CHAPTER I

STUDY OF LANGUAGE

AND

SRI AUROBINDO
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I.1. Introduction

Language has been defined in many ways. Some would say it might be the expression of thought by speech sounds.\(^1\) Others would define it as a system of signs.\(^2\) Yet others would assume it to be something that bodies forth thought and makes it apprehensible.\(^3\) However, in spite of thousands of definitions of language the human mind is not yet clear what it is. But the mankind has realized that it is one of the extraordinary creations that has developed in the course of human evolution.

Language, no doubt, is a unique, distinctively human\(^4\), complex

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\(^1\) Sweet Henery, History of Language, p. 1

\(^2\) Vendry, Language, p. 8

\(^3\) W.D. Whitney, The Life and Growth of Language, p. 1

\(^4\) Animals too have their own language but language in its special sense belongs to the human being. Invariability and monotony are the two things by which the animal language is characterised. So the animal world has the same language (though it differs only from animal to animal) from time immemorial, whereas the variations of human language take place in many ways and in many levels. The science of language, therefore, is concerned only with the human language. It was Darwin who for the first time expanded the study of language from human to the animal world. He did not accept language to be distinctively human. He, on the contrary, believed that the language of animals differs not in kind but in degree, in definiteness of connotation and distinction of articulation. So he suggested that the study of language should include the animal language. Darwin claimed that animals too had the power of abstraction like human beings, and the latter produced a considerable body of evidence from the mental habits of animals. (see Darwin's a. Descent of Man, first published in 1871 and reprinted with introduction by J. T. Bonner and R. M. May, New Jersey, Princeton University Press; b. The Expression of the Emotions in man and Animals, Chicago, 1965).
and important affair. It is an integral part of human life. Therefore, it is as important as the humanity itself. Without it the humanity would not have been what it is today. This is the phenomenon through which are expressed the things and events of the world – seen, experienced and felt. Language and the world in which humanity lives are inseparably related. As 'language pictures the world so the world has no form without language'. Perhaps Ācārya Daṇḍī has rightly expressed this in the following verse.

इदमन्त्यतः कृत्स्मं जायेत भुवनत्रयम्।
यदि शब्दाह्वयं ज्योतिरासंसरं न दीयंते ॥

“All the three worlds would have been enveloped in blinding darkness, had there been no language, the brilliant light that shines eternally.” This statement of Ācārya Daṇḍī reveals the utmost importance of language and each conscious speaking being realizes this. Still it has always been a common error to think it simple and trivial. It is so familiar a feature of daily life that one rarely takes a pause to observe the significance of it, and because of this familiarity often it is most taken for granted. But language from its very birth has been so important a phenomenon in the evolution of human beings that it deserves special and very careful attention. There have been many attempts at studying language with all other elements related to it and the findings of the

5 Kāvyādarśa, 1.4
6 cf. “Of all the discoveries that have occurred and developed in the course of human history, language is the most significant and probably most taken for granted. Without language, civilization could obviously not exist”. Vyas Houston, Devavāni, p.2, see also “Language plays a great part in our life perhaps because of its familiarity, we rarely observe it, taking it rather for granted, as we do breathing or walking,” Leonard Bloomfield, Language, p.3
study have been much interesting and encouraging. Still many problems related to the study of language remain unsolved, some are left half the way; some did not even proceed further because of their wrong foundation. This chapter makes an attempt to deal with the history of the study of language and also enumerates Sri Aurobindo's views on the study of language.

I.2. A Retrospect of the Study of Language

As it is known from the observations of many scholars of linguistics scientific study of language started with the discovery of Sanskrit by the Europeans in eighteenth Century A.D. It was on 27th September of the year 1786, that Sir William Jones gave a memorable paragraph on the Hindus which became the starting point for a scientific study of language. He wrote: "The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of wonderful structure, more perfect than Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either; yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity both in the roots of verbs, and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident, so strong indeed that no philologer could examine them all three without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which perhaps no longer exists. There is a similar reason, though

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7 This whole section is based on the works of the following scholars: Edward Sapir, Richard Albert Wilson, Henery Sweet, Leonard Bloomfield, Max Muller, Mario Pei, R.V. Jahangirdar, S.M. Katre, J. Vendryes and W.D. Whitney.

8 The discovery of Sanskrit by the Europeans in eighteenth century is considered to be a landmark in the History of the study of Sanskrit. It played an important role in the development of comparative Indo-European linguistics. For further detail see: a. 'Sanskrit: Discovery by Europeans', Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics, Edited by R.E. Asher, 1994, Vol. 7, pp. 3651-54; b. 'A Companion to Sanskrit Literature'. S.C. Banerji, 1989, pp. 552-76
not quite so forcible, for supposing that both Gothic and Celtic, though blended with a very different idiom, had the same origin with the Sanskrit; and the old Persian might be added to the same family.”

Though the above observation had a strong impact on the European thoughts on language yet the seed was sown long before Sir William Jones. “In a letter of 1725, published in 1729, Benjamin Schultze, provoked by a remark by Veyssiere de la Crozo to the effect that numerals in Malbar are ‘pure Latin’, listed the Sanskrit numerals 1 to 20, 30 and 40, with equivalents in Latin for all, and in other European languages for some”.

Another remarkable contribution with regard to the study of language was by Gaston-Laurent Coerdoux who authored ‘a memoir which included, besides a basic Sanskrit vocabulary, lists of Sanskrit words that have equivalents in Latin, Greek, or both, notably the numerals 1 to 21, 30, 40 and 100, pronouns: and a partial paradigm of the root as - ‘to be’. This, on the request of Abbé Barthelemy of Academie des Inscriptions et Belles-Letters was published in 1808 though written much earlier.

A survey of Sanskrit Literature by Jean Francios Pons published in 1743 described Sanskrit as ‘admirable for its harmony, copiousness and energy’. This work of Pons revealed information about the works of Brosses, Doco, Sinner, Voltaire. Scholars in their respective works endeavoured to find out and establish the relation between Greek, Latin

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10 Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics, R.E. Asher, Vol. 7, p. 3651
11 Ibid., p. 3652
and Sanskrit. The views of these scholars were emphasized again in the statement of Sir William Jones. However, Sir William Jones’ statement was elevated later to the rank of a charter of Comparative Indo-European Linguistics. Some even think of Johann Gottfried Herder’s Prize essay on the Origin of Language in 1772 to be the first attempt in the true beginning of the scientific investigation of language in the eighteenth century A.D. Friedrich Schlegel through his book “The Language and Wisdom of the Indians’, published in 1808, carried out the comparison between Sanskrit and the European languages as suggested by Sir William Jones. He was the first to use the phrase “comparative grammar”. Similarly scholars like Rasmus Rask, Franz Bopp, Wilhelm Von Humboldt

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12 Ibid.
13 Richard Albert Wilson, Miraculous Birth of Language, p. 50
14 Rasmus Rask (1787-1832) was a Danish scholar who had first-hand knowledge of many languages which he obtained by his extensive travel from Sweden to India (1816-23). He compared and classified many languages on the basis of grammatical structure to find out the similarities and differences in the most essential and indispensable words.
15 Franz Bopp (1791-1867) was a significant contributor to linguistic science. He drew his materials for the comparative study of language from Schlegel’s book The Language and Wisdom of Indians. He published his book in 1816 - On the conjugation system of the Sanskrit Language in comparison with Greek, Latin, Persian and German. He was inspired with the hope that by a complete analytic comparision of the grammars of these related languages he could discover their oldest recorded shapes, and by this route might be able to discover the ultimate origin of grammatical forms.
16 Wilhelm Von Humboldt (1767-1835) was chiefly, a philosopher than a philologist. His investigation of language was philosophical. He developed the theory that the structure of each separate language grew out of and reflected the peculiar mental life of the people who made it, and that each language had therefore its own individuality which separated it from all other languages. The essay in which he presented the view – The Heterogeneity of Language and its Influence upon the Intellectual Development of Mankind, – was published in 1836.
and many others enriched the study of language by their sincere efforts.\textsuperscript{17}

However, the study of language is not a new or particular contribution of the modern times. A glance at the literary activities of ancient Greeks and Indians shows that the study of language was conducted along scientific lines in Greece and more specifically in India.

"The ancient Greeks had the gift of wondering at things that other people take for granted. They speculated boldly and persistently about the origin, history and structure of language. Our traditional lore about language is due largely to them."\textsuperscript{18}

The ancient Greek philosophers had seen enough of language to find out the key to its mysteries. Plato (427-347 B.C.) discusses about the origin of words, and particularly the question whether the relation between things and the words which name them is a natural and necessary relation or merely the result of a human convention'. He discusses all these in detail in his dialogue 'Cratylus'.\textsuperscript{19} This whole dialogue of Plato gives "a first glimpse into a century long controversy between the Analogists, who believed that language was natural and therefore at bottom regular and logical, and Anomalists, who denied these things and pointed out the irregularities of linguistic structure."\textsuperscript{20} Heraclitus (503 B.C.) held that words exist naturally. According to him 'the words are like the shadows of things, like the pictures of trees and

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\textsuperscript{17} For details see Leonard Bloomfield, Language, Chapter One - The Study of Language. \\
\textsuperscript{18} Leonard Bloomfield, Language, p. 4  \\
\textsuperscript{19} For Plato's Cratylus see Great Books of the Western World, Vol. 7, pp. 85-114  \\
\textsuperscript{20} Leonard Bloomfield, Language, 1.4
\end{flushleft}
mountains reflected in the river, like our own images when we look into a mirror.'21 Democritus (430-410 B.C.) represented language as due to \textit{thesis} that is institution, art and convention. He called words \textit{agálmata phônênta}, statues in sound. He believed that words are not natural images, images thrown by nature on the mirror of the soul, they are statues, works of art, only not in stone or brass, but in sound.22 Aristotle too had the same idea that language had arisen by 'convention' or 'agreement'.23 Epicurus is reported to have said that in the first formation of language men acted unconsciously, moved by nature as in coughing, sneezing, lowing, barking, or sighing. He also admitted that this would account only for the one-half of language, and that some agreement must have taken place before language really began before people could know what each person meant by these uncouth utterances.24 It is obvious from the grammars of Dionysius Trax (Second Century B.C.)25 and of Apollonius Dyscolus26 (second century A.D.) that the ancient Greeks studied no language but their own. They made

\begin{enumerate}
\item See Max Muller, \textit{Lectures on the Science of Language}, p. 1873, p. 334
\item \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 335-36
\item See Mario Pei, \textit{The story of Language}, p. 15
\item See Max Muller, \textit{Lectures on the Science of Language}, 1873, p. 338
\item Dionysius Trax (120 B.C.) was the author of the first Greek grammar. His grammar begins with the definition of grammar and its functions. Next he deals with accents, punctuation marks, letters and syllables, it goes on to the eight parts of speech and their inflections. It deals with no rules of syntax. It is essentially an elementary school grammar and as such, used everywhere in the Greek-speaking world till about 12th century A.D. Later it served as a model for Latin grammar and even for modern grammars. (Source: \textit{Encyclopedia Britanica}, Vol. 7, p. 466)
\item Appollonius Dyscolus (2nd century B.C.) was a Greek grammarian and was supposed to be the founder of scientific grammar. Four of his works are extant. On \textit{Syntax} and three smaller treatises, on \textit{Pronouns, Conjunctions} and \textit{Adverbs}. (Source: \textit{Encyclopedia Britanica}, Vol. 2, p. 122)
\end{enumerate}
grammatical observations but confined these to one language and stated them in philosophical form. "They discovered the parts of speech of their language, its syntactic constructions, such as, especially, that of subject and predicate and its chief inflectional categories: genders, numbers, cases, persons, tenses and modes. They defined these not in terms of recognizable linguistic forms, but in abstract terms which were to tell the meaning of the linguistic class."27

But the thoughts and observations of ancient Greeks on language were not improved until the eighteenth century A.D. However, the contribution of Greeks to the study of language is remarkable.

India, as Prof. R. G. Bhandarkar states, "may justly claim to be the original home of scientific Philology"28; or in the words of Leonard Bloomfield – "It was in India, however, that there arose a body of knowledge which was destined to revolutionise European ideas about language."

India’s contribution to the study of language is immensely rich. In many places of Vedic literature there are distinct indications of the linguistic study.30 A passage in Taittiriya Samhitā says – "Speech was once inarticulate and undistinguished (into its parts). Then the gods said to Indra, ‘Distinguish our speech into parts’. He said, ‘I will ask a gift of you, let Soma be poured into one cup for me and Vāyu together, then

27 Leonard Bloomfield, Language, p. 5
28 Wilson Philological Lectures, p. 244
29 Language, p. 10
30 The higher aspects of Speech revealed by the ancient Indians are dealt with in a separate chapter in this thesis. So here only the linguistic aspects are dealt with.
Indra going into its midst distinguished it. Hence distinct speech is now spoken.”31 Next to the Sanhita texts rank the Brāhmaṇas. These Brāhmaṇas’ texts are full of etymological explanations of words and many other grammatical descriptions. In a passage of Gopatha Brāhmaṇa there description of many grammatical terms directly related to the study of language. And the language in which they are described reveals the fact that these are not just descriptions but a quest for the full knowledge of a word and its structure. This passage uses the following technical terms of Grammar.

Verbal roots (dhatu), nominal stems (pratipadika), nouns (nāma), verbs (ākhyāta), gender (liṅga), number (vacana), case endings (vibhakti), suffix (pratyaya), accent (svara), prefix (upasarga), particle (nipāta), grammar (vyākaraṇa), modifications (vikāras), the modifier (vikārī), accentual duration (mātrā), letters (varna), syllables (aksara), words (pada), conjunction (samyoga), places of pronunciation (sthāna) etc.32 Maitrāyani Sanhita mentions about six case-endings.33 Aitareya Brāhmaṇa speaks of seven divisions (seven case endings) of speech.34 In many Brāhmaṇa texts one finds etymology of quite a few words.35

31 Taittirīya Sanhita, VI.4.7
32 Gopatha Brāhmaṇa, Pūrvādhyāya, 1.24
33 Maitrāyani Sanhita, 1.7.3
34 Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, 7.7
35 For example: Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 12.9.1-14 gives the etymology of the word prāna. Gopatha Brāhmaṇa 1.26 gives the etymology of om. Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa 2.3.8.3 defines the word manusya. Kauśitakī Brāhmaṇa 8.2 gives the etymology of Viṣṇu.
the Prātiśākhyaśas and Śikṣās deal extensively with phonetics. Prātiśākhyaśas especially, recognise the usable form of the word as a morphological unit and explains the phonemic changes involved in a text formation. Another important contribution to the study of language is that of Yāskācārya. He is the author of Nirukta, which embodies the earlier systematic discussions on the questions of language. Here Yāskācārya lays down the principles of the derivations of words. It is evidenced from the list of schools and individual teachers quoted or referred to in Nirukta that the grammatical speculations had sufficiently advanced in the days of Yāskācārya. Yāska has enumerated the four-fold division of words such as noun (nāma), verb (ākhyāta), prepositional (upasarga), and indeclinable (nipāta). He has given more stress on the sense of a word while giving its etymology. In this case his Nirukta is supposed to be the source of Semantics. He formulates the theory that every noun is derived from a verbal root. In this respect his attempt to the study of origin of language belongs to the root theory school which holds that all words have a radical derivation. In this manner

36 Prātiśākhyaśas, related to different branches of the Vedas, mainly deal with different ways of chanting the Vedic Mantras, accentuation, euphonic combination, metrics and pronunciation etc.

37 Śikṣā texts deal particularly with phonetics. Taittirīya Samhitā 1.2 defines Śikṣā as वर्णः स्वरः मात्र बलम् सम सत्तनाः। इत्युत्तरः शिशिवायवः।। The subject matter of Śikṣā texts are: Syllable and Accent, Pitch and Effort, Tone and Continuity. For detail on the Prātiśākhyaś as well as Śikṣā one can refer to: Phonetics in Ancient India by W.S. Allen, Oxford University, 1965; Critical Studies in the Phonetic Observations of Indian Grammarians by Siddheswar Varma, Delhi, 1961; Prātiśākhyaśon me Prayukta Pāribhāṣika Sābden kā Ālocaṇātmaka Adhyayana (Critical studies on the technical terms used in Prātiśākhyaś) by Dr. Indra, Varanasi 1991

38 वर्णवृत्तान्तनां नामस्यां त्रिष्णाविनिपत्तातः, Nirukta, 1.1

39 अग्निन्यमः प्रीक्षेत्, Nirukta, 201

40 Nirukta, 1.12-13
Yāskācārya has raised the study of language to science. His *Nirukta* is, in fact, the postulate of modern philology. Next is the Grammar of Pāṇini. "This grammar is one of the greatest monuments of human intelligence. It describes with the minutest detail, every inflection, derivation and composition and every syntactic usage of its author's speech."41 In this way Pāṇini's Grammar is considered to be the most impressive work of ancient Indian linguistics. Even more the supplementary rules and commentaries provided by Kātyāyana, Patañjali and other grammarians enrich Pāṇini's notion towards language.

The study of language in India42 has not been confined to the school of grammarians. It has also been enriched by the contribution of different schools of Indian philosophies (such as *Mīmāṁsā*, *Nyāya*, *Buddhism* etc.), poetics and lexicography. However, the ancient Indian studies on language though promising lines of scientific treatment, have certain limitations and differ as well in outlook from that of the modern scholars. But it is the contribution of the Ācāryas of ancient India, especially, that of the grammarians, "presented European eyes, for the first time, a complete and accurate description of a language, based not upon theory but upon observation. Moreover, the discovery of Sanskrit disclosed the possibility of a comparative study of languages."43

41 Leonard Bloomfield, *Language*, p.11
42 The list of Ācāryas who have immensely contributed to the field of the study of language is long. Here a glimpse of them has been provided. For details one can look into the research works done by Goerge Cardona and others.
43 Leonard Bloomfield, *Language*, p.11
I.3. A Note on Comparative Philology

"Among all the many promising beginnings of which the nineteenth century was the witness none perhaps was raised with greater eagerness by the world of culture and science than the triumphant debut of Comparative Philology." 44

Comparative Philology, as mentioned earlier, came out of the discovery of Sanskrit by Europeans early in the eighteenth century. Its origin owes a lot to Sir William Jones, Friedrich Shlegel and Franz Bopp. Sir William Jones’ statement in 1786 opened the eyes of other scholars of this field. He by his statement threw light on the fact of affinity, common source and the general principles which govern the change of the language from a parental tongue. Friedrich Shlegel continued his research in the light of Jones to find out the similarity between Sanskrit and the best known European languages. Franz Bopp is considered to be the actual founder of Comparative Philology. Other important philologists who were influenced by Sanskrit are Max Muller, W.D. Whitney, Karl Verner, Karl Brugmann, Grassman and Jacob Wackernagel.

What were the aims and objectives of Comparative Philology? How it proceeded? What it achieved? What was the method of approaching the study of languages? What was the conclusion? These are some important questions one asks with regard to the Comparative Philology. So far as the aims and objectives are concerned Comparative Philology mainly aims at finding the relationship of languages. It also

44 Sri Aurobindo, SABCL., Vol.10, p.551
attempts to study a phenomenon common to all mankind, to examine the resemblances and differences between languages, and even to study the development of an individual language. In a way Comparative Philology comes as a second phase in the development of linguistic studies, (the first phase being the traditional grammars such as that of ancient Greeks and Indians as mentioned earlier and a third stage being the modern linguistics.45) “Comparative Philology is an explanatory science. It sets out to explain the evident fact that languages change and that different languages are related to one another in different degrees. The change that languages undergo and the different degrees of relationship between languages are accounted for in terms of hypothesis.”46 Along with these it also aims at establishing a parent tongue which is the common source of all languages. It takes accounts of the similarities in grammar and vocabulary between Latin, Greek and other languages and supposes that they all developed by a continuous process of change from a pre-historic common ancestor conventionally called Indo-European. Using comparative material from such languages as Sanskrit and Gothic it attempts to re-construct to some extent the sounds and structure of Indo-European and explains how Latin and Greek reached the forms in which they are known. To achieve these

45 The difference between modern linguistics on the one hand and the traditional grammars and Comparative Philology on the other hand lies in the stress laid on the importance of written or literary language. The traditional grammars and to a great extent the Comparative Philology assume that the written language is more fundamental than the spoken. On the contrary the modern linguists lay more stress on the spoken language. Their argument is - spoken language is prior to the written because writing is just a medium of preserving the speech. To them speech is older and more widespread than writing. The Swiss scholar Ferdinand de Saussure is considered to be the founder of modern linguistics.

46 Srimannarayana Murti, An Introduction to Sanskrit Linguistics, p.23
goals the comparative philologists endeavoured to find out and explain the similarities in the vocabulary and structure of a particular group of languages. At the same time they were not confined to a particular period of the languages under study. They, rather, started dealing with the facts of a language in the past as well as the present and tried to give its history by comparing those facts at various periods in that group of languages. In their plan they also included the problems of origin of language, the causes of its change, growth and the like. As Whitney says—"Our science strives to comprehend language both in its unity and as the means of human expression and as distinguished from the brute communication, and in its internal variety of material and structure. It seeks to discover the cause of the resemblances and differences of languages and to effect a classification of them by tracing out the lines of resemblance and drawing the limits of difference."47

The comparative philologists first divided their study into four main branches. The first is Phonology, which deals with speech sounds, their physical production and history. It also includes the physiological mechanism of the lungs, throat, mouth, nose, etc. which act as instruments in the production of the speech-sound. The second branch is Morphology, which deals with the formation of words or word-building process by the union of the several constituent parts of the word such as the root, stem, suffixes, affixes, case-endings and personal-endings, declensions of nouns and conjugations of verbs. The third branch is Syntax, which deals with the manner in which the words are arranged in a sentence and the relationship of one word with the other as to express

47 The Life and Growth of Language, p.4
a complete thought. The fourth branch is Semantics or Semisiology, which deals with changes and development of meanings. It also attempts to find out the way in which the meaning came to be attached to the words.

On the basis of the manner of word-building, grammatical devices, the roots and formative elements that exist in the languages, the comparative philologists classified the languages of the world into different types such as Isolating, Agglutinating, Inflexional etc., and into different families such as Indo-European, Semitic, Dravidian, Bantu etc. Each family also has its own groups of languages and further divisions and branches. By studying all the branches of these languages and finding out the characteristic features of each branch, the philologists then attempted to reconstruct a parent language, which they claimed to be the progenitor of all languages. They invented several ways and methods of comparing the morphemes, phonemes and the grammatical devices of a group of languages for reconstruction of the parent tongue. But they based their conclusion only on the surfacial study of the words of a language which ultimately led to no satisfactory result.

Though Comparative Philology has been claimed to be a science yet the findings and conclusions of it are merely hypothetical and conjectural. A science of such a status can never be able to fix satisfactorily the rules and processes that govern language.48

48 cf. "Even the comparative study of languages, by its attempts to postulate or reconstruct a common primitive tongue, cannot explain the origin of language though it may furnish a hypothetical sample of a earliest speech form." An Introduction to the Comparative Philology of Indo Aryan Languages by R.V. Jahangirdar, p. 3
1.4. *Sri Aurobindo's Views on Comparative Philology*

Sri Aurobindo with his deep knowledge of several languages such as Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Tamil, English, French etc., and with an acquaintance of the findings of Comparative Philology came to realise that there have been many misapprehensions and mishandlings with regard to the study of language. He observed that Comparative Philology after its inception has been more a mass of conjectural and ingenious learning than a science. It has hardly moved a step beyond its origin and has been more disappointing in its results. On the other hand Sri Aurobindo also admires the contribution of Comparative Philology in the field of investigation into the languages of the world. According to him the Comparative Philology has 'at least swept out of existence the fantastic, arbitrary and almost lawless etymology' of the ancients. It has provided 'descriptions of the relations and history of extant languages'. It has deduced the processes and causes responsible for the degenerations of the languages. It has also evolved the firmly established notion that the 'investigations into languages must be a search for rules and laws and not free and untrammeled gamblings among individual derivations'. The way has been prepared; many difficulties have been cleared out of the way. "Still scientific Philology is non-existent". All these achievements of Comparative Philology do not lead to the discovery of a true science of language. On the other hand a true science of language alone can provide satisfactory and right clues to know the origin, growth, development and decay of human speech through out its history. For this one needs 'sufficient material and the

right materials'. One also needs 'the right way of approaching the materials'. "Once that is discovered the processes will also be discovered and science of speech founded."  

The path is there. The materials for the investigations too are readily available. But the approach has been wrong. Comparative philology has given much importance on the surface level of language. It has based its conclusions on conjectures and contradictions. Word-identities of final word-meanings have been important for the philologists to begin their enquiry. But this method has led them to no resting place, and as such their conclusion remain surfacial. The fundamental mistake with regard to this method of comparative philologists has been their famous original formula, pitā, patēr, pater, vater, father and the hasty conclusions they have drawn from it. On the basis of this comparison of formed-words of one language with that of other they have divided the humanity into different races such as Aryan, Semitic, Assyrian, Ethiopic, Dravidian, Turanean etc., even though they themselves have expressed at times that evidence of language can never guide "to any positive conclusion respecting the specific unity or diversity of human races." The division of Indian nationality, similarly, into the Aryan and Dravidian (purely on the basis of linguistic differences) is another great error. "The races of India may be all pure Dravidians, if indeed such an entity as a Dravidian race exists or ever existed, or they may be pure Aryans if indeed such an entity as an Aryan race exists or ever existed, or they may be a mixed race with one

50 Ibid., Vol. 27, p. 164
51 Whitney, Language and the Study of Language, p. 394
predominant strain, but in any case," Sri Aurobindo asserts, "the linguistic division of the tongues of India into the Sanskritic and Tamilic counts for nothing in that problem".52

Sri Aurobindo is of the opinion that language cannot be a decisive factor to determine ethnic affinity or otherwise of races. Moreover, common terms do not necessarily imply a common civilization; the assumption that they do 'sins both by excess and by defect'. Sri Aurobindo thus observes: "More sensible and careful reflection has shown that community of language is no proof of community of blood or ethnological identity; the French are not a Latin race because they speak a corrupt and nasalized Latin, or the Bulgars Slaves in blood because the Ugro-Finno-Slavic races have been wholly slavonicised in civilization and language."53 So in any case the ethnological factors have to be excluded from the domain of Philology. Sri Aurobindo remarks: "The Philologist has nothing to do with sociology, anthropology and archeology". Then he confirms that the "sole business" of a Philologist "is or ought to be with the history of words and the association of ideas with the sound forms which they represent."54 He must aim to trace out the inner life of language, to discover its origin, to follow its successive steps of growth, and to deduce the laws that govern its mutations and along with this, he must apprehend the nature of language.

The study of affinities of languages, Sri Aurobindo suggests, can be at least a proper field of the labours of philology but this also does

52 Sri Aurobindo, SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 554
53 Ibid., p. 553
54 Ibid., p. 556
not help to know what constitutes communities or diversity of origin between them. "The mere possession of a large body of common terms' by two or more languages 'is insufficient to establish any kinship between them. It may establish some contact or co-habitation', but nothing more than this.\textsuperscript{55} For example, the common terms of the primitive languages can be taken for investigation. Sri Aurobindo defines the common terms to be "those which express ordinary and familiar ideas and objects, such as domestic relations, numerals, pronouns, the heavenly bodies, the ideas of being, having etc. – those terms which are most commonly in the mouths of men..."\textsuperscript{56}

Here are some examples of these categories: "Sanskrit says addressing the father, \textit{pitar}, Greek \textit{pater}, Latin \textit{pater}, but Tamil says \textit{appā}; Sanskrit says addressing the mother, \textit{mātar}, Greek \textit{matēr}, Latin \textit{mater}, but Tamil \textit{āmmā}; for numeral seven Sanskrit says \textit{saptan} or \textit{sapta}, Greek \textit{hepta}, Latin \textit{sapta}, but Tamil \textit{elu}; for first person Sanskrit says \textit{aham}, Greek \textit{ego} or \textit{egon}, Latin \textit{ego}, but Tamil \textit{nān}; for the sun Sanskrit says \textit{surya}, Greek \textit{lelios}, Latin \textit{sol}, but Tamil \textit{nāyir}; for the idea of being Sanskrit has \textit{as}, \textit{asmi}, Greek has \textit{einaɪ} and \textit{eimi}, Latin \textit{esse} and \textit{sum}, but Tamil \textit{iru.}" Here the basis of differentiation appears with a striking clearness. But when one goes a little further doubt begins to creep into the vision. Addressing daughter, Sanskrit says \textit{duhitār}, milkmaid; Greek says \textit{thugather}, but

\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Ibid.}, Vol. 10, p. 557; "The Indian \textit{suraṅga}, a tunnel, is supposed to be the Greek \textit{surinx}. We cannot, therefore, argue that the Greeks and Indians possessed the common art of tunnel-making before their dispersion or even that the Indians who borrowed the word from Greece, never knew what an underground excavation might be till they learned it from Macedonian engineers." Sri Aurobindo, \textit{SABCL.}, Vol. 10, p. 555

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 557
Latin knows nothing of duhitā and uses a word filia which has no conceivable connection with milk-pail and is not connected with any variant for daughter in the kindred tongues. Addressing the son, 'Sanskrit says putra, Greek luos, Latin filius, the three languages use three words void of all mutual connection'. If one proceeds in this manner one finds several examples of common terms either having mutual connection or absolutely void of all mutual connection. This investigation drives to a point where it becomes obvious that "...the absence of a common vocabulary for common and domestic terms is not a sure proof of diverse origin...", and similarly, "...the possession of an almost identical vocabulary for these terms is not a sure proof of common origin. These things prove, at the most, intimate contact or separate development; they do not prove and in themselves cannot prove anything more." 1

Another objection, which Sri Aurobindo has raised against Comparative Philology, is its status as a science. Some Philologists claim that Comparative Philology is a science. Max Muller, even attempted to establish it as a physical science. Whitney called it a historical science and said: "Linguistics is a historical science, so its evidences are historical and its methods of proof of the same character. There is no absolute demonstration about it; there is only probability in the same varying degree as elsewhere in historical enquiry." 2

After having examined the claims of some philologists, Sri Aurobindo on a

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57 Ibid., p. 561; "The fundamental mistake of the philologists is contained in their famous original formula, pitā, pater, pater, vater, father and the hasty conclusions they have drawn from it, which have prevented a deeper scrutiny of the root of language. An identity of words between various languages can never in itself lead to any fundamental discovery. It does not even prove that the languages thus agreeing are of a single stock." Ibid., Vol. 27, p. 164

58 Life and Growth of Language, p. 312
point says: "...the very word, Philology, is a by word of scorn or pseudo scientific cant. Beyond one or two generalisations of the mutations followed by words in their progress through the various Aryan languages and a certain number of grammatical rectifications and rearrangements, resulting in a more or less arbitrary view of linguistics..., modern Philology has discovered no really binding law or rule for its own guidance. It has fixed one or two sure sign-posts; - the rest is speculation and conjecture." 59

He further observes that "one of the greatest of European scholars and foremost of European thinkers, Ernest Renan, after commencing his researches in Comparative Philology with the most golden and extravagant hopes, was compelled at the close of a life of earnest and serious labour to sum up the chief preoccupations of his days in a formula of measured disparagement, - 'petty conjectural science'." Then Sri Aurobindo remarks that Comparative Philology is "no science at all; for a science built upon conjectures is as much an impossibility and a contradiction in terms as a house built upon water." 60

Then question comes 'can there be no Science of Language?' Or 'is Science of Language undiscoverable?' Sri Aurobindo's answers to these questions are encouraging. According to him, "...somewhere the road exists. If it exists, it can be found." Then he explains: "The right clue alone is wanted and a freedom of mind which can pursue it unencumbered by prepossessions and undeterred by the orthodoxies of

59 Sri Aurobindo, SABCL., Vol., 10, p. 183
60 Ibid., p. 180
the learned."\(^{61}\) The Philologists have seldom allowed the flexibility of mind movements. They are, rather governed by the fixed laws of the physical world. Sri Aurobindo explains: "The laws of physical formation follow a fixed line and their variations even ... are a fixed fashions. But with the growth of life in matter there comes a growing element of freedom, of a more elusive principle and a more elastic variation; for this reason science has found life more difficult to fathom and analyse than matter and her triumphs here have been far less notable than in the pure physical domain. Mind brings with it a still freer play, a still more elusive principle and flexible application. A general law always obtains, but the applications, the particular processes... more subtly and are more numerous."\(^{62}\) This law of increasing freedom has not been taken into account by the Philologists. They have been, rather, too rigid in not allowing for this freedom or flexibility of mind movements. But Sri Aurobindo strongly holds that while dealing with the laws of speech "we must remember this flexibility of all mind processes. We must ourselves keep a flexible mind to follow it and an open eye for all variations. It is for regularity in irregularity that one must always be on watch, not for a fixed or a continuous regularity."\(^{63}\)

The study of physical science is comparatively simple because the materials here are homogenous and it involves an unchanging set of laws. 'However complex may be the forces or constituents at work, they are all of one nature and obey one class of laws'. But mental science is of

\(^{61}\) Ibid., p. 552  
\(^{62}\) Ibid., Vol. 27, p. 165  
\(^{63}\) Ibid.,
more complex and complicated nature as it deals with heterogeneous material as well as 'heterogeneous forces and actions of forces'. "Philology", says Sri Aurobindo, "is the attempt to form such a mental science, – for language has this two fold aspect; its material is physical, the sounds formed by the human tongue working on the air vibrations; the energy using it is nervous, the molecular Pranic activity of the brain using the vocal agents and itself used and modified by a mental energy, the nervous impulse to express, to bring out of the crude material of sensation the clearness and preciseness of the idea; the agent using it is a mental will, free so far as we can see, but free within the limits of its physical material to vary and determine its use, for that purpose, of the range of vocal sound. In order to arrive at the laws which have governed the formation of any given human tongue... we must examine, first, the way in which the instrument of vocal sound has been determined and used by the agent, secondly, the way in which the relation of the particular ideas to be expressed to the particular sound or sounds which express it, has been determined. There must always be these two elements, the structure of the language, its seeds, roots, formation and growth and the psychology of the use of the structure."64

To achieve the goal in the above light it is needed to go digging down 'into the hidden original foetus' of the language under study. It cannot be done by enquiring the word-identities and identities of final word-meanings as the European Philologists have done. A true science must start, as Sri Aurobindo suggests, "from root-identities and identities of original and derivative root-meaning and even from sound-

64 Ibid., Vol. 10, pp. 569-70
identities and identities of fundamental and applicatory sound-meaning".\textsuperscript{65} It is only in this way that it would be 'possible to establish unity' of human speech and some of the 'laws governing the birth and development of speech'. To quote Sri Aurobindo: "...the true method of science is to go back to the origins, the embryology, the elements and more obscure processes of things... The profundities of things, their real truth, can best be discovered by penetration into the hidden things that the surface of phenomena conceals, into that past development of which the finished forms present only secret and dispersed indications or into the possibilities from which the actualities we see are only a narrow selection. A similar method applied to the earlier forms of human speech can alone give us a real Science of Language.\textsuperscript{66}

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., Vol. 27, p. 165

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., Vol. 10, pp. 47-48