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 *māyā*, 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 (*viṣaya*), and the distinction in *avidyā* between non-apprehension and
misapprehension. A closer investigation shows that Maṇḍana is directly influenced
by Bhartṛhari's linguistic non-dualism in developing the concept of *avidyā*. This
study also compares other key constituents such as *vivartta* and *pariṇāma* 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 Bhartṛhari and Maṇḍana.

Keywords   Maṇḍana · Bhartṛhari · *avidyā* · *vivartta* · *pariṇāma* · *ābhāsa* · *prat-
ibimba* · *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

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appears to be a snake through erroneous cognition. The first method, the transformation of Brahman or *pariṇāma*, 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 Gauḍapāda 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 Bhartṛhari 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 Bhartṛhari—support each other, as Bhartṛhari in his philosophical treatises draws upon a wide range of literature. The scope of this essay is to examine how the philosophy of Bhartṛhari influences subsequent Advaita. Specifically, this paper explores the influence of the concept of *avidyā* found in Bhartṛhari's writings upon the *Brahmasiddhi* (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 Sureśvara and Padmapāda assert that there is a singular *avidyā* identical to *māyā*, 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,*

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[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 Maṇḍana's thought, but also to learn the interrelationship among classical Indian philosophies.

In light of the findings that Maṇḍana, while composing BS, was closely reading the *Vākyapadīya* (VP) and the *Vṛtti* (VPvṛ) thereon,[3] it is reasonable to investigate Bhartṛhari's influence on Maṇḍana's understanding of *avidyā*. Identifying the imprint of Bhartṛhari's thought that can be found in Maṇḍana'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, Maṇḍana does. Given the fact that Bhartṛhari is the first known philosopher to utilize the term *vivartta*, this investigation becomes essential in understanding the depth of ideological influence of Bhartṛhari upon Maṇḍana's thought.[4] 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 *ābhāsa, 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 Maṇḍana's BS.[5] 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,

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[3] The essay "The Brahman and the Word Principle (*Śabda*): Influence of the Philosophy of Bhartṛhari on Maṇḍana's *Brahmasiddhi*" is in progress.

[4] Hacker points out that Śaṅkara does not utilize the term *vivartta*. See Hacker (1953).
Maṇḍana uses the term *vivartta* in his description: *draṣṭur eva cidātmanas tathā tathā vipariṇāmād vivarttanād vā* | BS 7:24. The application here reminds one of the VPvṛ: *sa tu pratipuruṣam antaḥsanniviṣṭo bāhya iva pratyavabhāsate |* . . . *apareṣāṃ sarvaprabodharūpaś caikasya citi-kriyātattvasāyaṃ pariṇāma.* . . VPvṛ 196: 3–6. This line appears again in BS with a slight modification: *ekasyaivātmanas tathā tathā vipariṇāmād vivarttanād vā* BS 8:8. Particularly, the passage: *vāgrūpānvitañ ca jagad ato vāco vipariṇāmo vivartto vāvasīyate* (BS 18:2) is conceptually closer to the philosophy of Bhartṛhari.

[5] Thrasher (1993, p. 1).

> . . . *tattvānyatvābhyām anākhyeyau* | *etad dhi avidyāyā avidyātvam*
>
> VPvṛ 9:2–3
>
> . . . *tattvānyatvābhyāṃ sattvāsattvābhyāṃ cāniruktavirodhiśakti*. . .
>
> VPvṛ 21:3–4,

there are multiple instances in VP that explain this concept. In Bhartṛhari's depiction, *prakṛti*, whether existing or non-existing, is transforming,[6] and this understanding is at variance with the Sāṅkhya concept. Because *prakṛti* is one of the synonyms for *avidyā*,[7] this definition of *prakṛti* is identical to the Advaita concept. In another instance, Bhartṛhari states that this *prakṛti* is dependent upon the speaker who determines whether something is existing or non-existing.[8] 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.[9] With regard to these powers, the eternal principle is also known in the same terms of existing and non-existing.[10] This concept deviates from the model of origination as accepted in the Sāṅkhya school and is identical to Advaita.

As Thrasher points out, Maṇḍana does not describe *avidyā* in terms of power (*śakti*).[11] His application of *avidyā* is epistemological, as it mediates the cognitive 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-viṣaya*).[12] This presentation resonates of Bhartṛhari's application of this term. For instance, according to Bhartṛhari, the oneness of time as either existent or non-existent is mere imagination (*kalpanā*).[13] Along the same lines, Bhartṛhari describes the manifestation of the highest principle into multiple forms as non-substantial *kalpanā*.[14] For him, this manifoldness is due to the imagination (*kalpanā*) that rests on intellect.[15] Manifestation of the entities in sequence, along the same lines, depends upon imagination (*kalpanā*).[16]

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[6] *satī vāvidyamānā vā prakṛtiḥ pariṇāminī* VP III.7.47.

[7] *Pañcapādikāvivaraṇa* 173:1–174:1. The synonyms *avyākṛta* and *avyakta* mentioned here are also used as the synonyms of *prakṛti* elsewhere.

[8] *asatī vā satī vāpi vivakṣitanibandhanā* VP III.12.5.

[9] *tābhiḥ svaśaktibhiḥ sarvam sadaivāsti ca nāsti ca* VP III.9.59.

[10] *tasmāc chaktivibhāgena nityaḥ sadasadātmakaḥ* VP III.3.87.

[11] Thrasher (1993, p. 4).

[12] BS. Shastri (1984, 14:21–15:2). For discussion, see Thrasher (1993, pp. 8–9).

[13] VP III.9.88.

[14] VP III.1.22.

[15] VP III.14.16.

[16] VP III.7.8.

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Nirupākhya and *Anirvacanīya*

Crucial to understanding the nature of *avidyā* is its indescribable nature. The argument is that Maṇḍala'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 Bhartṛhari's application of the term *nirupākhya*. Thrasher suggests that, although both *nirupākhya* and *anupākhyeya* 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). Maṇḍana does state that 'there is no particularity in the *nirupākhyatva* of the absence of *pramāṇa* and the absence of *prameya*' {*tayoḥ*}.[17] What is noteworthy in this statement is that Maṇḍana identifies indeterminacy (*nirupākhyatva*) of absence (*abhāva*) and not *nirupākhya as* absence (*abhāva*). Based on the observation made earlier that Maṇḍana is closely reading Bhartṛhari's writings while composing BS, it is reasonable to examine some application of the term *nirupākhya* in Bhartṛhari's literature.

Bhartṛhari 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 VPvṛ, something that is not determined by language is identical to something non-existent. The distinction between indeterminable and non-existent is maintained also in Maṇḍana'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 Bhartṛhari's writings closely, we find that he uses *nirupākhya* and *anākhyeya* 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 VPvṛ, *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 *Dvādaśāranayacakra* (DNC) of Mallavādin and the *Nyāyāgamānusāriṇī* commentary of Siṃhasūri thereon, noteworthy in this context.

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[17] *yady evaṃ pramāṇābhāvo viṣaya uktaḥ syān nāstīti dhiśabdayos tatra ko 'parādhaḥ syāt prameyābhāvasya yena tam atilaṅghya pramāṇābhāvo viṣaya ucyate na hi tayor nirupākhyatve kaścid viśeṣaḥ* | BS 93:21–94:2.

[18] *sad api vāgvyavahāreṇānupagṛhītam artharūpam asatā tulyam* | VPvṛ 186:3.

[19] *yathā nirupākhyam. . . tathā anākhyeyā* | VP II.233.

[20] VP.III.14.263-265.

[21] *tatrādvaye katham hi syāt sopākhyanirupākhyatā* | VPvṛ 32:2; . . . *satām asatām vā sopākhyanirupākhyatvam* . . . VPvṛ 83:1–2; *avidheyaṃ vastu nirupākhyair eva tulyam* VPvṛ 95:1.

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na tad ekam nānyad vā vācyam nirupākhyatvāt DNC 317:2

avinidrāvasthātve saty apy asattve nirupākhyatvāt vāgbuddhigocarātikrāntatvāt

DNC, *Nyāyāgamānusāriṇī* 137:13–14

Siṃhasūri defines *nirupākhya* as something that does not have any distinct name.[22] 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 *nirupākhya*, saying that even the entities that exist can be indescribable (*anupākhya*). Furthermore, he explains that even the entity that does not exist is not necessarily devoid of description (*nirupākhya*), because it is described in a generic sense as non-existing.[23] These instances suggest that the term *nirupākhya* is used in the sense of something that cannot be described.[24]

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 Maṇḍana's writing may be due to 'misreading of the places where Śaṅkara uses the *tattvānyatvābhyām anirvacanīya* formula' (Thrasher 1993, p. 28). This observation is arguable for a number of reasons. One, the history of Śaṅkara and Maṇḍana, with Maṇḍana being posterior to Śaṅkara, is not settled. Two, Maṇḍana appears to be developing this concept based on earlier literature, such as VP, VPvṛ, and the texts cited in VPvṛ. For instance:

mūrttikriyāvivarttāv   avidyāśaktipravṛttimātram   tau   vidyātmani tattvānyatvvābhyām anākhyeyau | etaddhi avidyāyā avidyātvam iti |

VPvṛ 9:1–3

avidyāyā avidyātvam anyathā parihīyate ||
sadasadbhyām anirvācyām tām avidyām pracakṣate |

Vibhramaviveka 28cd–29ab

If we compare three applications,

the VPvṛ passage [*tattvānyatvābhyām anākhyeya*],

Śaṅkara's passage [*tattvānyatvābhyām anirvācya*],

and Maṇḍana's passage [*sadasadbhyām anirvācyam*],

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[22] *upākhyā samjñā, nirgatopākhyam tvatparikalpitagatyabhāvamātrasthānam tat prāpnoti* DNC, *Nyāyā-gamānusāriṇī* 546:3-4.

[23] *yadapi ca vaidharmyam ucyate sat sopākhyam asan nirupākhyam iti tad-api nopapadyate sato 'py anupākhyatvāt | atha ca nirupākhyatāyām api naiva tad asat, sāmānyasopākhyatvāt* DNC 664.

[24] See for other instances:

1. *ghaṭo deśabhedād yāvan nirupākhyaśaḥ kālabhedena ca paramaniruddhakṣaṇotpatti-nirupākhyaśo bhidyate* (DNC 228:7-8). The commentary *Nyāyāgamānusāriṇī* of Simhasuragaṇi here runs as:
   deśabhedād ghaṭo bhidyamāno rūpādibhedena bhidyate yāvan nirupākhyaśaḥ, kālabhedena ca bhidyamānaḥ paramaniruddhakṣṇotpattivināśanirupākhyaśo bhidyate.

2. *atha nirupākhyam eva tvatparikalpitagatyabhāvamātrasthānam prāpnoti, abhāvatvāt* (DNC 545:12-13).

3. *sad asadeva tu sopākhyanirupākhyatvāt, sāmānyavat* (DNC 666).
   nirupākhyañ ca nāsyopākhyāsti, vastuvat-vastuna iva sambandhisāmānyādy upākhyā nāsti, sāmānyādeḥ sāmānyādy antarābhavād iti sopākhyam eva nirupākhyam (*Nyāyāgamānusāriṇī* 666:15–17).

not only does Śaṅkara appear indebted to the early texts such as that one cited in VPvṛ, but the application of the term *anākhyeya* in the early literature also appears to have been replaced by *anirvācya* in the subsequent Advaita literature.

The Advaita understanding of erroneous cognition rests upon the assumption of *avidyā*. Reasonably, application of *pṛthag iva* (as if different) and similar terminology in Bhartṛhari's writings provide a conceptual framework for the rise of the Advaita doctrine of erroneous cognition (*khyāti*).[25] Both Bhartṛhari and the Advaitins accept that the highest principle assumes manifoldness while remaining one in its essential nature. The only noteworthy difference is that for Bhartṛhari, it is through 'the powers' inherent to the Brahman that the word principle assumes manifoldness.[26] Bhartṛhari 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.[27] 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 VPvṛ, 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.[28] 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. Bhartṛhari'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*.[29] In this description of the false appearance, Bhartṛhari also utilizes the example of firebrand, central to the fourth chapter of Gauḍapāda's Kārikās.[30] This description of false appearance is also crucial in understanding the nature of difference (*bheda*) in Bhartṛ-hari's philosophy, as he identifies it as caused due to contrary perception (*viparyāsa*) that is conceptually similar to the appearance of something as the other (*anyathākhyāti*).[31] He identifies perception of difference as

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[25] For instance, this is the one entity that is identified in various distinctive forms: *eko 'py anekav-artmeva samāmnātaḥ pṛthak pṛthak* ‖ VP.I.5. The entity that is free from sequence appears 'as if' endowed with difference in the form of sequence: *akramaḥ kramarūpeṇa bhedavān iva jāyate* | VP.I.48. Bhartṛhari utilizes the example of counter-image to describe motion that is imposed on an image which is found in the counter-image due to the motion on its surface: *pratibimbaṃ yathānyatra sthitaṃ toyakriyāvaśāt* | *tatpravṛtim ivānveti sa dharmaḥ sphoṭanādayoḥ* ‖ VP.I.49. The VPvṛ explains this in terms of appearance as if different: *te cāsya pratipādyapratipādakaśaktī nityātmabhūte pṛthaktveneva pratyavabhāsate* | (VPvṛ 116:1-2. The application of *avabhāsa* in the same meaning is also found in VP: *ekatvam anatikrāntā vāṅnetrā vāṅnivandhanā* | *pṛthak pratyavabhāsante vāgvibhāgā gavādayaḥ* ‖ VP.I.126.

[26] *ekam eva yadāmnātam bhinnam śaktivyapāśrayāt* |
    apṛthaktve 'pi śaktibhyaḥ pṛthaktveneva varttate ‖ VP.I.2.

[27] *buddhibhedād abhinnasya bhedam eke pracakṣate* ‖ VP.I.45.

[28] *abhinnam api jñānam arūpaṃ sarvajñeyarūpopagrāhitvād bhedarūpatayā pratyavabhāsate* . . .
    śabdatattvam evedam vāṅmanasākhyam avibhāgam anyathā pratīyata iti | VPvṛ 152:6–153:1.

[29] *viruddhaparimāṇeṣu vajrādarśatalādiṣu* |
    parvatādisarūpāṇām bhāvānāṃnāsti sambhavaḥ ‖ VP.I.100.

[30] *atyantam atathābhūte nimitte śrutyupāśrayāt* |
    dṛśyate 'lātacakrādau vastvākāranirūpaṇā ‖ VP.I.129.

[31] For instance: *prasiddhārthaviparyāsanimittam yacca dṛśyate* |
    yas tasmāl lakṣyate bhedas tam asatyam pracakṣate ‖ VP.II.289.

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conditioned due to difference in space, time, and the sense organs.[32] This rejection
of difference is fundamental to Bhartṛhari's philosophy.

Two Roles of *Avidyā*

The Advaita understanding of *avidyā* in subsequent literature can be read in
light of categories discussed in Bhartṛhari'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
Bhartṛhari'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
Bhartṛhari uses in describing the role of 'time' (*kāla*) is noteworthy. The 'time'
of Bhartṛhari 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). Bhartṛhari also cites the position of those who accept only two
powers of time in the form of past and future, with which time reveals (*un-
mīlana*) and conceals (*nimīlana*) entities.[33] The powers attributed here to time
are similar to the powers of false projection (*vikṣepa*) and concealment
(*āvaraṇa*), the two powers of *avidyā*. Bhartṛhari also describes two functions of
time in terms of seeing (*darśana*) and not seeing (*adarśana*) (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 VPvṛ,
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.[34] Consistent in VP and VPvṛ
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 gen-
erally 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

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[32] *deśakālendriyagatair bhedair yad dṛśyate 'nyathā* |
yathā prasiddhir lokasya tathā tad avasīyate || VP.II.296.

[33] *dve eva kālasya vibhoḥ keṣāñcic śaktivartmanī* |
karoti yābhyām bhāvānām unmīlananimīlane || VP.III.9.543.

[34] *pakṣāntare tv ekasyaivātmanaḥ śaktidvyayapravibhāgarūpaparigrahakṛtād buddhyavacchedān*
nānātvakalpanā VPvṛ 103:3.

vikṣepa, and this position is developed in his commentary upon Śaṅkara's position of non-qualified *avidyā* and the *avidyā* qualified by passion etc.[35] This application of *laya* and *vikṣepa* resonates of Gauḍapāda's usage.[36] Two states of consciousness, *svapna* and *nidrā* are caused by ignorance, which, following Gauḍapāda, are 'grasping reality otherwise' and 'not knowing the reality.'[37] Reasonably, this depiction also relies on the twofold nature of ignorance.

Fundamentally, the appearance of a single entity in manifold forms, propounded by Bhartṛhari and the Advaita Vedāntins, rests upon the twofold nature of the agent. This agent, for Bhartṛhari, 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 Bhartṛhari.

The concept of *vivartta* is one of the key components that can demonstrate Bhartṛhari's influence upon scholastic Advaita. Scholars such as Thrasher have pointed out the relationship of Bhartṛhari's concept of *vivartta* in the Advaita philosophy of Maṇḍana.[38] Although the available literature leads us to Bhartṛhari for the application of *vivartta*, in light of the citations found in VPvṛ, it can be

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[35] Śaṅkara's position:
   na ceśvaro vaiṣamyahetur ityuktam | na cāvidyā kevalā vaiṣamyasya kāraṇam; ekarūpatvāt | rāgādikleśavāsanākṣiptakarmāpy eṣā tv avidyā kevalā vaiṣamyakarī syāt The Bhāṣya of Śaṅkara on Brahmasūtra 2.1.36.
   The commentary of Vācaspati thereon: *kevaleti layābhiprāyam | vikṣepalakṣaṇāvidyāsamskāras tu kāryatvāt svotpattau pūrvam vikṣepam apekṣate | vikṣepaś ca mithyāpratyayo mohāparanāmā puṇyāpuṇyapravṛttihetubhūtarāgadveṣanidānam* Bhāmati on the Bhāṣya of Śaṅkara, Brahmasūtra 2.1.36.

[36] *Gauḍapādakārikā* 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 gṛhṇataḥ svapno nidrā tattvam ajānataḥ | Gauḍapādakārikā* 1.15.

[38] Thrasher (1993, pp. 39–50).

argued that the application of the term *vivartta* was not unique to Bhartṛhari, but was in common usage during his time.[39]

The citations found in the VPvṛ 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 VPvṛ, 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 VPvṛ 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 VPvṛ 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 VPvṛ utilizes terms synonymous to Ābhāsa, such as *prat-yavabhāsa*, or *avabhāsa*, as interchangeable with the concept of *vivartta*. After defining *vivartta*, VPvṛ gives an example of dream entities and applies the term *pratibhāsa*.[40] Extrapolating from the citation found in VPvṛ, *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+vṛt* in VPvṛ are:

  1. *mūrttikriyāvivarttāv avidyāśaktipravṛttimātram* | VPvṛ 9:1-2;
  2. *...bhedarūpaṃ vivarttate* | VPvṛ 14:2;
  3. *vivṛttaṃ śabdamātrābhyas...* VPvṛ 14:4;
  4. *...asminn evāpāre tamasi vīte vivarttate* VPvṛ 24:1;
  5. *vivṛttāvivṛttaṃ bahudhānakaṃ caitanyam...* VPvṛ 34:8;
  6. *...tejasaiva vivarttate* VPvṛ 175:2;
  7. *...śabdatvena vivarttate* VPvṛ 174:6;
  8. *bhedodgrāhavivarttena ...* VPvṛ 194:1-2.

Also noteworthy is the citation: *nāmaivedaṃ rūpatvena vavṛte...* VPvṛ 42:5;

[40] *ekasya tattvādapracyutasya bhedānukāreṇāsatyavibhaktānyarūpopagrāhitā vivarttaḥ | svapnav-iṣayapratibhāsavat* | VPvṛ 8:3–9:1.

[41] *...ābhāse 'py anavasthitaḥ | ... parikaliptaḥ ||* cited in VPvṛ 10:3-4.

[42] *...kramāvānivābhāsopagamo lakṣate* | VPvṛ 19:1.

[43] *...eka evāyaṃ śabdātmā kramotpannāvayavarūpapratyavabhāsaḥ prakāśate...* VPvṛ 58:1-2.

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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 VPvṛ identifies the appearance of concepts in the form of the external entities in terms of *pratyavabhāsa*.[44] This term explains the appearance of distinctness in the entity that in reality is not distinct.[45] Use of the term *nirbhāsa* also confirms the same false appearance.[46] 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 VPvṛ. This, however, is not the only terminology that is commonly shared in VP–VPvṛ 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 Bhartṛhari. Although the Advaita model of Padmapāda is somewhat different from that of Maṇḍana, the application of the terminology of *prabibimba* 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*.[47]

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 *pariṇāma* wherein the effect is present in its cause. The concept of *pariṇāma* apparently describes origination in early Advaita, with the analogy of gold and ornaments or clay and clay-pots.[48] Although this concept of *pariṇāma* is not directly rejected by Maṇḍana, he is nonetheless explicit in the application of *vivartta* with an example of the image of reflection.[49]

Although a seeming difference in the application of *pariṇāma* and *vivartta* is visible in the writings of Bhartṛhari 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. Bhartṛhari uses the term *pratibimba* for the first time in VP with an application of $\sqrt{bhās}$ (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 Bhartṛhari'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] *arthasarūpapratyavabhāsānāṃ vā pratyayānāṃ bāhyeṣv artheṣu pratyastānām*. . .VPvṛ 60:2.

[45] . . .*pratyavabhāsamātrāyāṃ pṛthagbhūtāyām iva*. . .VPvṛ 112:3-4.

[46] . . .*udayapratyastamayanirbhāsā*. . .VPvṛ 111:2.

[47] Śrībhāṣya II, 1.5. Cited in Shastri (1984, appendix 5, p. 55).

[48] Nakamura (1983, pp. 213, 286, 316, 339, 490) presents *pariṇāmavāda* as an early doctrine of Vedānta.

[49] Thrasher (1993, p. 48).

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The application of *pratibimba* to portray non-substantial appearance frequently occurs in Bhartṛhari'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 *sphoṭa* assumes the manifoldness of sound (VP 1.49), in the sequence of explaining causality 'as if endowed with difference' (*bhedavān iva*) (VP 1.48) found in the sequence of the application of the term derived with *vi*+√*vṛt* (VP 1.47). The VPvṛ 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 *pariṇāma* in Bhartṛhari'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 Bhartṛhari 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 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 Bhartṛhari'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, VPvṛ 1.70 utilizes the example of counter-image in the process of explaining causality, following the position of those who propound oneness (*ekatvavādin*).[50] In this context of describing the position of the oneness of phonemes giving rise to a plurality of words, VPvṛ 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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[50] *deśapṛthaktvadarśanaṃ sattākṛtijalabimbadarśanavat* VPvṛ 134:1-2.

[51] *nimittabhedād bhinneṣu prayoktṛṣu deśapṛthaktve 'pi bhedarūpeṇa pratyavabhāsamāna eka evāyam akāraś chāyādarśajalādipratibimbabhedakalpena loke prayujyate* VPvṛ 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 Maṇḍana, 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 Maṇḍana'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

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[52] *rūpavad hi dravyam atisvacchatayā rūpavato dravyāntarasya tadvivekena gṛhyamāṇasyāpi chhāyāṃ gṛhṇīyāt | cidātmā tu arūpo viṣayī na viṣayac chāyām udgrāhayitum arhati | yathāhuḥ- 'śabdagandharasādīnāṃ kīdṛśī pratibimbatā' iti.* Bhāmati on the Bhāṣya of Śaṅkara on Brahmasūtra. See Joshi (1982, pp. 7-8).

[53] *avidyopadhānam ca yadyapi vidyāsvabhāve paramātmani na sākṣād asti tathāpi tat-pratibimbakalpajīvadvāreṇa parasminnucyate* Bhāmati on the Bhāṣya of Śaṅkara on Brahmasūtra. See Joshi (1982, p. 421).

[54] *avidyopadhānakalpitāvacchedo jīvaḥ paramātmapratibimbakalpaḥ |* Bhāmati the Bhāṣya of Śaṅkara on Brahmasūtra. Joshi (1982, p. 502).

[55] *jīvaḥ punaḥ pratibimbakalpaḥ sarveṣām naḥ pratyakṣaś cidrūpaḥ* Vivaraṇa 189:2–190:1.

[56] *Siddhāntaleśasaṃgraha* (the first chapter) separately treats *pratibimba* and *avaccheda*, explaining the nature of individual soul. The texts cited by Appayya for establishing *pratibimba* are *Prakaṭārthavivaraṇa, Tattvaviveka, Saṅkṣepaśārīraka, Pañcadaśī, Vivaraṇa* and *Kalpataru*.

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examine the instances of *avaccheda* in the writings of Maṇḍana, exploring the possibility whether his usage echoes similarities found in Bhartṛhari'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 *antaḥkaraṇas* 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 Bhartṛhari.[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 *pariṇāma* 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 *pariṇāma*.

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[57] *eko 'py ātmā pradeśaiḥ sukhaduḥkhādibhir yujyamānas tatra baddha ivetaratra mukta iva ca gamyate* BS 7:11-12.

[58] Compare: *tathā maṇikṛpāṇadarpaṇādiṣu mukhādīnāṃ varṇasaṃsthanabhedavyavasthānam upalabhyate bhedābhāve 'pi* BS 7:9-10.
  And,
  viruddhaparimāṇeṣu vajrādarśataḷādiṣu |
  parvatādisvarūpāṇāṃ bhāvānāṃ nāsti sambhavaḥ || VP I.100.

[59] *avyatireke 'pi ca brahmaṇo jīvānāṃ bimbapratibimbavad vidyāvidyāvyavasthā vyākhyātā* BS 12:10-11;
  avidyayaiva tu brahmaṇo jīvo vibhaktas tannivṛttau brahmasvabhāvam eva bhavati yathā ghaṭādibhede tadākāśaṃ pariśuddhaṃ paramākāśam eva bhavati BS 12:21-22.

[60] *na ca tāvad bimbād avadātāt pratibimbaṃ kṛpāṇādiṣu bhinnam* BS 11:11-12;
  dṛṣṭo hi maṇikṛpāṇadarpaṇādiṣv abhinnamukhopādānas tadbhedaḥ BS 72:5;
  yathā ca sphaṭikadarpaṇādayaḥ svacchāḥ .. tacchāyāpattyā nityacaitanyo 'pi BS 15:26–16:3.
  See also BS, *Tarkakāṇḍa*, verses 30-31 for further discussion.

[61] BS 13:18.

[62] *. . .vipariṇāmād vivarttanād vā darpaṇatala ivātmanaḥ* BS 8:8-9.
  [It is] due to *vipariṇāma* 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.[63] He supports this with an example derived from Bhartṛhari'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 Bhartṛhari's influence.[64] 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 Bhartṛhari. This not only provides a link between Bhartṛhari 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, Bhartṛhari 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 Bhartṛhari and the early Advaita that is known to the author of VPvṛ. The concept of *Avidyā* is pivotal to the scholastic Advaita of Śaṅkara. Based on this study, Bhartṛhari 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 Bhartṛhari'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 Bhartṛhari, 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.

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[63] BS 14:5-6.

[64] BS 125:18-126:4.

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Vivaraṇa. See *Pañcapādikā* of Padmapāda. With *Vivaraṇa* of Prakāśātman, *Tattvadīpana* of Akhaṇḍā-nanda, and *Rjuvivaraṇa* of Viṣṇubhaṭṭa.