Bhartṛhari and Maṇḍana on Avidyā

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Abstract The concept of avidyā is one of the central categories in the Advaita of Śaṅkara and Maṇḍana. Shifting the focus from māya, interpreted either as illusion or as the divine power, this concept brings ignorance to the forefront in describing duality and bondage. Although all Advaitins accept avidyā as a category, its scope and nature is interpreted in multiple ways. Key elements in Maṇḍana’s philosophy include the plurality of avidyā, individual selves as its substrate and the Brahman as its field (visāya), and the distinction in avidyā between non-apprehension and misapprehension. A closer investigation shows that Maṇḍana is directly influenced by Bhartrhari’s linguistic non-dualism in developing the concept of avidyā. This study also compares other key constituents such as vivartta and parināma that are relevant to the analysis of avidyā. As the concept of counter-image (pratibimba) emerges as a distinct stream of Advaita subsequent to Maṇḍana, this study also compares the application of pratibimba in the writings of Bhartrhari and Maṇḍana.

Keywords Maṇḍana · Bhartṛhari · avidyā · vivartta · parināma · ābhāsa · pratibimba · avaccheda · kāla

Introduction

The relationship between the world and Brahman has been addressed in Advaita philosophy in two distinct ways. In the first, Brahman is compared to clay and manifestations such as the world or individuals or rocks to various forms of pots. In another analogy, Brahman is like the element gold itself and the world is seen as ornaments crafted of gold. In the second method, the world is like the rope that
appears to be a snake through erroneous cognition. The first method, the transformation of Brahman or parināma, is also the earlier attribution of causality in Advaita. Later Advaitins that interpret causality of the world in terms of false projection (vivartta) often cite examples such as the shell that appears to be silver, or a mirage, or the rope appearing as a snake. Not knowing the reality or knowing it otherwise due to the cosmic principle ‘ignorance’ (avidyā) is more prominent in the second model, as the first often interprets Brahman as endowed with powers to manifest in multiplicity, for instance, pure elemental gold manifesting in the forms of various ornaments. Advaita that developed after Gaudapāda tends to attribute the rise of plurality to avidyā. This, however, is not the argument that, following the concept of avidyā, nothing that appears exists. The application of avidyā in this context is only to confirm that no real transformation occurs in Brahman. The role of avidyā is thus crucial in describing how the non-dual Brahman assumes plurality. Grammarians such as Bhartrhari maintain that the word-principle (śabda) is non-dual, and it somehow assumes manifoldness, or somehow appears otherwise in the form of meaning without having any deformity in its essential singular nature. These seemingly parallel concepts—the Brahman appearing as many according to Advaitins and the word principle assuming manifoldness following Bhartrhari—support each other, as Bhartrhari in his philosophical treatises draws upon a wide range of literature. The scope of this essay is to examine how the philosophy of Bhartrhari influences subsequent Advaita. Specifically, this paper explores the influence of the concept of avidyā found in Bhartrhari’s writings upon the Brahmāsiddhi (BS) of Maṇḍana.

Accepting avidyā to describe plurality is not free from problems. Unlike the case of Brahman itself that assumes many forms, this model of Advaita needs to explain how this additional category does not confront the singularity of Brahman and pose duality. Responding to the challenges inherent with the acceptance of avidyā, Advaitins have adopted different approaches. The prominent Advaitins Suresvara and Padmapāda assert that there is a singular avidyā identical to māya, the cosmic illusion, while also accepting that Brahman is endowed with the power identified as avidyā. Maṇḍana, on the other hand, maintains that individual selves are the substrate of avidyā, leading to the plurality of avidyā, and Brahman is considered as the singular object. This avidyā of Maṇḍana is not identified as the power (śakti) of Brahman, as Thrasher points out.¹

Contemporary scholars have addressed the centrality of Maṇḍana’s articulation of avidyā in Advaita philosophy. Kuppuswami Sastri has identified avidyā as central to Maṇḍana’s philosophy.² He points out that Maṇḍana recognizes two kinds of avidyā, with its nature of non-apprehension (agrahaṇa) and misapprehension (anyathāgrahaṇa). Biardeau and Thrasher, in their studies on Maṇḍana, have shed further light on his contributions to the development of subsequent Advaita. The key chapters in Thrasher’s text, anirvacanīya, vivartta, and avidyā, relate directly to the issue of avidyā in Maṇḍana’s philosophy. Understanding the concept of avidyā,

¹ Thrasher (1993, p. 65).
² Shastri (1984, xxiv–lxxv). Numbers 2–4 in this list concern the nature of avidyā. Although number 2 discusses the nature of appearance (khyāti), whether what is appearing is indeterminable (anirvacanīya) or is appearing otherwise (anyathākhyāti), relates to the concept of avidyā.
therefore, becomes crucial in not only comprehending Manḍana’s thought, but also to learn the interrelationship among classical Indian philosophies.

In light of the findings that Manḍana, while composing BS, was closely reading the Vākyapadīya (VP) and the Vṛtti (VPvṛ) thereon, it is reasonable to investigate Bhartrhari’s influence on Manḍana’s understanding of avidyā. Identifying the imprint of Bhartrhari’s thought that can be found in Manḍana’s writings is particularly significant in light of the fact that the Advaita after Śaṅkara is recognized as adopting the doctrine of false projection (vivartta) and while śaṅkara does not apply this terminology, Manḍana does. Given the fact that Bhartrhari is the first known philosopher to utilize the term vivartta, this investigation becomes essential in understanding the depth of ideological influence of Bhartrhari upon Manḍana’s thought. The concept of avidyā is crucial to understanding other epistemological arguments of Advaita, such as the concept of appearance (khyāti), or the nature of direct perception (pratyakṣa).

Avidyā in VP/VPvṛ and BS

The nature of avidyā, its role in the projection of the world, and the removal of ignorance in recognizing Brahman are the key issues that arise with the adoption of avidyā as a category. Advaitins have applied multiple approaches to confront the issues that arise with the acceptance of avidyā. Its nature, function, and removal are the crucial issues that divide Advaita into the streams of the abhāsa, pratibimba, and avaccheda models. The concept, whether there exists a single individual self (ekajīva) or multiple jīvas, emerges from the background of whether the Brahman or the jīva is the substrate of ignorance. In the school of Advaita, avidyā is explained as ‘indeterminable’ (anirvacanīya). Thrasher points out that this identification is not made by Śaṅkara, whereas this concept is present in Manḍana’s BS. Thrasher needs to be credited for identifying the influence of VPvṛ in the development of this concept, in which avidyā is identified as ‘indescribable, both as identical or different and as existent or non-existent’ (Thrasher 1993, p. 4). In addition to the following instances found in VPvṛ and identified by Thrasher that describe the indeterminable nature of ignorance,

3 The essay “The Brahman and the Word Principle (Śabda): Influence of the Philosophy of Bhartrhari on Manḍana’s Brahmaśiddhi” is in progress.

4 Hacker points out that Śaṅkara does not utilize the term vivartta. See Hacker (1953). Manḍana uses the term vivartta in his description: draṣṭu eva cidātmanas tathā tathā vipariṇāmād vivarttanād va | BS 7:24. The application here reminds one of the VPvṛ: sa tu pratipurusam antahsannivisto bāhya iva pratavabhāsate | . . . aparesām sarvaprābudhārupās caikasya citrikiyātattvādyaṁ pariṇāma. . . . VPvṛ 196: 3–6. This line appears again in BS with a slight modification: ekṣayaivātmanas tathā tathā vipariṇāmād vivarttanād vā BS 8:8. Particularly, the passage: vāgrūpaṇvitaḥ ca jagad ato vāc vôp vipariṇāmaḥ vivartto vāvasyate (BS 18:2) is conceptually closer to the philosophy of Bhartrhari.

there are multiple instances in VP that explain this concept. In Bhartrhrari’s
description, *prakṛti*, whether existing or non-existing, is transforming, and this
understanding is at variance with the Sāńkhya concept. Because *prakṛti* is one of
the synonyms for *avidyā*, this definition of *prakṛti* is identical to the Advaita
concept. In another instance, Bhartrhari states that this *prakṛti* is dependent upon
the speaker who determines whether something is existing or non-existing. The
entities arising due to the ‘powers’ that are identified as existing or non-existing are
described in the same terminology of both existing and non-existing. This concept
deviates from the model of origination as accepted in the Sāńkhya school and is identical to Advaita.

As Thrasher points out, Maṇḍana does not describe *avidyā* in terms of power (*sakti*). His application of *avidyā* is epistemological, as it mediates the cog-
nitive process, giving rise to manifold ideas of a single object. This *avidyā* is
often identified with imagination (*kalpanā*), and described as indeterminable.
The first in this context, the term *kalpanā* is used by Maṇḍana as synonymous
with *avidyā*. Adopting this terminology, Maṇḍana describes that both bondage
and liberation are the objects of imagination (*kalpita-visāya*). This presentation
resonates with Bhartrhari’s application of this term. For instance, according to
Bhartrhari, the oneness of time as either existent or non-existent is mere
imagination (*kalpanā*). Along the same lines, Bhartrhari describes the mani-
festation of the highest principle into multiple forms as non-substantial *kal-
panā*. For him, this manifoldness is due to the imagination (*kalpanā*) that rests
on intellect. Manifestation of the entities in sequence, along the same lines,
depends upon imagination (*kalpanā*).
Nirupākhya and Anirvacanīya

Crucial to understanding the nature of avidyā is its indescribable nature. The argument is that Manḍala’s application of the term anirvacanīya that describes the concept that ignorance cannot be defined either as existing or as non-existing is conceptually closer to Bhartrhari’s application of the term nirupākhya. Thrasher suggests that, although both nirupākhya and anupākhya mean ‘indescribable,’ the term nirupākhya is used in BS to refer to the ‘void of all positive qualities’ and ‘utterly non-existent’ (Thrasher 1993, p. 18). Manḍana does state that ‘there is no particularity in the nirupākhya of the absence of pramāṇa and the absence of prameya’ {tayoh}.17 What is noteworthy in this statement is that Manḍana identifies indeterminacy (nirupākhya) of absence (abhāva) and not nirupākhya as absence (abhāva). Based on the observation made earlier that Manḍana is closely reading Bhartrhari’s writings while composing BS, it is reasonable to examine some application of the term nirupākhya in Bhartrhari’s literature.

Bhartrhari states that even the entity that exists (sat) can be compared to something non-existent, if that entity is not within the domain of speech.18 In this way, he is comparing something that cannot be determined by language to something that does not exist, although this process of comparison does not mean that, following VPvr, something that is not determined by language is identical to something non-existent. The distinction between indeterminable and non-existent is maintained also in Manḍana’s Vibhramaviveka (VV 133c–136d). Arguably, in the case of anirvacanīya or in the case of nirupākhya, the issue is that of determining the meaning of negation. If the meaning of negation, found with the prefix nañ, were to be explained in any positive terms, it would not be negation.

In reading Bhartrhari’s writings closely, we find that he uses nirupākhya and anākhya as synonymous.19 In another application, he not only analyzes nirupākhya in four categories but also uses the term sopākhya in a parallel structure as the antonym of nirupākhya.20 In VPvr, nirupākhya often appears with its counter term, sopākhya.21

An exploration into other contemporaneous applications of the term nirupākhya in the classical literature can determine whether it is used to refer to ‘totally non-existent.’ There are a few passages from the Dvādasārānayacakra (DNC) of Mallavādin and the Nyāyāgamānasūrinī commentary of Simhasūri thereon, noteworthy in this context.

17 yady evām pramānābhaśvo viśaya uktāḥ syān nāstī tād bhīṣabdāyos tatram ko ‘parādhāḥ syāt prameyābhāvasya yena tām atilāṅghya pramānābhāvo viśaya ucyate na hi tayor nirupākhya vate kāścid viśeṣaḥ | BS 93:21–94:2.
18 sad api vāgyavāhārenānupagrhitam artharūpam asatā tulyam | VPvr 186:3.
19 yathā nirupākhyaṃ. . . tathā anākhyaṃ | VP II.233.
20 VP.III.14.263-265.
21 tatraśvaye katham hi syāt sopākhyanirupākhya tāt | VPvr 32:2; . . . satām asatām vā sopākhya-nirupākhya tāt | VPvr 83:1–2; avidheyam vastu nirupākhya eva tulyam VPvr 95:1.
Simhasūri defines nirupākhyya as something that does not have any distinct name. Based on this etymological understanding, he explains that it is not appropriate to identify something that exists as sopākhya and something that does not exist as nirupākhyya, saying that even the entities that exist can be indescribable (anupaśkhyya). Furthermore, he explains that even the entity that does not exist is not necessarily devoid of description (nirupākhyya), because it is described in a generic sense as non-existing. These instances suggest that the term nirupākhyya is used in the sense of something that cannot be described.

This investigation of the meaning of the term anākhyeya as used by these scholars is very close to the Advaitin’s application of the term anirvacanīya. Thrasher suggests that the application of anirvacanīya in Manḍana’s writing may be due to ‘misreading of the places where Śaṅkara uses the tattvānyatvābhyaṁ anirvacanīya formula’ (Thrasher 1993, p. 28). This observation is arguable for a number of reasons. One, the history of Śaṅkara and Manḍana, with Manḍana being posterior to Śaṅkara, is not settled. Two, Manḍana appears to be developing this concept based on earlier literature, such as VP, VPvr, and the texts cited in VPvr. As for instance:

\[
mūrttikriyāvivarttāv avidyāsaktiprayīttimātram tau vidyātmanī tattvānyatvābhyaṁ anākhyeyau | etaddhi avidyāyā avidyātvan iti |
\]

\[
VPvr 9:1–3
\]

\[
avidyāyā avidyātvan anyathā parihiyate ||
sadasadbhyāṁ anirvācyāṁ tām avidyām pracaksate ||
\]

Vibhramaviveka 28cd–29ab

If we compare three applications, the VPvr passage [tattvānyatvābhyaṁ anākhyeyaa], Śaṅkara’s passage [tattvānyatvābhyaṁ anirvācyaa], and Manḍana’s passage [sadasadbhyāṁ anirvācyam],

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22 \[upaśkhyā samjñā, nirgatopākhyam tvatparikalpitagatayabhāvamātrasthānam tat prāpnotī DNC, Nyāyāgamānusāriṇī 546:3–4.\]

23 \[yadapi ca vaidharmyam ucyate sat sopākhyaṁ asan nirupākhyam iti tad-api nopapadyate sato ’py anupākhyatvatā \| atha ca nirupākhyatāyām api naivā taś atat, sāmānyasopākhyatvatā DNC 664.\]

24 See for other instances:

1. ghaṭo desaḥbhedā yāvan nirupākhyasāḥ kālabhedena ca paramaniruddhakṣaṇotpatti-nirupākhyāśo bhidyate (DNC 228:7–8). The commentary Nyāyāgamānusāriṇī of Simhasuragaṇi here runs as:
   desaḥbhedā ghaṭo bhydymānaṁ rūpacābhedena bhidyate yāvan nirupākhyasāḥ, kālabhedena ca bhydyamānaṁ paramaniruddhakṣaṇotpatti-vināśanirupākhyāśo bhidyate.

2. atha nirupākhyam eva tvatparikalpitagatayabhāvamātrasthānam prāpnotī, abhāvavatā (DNC 545:12–13).

3. sad asadeva tu sopākhyanirupākhyatvatā, sāmānyavat (DNC 666).
   nirupākhyān ca nāsyopākhyāstā, vastuvat-vastuña iva sambandhisāmānyāyām upākhyāvā nasti, sāmānyadeḥ sāmānyāyāntiṣ uvācīmābhavād iti sopākhyam eva nirupākhyam (Nyāyāgamānusārīnt 666:15–17).
not only does Śaṅkara appear indebted to the early texts such as that one cited in VPṛ, but the application of the term anākhya in the early literature also appears to have been replaced by anirvācyā in the subsequent Advaita literature.

The Advaita understanding of erroneous cognition rests upon the assumption of avidyā. Reasonably, application of prīthag iva (as if different) and similar terminology in Bhārtṛhari’s writings provide a conceptual framework for the rise of the Advaita doctrine of erroneous cognition (khyāti).

Both Bhārtṛhari and the Advaitins accept that the highest principle assumes manifoldness while remaining one in its essential nature. The only noteworthy difference is that for Bhārtṛhari, it is through ‘the powers’ inherent to the Brahman that the word principle assumes manifoldness. Bhārtṛhari cites the position of some who accept that the distinction perceived in the world is due to the distinction in cognition of a single entity.

This position tallies with the Advaita understanding that it is only due to ignorance that differentiation arises. In the same way, following a passage found in VPṛ, the appearance of the word principle in manifold forms is compared to the awareness, which in itself is devoid of forms and free from difference, appears in plurality, assuming the forms of the objects of cognition. Strikingly, the singularity of the word principle, the doctrine under discussion, is compared here with the singularity of awareness itself, the concept crucial to Advaita. Bhārtṛhari’s depiction of the false projection of plurality with the example of a mirror where the entities are perceived although without actually being there tallies with the Advaita model of pratibimba.

In this description of the false appearance, Bhārtṛhari also utilizes the example of firebrand, central to the fourth chapter of Gaṇḍapāda’s Kārikās. This description of false appearance is also crucial in understanding the nature of difference (bheda) in Bhārtṛhari’s philosophy, as he identifies it as caused due to contrary perception (viparyāṣa) that is conceptually similar to the appearance of something as the other (anyathākhyāti).

25 For instance, this is the one entity that is identified in various distinctive forms: eko ’py anekavartmeva sanāmānāth prthak prthak | VP.I.5.

26 ekam eva yadāmnātāṁ bhinnam śaktivyapāśrayat | aprthaktve ’pi śaktibhyah prthaktvan eva varttate | VP.I.2.

27 buddhībhedad abhinnasya bhedam eke pracakṣaye | VP.I.45.

28 abhinnam api jñānam arupam sarvajneyaropagrahītvad bhedarupatayā pratyavabhāsate ... śabdālogyam evadā vānmanasākhyam avibhāgam anyathā pratīyata iti | VPvr 152:6–153:1.

29 viruddhaparimāṇaṁ vajrādarsātalaliṣu | parvatādisarupāṃ bhāvānāṃasti sambhavah | VP.I.100.

30 atyantam atathābhūte nimitte śrutapāśrayat | drṣyate ’lātacakraḍau vastvākārānirupāṇi | VP.I.129.

31 For instance: prasiddhaṛthavipaśyāsaniṁnитam yacca drṣyate | yas tasmāl lakṣyate bhedas tam asatyam pracakṣaye | VP.II.289.
conditioned due to difference in space, time, and the sense organs. This rejection of difference is fundamental to Bhartrhari’s philosophy.

Two Roles of Avidyā

The Advaita understanding of avidyā in subsequent literature can be read in light of categories discussed in Bhartrhari’s philosophy. For instance, Vācaspati is credited with accepting the difference between māyā and avidyā. In scholastic Advaita, avidyā is recognized as having two different powers, that of concealing the true nature (āvaraṇa) and of false projection (vikṣepa). Furthermore, Vācaspati is also credited with propounding the avaccheda model of Advaita, with the acceptance that individual selves (jīvas) are limitations (avaccheda) of Brahman. These depictions of avidyā, its nature and role, approximate Bhartrhari’s depiction of the powers inherent to the word principle (śabda), giving rise to plurality.

One among the powers of the word principle is time (kāla). The language Bhartrhari uses in describing the role of ‘time’ (kāla) is noteworthy. The ‘time’ of Bhartrhari has the powers of past and future with the ability to conceal entities and the power of present time to reveal them (VP.III.9.537). These two aspects of hiding and illuminating are compared with darkness and light (VP.III.9.540). Bhartrhari also cites the position of those who accept only two powers of time in the form of past and future, with which time reveals (unmīlana) and conceals (nimīlana) entities. The powers attributed here to time are similar to the powers of false projection (vikṣepa) and concealment (āvaraṇa), the two powers of avidyā. Bhartrhari also describes two functions of time in terms of seeing (darsāna) and not seeing (adarsāna) (VP.III.9.548). Most noteworthy is the statement that these are considered to be the conditions of ignorance (line 549).

Early Advaita maintains that Brahman assumes manifold forms through its own powers, without being dependent upon avidyā for the rise of plurality contrary to the position found in scholastic Advaita. This position can also be found in VPvr, where the text mentions that the imagination of manifoldness is due to the limitation of the intellect by two different powers of the very self. Consistent in VP and VPvr is the position that the twofold powers of concealing the real entity and revealing it as something else belong either to time or to the self. These twofold powers are attributed to avidyā in subsequent Advaita.

Although the Advaita position concerning the two functions of avidyā is generally found in terms of concealment (āvaraṇa) and projection (vikṣepa), this is not always the case. Vācaspati identifies these two functions of ignorance as laya and

32 deśakalendriyagatair bhedair yad drṣyate ‘nyathā | yathā prasiddhir lokasya tathā tad avasiyate || VP.II.296.
33 dve eva kālaṣya vibhoḥ keśānēc śaktivartmaṇi | karoti yāhhyām bhāvānām unmīlanaṇānimīlana || VP.III.9.543.
34 paksāntare tv ekasyaivātmanāḥ śaktidvyayapravibhāgarūpyaparigrahakṛtād buddhyavacchedān nānātvakalpanā VPvr 103:3.

S. Timalsina
vikṣepa, and this position is developed in his commentary upon Śaṅkara’s position of non-qualified avidyā and the avidyā qualified by passion etc. This application of laya and vikṣepa resonates of Gaudapāda’s usage. Two states of consciousness, svapna and nidrā are caused by ignorance, which, following Gaudapāda, are ‘grasping reality otherwise’ and ‘not knowing the reality.’ Reasonably, this depiction also relies on the twofold nature of ignorance.

Fundamentally, the appearance of a single entity in manifold forms, propounded by Bhārtṛhari and the Advaita Vedāntins, rests upon the twofold nature of the agent. This agent, for Bhārtṛhari, is found in plurality as the inherent powers (śakti) of Brahman, whereas it is avidyā for the Advaitins following the Upaniṣadic tradition. This concept is inherently linked with the concept of false appearance (vivartta), also common to both the schools of linguistic and Upaniṣadic non-dualism.

The Concepts of Vivartta, Ābhāsa and Pratibimba

The model of causality congruent with the concept of vivartta is that the highest principle does not transform into the form of the world. This concept confirms the non-substantiality of the effect, which differs from the example of clay transforming into pots or gold into various ornaments. This model of non-dualism that depends upon the application of vivartta differs from the early monistic thoughts in which the very Brahman assumes manifoldness. In the sense of the application of vivartta to describe causality, the scholastic Advaita begins with Bhārtṛhari.

The concept of vivartta is one of the key components that can demonstrate Bhārtṛhari’s influence upon scholastic Advaita. Scholars such as Thrasher have pointed out the relationship of Bhārtṛhari’s concept of vivartta in the Advaita philosophy of Maṇḍana. Although the available literature leads us to Bhārtṛhari for the application of vivartta, in light of the citations found in VPvr, it can be

35 Saṅkara’s position: na cesvaro vaisāmyahetur ityuktiṁ na cāvidyā kevalā vaisāmyasya kāraṇam; eka-rāptvāṁ rāgadiklesavanāksiptakarmāpy eṣa tv avidyā kevalā vaisāmyakari syāt The Bhāsya of Saṅkara on Brahmasūtra 2.1.36.

The commentary of Vācaspati thereon: kevaleti layābhikprāyaṁ vikṣepalaksanāvidyāsamskāras tu kāryavatvā svotpattau pūrvam vikṣepam apekṣate tv vikṣepaṁ ca mithyāpratvayō mōhāparanāmā punyāpyunyapravṛttihetubhūtārāgadveṣanidānam Bhāmati on the Bhāsya of Saṅkara, Brahmasūtra 2.1.36.

36 Gaudapādakārikā 3.35, 42, 44, 46. Thrasher has connected laya and vikṣepa with the two aspects of avidyā. See Thrasher (1993, pp. 71–74).

37 anyathā grhnataḥ svapno nidrā tatvam ajānatāḥ | Gaudapādakārikā 1.15.

38 Thrasher (1993, pp. 39–50).
argued that the application of the term *vivartta* was not unique to Bhartrhari, but was in common usage during his time.\(^{39}\)

The citations found in the VP\(v\)r utilizing the terminology of *vivartta* are of two types. The first is where the concept is explicitly related to linguistic usage, such as *vivartta* occurring through the parts of word (*śabdamātrā*), or assuming *vivartta* in the form of word. The second, and the more prevalent usage found in VP\(v\), is in the same sense as it is applied in Advaita, describing both aspects of *vivartta* as the false appearance of form and that of action as the functioning of the power of ignorance. In either case, the presentation of *vivartta* comes in the context of discussing the concept of difference (*bheda*). The application of *vivartta* found in VP\(v\)r to describe that consciousness is that what assumes manifoldness through *vivartta* without actually undergoing difference is noteworthy, as this is not describing the word (*śabda*) but rather consciousness (*caitanya*) assuming *vivartta*, which is actually the subject matter of Upaniṣadic Advaita. What is significant is not only the application of the term *vivartta* in Maṇḍana’s writings, but also its absence from Gauḍapāda’s and Śaṅkara’s literature. The select application of the term *vivartta* in VP and VP\(v\)r or the citations thereon are not sufficient to decide whether this term was originally used in the linguistic context or in other cosmological meaning. The application of *vivartta* in the philosophy of language, its possible application in the philosophical context of *bhedābheda*, or its affinity to other schools of thought are some reasons that may have hindered some Advaitins from the use of this term.

The doctrine of Ābhāsa, with the concept of plurality as the false appearance of one supreme principle, becomes one of the prominent models of Advaita subsequent to Śaṅkara. The VP\(v\)r utilizes terms synonymous to Ābhāsa, such as *pratyabhāsa*, *avabhāsa*, or *avabhaṣa*, as interchangeable with the concept of *vivartta*. After defining *vivartta*, VP\(v\)r gives an example of dream entities and applies the term *pratibhaṣa*.\(^{40}\) Extrapolating from the citation found in VP\(v\), ābhāsa bears an equal degree of reality to something imagined (*parikalpita*).\(^{41}\) This understanding of ābhāsa also explains the process in which something beyond sequence assumes sequence (*krama*).\(^{42}\) A single entity assuming multiple forms is described in this depiction in terms of ābhāsa.\(^{43}\)

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39 The citations with *vi+vr* in VP\(v\)r are:
1. *muṛttikriyāvivarttāv avidyāsaktipraavṛttimātram* | VP\(v\)r 9:1-2;
2. *bhedārūpaṃ vivarttate* | VP\(v\)r 14:2;
3. *vivrttam śabdamātrābhyaṃ*. . . VP\(v\)r 14:4;
4. *asmin evāpāre tamasi vīte vivarttate* VP\(v\)r 24:1;
5. *vivrāvrttam bahuḥhānākam caitanyam*. . . VP\(v\)r 34:8;
6. *tejasaiṅa vivarttate* VP\(v\)r 175:2;
7. *sabdātvena vivarttate* VP\(v\)r 174:6;

Also noteworthy is the citation: *nāmaivedam rūpatvena vavrte*. . . VP\(v\)r 42:5;

40 ekasya tatvdāpapracyutasya bhedāmukārenāsyavibhaktānārupagrāhītāḥ *vivarttāḥ* | svapnav-isyāyatpratibhāsavit | VP\(v\)r 8:3–9:1.

41 *abhāse “py anavasthitah l . . . parikalpitaḥ ll cited in VP\(v\)r 10:3-4.

42 *kramavānivibhāsopagamō lakṣate* | VP\(v\)r 19:1.

43 *eka evāyaṃ śabdātmā kramotpānāvayavārupaprātyayabhāsāḥ prakāśate*. . . VP\(v\)r 58:1-2.
The concept of ābhāsa rejects the ontological being of external entities, identifying them as mere appearance. One clear example of the application of this term can be found when VPvr identifies the appearance of concepts in the form of the external entities in terms of pratyavabhāsa. This term explains the appearance of distinctness in the entity that in reality is not distinct. Use of the term nirbhāsa also confirms the same false appearance. In all contexts, the false appearance depends upon not knowing the reality and perceiving it otherwise, the function of avidyā.

Based on the evidence discussed above, it is reasonable to say that the specific Advaita model of Ābhāsa draws from early sources that include VPvr. This, however, is not the only terminology that is commonly shared in VP–VPvr and the scholastic Advaita of Śaṅkara. The application of the terminology of pratibimba, which again suggests the specific school of Advaita attributed to Padmapāda, is commonly found in the literature of Bhārtṛhari. Although the Advaita model of Padmapāda is somewhat different from that of Maṇḍana, the application of the terminology of prabimbha occurs frequently in Maṇḍana’s writings as well. The concept of pratibimba most likely represents Advaita in general, as Rāmānuja criticizes Maṇḍana’s model of Advaita with the example of counter-image, suggesting that the Advaita known to rivals of Advaita through the writings of Maṇḍana included the example of pratibimba.

In the early literature, the application of the term vivartta appears to describe the process by which the singular entity becomes many. This, then, may not refer to the specific application found in scholastic Advaita, that of false appearance. The early understanding of vivartta does not pose a direct contradiction to the concept of parināma wherein the effect is present in its cause. The concept of parināma apparently describes origination in early Advaita, with the analogy of gold and ornaments or clay and clay-pots. Although this concept of parināma is not directly rejected by Maṇḍana, he is nonetheless explicit in the application of vivartta with an example of the image of reflection.

Although a seeming difference in the application of parināma and vivartta is visible in the writings of Bhārtṛhari and Maṇḍana, terms such as ābhāsa and pratibimba, often used in Advaita literature to describe the process of vivartta, do not pose any conceptual difference in their writings. After all, these terms are used to describe the non-substantiality of entities. Bhārtṛhari uses the term pratibimba for the first time in VP with an application of √bhās (to shine forth) (VP 1.20). This use of the example of counter-image and the description of the false appearance comes in the sequence of the use of vivartta in VP 1.18. This is to suggest that Bhārtṛhari’s application of vivartta is not necessarily in the sense of the one becoming many, but describes the non-transforming nature of the cause.

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44 arthasarārapratyavabhāsānām vā pratyayānāṃ bāhyesv arthesu pratyaśtānām. . VPvr 60:2.
45 ...pratyavabhāsamātrāyām prthagbhūtāyām iva. . VPvr 112:3-4.
46 ...udadayapratyastamayanirbhāsā. . VPvr 111:2.
The application of *pratibimba* to portray non-substantial appearance frequently occurs in Bhartrhari’s writings. He uses it to delineate the imposition of motion on the surface to the motion seen in reflection (VP 1.49). The application of *pratibimba* also occurs in the context of describing how a single *sphota* assumes the manifoldness of sound (VP 1.49), in the sequence of explaining causality ‘as if endowed with difference’ (*bheda*vān iva) (VP 1.48) found in the sequence of the application of the term derived with *vi+p+vr* (VP 1.47). The VPvr in 1.47 describes this process of manifestation into plurality as ‘attaining false appearance (*prāpta*vivarttena); this line is related to the commentary on the next verse which utilizes *pratyavabhāsa*, which in turn is related with the application of *pratibimba* in VP 1.49. The point is, it is not reasonable to dissociate these applications that are found in the same sequence and attribute to them different nuances in the use of *vivartta* and *pratibimba*.

Even the application of the term *parināma* in Bhartrhari’s literature does not necessarily suggest a real causality, as in the examples of picture, firebrand, *gandharvanagara*, clay dolls, dream etc. (VP II.290–295). The application of the metaphor of counter-image also describes the process where time, the foundation of the elements, assumes their forms (VP III.9.527). In another example, the appearance of consciousness imposed on unconscious entities is explained as *pratibimba* (VP III.14.1026). These applications are identical to that found in the Upaniṣadic Advaita tradition. Describing the cosmic order of how Brahman, consciousness in itself, assumes the forms of unconscious entities, the example of *pratibimba* used by Bhartrhari is identical to its Advaita application. In the Advaita of Maṇḍana and Śaṅkara, it is through the agency of avidyā that this *pratibimba* of Brahman occurs.

The use of the example of counter-image shifts the paradigm of Advaita from the early example of gold and ornaments, where gold itself turns into ornaments, just like the counter-images which appear without any obstruction or modification to the image itself. This example also differs from examples of illusion, such as the sight of two moons due to deformity in the eyes, or to the appearance of a snake instead of the actual rope, due to erroneous cognition. The example of *pratibimba* does not necessarily describe monism. What is nonetheless significant in the application of this example in Bhartrhari’s literature is its monistic background. Application of the examples of both *pratibimba* and *vivartta*, common among the early grammarians, describe a single entity assuming manifold forms. In agreement with this position, VPvr 1.70 utilizes the example of counter-image in the process of explaining causality, following the position of those who propound oneness (*ekatvavādīn*).50 In this context of describing the position of the oneness of phonemes giving rise to a plurality of words, VPvr uses *pratyavabhāsa* with the example of counter-image.51 This application allows us to relate the concepts of *vivartta* with the application of ābhāsa and *pratibimba*.

In later scholastic Advaita, the terms *pratibimba* and *avaccheda* describe two different streams of thought, where the first model that explains the individual self

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51 *nimittabhedā bhinnesu pratyoktuṃ deśapraṇthakte ‘pi bhedarūpena pratyavabhāsamāna eka evāyam akāraś chāyādarśajalādipraptibimbabhedakalpena loke prayuyate* VPvr 135:4-6.

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as the reflection of the absolute is attributed to Padmapāda, and the second that propounds the individual selves as limitations of the Brahman is attributed to Vācaspati. In the Advaita of Manḍana, whose imprint in Vācaspati is explicit, this distinction is not clear. Although the concepts that there exist plurality of jīvas and these are the support for ignorance and Brahma, thus, is merely the object being perceived as many due to ignorance is prevalent in Manḍana’s thought and which also continues to exist in Vācaspati’s presentation of Advaita, the very terms pratibimba and avaccheda are not used to pose this distinction.

The argument that Vācaspati does not accept the concept of pratibimba is grounded upon the discussion wherein he rejects reflection of the formless Brahman.52 What is particularly relevant is that this rejection comes in the context of presenting a prima facie view in order to establish superimposition (adhyāsa). Vācaspati utilizes the suffix ~kalpa with the term pratibimba, in the process of presenting the concept that he eventually refutes.53 This refutation, however, is merely to reject that the self assumes jīvahood in reality. Thus this rejection does not contradict with the acceptance of jīva as pratibimba in the conventional level. Sufficient to confirm that these two terms do not pose contradiction in the Advaita of Vācaspati, he uses both the terms avaccheda and pratibimba in the same sequence in describing the nature of individual selves in another context.54 Merely the application of the suffix ~kalpa in Vācaspati’s presentation is not sufficient to make an argument that he does not favor the application of pratibimba, as even Padmapāda utilizes the same terminology in describing the nature of individual self.55 In fact, the metaphor of image and counter-image does not limit the Brahman as image or the individual self as counter-image. This is why Padmapāda describes also Brahman as bimbakalpa, and not as bimba in the next line in the same context. Whether or not these terms are used in the absolute sense, it is reasonable on these grounds to argue that although later scholastic Advaita treats avaccheda and pratibimba as two different models, it is not possible to make this distinction in the early application of the terms pratibimba and avaccheda. It is nevertheless reasonable that different scholars have slightly different understandings in their application of these terms.56

Although the early application of the terminology of avaccheda may not be to refer to the same concept of Advaita, exegeses evolve on the ground of the application of terms such as this in the early literature. It is therefore contextual to

52 rūpavād hi dravyam atisvacchatayā rūpavato dravyāntarasaya tadvivekena grhyamāṇasyāpi chhāyāṁ ghrṛṇyāt | cidāmā tu arūpo viśayī na viśayac chhāyāṁ udgrāhāyitum arhaī l yaṭhāḥuḥ-śabdagandharasādīnām kīḍṛśi pratibimbataīt | Bhāmati on the Bhāṣya of Sāṃkara on Brahmaśūtra. See Joshi (1982, pp. 7-8).


55 jīvah punah pratibimkalpah sarveṣām naḥ prayākṣaś cidrūpah Vivaraṇa 189:2–190:1.

56 Siddhāntālaśasamgraha (the first chapter) separately treats pratibimba and avaccheda, explaining the nature of individual soul. The texts cited by Appayya for establishing pratibimba are Pratjārthavivaraṇa, Tattvaviveka, Saṅkṣepaśārīraka, Pañcadaśi, Vivaraṇa and Kalpataru.
examine the instances of *avaccheda* in the writings of Maṇḍana, exploring the possibility whether his usage echoes similarities found in Bhartrhari’s writings. Maṇḍana, in one instance, states that the self, though being one, appears as if bound in one part through its contact with pain and pleasure, and unbound in another.\(^{57}\) This application resonates of the concept of *avaccheda*, where the same self manifests as many being conditioned in different *antahkaranas* and assumes bondage and liberation. It is noteworthy that this discussion comes in the sequence following examples of the reflection of face in crystal, a sword, or mirror. The example of the reflection in a mirror also follows this discussion. This passage of Maṇḍana compares favorably to the examples used by Bhartrhari.\(^{58}\) Significantly, while describing *jīva* as the limitation of Brahman with the example of the sky in the jar, Maṇḍana also describes Brahman as the image (*bimba*) that gives rise to a counter-image (*pratibimba*).\(^{59}\) Maṇḍana repeatedly uses the example of reflection in order to describe the distinction of *jīva* from Brahman.\(^{60}\) With these examples, Maṇḍana suggests that the realization is the knowledge of the foundation of reflection, the knowledge of water in the example of reflection in water.\(^{61}\)

The point then is to interpret the application of *pratibimba* in the writings of Maṇḍana that does not contradict with his assumption that this does not contradict with the plurality of *jīvas* and them being the substrate of ignorance, which is not always the case with other models of Advaita. As are these terms found common in Maṇḍana’s writing that do not make any particular distinction, even the terms such as *parināma* and *vivartta* sometimes overlap, that are used in other contexts to present two contradictory doctrines of causality.\(^{62}\) The example of the counter-image in the mirror to describe the manifold appearance of the self, applied by Maṇḍana in this context, is not only describing *vivartta*, this example is shared also to describe the term *parināma*.

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\(^{57}\) *eko ’py ātma pradesāḥ sukhadukkhādibhir yuṣyamānas tatra baddha ivetaratra mukta iva ca gamyate* BS 7:11-12.

\(^{58}\) Compare: *tathā manikṛpanādarpanādiṣu mukhādīnāṁ varṇasaṃsthānahedavyavasthānams upalabhyaṃ bhedābhāve ’pi* BS 7:9-10.

And,

*viruddhaparimāneṣu vajrārdṣatalādīṣu \| parvataūdisvaruṣpāṇām bhāvānāṁ nāsti sambhavah ||* VP I.100.

\(^{59}\) *avyatireke ’pi ca brahmaṇo jīvānāṁ bimbapatibimbalavad vidyāvidyāvyavasthāṃ vyākhyātā BS 12:10-11; avidyāyaiva tu brahmaṇo jīvo vibhaktas tannivṛttau brahmavabhāvam eva bhavati yathā ghatādibhede tadhākāsām pariśuddhām paramākāsām eva bhavati BS 12:21-22.*

\(^{60}\) *na ca tāvad bimbād avadātāt pratibimbam kṛpaṇādiṣu bhinnam BS 11:11-12; drṣto hi manikṛpaṇaardarpanādiṣy abhiyamukhopādānas tadbhedāḥ BS 72:5; yathā ca sphaṅkikardarpanādayaḥ svacchāḥ .. taccchāyāppattiyā nityacaitanyo ’pi* BS 15:26–16:3.

See also BS, *Tarkaṅḍa*, verses 30-31 for further discussion.

\(^{61}\) *BS 13:18.*

\(^{62}\) *... viparināmād vivarttanād vā darpanatāla ivātmanāḥ* BS 8:8-9.

[It is] due to *viparināma* or *vivartta* of the self, like in the surface of a mirror.
Maṇḍana argues that the real Brahman can be realized through the knowledge of the Brahman that is bound by ignorance. He supports this with an example derived from Bharṭṛhari’s discussion that the lines that constitute letters are not themselves the letters but nonetheless signify them. This example occurs in conjunction with the term pratibimba. Maṇḍana also explains phoneme, word, and sentence with the concept of the image and counter-image, further suggesting Bharṭṛhari’s influence. These applications provide a framework for subsequent Advaitins to describe the nature of avidyā. What is significant is that the application of the terminology crucial to scholastic Advaita are found prevalent in the same meaning in the literature of Bharṭṛhari. This not only provides a link between Bharṭṛhari and Maṇḍana, it supports to contemplate upon the depth of the influence of the non-dual philosophy of language in the Upaniṣadic philosophy of Advaita.

Conclusion

The arguments presented in this paper are not to discredit the contribution of Maṇḍana in the development of Upaniṣadic non-dualism. This is only to explore the intricate relationship of early philosophers, in this case, Bharṭṛhari and Maṇḍana. This case study also allows one to explore the influence of the Upaniṣadic and linguistic philosophies in classical India. This historical relationship also supports establishing relationship between the cognitive process of linguistic comprehension and the realization of the self, the concept that is at the epicenter of the Upaniṣadic thinking.

Based on the arguments presented in this paper, it is reasonable to come to the conclusion that the philosophy of Maṇḍana is saturated with the thought of Bharṭṛhari and the early Advaita that is known to the author of VPvr. The concept of Avidyā is pivotal to the scholastic Advaita of Śaṅkara. Based on this study, Bharṭṛhari is to be credited for various nuances of the category of avidyā. The presupposition of vivartta or the concept of false appearance described in any other term such as ābhāsa or pratibimba appears to have intricate relationship with the concept of avidyā. Vivartta describes the fact that plurality experienced in the world is not real. In the quest of the cause, the answer is, it is avidyā that gives rise to vivartta. It is possible that the Upaniṣadic traditions existing prior to Bharṭṛhari’s time utilized concepts such as avidyā in order to describe the diversity of phenomena while adopting the singularity of the Brahman. The philosophy of Bharṭṛhari, nevertheless, has an unmistakable imprint in Maṇḍana’s formulation of the concept of avidyā, its two functions of concealing the truth and projecting it as something else, the concept of vivartta, and, along the same lines, the application of the example of counter-image (pratibimba) to describe non-substantiality of the phenomena.

63 BS 14:5-6.
64 BS 125:18-126:4.
References


Vivarāṇa. See Paścāpakādikā of Padmapāda. With Vivaraṇa of Prakāśātman, Tattvadipana of Akhaṇḍānanda, and Rjuvivaraṇa of Viṣṇubhaṭṭa. 

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