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# Bharṭṛhari's Linguistic Ontology and the Semantics of *Ātmanepada*

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**Abstract** The distinct function of *ātmanepada* in Sanskrit language remains a sort of linguist mystery in Sanskrit studies. In this article, I analyze the larger implications and subliminal meaning of *ātmanepada* by moving beyond the realm of linguistics, which has been the dominant approach, and entering the territory of philosophy and, more specifically, the purportful approach of traditional Indian philosophy of language represented by Bharṭṛhari's *Vākyapadīya*. Bharṭṛhari's analytical procedure seeks to unveil the ontological interdependence that binds together the constituent elements of linguistic sentences, understood as modal appearances of the ever present foundational ground of the world/word—*Brahman as Vāc*. This is our referential guide to the semantic reconstruction of *ātmanepada*'s teleology.

**Keywords** *Ātmanepada* · Bharṭṛhari · Philosophy of language · *Sphoṭa*

## Introduction

The distinct function of *ātmanepada* in Sanskrit language has remained a sort of linguist mystery since my early studies of the language while undertaking my Ph.D. research on the structure of philosophical argument in Saṅkaracārya's Advaita Vedānta. The parallel readings of Nyāya, Mīmāṃsā, and the Vyākaraṇa tradition rose gradually my suspicion to the fact that what Richard Salomon calls the 'process of decay of *ātmanepada* as a distinct semantic category' (1980, p. 379) since Pāṇinian times—reflecting either an interchangeable usage along with *parasmaipada* or a fixation of its original meaning in specific verbal forms<sup>1</sup>—was perhaps a diachronic development whose background involved a much wider scope of semantic implications. I am aware that etymology is not necessarily the best instrument for evaluating plain questions of

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<sup>1</sup>This is explained by Bharṭṛhari in the following terms: 'For some verbs the capacity to signify a particular sort of action (that is, *ātmanepada*) is suppressed while there are others for which this does not hold.' (kriyāvīśeṣavacane sāmānyamaparudhyate / keṣāṃcidanye tu kṛtāḥ...) [VP III.12.11] (Bharṭṛhari 1965a, p. 112)

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current meaning. Still, etymology is always bound to supply, as Heidegger has shown remarkably in the case of Greek language, fundamental keys to the understanding of the deeper layers of meaning which recur as coextensive and coexistent to diachronic developments. Those etymological layers may prove, at times, decisive in deciding basic hermeneutical questions.

According to Pāṇini's traditional teachings, *ātmanepada*<sup>2</sup> is described as comprising verbal endings meant for situations where 'the results of the acts are intended for the agent' (*kartrabhiprāye kriyāphale*) (Pāṇini 1.3.72). If historical research on the linguistic origins of Indo-Aryan languages is correct in attributing to Vedic *ātmanepada*, a scope of usage which potentially involved all verbal forms<sup>3</sup>, it will always remain an important and vital question to inquire into its distinct semantic implications lying dormant in each and every surviving form of classical and current usage of exclusive or interchangeable (to *parasmaipada*) character. Equally relevant is the investigation of the analytical forms—prepositional or explanatory—developed over the centuries meant to express, in a rather frozen or crystallized way, that which formerly constituted (and perhaps still constitutes, though in an obscure way) a possible layer of meaning of each and every verbal form. To assess the larger implications and subliminal meaning of what could indeed mean the descriptive expression 'the results of the acts are intended for the agent' (*ātmanepada*), one should perhaps take the inquiry beyond the realm of linguistics, which has been the dominant approach to modern Sanskrit studies, and get inside the territory of philosophy, and more specifically philosophy of meaning as the purportful approach of traditional Indian philosophy of language. Accordingly, a legitimate and contextualized philosophy of meaning lies at the heart of grammatical studies in the Indian tradition. And its major expression is, undoubtedly, Bhartṛhari's *magum opus Vākyapadīya*.<sup>4</sup>

Accordingly, the present article is divided into two major parts. In the first part, I will present the general framework of Bhartṛhari's philosophy of language, understood as a rational and soteriological undertaking, and in the second part, I will try to argue that the specific powers or capacities (*sāmarthya*) of *ātmanepada*, as traditionally laid down in Bhartṛhari's linguistic system, include a unique semantic disposition to suggest oneness that could be of instrumental relevance in that noble soteriological undertaking. I am aware that this is a *relatively untouched territory*. In this article, I will endeavor to put forwards some preliminary and tentative insights and arguments that might prove worthy of further research.

## Bhartṛhari's Soteriology

Mādhavācārya's (fourteenth century) inclusion of the grammarian tradition (*vyākaraṇa*) among traditional *darśana*(s)—schools of philosophy (literally 'viewpoint')—in India in his classical Sanskrit compendium *Sarva-darśana-saṅgraha* (*Compendium of All Schools of Philosophy*)<sup>5</sup> reflects the recognition that the scientific and meticulous

<sup>2</sup> *Ātmanepada* means literally 'word for oneself,' while *parasmaipada* means 'word for another'.

<sup>3</sup> 'Moreover, acts denoted by all verbs can have results intended for their agents' (Cardona 2004, p. 143).

<sup>4</sup> Mostly in footnotes, I will be using the abbreviation VP for *Vākyapadīya*.

<sup>5</sup> See the chapter 'Pāṇini-darśanam' ('Pāṇini's Grammar School of Philosophy') (Mādhavācārya 1978, p. 288–310).

character of that discipline was never dissociated, implicitly or explicitly, from ontological/metaphysical considerations having as reference either the Vedic-Upaniṣadic, Tantric, or Buddhist lore.<sup>6</sup> Mādhavācārya's acknowledgment of the soteriological concerns of the grammatical tradition<sup>7</sup> had particularly in mind the extraordinary work of Bharṭṛhari (sixth century AD), the *Vākya-padīya* (1965a, b, 1971, 1974), as the most explicit manifestation of a philosophy of language underlying the analytical considerations about the syntactical structures, morphologies, aspects, diathesis, and prosodies of Sanskrit language. Expanding from Pāṇini (fourth century BC) and Patañjali's (second century BC)<sup>8</sup> primary commitment to the correct ascertaining of the meaning of Vedic words as a subsidiary task (*vedāṅga*) to the performance of Vedic ritual (*karmakāṅḍa*)<sup>9</sup> and, consequently, to the subjective accumulation of religious merits (*dharma*) and the subsequent attainment of *svarga* ('paradise,' the putative goal of all Vedic rituals or *yajñas*) as existential welfare (*abhyudaya*), Bharṭṛhari postulates that the correct understanding of the ultimate meaning of all linguistic functions should lead one to the realization of the supreme aim of life (*apavarga/mokṣa*)<sup>10</sup>: the nondual linguistic ontology (*śabdādvaitavāda*) that lies beyond all subjective paradisiacal goals and all subject-object dichotomies. (Iyer 1992, p. 56–70) The Upaniṣadic Brahman<sup>11</sup> (*jñānakāṅḍa*)<sup>12</sup> emerges as the nondual absolute, the unitarian principle subsuming all cosmic manifestation—*laukika* ('wordly') as well as *alaukika* ('metawordly/paradisiacal')—as a process of ontic differentiation (i) between words (*śabdavācaka*) and their inherent meanings (*śabdavācya*) and (ii) between the elements of the tripartite scheme comprising the experiencer (*bhoktr*), the experienced (*bhoktavya*), and the experience (*bhoga*). Grounded on the ontological oneness of Brahman (*vāc* or *śabda-tattva*)—the only self-subsistent reality (*vastu*)—the linguistic differentiations establish the multiplicity of a world marked by sets and subsets of event-experiences expressible through the centrality of verbal forms involving the so-called 'conditioning factors

<sup>6</sup> Thus, the double sense pertaining to the word *vyākaraṇa*: (i) 'grammatical studies' (*vyākaraṇa-vedāṅga*), an ancillary discipline to the Vedas (*vedāṅga*), and (ii) as 'philosophy of language' (*vyākaraṇa-darśana*).

<sup>7</sup> Tasmādyākaraṇaśāstram paramapurūṣārthasādhanatayādhyetavyamiti siddham (Mādhavācārya [13.284] 1978, p. 310).

<sup>8</sup> Pāṇini, Vātsyāyana, Patañjali, and Bharṭṛhari are, in this sequence, the main classical representatives of *vyākaraṇa darśana*.

<sup>9</sup> Section of the Vedas devoted to the performance of rituals.

<sup>10</sup> 'It is a direct path towards the holiest of lights, that supreme essence of the kind of speech which has assumed distinction of form. Words are the sole guide to the truths about the behaviors of object; and there is no understanding of the truth about words without grammar. A gateway to liberation, a cure to the blemishes of speech, purifier of all disciples, it shines as being applied to them... It is the first rung on the ladder towards liberation; it is the straight royal road for those desirous of (reaching) that goal.' (prārtarūpavibhāgāyā yo vācaḥ paramo rasaḥ / yattatpūṇyatamam jyotistasya mārgoyamāñjasaḥ // arthapravṛttitattvānām śabdā eva nibandhanam / tattvāvabodhaḥ śabdānām nāsti vyākaraṇārṭe // tad dvāramapavargasya vaṁmalānām cikitsitam / pavitram sarvavidyānāmadhividyam prakāśate // ... // idamādyam padasthānam siddhisopānarparvaṇām / iyam sā mokṣamānānamajihmā rājapaddhatiḥ] [VP I.12–14 and 16] (Bharṭṛhari 1965a, p. 2). Thus, *vyākaraṇa*, the 'royal path' (*rājapaddhati*), comprehends what Kauṇḍabhatta refers to, in his commentary on VP I.14, as both the search for paradise (*svarga*) as well as the search for liberation (*mokṣa*) (*tasya... svargamokṣādihetutvam*) (cit. in Houben 2012, p. 321).

<sup>11</sup> The nondual absolute postulated by the Upaniṣads. Johannes Bronkhorst argues that Bharṭṛhari belongs to the Mānava Maitrāyaṇīya school of the Vedas. The school's well-known Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad might have been an important source of inspiration for Bharṭṛhari (Bronkhorst 2009, p. 99–117).

<sup>12</sup> Section of the Vedas devoted to reflexive thinking leading to the immediate knowledge of nondual Brahman.

(of appearance)' (*upādhi*) such as nominative subjects, accusative objects, and their modes of manifestation (time, space, aspect, diathesis, number, gender, etc.). These factors are experienced by the common man in ignorance as self-subsistent and reified entities. After proper scrutiny, those factors are unveiled as dependent appearances (*vivarta*) or emanations/modal forms (*pariṇāma*) of Brahman<sup>13</sup>. That is the peculiar and radical task proposed by Bhartṛhari: over and above the meaning of particular units, sentences, or words, which are more immediately committed to ego-centered ritual actions leading to the acquisition of worldly/metaworldly goals, there is another level of meaning—a meaning subjacent to all meanings (*sthita-lakṣaṇa*)—pervading each and every linguist sentence where the worldly and paradisiacal distinctions such as the knower and the known, the doer and the done, and the experiencer and the experienced are transcended. In other words, there is a supreme meaning (*paramārtha*) where (conventional) linguistic differences between word (*śabda/śabdavācaka*) and their inherent meanings (*artha/śabdavācya*) are, ultimately, sublimated.

Thus, Bhartṛhari's philosophy of language commits itself, through analytical procedure, to unveiling what has always been there as the ultimate substratum of all linguistic events (*Brahman/satyam vastu*'). Unsubstantial grammatical factors (*upādhi*) condition its appearance as a world of words and meanings.<sup>14</sup> If traditional outlook thinks of grammarians as dealers of sounds and meanings (*artha*) rather than objective realities (*dravya*), Bhartṛhari lends this maximum a new corollary: it is so because the so-called 'objective reality' is itself an appearance/emanation of (or coextensive to) linguistic differentiations between words and meanings. Grammar becomes in Bhartṛhari's hands a soteriological undertaking (*mokṣa-sādhana*) where traditional analysis sentences into their constitutive elements (*apoddhāra*) goes beyond the topical understanding of particular linguistic events by combining meanings of different words (*saṃsarga*) and whose efficacy resides in its capacity to prompt one to act ritually. Instead, for Bhartṛhari, the analytical procedure is, above all and ultimately, a means to unveiling the ontological interdependence that binds together all the constituents of all the sentences, understood as modal appearances of the ever present foundational ground of the world (Brahman). This soteriological discipline, described by Bhartṛhari as *śabda-pūrva-yoga*<sup>15</sup>—literally 'the soteriological path leading to the realization of what lies beneath the word'—, commits *vyākaraṇa* with the realization of the highest goal of *apavarga* (*brahmaprāpti*) through self-detachment (*vairāgya*), beyond the ephemeral goals of *abhyudaya* postulated by his predecessors.

The principles above are eminently enshrined in the overall project of the *Vākyapadīya*, its structural divisions and general hermeneutical context. It comprises three major divisions. In part I, known as 'Brahma-Kāṇḍa' ('Section Devoted to Brahman') (Bhartṛhari 1965a, p. 1–15), Bhartṛhari sets forth the linguistic nature of Upaniṣadic

<sup>13</sup> The sharp distinction between *vivarta* as 'virtual appearance' and *pariṇāma* as 'real appearance' in later philosophical discourse seems to have been unknown to Bhartṛhari who uses both the terms as synonyms. He says: *śabdasya pariṇāmo 'yam ity āmnāya-vido viduḥ / chandobhya eva prathamam etad viśvam vyavartata* ('Those who are versed in the Vedas know that the universe is the transformation [*pariṇāma*] of speech. It was out of the Vedas that this universe was first evolved [*vivarta*']') [VP I.120] (1965a, b, p. 11). See also Sastri 1959, p. 56 and Akjulkar 2001, p. 461.

<sup>14</sup> *Satyam vastu tadākāraṇasatyairavadhāryate / asatyopādhibhiḥ śabdaiḥ satyamevābhidhīyate* [VP III, i, 2] (1965a, b, p. 66).

<sup>15</sup> *Yatra vāco nimitāni cinhāni iva aksarasmtṛṭḥ / śabdapūrveṇa yogena bhāsante pratibimbavat* [VP I, 20] (1965a, b, p. 2).

Brahman: the Word-Principle (*śabda-tattva*), seed of cosmic appearance/emanation, and the innermost essence of all subjectivity, i.e., the supreme self. Accordingly, while entrusting *vyākaraṇa* (grammar) with the exalted status of *Brahma-vidyā* (*Science of Brahman*), Bharṭṛhari inscribed it definitely in the pantheon of *mokṣa-darśanas*.

In part II, known as 'Vākya-Kāṇḍa' ('Section Devoted to the Sentence') (1965a, p. 16–57), Bharṭṛhari deals with the smallest unit of meaning, viz., the sentence (*vākya*). Following Pāṇini and Patañjali's grammarian tradition, Bharṭṛhari challenges the *mīmāṃsākas'* position regarding the meaning of a sentence (*vākya-rtha*). According to latter's tenets, the meaning of a sentence is understood as the sum-result of putting together previously existing meanings expressed by the individual words (nouns, adjectives, etc.) (*khaṇḍapakṣa*) (VP II.4).<sup>16</sup> Bharṭṛhari challenges this position by positing the sentence as an indivisible unity of meaning (*akhaṇḍapakṣa*) which is grasped by the listener in a 'flash of light' (*sphoṭa/pratibhā*), a sort of immediate intuitive perception. In other words, the meaning of a sentence is not grasped through the gradual sequence of added meanings of individual words, but by an immediate and unitarian flash of signification that gets gradually clarified, unveiled by the temporal sequence of uttered words (VP II. 7–12). Consequently, individual words have their meaning determined by their contextual relations within the sentence. The ontic character of particular as well as universal entities results from a linguistic determination within the sentence; it does not have any ontological character per se. In Bharṭṛhari's words 'The sentence is an indivisible unity (of meaning) bereft of any expectation which is presented through individual words marked by mutual expectation (i.e., interdependence) (*ākāṅkṣā*).'<sup>17</sup> This unitarian (*ekārthībhāva*) and autarchic (*nirākāṅkṣa*) character of the sentence vis-à-vis their constituent elements constitutes an analogical, 'microcosmic,' reflection of the foundational 'relationship' between Brahman and the plurality of the world of words/meanings. Here lies the logical and necessary connection between the first two parts of the *Vākya-pāṇini*: the ontological tenets posited in the first (Brahma-Kāṇḍa) supply the parameters of reference for the apprehension of the (indivisible) meaning of any sentence discussed in the second. Accordingly, the *sphoṭa* theory ('flash of meaning') presented in the first part as propositive of Brahman as the ultimate unitarian (*ekatva*) and autarchic (*nirākāṅkṣa*) Word-Principle and substratum of world manifestation, as the ultimate word meaning (*sphoṭa*) beneath all word sounds/meanings (*nāda*)<sup>18</sup>, becomes the ontological foundation for Bharṭṛhari's descriptive grammar of the second part. And in a similar manner that the oneness of Brahman involves the nonduality of word and meaning, the unicity of each and every sentence—i.e., the flash of meaning it carries—echoes the same mystery of world appearance: the meaning of the individual words, though apparently

<sup>16</sup> Termed by Matilal as the 'divisibility' thesis (*khaṇḍapakṣa*), as opposed to the 'indivisibility' thesis (*akhaṇḍapakṣa*), it appears that Bharṭṛhari takes it as the standard *mīmāṃsāka* position. Kumāriḷa Bhaṭṭa represents the argumentative climax of that tendency (Matilal 1992, p. 106). However, it does constitute a consensual position within the school. In fact, another important tendency is that of Prabhākara whose concept of *anvītabhidhāna* ('context') comes closer to Bharṭṛhari's 'indivisibility' thesis (*akhaṇḍapakṣa*). It is possible that the latter might have exerted some influence on the former.

<sup>17</sup> *Tathaivaikasya vākyasya nirākāṅkṣasya sarvataḥ / śabdāntaraiḥ samākhyānām sākāṅkhairanugamyate* [VP.II. 9] (1965a, b, p. 16). Also: *nādasya kramajanmatvāna pūrvo na paraśca saḥ / akramah kramarupena bhavedānīva jayate* [VP.I. 48] (1965a, b, p. 6).

<sup>18</sup> *Pratībhāmat yathā anyatra sthitam toya kriyāvāśāt / tatpravṛttim iva anveti sa dharmah sphoṭa-nādayoh* [VP.I.49] (1965a, b, p. 6).

liked to externalities, does in fact spring from and in concomitance with the uttering of the sentence. Consequently, the realization of this flash of meaning involves necessarily the act of self-detachment from presumptive reified meanings of individual words. In the words of Bhartṛhari, ‘This is the (explanation) of the meaning of the sentence: when the different words of a sentence have their meanings freed from (outer) determinations, a flash of meaning is produced. The word meanings become then the instruments to present (that flash of meaning as) the meaning of the sentence.’<sup>19</sup> This unequivocal statement lends remarkable clarity to the nature of the grammarians’ soteriological discipline, viz., *śabda-pūrva-yoga*: it constitutes a sort of systematic process of purification of word meanings (*padārthasamśodana*).

Part III is a disputed component of the work as a whole. While most of the commentators consider it to be a genuine section of *Vākyapadīya*, others sustain it to be a separate work of the same author. Whatever be one’s position on the matter, the fact remains that part III, also known as ‘Pada-Kāṇḍa,’ constitutes a logical sequence of the previous two sections. In accordance with the principles there stated, ‘Pada-Kāṇḍa’ undertakes the analysis of each and every component of the sentence (*pada*). Though ultimately lacking autonomy to convey meaning on their own, individual words are, nevertheless, assumed by the common man as if bearing an immediate connection to external self-subsistent entities of a presumed ‘objective world.’ Bhartṛhari’s process of linguistic analysis (*apoddhāra*) seeks to contextualize and relativize their roles by positing their subservience to the meaning-bearing sentence. The basic tool to accomplish this task is the notion of *ākāṅkṣā*: the difference between individual words and the sentence is that the meaning of the former is marked by expectancy (*ākāṅkṣā*)—i.e., it is a meaning that depends ultimately on the relationship of that word with other words—whereas the meaning of the latter is free from expectancy (*nirākāṅkṣātā*). Notions such as (i) time (*kāla*), (ii) space (*dik*), (iii) action (*kriyā*), (iv) the means to accomplish actions (*sādhana*s such as *kāraṅgas*, the cases-ending suffixes), and (v) diathesis (*upagraha*, such as *parasmaipada* and *ātmanepada*) and others are presented as de-substantialized linguistic categorial powers (*śakti*) or conditioning factors (*upādhi*) that help in the process of a sentence’s meaning creation and, ultimately, of Brahma manifestation. Particularly relevant for our analysis are the intimate links between the fourth and the fifth factors (*sādhana* and *upagraha*).<sup>20</sup> The understanding of their combined efficacy implies one’s relinquishing of any realistic claim to the notion of substance (*dravya*), which is doomed, consequently, to be relegated as a subaltern category submissive to the commanding designs of verbal centrality. Accordingly, the notion of action (*kriyā*)<sup>21</sup> acquires a unique prominence within the various components of the sentence. For its character of an (un-reifiable) ‘event’ or ‘process,’ *kriyā* is the privileged locus of the meaning of the sentence, i.e., the center to which all the remaining components of the sentence converge. In other words, says Subramania Iyer, ‘within the sentence, it is the verb which chiefly expresses the main meaning’ (1992, p. 326).

<sup>19</sup> Vicchedagrahane’rthānām pratibhā’nyaiva jāyate / vākyārtha itī tāmāhuḥ padārthairupapāditaṁ [VP.II.143] ((1965a, b, p. 28).

<sup>20</sup> Dealt under sections III.7 and III.12, respectively (1965a, b, p. 78–92 and 111–113).

<sup>21</sup> Dealt under section III.8 (1965a, b, p. 92–98).

The three parts of *Vākyapadīya* have been correctly correlated with the three stages of *Vāc*, i.e., the three levels of the word meaning as described by Bhartṛhari in part I<sup>22</sup> and explained in greater detail in his own commentary known as *Vṛtti*. The first stage, the main subject of 'Brahma-Kāṇḍa' is designated by Bhartṛhari as *paśyantī*. Subramania Iyer explains it in these words: '*Paśyantī*, the first stage is One and absolutely free from all differentiation (between word and meaning) and sequence. It is beyond all notion of correctness and it is beyond all worldly usage. It is indivisible, it is the inner Light, it is the subtle Word and it is imperishable... It is a pre-mental state.' (1992, p. 66) The second stage, the main subject of 'Vākya-Kāṇḍa' is designated by Bhartṛhari as *madhyamā*. In Iyer's words, 'it's a purely mental (stage) and is not audible to others. It is accompanied by the subtle function of breath (*prāṇa*) and so it appears to have a sequence. Being one with the mind which is sequenceless, it is also sequenceless, but appears to have sequence... (In it), word and meaning are differentiated from each other, but each one is still a unity' (1992, p. 66). This is the mental stage because the texts emphasize its association with *buddhi* (intellect). The third stage, the main subject of 'Pada-Kāṇḍa,' is designated by Bhartṛhari as *vaikharī*. In Iyer's words, 'It's the externalized stage. Is the word that is audible to others. It is highly mixed-up or uttered in distinct phonemes. It can have correctness or can be without it. Its association is with breath (*prāṇa*) and the vocal organs (*karaṇa*). Here, both the word and meaning are fully differentiated, not only from each other but within each other there is full differentiation. It is this which is known to the ordinary man and which is used in every-day life' (1992, p. 66–67). As a corollary of the above, one should note that the three stages propounded by Bhartṛhari should be not understood as corresponding necessarily to different types of words or discourses, but, fundamentally, to different levels of realization of meaning, which recur in each and every human linguistic utterance.

### *Ātmanepada* and the Disclosure of Oneness

From an ontological perspective, Bhartṛhari's tripartition of *Vāc* reflects a dynamics of manifestation of Brahman into layers constitutive of world multiplicity. From an epistemological perspective, on the other hand, it reflects the reverse process—from *vaikharī* to *paśyantī*—consisting of a cognitive *sādhana* that enables existential ignorance, marked by a natural disposition to falsely posit substantive otherness (*dvaita*), to redeem itself and realize the unicity of Brahman. These two fundamental aspects, one ontological and another epistemological, define, in a very technical sense, the precise meaning of the Vedas to Bhartṛhari: in the first, '*veda* denotes an entity which is identical with *praṇava*, the language principle and *brahman*,' and in the second, *veda* denotes a 'specific body of literature' dedicated to the teaching of *dharma* and *mokṣa* (Aklujkar 2012, p. 12). It is in this latter sense that the Vedas assume, definitely, the character of a propaedeutics of salvation. As Aklujkar states, Vedic *dharma* is, for Bhartṛhari, the means 'directly leading to some kind of elevation and, indirectly, to attainment of *brahman* or spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*)' (2004, p. 701). The first

<sup>22</sup> *Vaikharyā madhyamāyāśca paśyantyāścaitaddhutam / anekatīrthabhedāyāstrayyā vācaḥ param padam [VP I.143] (1965a, b, p. 14).*

dimension is descriptive of *dharma stricto sensu* as ritual actions (*yajña*) undertaken by an interested agent seeking to obtain a paradisiacal condition (*svarga*), and the second is descriptive of *dharma lato sensu* which includes, additionally, the path leading to the ultimate condition, beyond desires, of the realization of Brahman (*mokṣa*).

Therefore, the distinctive knowledge (*dharma/mokṣa*) revealed by the Vedas, not known or available elsewhere (*apūrva*),<sup>23</sup> constitutes, in Bhartṛhari's view, the *sādhana* that enables men to undertake the reverse process of world manifestation, that is, to move from *vaikharī*—the given, 'natural' condition of existence in ignorance—to the *madhyamā* and *paśyantī* levels of *śadba-brahman*.<sup>24</sup> We could therefore state that the gradual ascension towards the two superior levels of the nondual *śadba* constitutes, essentially, a *vedic* undertaking comprising *dharma* and *mokṣa puruṣārthas* or, in Bhartṛhari's terminology, the goals of *abhyudaya* and *apavarga (brahmaprāpti)*. In short, Bhartṛhari's grammatical teachings reflect the development of a soteriological *sampradāya (vyākaraṇa darśana)*, a specific *smṛti* understood as an actual pedagogy of the Vedas leading to effective hermeneutical application and existential realization.<sup>25</sup>

This being so, the analytical investigation of Bhartṛhari's *vyākaraṇa* is much more than just a matter of scientific/analytical description of linguistic components (*śāstra*): it is a method that points to and prompts one to realize the unity behind those components. The arguments I wish to advance about the semantic implications of *ātmanepada* are grounded on those descriptive-prospective principles that underscore the *Vākyapadīya*. Considering Bhartṛhari's general procedure of entrusting grammatical categories and subcategories with the role of 'conditioning factors' (*upādhi*) at the service of disclosure of sentential meanings—and, ultimately, the meaning of all the meanings, viz., Brahman—the specific chapter on *upagraha* derives its unique relevance from the fact that the verbal endings it deals with, viz., *ātmanepada* and *parasmaipada*, reverberate, in a specific relevant way, the linguistic interdependence between the totality of terms of the sentence. In fact, the centrality of verbal forms (*kriyā*) in defining the smallest unit of meaning (*vākya*) entrusts diathetic endings with a significant role in the process of proper conveyance of intended meaning. In particular, the case of *ātmanepada* presents, as we will see below, a singular capability to suggest convergence and unity of the nominal forms involved—viz., the subject (nominative role) and its objects (accusative and other roles)—eventually favoring ontological de-substantialization of some of them or even of them all. This fact could prove significant in the gradual process of philosophical disclosure of *Vāc (Brahman)* as Word-Principle, i.e., one's vertical ascend from the *vaikharī* to the *madhyamā* and *paśyantī* levels of meaning. To understand the implications of this possibility in the *Vākyapadīya*, one has to first briefly revisit the grammarian textual tradition on *ātmanepada*.

<sup>23</sup> The word *apūrva* is here synonymous to *dharma*, following the Jaiminian tradition of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā. It is a 'kind of cosmic principle or power to be manifested or actualized by the ritual acts.' (Halbfass 1992, p. 302). It constitutes, in the words of Ogawa, an 'epistemic *apūrva* (the Newly Known *apūrva*)' as distinct from the Kumārila Bhaṭṭa's 'ontic *apūrva* (the Newly Born *apūrva*)' (Ogawa 2004, p. 203).

<sup>24</sup> A topical correspondence could be made here between the three levels of *vāc*, that is *vaikharī*, *madhyamā*, and *paśyantī*, and the three steps of the spiritual ladder in the *vedāntic* tradition, that is, the *laukika (artha-kāma)*, *vaidika (dharma)*, and *adhyātika (mokṣa)* stages, respectively.

<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, Harold Coward states, 'The levels of language analyzed by Bhartṛhari in the *Vākyapadīya* are more than linguistic theory or theological speculation. They are intimately connected with the goal or purpose of living and the practical discipline for its realization' (Coward 1976, p. 50).

The specific discussion on *ātmanepada* appears in part III of *Vākyapadīya* ('Pada-Kāṇḍa') under a separate section called 'Upagraha-Samuddeśa' (III.12 'Chapter on Verbal Diathesis') (Bharṭṛhari 1965a, p. 111–113). The chapter, comprising 27 *ślokas*, is entirely devoted to the diathetic forms of Sanskrit verbs and more specifically to the diathesis involving *ātmanepada* and *parasmaipada* endings. The word *upagraha* used by Bharṭṛhari to nominate the section under evaluation was inherited from the grammarian tradition as a designation to specific suffixes meant to denote peculiar semantic diatheses of verbal actions.<sup>26</sup> Whereas in some circles (e.g., Kaiyyāṭa<sup>27</sup>), it meant exclusively *ātmanepada*, and in others, it meant the various nuances of meaning and usage between *ātmanepada* and *parasmaipada* (e.g., Jinendrabuddhi<sup>28</sup>). In both the circles, what surfaces the main point of discussion is not a general description of Sanskrit *padas* but rather the perplexity surrounding the dialectics between *ātmanepada* and *parasmaipada*. The original coextensivity of usage between *ātmanepada* and *parasmaipada* in potentially all verbal forms and the former's clear distinction from passive, impersonal, and reflexive meanings, tended to make *ātmanepada* a kind of obscure double of *parasmaipada*. In other words, if *parasmaipada* appeared as the default active form, meant to express interactive relations between subjects and objects, the possible nuances of those same relations which demanded the usage of *ātmanepada* remained relatively unclear. Bharṭṛhari's decision to dedicate a specific chapter on the matter ('Upahara-Samuddeśa') seems, therefore, to have been determined by the desire to bring clarity to the usage and meanings of *ātmanepada* vis-à-vis those of *parasmaipada*,<sup>29</sup> at a time when coextensivity was restricted to fewer verbal roots, and the exclusive usage of one or the other did not seem to properly adjust to traditionally held semantic distinctions. The importance and complexity of the matter is stressed on by commentator Helārāja in his work *Prakīrṇaprakāśa*. He says that *upagraha* and, more specifically, the differences between *ātmanepada* and *parasmaipada* are a matter endowed with an *alaukika* character,<sup>30</sup> meaning with this perhaps that 'it is recognized in Grammar only and not by the ordinary man in the world' (Iyer 1992, p. 348).

Bharṭṛhari's position on the specific aspects of *ātmanepada* follows the main principles formulated by Pāṇini and Patañjali. He opens the chapter on *upagraha* with words that clearly underscore his main concern with *ātmanepada* since he omits explicit mention to the main term of comparison (that is, *parasmaipada*): 'That

<sup>26</sup> There has been some controversy regarding the proper English translation of the word *upagraha* as designative of verbal endings *ātmanepada* and *parasmaipada*. I follow in this particular the rendering of Cardona (1993) and Ogawa (2005, p. 12) as 'diathesis.' The other usual translation as 'aspect' (Ashok Aklujkat and K. A. S. Iyer) has, in my opinion, the disadvantage of coming closer to the concept of 'voice' as understood in the case of Greek language. The Sanskrit word for 'voice' is *prayoga* (active-*kartariprayoga*, passive-*karmaniprayoga*, and impersonal-*bhāveprayoga*) as stated in Bhaṭṭoji Dikṣita's *Siddhānta Kaumudī*, a well-known commentary on Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* (Shastri 1983, p. 16–17), whereas the two variants of *upagraha* (*ātmanepada* and *parasmaipada*) are actually designative of a semantic subdivision within the active voice.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Iyer 1992, p. 347.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Iyer 1992, p. 347.

<sup>29</sup> An indication of the dominant concern with *ātmanepada* is the fact that the chapter under analysis (III.12—'Chapter on Verbal Diathesis') has eight instances of the word *ātmanepada*, whereas the word *parasmaipada* is mentioned only once.

<sup>30</sup> *Idānīmākyātārthamupagraham vicārayitum svarūpamasyālaukikatvāt pradarsayati* (Helārāja III.12.1, in Iyer 1992, p. 539).

difference in meaning which is understood from the *ātmanepada* substitute of *la* (verbal suffix) or the other substitute (*parasmaipada*) is called *upagraha*'.<sup>31</sup> This and the next six *ślokas* reinstate the grammarian position on *ātmanepada*. Its main points, eloquently explained by commentator Helārāja<sup>32</sup> with an emphasis on the suggestive (*vyaṅgya*) rather than expressive (*vācya*) nature of both diathetic endings,<sup>33</sup> are summarized by Iyer with the following words: 'The most important and distinctive notion attributed to the *ātmanepada* or *parasmaipada* suffix is that the fruit of the action denoted by the root coming to the doer or going to someone else. The action of the one who performs a sacrifice in order to go to heaven is *yajate* while that of the priest who officiates merely to get his fee is *yajati*. In the former case, the fruit (heaven) of the action denoted by the root *yaj* comes to the doer of that action, while in the latter, it goes to someone else. The two actions differ from each other in scope and aim. These two shades of the same meaning come under *upagraha*' (1992, p. 348). The fact that, ultimately, everybody acts, at all times, for his/her own sake demands an ad hoc explanation. What justifies the usage of *ātmanepada* is a situation where the intrinsic results of an action actually accrue to the doer. The priest, in the example above, is not expected to obtain the intrinsic fruit of the ritual, that is, the paradise: what he gets, the salary, is extrinsic to it. Similarly, the doer of the action whose intrinsic results are intended, need not be the actual performer of the acts: he may just cause others to perform them and still be the recipient of the results.

Bhartṛhari's clarification of the grammarian tradition on *ātmanepada* takes a decisive step with the introduction of the concept of *saṃvidhāna*. It is described as a constitutive component of all actions involving *ātmanepada*. More than an absolute innovation, it brings clarity and helps unveiling the profound and deeper implications of Pāṇini's seminal postulation—viz., 'the results of the acts are intended for the agent' (*kartrabhiprāye kriyāphale*). Generally translated as 'the act of making provisions/arrangements,' *saṃvidhāna* dominates the remaining part of the *Vākyapadīya*'s 'Upahara-Samuddeśa.' Especially relevant for the understanding of its major implications are *ślokas* 8 and 9: 'Sometimes, from verbs such as *pac* one understands the meaning of *saṃvidhāna* (making provisions/arrangements), just as one also understands from them other actions like putting the pot on the fire which are caused by the *saṃvidhāna*. The expression *kartrabhiprāye kriyāphale* in the sūtra implies a particular action. Indeed, an agent of such an action enjoys the fruit (aimed at through performing an action like cooking) in consequence of that action.'<sup>34</sup> In the sequence, Bhartṛhari reminds the reader that, despite its original all-pervasive character, in the course of time, this power (*sāmarthyā*) of 'making provisions' was extinguished in some roots. He states: 'For some verbs the capacity to signify a particular sort of action

<sup>31</sup> Ya ātmanepadādbhedah kvacidarthasya gamyate / anyataścāpi lādeśāt manyante tamupagraham [VP III.12.1] (1965a, p. 111).

<sup>32</sup> Ātmanepadaparasmaipadavyahyaḥ kartrabhiprāyataditarādirūpo viśeṣo yaḥ kriyāyāḥ sādhanasya sa upagrahaḥ iti pūrvācāryairabhyupagataḥ (Helārāja III.12.1, in Iyer 1992, p. 539).

<sup>33</sup> This may, perhaps, indicate that the active voice (*kartrāprayoga*) has both an expressive (*vācya*) as well as a suggestive (*vyaṅgya*) dimension.

<sup>34</sup> Saṃvidhānam pacādinām kvacidarthah pratīyate / tannimittā yathā'nyā'pi kriyā'dhiśryañādikāḥ // Kartrabhiprāyatā sūtre kriyābhedopalaksanam / tathābhūtā kriyā yā hi tatkartā phalabhāg yataḥ [VP III.12.8–9] (1965a, p. 111–112). In Nāgeśa's *Uddyota*, the meaning of *saṃvidhāna* is further detailed as *sāmagrīsanghaṭana*, that is, 'the act of bring things together' (see Ogawa 2005, p. 279).

(that is, *ātmanepada* as *saṃvidhāna*) is suppressed while there are others for which this does not hold.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, according to Bharṭṛhari, '*ātmanepada* expresses the idea of making arrangements (*saṃvidhāna*) for the performance of an action the ultimate result of which one would enjoy oneself.' (Iyer 1992, p. 350) In other words, 'it is only when the action of cooking is accompanied by the act of *saṃvidhāna* by its agent that the agent enjoys the fruit of the action.' (Ogawa 2005, p. 279) Therefore, the idea of the fruit of the action coming to the agent does not hang merely on the agent's intention to enjoy it. What actually conditions the possibility of *kartrabhiprāye kriyāphale* ('the results of the acts are intended for the agent') is that the agent's intentionality is accomplished through an act of *saṃvidhāna*. But what does *saṃvidhāna* actually means or implies? My contention is that *saṃvidhāna* entrust *ātmanepada* with a uniquely suggestive (*vyāṅgya*) character of eventive and purportful unity (*ekārthibhāva*) (Coward and Raja 1990, p. 84), that is, a distinctive capability to indicate the underlying unity of a plurality of terms involved in a particular action or sentence, in accordance with Bharṭṛhari's *spṛoṭa* principle, viz., 'all difference presupposes a unity' (*abhedapūrvako hi bhedaḥ*) (cit. Coward and Raja 1990, p. 59). Accordingly, the idea of an agent who commits himself/herself to *saṃvidhāna* ('making provisions/arrangements') makes him/her much more than just one among other intervenient factors: such an agent becomes the 'stage director/producer,' one who 'brings things together' (*sāmagrīsaṅghaṭana*), who directs the various characters involved in way that brings unity of focus and purpose. For that, he is the consciousness of the whole, underlying all procedures. And finally, on account of that, he is the so-called beneficiary of the fruits of the action as the center of convergence and meaning of all the components involved.

The suggestion of oneness has a distinct relevance in Bharṭṛhari's soteriological approach to the grammarian tradition and, more specifically, in the context of the 'reverse' process of climbing upwards the three levels of *Vāc*. In this way, *ātmanepada* understood as *saṃvidhāna* presents a semantic capability to point to existential events that reverberate, more intensely than others, the oneness underlying all mundane multiplicity.

As earlier described, the mundane level, *vaikharī*, is 'one where both the word and meaning are fully differentiated, not only from each other but within each other there is full differentiation.' The presumption in ignorance is that there are many substantial differentiated meanings, that is, meanings crystalized as *things*, and as much corresponding words. Sentences, therefore, tend to be understood as expressive of relations between things, and relations tend to be treated as circumstantial rather than constitutive properties of things. In this context, the semantic difference between *parasmaipada* and *ātmanepada* could be stated as follows. The first—e.g., in the sentence 'Devadatta cooks rice (for someone else to eat) (*Devadattaḥ taṇḍulam pacati*)—is expressive of situations where subjects/agents act over objects but the fruit of those actions does not accrue to the former. The circumstantiality of relations is here found to be a mere incidentality because, as the fruit of the actions accrues to a third party, subject/agent and object have reduced interaction and, consequently, are left intact in their presumptive ontological separateness. The second (*ātmanepada*)—e.g., in the sentence 'Devadatta cooks rice (for himself to eat) (*Devadattaḥ taṇḍulam pacate*)—, however,

<sup>35</sup> Kriyāvīśenavacane sāmāthyamuparudhyate / keśāṃcidanye tu kṛtāḥ svariteto nītatathā [VP III.12.11] (1965a, b, p. 112).

presents a significant difference. Being expressive of situations where subjects/agents act over objects and the fruit of those actions does accrue to the former, *ātmanepada* tends to evoke the participation of the object in the destiny of the subject/agent. Subject and object share a unity of purpose in that very action, which is made possible because of the ‘stage direction’ and the ‘arrangements’ (*saṃvidhāna*) provided by the former. The circumstantiality of relations is here found to be productive of an enhancement/inflation of the subject/agent represented by the acquisition of something new as a result of that interaction. The object is not a mere instrumentality, but the existential goal of the agent. Consequently, the awareness of unity assumes the form of an inflated agent (*bhoktr*) ‘consuming’ (*bhoga*) the intended object (*bhoktavya*). The unity of all terms tends, however, to remain subject-centric rather than verbal-centric: it is an ephemeral evocation of oneness, that is, a unity that, ultimately, renders service to the reification or inflation of a presumptive separateness of the subject/agent.

The ephemeral evocation of *saṃvidhāna* unity (‘making provisions’ or ‘bringing things together’), in a mundane context of *vaikharī*—befitting *artha* and *kāma puruṣārthas*—, represents a shadow of the paradigmatic dimension of lasting unity that rules entirely the Vedic injunctive actions of the *dharma* and its deeper cognitive dimension of *mokṣa*, which are constitutive, in Bhartṛhari’s opinion, of the *sādhana* that enables men to ascend to *madhyamā* and *paśyantī* levels of *śadba-brahman*. To understand this, one needs to remember, firstly, that the putative goal of all Vedic dharmic injunctions is *svarga* (‘paradise’), an afterlife condition to be enjoyed by the sacrificer (*yajamāna*) who may directly or indirectly (through an officiating proxy) be the performative agent of the ritual. By definition, therefore, Vedic injunctions are a matter of *ātmanepada* since the fruit of the action (*svarga*) is ‘intended for the agent,’ i.e., the sacrificial agent (*yajamāna*).<sup>36</sup> That explains why the standard example of all injunctive *dharmas*, viz., *yajeta svargakāmaḥ* (‘one desirous of heaven should sacrifice’), takes the verb in *ātmanepada* (*yajeta*, ‘let him sacrifice’).<sup>37</sup>

Differently from mundane actions which may either be conveyed by *ātmanepada* and *parasmaipada*, the semantics of Vedic dharmic injunctions is essentially and constitutively a matter of *ātmanepada*.<sup>38</sup> It functions, therefore, as a model of purportful unity (*ekārthībhāva*), distinctively activate by *saṃvidhāna*. What are, then, the specific aspects of *saṃvidhāna* present therein? As earlier described, the *madhyamā* level of *vāc*, prompted by Vedic propedeutics of *dharma*, ‘is a purely mental (stage) and is not audible to others... (In it), word and meaning are differentiated from each other, but each one is still a unity.’ It reflects a kind of ‘idealistic’ reversion of *vaikharī*: the ‘purely mental’ signals the territory of convergence between a unitarian word (viz., the sentence as one) and a unitarian meaning (viz., the ritual as the unity of

<sup>36</sup> The officiating proxy to whom *svarga* is not intended does not, rigorously speaking, perform a ‘vedic dharma,’ in the strict sense of an effective sacrificial act. In other words, the *yajamāna* is the only real sacrificial agent.

<sup>37</sup> Accordingly, the acts involved in every ritual, including major and ancillary rites, should be understood as implicitly involving the verb *yajeta* (potential mood denoting *codanā* or ‘instigation’). Thus, ‘one should pour ghee into the sacrificial fire,’ should be read as ‘(one desirous of heaven), should sacrifice (*yajeta*) by pouring ghee into the sacrificial fire.’ See also Freschi 2012, p. 5–6.

<sup>38</sup> A traditional *mīmāṃsāka* account of the semantic prominence of *ātmanepada* in Vedic dharmic injunctions can be seen in Laugākṣi Bhāskara’s *Arthasaṅgraha* (Bhāskara 1974, p. 1–3). Accordingly, the word *yajamāna*, standing for the actual *svargakāmaḥ* (‘one desirous of heaven’), is also a verbal nominal form in *ātmanepada*. See also Gonda 1989, p. 106–109.

action and *svarga* as the unity of purpose). It is a new (*vedic*) world in which the plurality of things of mundane world (*laukika*) are re-created as *de-substantialized entities*, i.e., as subordinate and subservient terms (subjects, object, etc.): instead of possessing relations, they become 'possessed' by and participate in the unitarian word and meaning.<sup>39</sup> It is precisely the congregation of 'unsubstantial' things in that unity of action and purpose that constitutes precisely the act of *saṃvidhāna* prompted and directed by the sacrificial agent (*yajamāna*), the 'provider' *par excellence*.

Let us turn our attention to fundamental difference between the sacrificial and mundane agency of *ātmanepada*, with regard to the actual contents of the unity experienced. Instead of a subject-centric unity represented by an inflated agent (*bhoktr*) who 'consumes' an intended object (*bhoktavya*), sacrificial agency conforms itself to a verb/sentence-centric unity that prompts a transformative deconstruction of their (the agent's and the object's) presumptive ontological separateness, opening the way for a growing awareness of their existential interdependence. The object's transformative deconstruction is represented by the agent's renunciation to its empirical meaning—its being a *thing*—by offering it to the sacrificial fire with the following words: *agnaye idam na mama* ('this is for *agni* not for me'). On the other hand, the agent's transformative deconstruction takes place in more complex and transverse way. Though the intended *svarga* is indicative of an initial egocentric motivation, the actual undertaking of the actions is projective of the *yajamāna*'s ego-decentration. In fact, the renunciation to mundane objects does not have, as a contemporary counterpart, the actual acquisition of the paradise which, by definition, is to be enjoyed in the next life. Thus, the *yajamāna*'s immediate existential condition, here, in this life, is that of a transformed being, an ego subservient to the ritual action itself, resigned to live a life marked by an additional renunciation: the circumstantial and yet extraordinary renunciation to the deferred results of his ritual actions (*svarga*).<sup>40</sup> *Dharma* and not *svarga* become the actual (immediate) goal (*puruṣārtha*). In other words, the unity of dharmic action, as an existential imperative, becomes the *de facto* unity of purpose. In this context, ritual narrative draws itself closely to the 'pure mental,' 'mantric' (Coward and David 2008, p. 41) territory of *madhyamā*, through reordering of meanings and de-reification of the terms of intercourse: empirical reality (*things*) is 'neutralized,' 'put in brackets,' and the transcendent reality (*svarga*) is not yet produced.<sup>41</sup> This unitarian convergence between word and meaning is, therefore, conveyed by *ātmanepada* through the *yajamāna*'s act of *saṃvidhāna*: 'bringing things together' and 'making arrangements' turn out to be a lasting experience of unity, a lasting experience of renunciation (*tyāga*),<sup>42</sup> interdependence, and shared cooperative coexistence under the ruling of sentence whole

<sup>39</sup> Accordingly, Jan Houben states that '(Vedic ritual) has the capacity to temporarily set aside the narrativity and historicity of the world. Moreover, its "cosmic" cyclicality creates a distinct temporality, "eternity" or a "time out of time," for its participants' (2002, p. 472).

<sup>40</sup> The idea of 'ritual initiation' (*diksā*) represents precisely that renewed decentered condition.

<sup>41</sup> Accordingly, S. Dange stresses on the 'divine' nature of Vedic utterances, as per the traditional saying *vāg vai yajñah* ('speech is indeed sacrifice') (Dange 2006, p. 89–100).

<sup>42</sup> 'Sacrifice (comprises three elements): the offerings, the deities and renunciation' (*dravyam devatā tyāga [yajña]*) (*Kātyāyana Śrauta-sūtra* I.2.1–2, in Dharmadhikari 1999).

and verbal centrality,<sup>43</sup> in full congruency with the principles of *ekārthībhāva* and *ākāṅkṣā*.<sup>44</sup>

The lasting experience of ritual unity (*dharma*) is the transitional doorway for the ultimate realization (*mokṣa*) of its foundational ontology: the ever present oneness of *śabda-brahman* as *paśyantī*, i.e., as complete freedom from all sorts of differentiation (between word and meaning). For that, one needs to deepen the renunciatory process (*tyāga*) and set oneself more decisively on the discipline of analytical investigation (*vicāra*) in order to entirely dispel the ignorance constitutive of world plurality—the error of substantive otherness (*dvaita*)—and its linguistic conditioning factors (*upādhi*), notably the notions of ‘agent’ and its objects (of desire).<sup>45</sup> The analysis of the deferred goal of ‘paradise’ (*svarga*)—the last and most difficult desire to shed away—is emblematic of that task. Being by definition a reality not existing before (*apūrva*), whose existence is to emerge in the next life, *svarga* is, at the time of the actual performance of ritual acts in this life, a word without referent. And yet, it does not fail to have a (mysterious) meaning, given the fact that it impels agents to act. Bhartṛhari’s approach to this mystery is unequivocal: differently from a word with referent, whose meaning involves the revelation of existence marked or hidden by a specific form (*ākāra*), the word *svarga*, as a formless word, reveals, instead, here and now, pure existence-ness (*asti/sattā*), i.e., the formless ‘meaning’ of all form-ful meanings, the ontological or substantial ground for the appearance of all individual unsubstantial forms.<sup>46</sup> Existence-ness (*sattā*), concludes Bhartṛhari, is *Brahman*, the reality which, ultimately, all words/things refer to.<sup>47</sup>

## Conclusion

In conclusion, we can summarize the main points of the article as follows. (1) To effectively embrace Bhartṛhari’s soteriological concerns, one needs to effectively look

<sup>43</sup> This agrees, in some aspects, with Jan Gonda’s linguistic evaluation of *ātmanepada*. He states that the usage of *ātmanepada* in ancient *Rg-Veda* is characterized by an ‘essential eventive character’ (1960, p. 30–67). According to him, the *ātmanepada* of Vedic times lends prominence to verbal action over the other linguistic entities (subject, object, etc.). Instead of looking at actions as qualities of reified agents, it declares the latter as circumstantial participators in the former’s process. Take, for example, the root *dā* (‘to give’): in the ultimate analysis, no one actually gives, and no one/nothing is actually given; instead, the *giving* contains both, enabling the revelation of a foundational unity that condition, a priori, the subject-object relationship.

<sup>44</sup> ‘It (i.e., the meaning of the sentence) is not really localized anywhere in the individual word meanings or in the aggregate. (Only), it is apparently divided into word meanings. Through that analysis (of the sentence) undertaken to explain it as a means of understanding it, there is presented another meaning (i.e., the meaning of the sentence) the parts of which, when analyzed show expectancy for one another’ (padārthe samudāye vā samāpto vā kvacit / padārtharūpabhedena tasyātma pravibhajyate // anvākyānāya yo bhedaḥ pratipattinibandhanam / sākāṅkṣāvayaḥ bheda tenānyadupavarṇyate) [VP II.439–440] (1965a, b, p. 53).

<sup>45</sup> ‘The tradition handed down from the elders declares that there is no distinction between the real and the unreal. They hold that the very reality [which is accepted] insofar as it has not been analytically investigated is the unreality (na tattvātattvayor bheda iti vṛddhebhya āgamaḥ / attvam iti manyante tattvam evāvicāritam) [VP III.2.7] (1965a, b, p. 67). See also Ogawa 2000, p. 15.

<sup>46</sup> ‘All words possess the general character of “having a meaning” (meaning-ness)’ (asty arthaḥ sarvaśabdānām) [VP II. 119] (1965a, b, p. 26). Jain commentator Sīnhasūri reinstates it as ‘Mere being is the meaning/object of all words’ (sattāmātram arthaḥ sarvaśabdānām) (cit. in Bronkhorst 2012, p. 423–424). See also Unebe 2011, p. 536–8.

<sup>47</sup> ‘Therefore, the attainment of faultless speech is the attainment of *Brahman*’ (tasmādyāḥ śabdasaḥkāraḥ sāsiddhiḥ paramātmānaḥ) [VP I. 132] (1965a, p. 13).

at the constitutive elements of the linguistic analysis and their functional dynamics (*pravṛtti*), as mystical pointers to the nondual ontology of *Śabda-Brahman*. (2) The article focuses on one of those elements, viz., *ātmanepada*, and shows that Bharṭṛhari contributes significantly to the clarification of Pāṇini's seminal definition—'the results of the acts are intended for the agent' (*kartrabhiprāye kriyāphale*)—by postulating *saṃvidhāna* (lit., 'making provisions/arrangements' or 'bringing things together') as an intrinsic semantic component of *ātmanepada*. (3) Both in worldly matters (*kāma* and *artha*) and, above all, in the Vedic sphere (*dharma* and *mokṣa*), *ātmanepada* seems to develop, through the suggestive power (*vyaṅgya*) of *saṃvidhāna*, a singular capacity to convey purportful unity of action (*ekārthībhāva*) and the agent's transformative dynamics of ego-decentration, through renunciation (*tyāga*) and reflection (*vicāra*). In short, in tune with Bharṭṛhari's principle according to which 'all difference presupposes a unity' (*abhedapūrvako hi bhedah*), *ātmanepada* emerges as a relevant tool to express the gradual process of philosophical disclosure of the oneness (*advaita*) of *Vāc* or, in other words, one's vertical ascend from the *vaikharī* to the *madhyamā* and *paśyantī* levels of meaning.

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