of valid knowledge is of two kinds, having perception or drstartha and imperceptions or adrstartha of objects.

Drstartha refers to the objects which can be seen or verified, e.g., the words Tajmahal, London, pot etc., which can be seen or verified from similar others, who have seen them. So in drstartha, we are to include the trustworthy assertions of ordinary persons, the saints and the scriptures in so far as they bear on the perceptible objects of the work, e.g., the evidence given by
witnesses in the law courts, the statements of a reliable farmer about plants, the scriptural injunctions to perform certain rights to bring about rainfall etc.

Adrstartha relates to imperceptible objects such as acceptable statements of common men, saints, religious texts, statements of scientists concerning atoms, beliefs of religious texts. It relates to supersensible object which is attainable in the other world (amutra). It refers to the object which cannot be seen or verified. It includes all the trustworthy assertions of ordinary persons related to supersensible objects which cannot be known by means of perception. The difference between the first and the second kind is testimony does not lie in the nature of the source of testimony but in the kind of objects the testimony is about: if the objects are perceivable it is of course necessary that the source of both kinds of testimony be intelligible and trustworthy. Drstartha is limited to the ordinary sensible objects of the world. On the other side adrstartha relates to supersensible objects which cannot be known by means of perception. Under the second kind of verbal knowledge will include all the trustworthy assertions of ordinary persons, saints’ prophets and the scriptures. Thus, the scientists assertion about atoms, either electrons, vitamins, etc, the prophet instruction about virtue and vice and the scriptural texts on God, heaven, future life and the like are all illustrative of adrstartha sabda.

A sentence (vakya) is a collection of significant sounds or words. We cognize the constituent of words and then their meanings. The cognition of the words leave behind traces (Samskaras) which are remembered at the end of sentence and then the different meanings are related together in one context. While the ancient Naiyayikas contest that the chief means (Mukhyakaranam) of verbal cognition is the recollection of objects due to verbal memory, the modern Naiyayikas argues that the verbal memory is the chief means. A sentence is undoubtedly a specific collection of words. So a sentence is inevitably a specific collection of sounds i.e. mutually related articulate sounds. A trustworthy person is one who speaks of things as they really exist and ‘assertion’ or ‘sentence’ is the collection of such words as are dependent upon (or in need of ) one another are endowed with the capability of being construed together and are in also juxta close position to one another. Word again is a collection or group of letters and the ‘collection’ or ‘group’ is not real, but ideal, i.e. the letters are regarded as forming a ‘group’ only
because they are conceived of such numbers of letters falling under one conception being regarded as one ‘group’. When a word is pronounced, the letters appear one after the other, and as such are quickly destroyed, there is no possibility of the hearer perceiving, at any one moment more the one letter.

Vatsyayana comprehensively explains the term ‘apta’ as signifying a person who has immediate knowledge of dharma (the moral law) who is capable of perceiving objects in their real form and who communicates real knowledge to the other out of comparison while the validity of verbal knowledge depends on its being based on the statement of the understanding of meaning of the statements. According to Vacaspati Misra, the statements of the Vedas are valid because these are not composed by any worldly authority and are therefore faultless.

Gangesa states that any word or sentence the utterance of which is preceded by the right knowledge of its meaning is called verbal testimony. In Tarka sangrah Annambhatta explains the term apta as a truthful speaker, i.e. who speaks about the things as they in reality are aptastu yatharthavakta. When a young man is in doubt whether a particular river is fordable or not, the information of an old experienced man of the locality, that it is fordable is to be trusted. According to Visvanatha, apta is one who possesses a perfect knowledge in respect of the meaning of the sentence of the context. According to Jayanta Bhatta, an apta should be able to communicate adequately. He explains the points of this criterion by saying that a dumb person cannot be an apta even though he possesses the relevant knowledge, for he lacks in the ability of adequate communication. According to Vacaspati Misra, the term apta is used as the definition to exclude the source books of the Buddhas and the Jains and the Carvakas which are not actually sacred literatures from the domain of literature. Vacaspati Misra further states that apta sruti is a pramana, does not refer to the wording but to the knowledge arising out of it.

The words of the risis deal with the invisible world. The rsis were aptas, or reliable persons they had reliable words, since they had an initiative perception of the truth, love for
humanity and the desire to communicate their knowledge.\textsuperscript{18} The \textit{Apta} or the reliable person is the specialist in a certain field, "one who, having had direct proof of a certain matter, desires to communicate it to others who thereby understand it." \textit{Apta} may be a case or race "\textit{rsis}, \textit{arya} or \textit{Mleccha}".\textsuperscript{19} Moreover a reliable person should not have imperfect knowledge of the subject matter, which he undertakes to impact. We can understand his statement if we understand the meaning of the words or the statements uttered by the reliable person. A reliable person is one who has got intimate knowledge of the subject on which the testimony is to be given.\textsuperscript{20}

It is evidently a very comprehensive definition of \textit{Sabda} and includes not only the scripture which is regarded as the word of God, but also the statements made by worldly persons who know the truth and communicate it correctly. The concept of an \textit{apta} is very essential to the concept of \textit{sabda pramana} or verbal testimony. Gautama in his Nyaya Philosophy does not explain the term, he just defines that an \textit{apta} is one who has directly perceived the true nature of things and who is prompted to communicate the properly experienced idea. The authors of the Vedas are \textit{aptas}, or reliable persons, since they had an intuitive perception of the truths, love for humanity and the desire to communicate their knowledge. Later Naiyayikas, like Udayana and Annam Bhatta and the Vaisesika thinkers, regard the supreme \textit{Isvara} as the eternal author of the Vedas. Vatsyayana accepts that a reliable person (\textit{apta}) is one who knows the truth and is interested in communicating the truth to others. He has the direct knowledge of an object and is motivated by the desire of communicating objects as directly known by him. The validity of verbal knowledge depends on the utterance of a reliable person,

The complete definition of \textit{Sabda} signifies that an assertion which is productive of such knowledge as it is neither memory no doubt nor an error which is a means of verbal knowledge. The \textit{Sabda} is distinguished, from other \textit{pramanas} by the fact that it is due to the knowledge of words or sentences, while perception is due to sense object contact, Inference is due to the knowledge of \textit{Vyapti} and comparison is due to the perception of similarity or dissimilarity. \textit{Sabda} or testimony is the perception of the words of sentence or proposition set forth by some trustworthy person. In the case of a spoken sentence, we have an auditory perception, and in that written sentence, we have a visual perception of the constituent words. We can neither perceive
nor infer the existence of all objects of this world. We can know about ‘Suvarga’ (Heaven) only through testimony. We believe in the infallibility of the Vedas and so we also rely on the Vedic assertion that the performance of *Agnihotra* sacrifices will lead a person to heaven and heavenly bliss.

These words may be uttered by men or may belong to the Vedas. Words, constituted of various sounds (*varnas*) are like blocks of a sentence (meaningful statement). It is therefore obligatory to understand the meaning and the functional values of words (*pada*) and sentences (*vakya*) leading to formulate a verbal testimony A word has a permanent relation to an object (*artha*) which is impersonal. It is neither created by God nor by person. It is only learnt from the speech and actions of the elderly acquainted with the meanings of a words. Word covers the aspects: sound, letters and the meaning conveyed. In the first aspect, letter and meaning are not involved, sound is a physical phenomenon. A word is a combination of letters signifying an object, by way of denotation (*abhida*) or implication (*laksana*). Each and every word has a meaning, which is generally regarded as a relation between the word or the sign and the object which is signifies. A statement is a cluster of words or *Padas* arranged in a certain way. A word is a group of letters arranged in a settled order to express meaning. Sometimes a mere word is loosely regarded as *pada*. The word ‘cat’ is used in such contexts as ‘Bring the cat’, ‘Bind the cat’, etc. While the word cat is present in both these sentences, the words ‘bind’ and ‘bring’ are inconstant. Hence, the word ‘cat’ is not invariably related to any other sense than its own meaning. Then, the meaning of all the words in a sentence is put together and the sense of the sentence is construed. First, the sense of words arises from words; and then from the sense of words the sentence is construed. The words must be such that the expectancy set up by each is satisfied by which they expect or imply one another. The second condition of the combination of a word in a statement is their mutual fitness contiguity is the third condition of verbal knowledge. It requires that there is no long gap between the uttering or written together of the words making up the statement. According to The Prabhakaras following Sabara call ‘*Sabda*”
Pramana’ as Sastrapramana (Scriptural Word). Prabhakara while commenting on the ‘Sabara Bhasya’ holds that the term Sastra applies to the Vedic injunctive sentences (vidhi) only which alone bear upon verbal testimony. According to the Prabhakaras, it is only the Vedic sentence that can be called ‘Sabda pramana’. According to Vedanta, words possess two fold potentialities, first the capacity of the manifestation of their meanings and second the capacity of their manifestation of the forms. The ‘Vacya - vacaka - sambandha’ or the relationship between the word and its meaning is eternal, as the Vedic and non-Vedic Sanskrit words are concerned. The verbal knowledge is distinct and has self valid consciousness. No invalidity can cling to verbal knowledge either in the stage of its origination or in the stage of its manifestation. The verbal testimony of Veda passages is valid because it produces an experience, which cannot be gained through any of the sensory organs. In Jaimini Sutra, there is eternal connection between the word and its meaning; knowledge is precept (Updesa). It is never erroneous in matter invisible; it is authoritative in the option of Badarayana by reason of its not depending on others.

A word has a fixed relation to some object, so whenever it is heard or read, it refers to an object. So we can say that words are significant symbols. This capacity of words to mean their respective objects is called their sakti or potency, and it is said to be due to the will of God, that a word has a fixed unalterable relation to certain things only or that this word always means this object and not others is ultimately due to the Supreme Being who is the ground and reason of all the older and uniformity that we find in the world. Word (sabda) has been recognized to be the means of verbal cognition (Sabdabodha). Vatsayayana defines word in Nyaya Bhasya word as an instruction of a trustworthy person (apta aptopadesa) intending to convey the sense understood from elders nevertheless. Etymologically speaking, word can be analyzed as that from whose meaning is sounded (Sabdyate anena arthyh). When a word is pronounced the letter appears one after the other; and each is quickly destroyed, there is no possibility of the hearer’s perceiving, at any moment; more than one letter. Hence what happens is that having, in due succession, heard each of the preceding letters, when a person hears the last letter of the word, there is produced in his mind by the auditory organ, the idea of the whole word, containing the impression of the preceding letters which are no longer in existence. So above this view there is no controversy
between Naiyayikas and Mimamsakas. In his *Samkhya Sutra vrtti*, Apirudha Bhatta states that words are able to communicate their meaning. *Samkhya Sutra* states that relation between a word and its meaning is determined by three means, First the direct instruction of the competent teacher example, the reliable person (*Aptopodesa*) Second, the practice of the experienced person for example, the old men, Third, association of the word with another well known word or association with the word already known.

As regards the eternality of the word, the Mimamsakas and the Naiyayikas differ from one another. Mimamsakas upholds the theory of the eternality of the word and the Naiyayikas regard the word as non-eternal. The Mimamsakas maintain that words are manifested in the form of sound by human effort; they are not created by any one. The Naiyayikas on the other hand are of the view that words do not exist before their production by human effort, nor there exists any veil which covers them. The relation between word and its meaning is a class in itself, it cannot therefore, be, subsumed under inference. The Samkhya, like Mimamsakas hold that the relation between the word and the object stated is learnt from elders and is natural. For example, the child knows the denotative relation with reference to the object which is in operation and the activity and the desisting from activity is possible in case of an individual object only so, according to Samkhya, word denotes a *Vyakti*.

Nyaya states that the relation between the word and its meaning is not due to nature, but due to convention. This view is confirmed by our experience of the way we acquired the knowledge of the meaning, of words. We get to know the meaning of words through popular usage, grammar, dictionaries and in the view of Vedanta by gesture as well. Nyaya gives example of a cow which is an animal with two horns, four feet and one tail is called by everyone by the name of ‘cow’. But if by common consent one were to start calling it a ‘bova’, the name would do equally well. Therefore the relation between the word and meaning is only conventional and not natural.

On the other hand Mimamsakas states that the relation between word and its meaning is *anadi* or eternal. The signifying power is contained in the words themselves. The Mimamsakas call this power *sakti* and consider it is an independent entity. We learn language from elders and
so on. The Naiyayikas accept the role of the elder in language like the Mimamsakas but reject the theory of natural relationship and advocate that the relation has a conventional origin. They maintain that the relation between word and its meaning is created by God and thus it is contrary to Mimamsakas standpoint, who locates the original source of language behavior in God. According to the latter Nyaya logicians, this relationship can also be well established by man. Mimamsakas states that word have an infinite power of expressing its meaning in the same way as fire has the inherent power of burning. The relation of words to objects is not created by anyone. According to Nyaya, the convention that such and such word should mean such and such an object is established by God (*Isvara samketha*). Later Nyaya admits that the men also established conventions (*icchamtram saktih*), though the latter are styled 'Paribhasika', since they vary with different people. It seems Mimamsakas believe that the relation between words and their meaning is natural; that the letters constitute a word, and that words are eternal, omnipresent and part less. Although the hearer might fail to understand this relationship and therefore his ignorance about the expressive power of the word itself is competent to denote that meaning is that of expressive and expressed. Their relation is known, states Vacaspati Misra, by perceiving an experienced person directing the other to perform certain action and seeing the latter acting according to the direction of former. Anirudha and Vijnanabhiksu mention two additional means, viz; instructions by competent person (*aptopadesa*) and occurrence of the word in co ordination of another familiar word. Ramanuja accepts the authority of scripture. The highest reality, which is the sole cause of the world, is not the objects of the other means of knowledge, but is known only through the *Sastras*.

According Nyaya, there are different ways in which we learn the meaning of words. First, we learn the meaning of radical’s verbal roots, suffixes, etc; from grammar. Secondly we know the meaning of certain general names by means of comparison. Thirdly, we hear the meaning of certain words from authority. A word is collection or group of letters, and the ‘collection’ or ‘group’ only because they conceived of as such; the numbers of letters falling under one conception being regarded as one ‘group’ is inborn or infallible regarding all that is imperceptible, according to Badarayana (the author of basic Vedantic text, *Braham Sutra*).
Braham Sutra is an important philosophical treatise setting forth the system but nevertheless; it is an authoritative inter perception of doubtful points in Upanishads. This explains why *sabda* is considered to be a very important *pramana* in the study of *Brahma-Sutra Bhasya*. According to Vedanta, the relation between a word and its meaning is natural, and not conventional, it is eternal. There is no object of our experience that is not expressible through words.

Every word has a meaning that is; it has an inherent power to convey a meaning. It is called *Sphota* in the Panini’s system of grammar. Knowledge derived from the word is called *Upedesa* (percept) by the Mimamsakas. In matters of religion, it is the infallible guide. In the opinion of Jamini’s preceptor, the word is authorities and has a binding force. It is self-sufficient and does not derive its authority from any other source.

Words have natural denotative powers by which they refer to objects irrespective of our understanding of their meanings. Jayanata naturally upholds the Nyaya view against the contention of the Mimamsakas. He refutes the grammarian’s theory ‘*Sphota*’ in a passing manner. The theory has eternity of words by the convention that *Vedas* are not produced by any human agency (*apauruseya*) and therefore words cannot be held to be anything but eternal.

Samkhya states that a word is related to its object as a sign to the thing signified. This is evident from the instructions of the trustworthy, the law of use and conventions and also from the fact of words possessing the same denotation. According to Mimamsakas, no place or time can be found wherein the words are totally absent. Speech is established as eternal by interface as well as *Pratyabhijaa* (recognition).

In *Jaimin Sutra* the author states the five propositions:-

First proposition -The word and its meaning are eternally connected.

Second proposition- The knowledge there of is called *updesa* (precept) in the language of Mimamsa.
Third proposition - In matter connected with invisible things it is never erroneous.

Fourth proposition - In the opinion of Badarayana, the word is authoritative and lastly.

Fifth proposition - It doesn’t depend upon any other proof and is sufficient in itself.

According the Mimamsakas, the usage such as the sound ‘ga’ is produced, the sound ‘ga’ is destroyed etc are to be explained as referring to the air (wind) which manifests air is produced or destroyed while the actual sound is always existent in its subtle form.

Nyaya defines that words are not eternal and language is due to the divine will or the convention. The Mimamsakas refutes this view and points out that only the sounds and the symbols are created and destroyed, while the real words are eternal. Nyaya totally opposes that speech or word is eternal. According to them, the inference such as “Sabda is non-eternal since it is the object of the sense organ of external like pot” proves non eternity of speech. Also, the pratyabhijnä such as “this ‘ga’ sound is same as the previous ‘ga’ sound with this ‘ga’ sound and hence speech cannot be eternal. The Prabhakaras believe that alphabets and all words are eternal as stated by Jamini in one of his Sutra. According to Prabhakaras, the process of learning, the relation between words and their significance is also eternal. According to Kumarila also all words, weather found in the Vedic texts or in popular language, are the same and they reveal the same sense and also by their significative power. To uphold the authority and the authorless of the Veda, the Mimamsakas puts forward the theory that words and meanings as well as their relations are all natural and external. Words are self-denotative; by implication therefore, both words and the meanings denoted by them are eternal. The words, however, require some manifesto agency by which they are made known to us. The main festive agency is the effort exerted by the person pronouncing the word. While Nyaya holds that this effort of pronouncing the word is the cause that is only manifested to us of the ever-existing word. Prabhakara also states that the meanings of words can be known only when they occur in a sentence enjoying some duty. If they are not related to an injunction, but simply remind us of discrete meanings, it is merely a case of remembrance which, according to Mimamsa, is not valid cognition.
Mimamsakas consider the Veda as eternal, since the words of which they are composed are eternal.

Indian philosophy contains several theories which relate to the meaning of word or \textit{Sabda}. We can take the case of Samkhya and some of modern Naiyayikas who favors the theory of individuals called \textit{vyaktivada}. But Mimamasakas and Vedantins have different opinion and they support the theory of universal or \textit{sativada}. Old Naiyayikas are in agreement with Gautama in accepting the composite denotation. But some Naiyayikas of them accept the theory of individuals qualified by universals. Modern Naiyayikas however support theory of individuals (\textit{vyaktivasa}) for meaning of words. The basic meaning of a word is individual (\textit{vyakti}). The main logic given by them is that in our practical purposes, we have to tackle the case of individuals alone. For example, if a cow is required by someone, obviously, he will try to find an individual’s cow and not the universal, existing in the entire class of cows, past, present and future. Prabhakara accepts the theory of \textit{anvitabhidhana} and Kumarila accepts the theory of \textit{anvitabhana}. According to the \textit{anvitabhidhanavada} of Prabhakara, a word always express its meaning as connected with and act which is imposed upon a person by an injunction. Prabhakara states that the meanings of words can only be know from words occurring in injective sentence. From this he deduces the conclusion that words must denote things only as related to the other factors of the injunction (\textit{anvitabhidhanavada}), and no words can be comprehended as having any denotation when taken apart from such a sentence. (ex:- the process by which according to Prabhakara) the meanings of words are acquired may be exemplified thus : a senior commands a junior to bring a cow and bind a horse, and the child on noticing the action of junior in obedience to the senior’s commands comes to understand the meanings of “cow” and “horse’. Bhatta’s \textit{abhitanvayavada} is correct in maintaining that each word has its individual meaning which is different from the cumulative meaning of a sentence. There is a difference between the Bhattas and the Prabhakaras regarding the way in which the validity of words is made out because the Prabhakaras advocate the theory of a \textit{vitabhidhanvada} and the Bhattas, \textit{abhiphanvayavada}.

Prabhakara doctrine holds that each renders its meaning only as being generally related to other factor or only as a part of an injunctive sentence, thus the word game accusative case of go
(coco) means that it is intended that something is to be done with the cow. Prabhakara theory admits that two powers of words are recognized. One enables us to remember the meaning and the other establishes the connection between the meanings remembered. The Prabhakara theory causes the recollection of meanings, whereas the latter gives rise to knowledge of the connection without itself being known. Kumarila however thinks that words independently express separate meanings which are subsequently combined into a sentence expressing one connected idea, (abhihitavayavada). Thus in Gamanaya, according to Kumarila, means the bovine class in the accusative character and Anaya independently means, bring these two of them combined into the meaning ‘bring the cow’. But on the former theory the word game in particular sentence only shows what the special kind of action is, as in the above sentence it appears as associated with bringing, but it cannot have any meaning separately by itself. This theory of Kumarila which is also the Nyaya theory is called abhihitavayada.

According to abhihitavayada (Bhatta theory) the knowledge arises neither through recollection nor through apprehension, but through what (that) is technically called abhidhana (denotation), and the meaning is known. According to Philosophers of the Sāṃkhya School, a word means the individuals (vyakti) or the primary meaning of a word is the precept of the particular (Vakyas eva Saktih.25 It is only the particular that is capable of being qualified by gender and number. Hence in the expressions like ‘the word horse that stands or ‘the horse that is sitting,’ the word Horse signifies only individual. Moreover the process of transference of meaning cannot be explained without its reference to individual’s objects. Also there are unique things like the sun and the moon and proper names which cannot have a class-essence or genus.

Advaita Vedanta maintains that a word denotes a genus (jāti) and not individuals, since individuals are infinite in number. The universals are neither born nor die; while individuals are born and die. Since words refers only to universals, it is possible to regard their signification as eternal and natural and it is also possible to conceive that words are prior to all individuals. Any cluster of words will not make a sentence. For example, if I utter words, food, bag, cat, house, it will not make any sense. There is no syntactical relation between them. Nor does it make a
sentence if I say “Rama sprinkles fire for this is not possible. The words in the sentence must be uttered in small succession and not at long intervals.”

Mimamsakas says that sentence may be of two types; first those uttered by men and second those which belong to the Vedas and which become a valid means of knowledge. The meaning of the words is known to us before; and therefore can't be counted as a means of proof. But the meanings of sentences involving knowledge of relation of words cannot be known by any other acknowledged means of proof, and it is for this reason we have to accept something else as a separate means of proof.

Sentence can also be of two kinds: personal and impersonal. A personal sentence is the creation of a particular person who has liberty to construct them in a particular manner. Personal sentences are injected with doubt and as such these do not immediately produce valid knowledge. Yamuna and Varadavis Numisha regard personal sentences as full of doubt, since the speakers of those sentences, may not have valid knowledge of objects conveyed by their words. But the above thinkers consider regard the impersonal sentence as conveying true (connected) meanings or true relations of objects contained in the words. A sentence is a group of words and word is an entity and has the power to express some meaning. A sentence is a combination of word having a particular meaning. It conveys a meaning through the meanings of the constituent words indirectly. Neither a sentence nor its component words directly convey a meaning.

The combination of words in particularly satisfying the rules of syntax, compatibility and togetherness makes a sentence. Nyaya points out that Sabda gives us the knowledge about the objects through the understanding of the meaning of the sentence. A statement or a sentence involving an assertion is a collection of words; and since a word is a conventional symbol and is used to stand for a definite object or action, a sentence, in order to be meaningful, must be sufficiently qualified so as to be intelligent.
According to Mimamsaka a sentence is a combined utterance i.e; an utterance of a word conjointly with another. This definition is rather vague and needs further clarification. By this sentence is meant a conjoint expression of words denoted by the respective substances which are related to each other as the main and the subsidiary. Annambhatta, in his Tarkasamgraha, describes verbal cognition as the comprehension of sentence meaning (Vakya artha jnanam)\(^{26}\).

A sentence is, in such a case, Sabda pramana, the verbal instrument of valid knowledge called ‘Sabda pramana’; it is a group of words arranged in a fixed order. The essential nature of a word lies in its meaning.

Venkatanath defines verbal knowledge of an object produced by a sentence, which is not uttered by an unreliable person. It is a means of valid knowledge, because the defects of its cause are not perceived and because it is contradicted by a subletting knowledge. A sentence is a collection of significant words which are uttered by a trustworthy person is an instrument of right cognition, i.e., pramana and this instrument of right cognition is available in ordinary parlance, as well as in the Vedas. In ordinary Parlance, all speakers are not trustworthy and hence it is not all but only a few sentences uttered by trustworthy persons are instruments of right cognition. In the Veda, on the other hand, each of the sentences is the work of God, who is supremely trustworthy and hence all Vedic sentences are instruments of right cognition. Sentence (vakya) first of all underscores the relationship between words, one implying the other. Each word has an extension which helps to build up a sentence. A sentence (vakya) is a combination of words having a certain meaning. According to Advaita, A sentence is true because it is reliable person’s statement because it gives us uncontradicted knowledge. An unreliable statement is based on delusion or guess work, so the falsity of his statement is due to his defects. The importance of human words has been recognized in the beginning of ‘Sloka vartika’ on the ‘Codana-Sutra’. The difference between Vedic words and human words is that a human word is not necessarily valid, whereas a Vedic word is always valid. This difference has been brought out by ‘Sabara Swamin in his commentary on the Codana-Sutra.’ Kumarila maintains that since in the case of the meanings of sentence, the cognition is produced by the means of the meanings of words (making up the sentences) without the recognition of the relation of invariable concomitance as
is necessary in inference. Therefore the recognition of the meaning of a sentence must be held to be distinct from inference like sense perception. Human speech also amounts to a sentence, which is a single and complete expression of thought. The words in a sentence are collected in such a way that they do not leave the hearer in eager expectation of hearing more to get information complete in itself. Any other combination of words which is not commensurate to the expression of thought is not a sentence. Each sentence has of at least two words, one of which must be a verb. It should through a single word constitute a sentence. The remaining word or words can be inferred from the context. An interjection, e.g. ‘ah’, ‘also’, ‘goodness’ is not being viewed as a sentence.

Advaita has defined knowledge as the relation between the meanings of the different words in a sentence or ‘the knowledge of the meanings of different words together with the knowledge of the relation between them. A sentence is valid if the relation implied by its meaning is not falsified by any other means of knowledge. Sabda as a pramana means the knowledge that we get about things (not within the preview of our perception) from relevant sentences by understanding the meaning of words of which they are made up. These sentences may be of two kind’s viz. those uttered by men and those which belong to the Vedas. The first becomes a valid means of knowledge when it is not uttered by untrustworthy persons and others (Mimamsakas).

Mimamsakas states testimony is verbal cognition and is derived from the meanings of words which compose sentences. To uphold the eternality and the authors of Veda, the Mimamsakas put forward theory that words and meanings as well as their relations are natural and eternal.

Mimamsakas hold that what we hear is a sound (dhavani) and not word (sabda). The difference between the two is that the Latter is manifested form of the former which means that a word, for instance, ‘cow’, in its original form is without a ‘beginning’, it is always there in form without a beginning; it is always there in the space. Whenever the obstruction between the ear and the eternal word is removed, the word manifests itself. Kumarila Bhatta recognizes Sabda as
eternal and all pervading substance (dravya). Prabhakara Misra also accepts eternality of Sabda. According to him, all sounds heard are in the shape of some letters. In the view of the Prabhakars, it is the letter that is the direct cause of verbal comprehension and neither perception nor inference can give any idea of the Sabda as from its constituent Letters. The Naiyayikas do not accept the eternality of Sabda.

Words are spoken in the form of sounds. These sounds are of two types: sensible and non sensible. Sensible sounds are released in a definite order in the form of words. Words are the combination of letters. According to this system, letters are eternal though pronounced differently. The fact of the unchanging nature of letters is inferred when we make out the word even when it is pronounced differently.

Nyaya's view about sound is that Akasa pervades all space and air in the substratum of sound. (N.B.1.1.2). We can find that sound be passed through an empty vessel or in vacuum but we may also hear it, not depending upon presence of air in it. Samkhya says that five gross Bhutas are contained in sound. A cow or a jar is the examples of such Bhutas. Samkhya says that there are also Gunas in sound. According to some Indian Philosophers sound is a quality of being all pervading eternal and is capable of being manifested. Sound can be created and destructed like knowledge. It is of two type's i.e; dhavanis or varana. Sound has no fixed nature of its own. But varana is a sound produced by action of vocal organ of human beings called alphabet of any language. Nyaya says that there is a link between alphabet and sentence. A word produces a sound that has some meaning. But Samkhya says that sounds are not eternal. Sound is created and soon it withers away. According to Samkhya, there is no similarity between Vedas and letters.

According to Mimamsakas, the words are created in the form of sounds by human effort. The Naiyayikas however hold that words do not exist before they are produced by human effort; these are not hidden in any veil. Mimamsakas gave the theory that words (sabda) are not really the perceived sounds (dhavanis). Speakers' produce sound and listener listens to it and words are not automatically born without any human effort. Sound is a quality of akasa as per old
Mimamsakas, which is eternal and spread all over. Prabhakara says that all sounds are heard in the form of letters etc. The word is not different from the letters composing it. Letters are perceived by the ear and the order in which they are perceived, determines what the words actually mean or refer to. According to him, letters are the means of verbal cognition. Words have naturally meaningful powers by which they refer to objects, but we may understand their meanings or not. Kumarila and Prabhakara argue that significance belongs to the letters themselves and not to any special sphota and therefore, deny the theory according to which apart from the momentary sounds of letters composing a word, there is complete word from manifested (sphota) but not produced by the pressing sounds. Naiyayikas and the Mimamsakas opine that sound having capability to express the meaning of the object is teamed as word or pada. The function of such a word is associated with its meaning as well.27

Testimony is of two kinds, namely laukika and alaukika, in which principal is open to confirmation by perception and inference. The former pertains to knowledge of objects constituting the words of ordinary experience, whereas the latter pertains to knowledge of super sensuous and transcendental reality. Thus when the geographer makes the claim that there is a continent called, 'Australia' we accept it as true because we ourselves can, in principal, certify it on the basis of perception and inference. Similarly when the microbiologist asserts that there exists certain minute organisms, aided by the appropriate theory and instruments, we ourselves can in principal, determine the truth or falsity of this assertion On the other hand, it is a matter beyond perception and inference, a matter beyond perception and inference, the Samkhya accepts the testimony of the Vedas. According to other Naiyayikas, it can be classified into the secular laukika and the Scriptural Vaidika. Secular testimony is the testimony of human beings and may therefore be true or false. Only that which proceeds from trustworthy person is valid but not the rest .In Vaidika testimony, we have the words of God. The Vedas are created by God and are, therefore valid on all points. The former relates to the sensible objects of the world and reliable statements of ordinary persons, sages and scriptures .The latter relates to imperceptible objects e.g. the reliable assertions of religious teachers, prophets and God etc. Secondly, according to this modern school classification, knowledge based on testimony is of two kinds,
namely Vaidika or scriptural and laukika or secular. The scriptural testimony includes the words of God. God according to Nyaya is extraordinary person or perfect person. He is the author of Vedas which are also perfect. So scriptural testimony includes the perfect and infallible Vedic sentences which are uttered by God himself. The secular testimony is the statement of human being. It may be true or false. It is true where it is uttered by a trustworthy person, otherwise not.

Two different views have been offered in regard to the origin of statement that plays a significant instrument role in our acquisition of knowledge. Ancient Nyaya logicians, like Vatsayana and Prasahtapada, have attributed the ancient Hindu scriptures or Vedas to great seers and sages, which Gangesa and others of the modern school of Nyaya assert that God alone could be the author of the Vedas. This difference in opinion led to a distinction between "the statement of seers and sages, and statements of human origin" (laukika) and "the statements of divine origin" (vaidika). Accordingly, since no human being is perfect, laukika testimony is believed to be fallible, while vaidika testimony because of its divine source is believed to be perfect and infallible. Thus, the statement of scientists with regards to electrons, protons, and so on, statements regarding virtue, vice, or liberation, belongs to the category of adstartha.

Secular (laukika, ordinary) and Scriptural (vedic, vaidika)

laukiika (ordinary words are created by human beings for this reason, Vedic words are completely free from defects and delusions. Ordinary words can be true as well as false. The utterances of reliable individuals are treated as true. The texts of the Vedas are all statements of God, and therefore their testimony is infallible. Not so are secular words. The Vedic testimony is based on the words of God. Since God is perfect and infallible, all Vedic testimony is necessarily perfect and reliable but secular testimony has its obvious limitations, because it finds its source in human beings. Vaidika or scriptural testimony is thus perfect and infallible by its very nature. But laukika or secular testimony is not all valid. it is the testimony of human beings and may, therefore be true or false.

It will be observed here that the first classification of testimony (sabda) has reference to the nature of the objects of knowledge and the second to the nature of the source of knowledge.
But the two classifications, given by different Naiyayika, agree in implying that testimony must always be personal i.e., based on the words of some trustworthy person, human or divine. In respect of their truth, however, there is no difference among the trustworthy statements of an ordinary person, a saint, a prophet, and the scripture as revealed by God.

Both the Naiyayikas and Vedantists are of the opinion that the Vedas are the creation of God, but the Mimamsakas have opinion that these are self revealed and not compared by any person, human or divine, Samkhya accepts that no person can be the author of the Vedas. *Sabda Pramana* or Testimony is the right knowledge which is derived from the utterances of infallible and absolutely truthful persons. All knowledge derived from Vedas is valid, for the Vedas were uttered by Isvara himself. The Vedas give us right knowledge, not of itself, but because they came out as the utterance of the infallible Isvara. The *Samkhya Sutra* discusses elaborately about the non eternity of the Vedas. The Vedas are not eternal because they themselves speak of their production.

*Na nityatvam vedanam karyatvasruten*

The Vedas are not composed by human beings and these are non eternal, because all created objects are non-eternal. This view is clear that the Veda being, accounts of their non-personal authorship are free from doubts and defects are regarded as of self-evident validity. If the validity of Vedas depends on something else, they would not be authoritative for us. The Vedas are not composition of human author. They are not composed by Isvara because existence of Isvara is not proved. The Vedas being free from human agency do not mean their eternality. The case may be like that of sprout, etc, which are not created by any human being but are non eternal in nature. The reason for this is that the Samkhya regards the Vedic seers as men who, by freeing themselves from all the imperfections of mundane existence, have gained insight into ultimate reality. Kapila, the founder of the Samkhya holds that it is possible that he remembered the revealed texts that he had studied during previous time-cycles. Just as things known on the previous day are remembered on the next day, after waking from sleep that such remembrance is possible, as indicated by the conversation between Avtya and Jaigisaya, where he revealed
Jaigisava speaks of his remembering things that occurred in past lives, extending over ten time-cycles-in the text-, while I was evolving during ten time-cycles etc.etc.

The Vedas constitute the most authoritative and infallible source of knowledge of the transcendental reality. Their utterances are expressions of their direct intuitive knowledge of ultimate reality. Now it is clear that Samkhya does not regard the Vedas as eternal, since they are founded in the transcendental experience of men who lived and died at certain times and places.

According to ancient Nyaya logicians like Vatsayayana and Pratastapada, the credit for writing ancient Hindu scriptures or Vedas goes to the great seers and sages Gangesa and others of the modern school of Nyaya assert that God alone could be the author of the Vedas. Vacaspati says that Vedas are the absolute. In the view of Vacaspati a reliable person is one who is endowed with the realization of object, piety and efficiency of organs. The Smritis of Manu, etc. are reliable because God is the original speaker there. Later Naiyayikas like Udayana and Annambhatta and Vaisesika thinkers consider God as the supreme Isvara and the eternal author of the Vedas.

Nyaya states that, words are not eternal and language is due to the divine will but the Mimamsakas refers this view and points out that only the sounds and the symbols are created and destroyed, while the real words are eternal. Words are manifested through human efforts. The sounds and the symbols are the vehicles of manifestation of the eternal words. According to Vacaspati Misra, verbal testimony is restricted to the Vedas only. According to him statements of worldly authorities are not included in verbal testimony. The statements of the Puranas and Smritis are authoritative not because of their authors but because they are based upon the Vedas. Mimamsa regards that Vedas are not the words of any person and these enjoin some ritual duties and declare their fruits (like attainment of heaven). Prabharkara admits only Vedic testimony as real testimony and reduces human testimony to inference because validity is inferred from the trustworthy character of the person. He does not accept the validity of non Vedic Sabda, holds that real Sabda Pramana is the Vedic Sabda. Both Kumarila and Prabharkara accept Sastra-Vedas, smritis and acaras as the authority or supernatural dharama.28 Advaita states that Vedas
have eternal wisdom and contain the timeless rules of all created existence. The Vedas are of superhuman origin \textit{(apauruseya)} and express the mind of God. While the significance of the Vedas (Vedanta) is eternal, the texts are not so, since they are re-uttered by Isvara in each world-age. Jyanata Bhatta and Udayana, the stalwarts of the Naiyayikas establish the authority of the Vedas. According to Nyayayikas, the authority of the Vedas can only be established if they are works of God. \textit{Samkhya Sutra} states that the Vedas came out of the self-born spontaneously without any effort or without going through to create them.

The Nyaya definition presupposes that all verbal statements are made by persons but according to Mimamsakas, Vedic Statements are not made by any person. In the \textit{Nyaya Sutra}, God has been described as the author of Vedas. Jyantha Bhatta and Udayana are the classical stars among the Naiyayikas who refute the counter arguments of the Mimamsakas and establish that the authority of the Vedas can only be established, if God is their author. Naiyayikas agree that \textit{Sabda} must be based on the words of trustworthy persons, human or divine. The Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa and Vedanta schools of thought agree with the Nyaya in treating the verbal testimony as an independent source of valid knowledge, but they all differ from the Nyaya as to the denotation of \textit{Sabda}. These schools agree that the Vedas are authoritative not because they are words of trustworthy Divine person, but because they are not known to have been created by any person \textit{(apauruseya)} and are eternal. ‘\textit{Tacca svatah pramanam vakyajanyam jnanam hi divvidham}’

It is one of valid means of knowledge. It is one of the five subtle essences of the elements. Briefly we explain that Nyaya states that, it is the testimony of a trustworthy person; one who knows the truth and communicates it correctly. According to Advaita, the truth revealed by \textit{Sabda} is the fundamental unity of being. According to Mimamsa, its purport lies in these injunctive texts of ritual sections. According to Nyaya- Vaisesika, sound is a quality perceived by the ear. It belongs only to either and is of the two kinds: noise and alphabet, viz. inarticulate noise \textit{(dhavani)} and articulate alphabetic sounds \textit{(varna)}. Mimamsa holds that Varna is eternal while Nyaya maintains that every \textit{Varna} is produced by God.
References

4. *Bhasa-Pariccha*, p.154
10. Vedanta Paribhasha, p.239
12. *N.S.1.1.7.*
15. *Tarka Bhasya*, p.34.
18. *N.B.ii.1.68.*
19. *N.B.1.1.7.*


22. Sesvara Mimamsa, p.34.


25. *Nyaya Kosa*


27. Ibid, p.29