

Mortal Combat and the Hereafter: *saṃparāya* and *sāṃparāya* in Sanskrit Literature

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Abstract *Sāṃparāya* is a comparatively rare word in Sanskrit literature that has been translated in various ways, among them ‘battle’, ‘the next world’, and ‘transit to the next world’. It is a nominalized adjective derived from *saṃparāya*, which is in turn derived from the rarely used verb *saṃ+parā+i* (to pass away, to decease). The aim of the present paper is to establish the basic meanings of *sāṃparāya* as well as of its base, *saṃparāya*, and to investigate how they are used in Sanskrit literature. To this end, text passages from a range of sources are discussed. It is shown that in pre-medieval literature, *saṃparāya* and *sāṃparāya* are generally used as variants of one and the same noun, and that this noun has two basic meanings: ‘mortal combat, battle’ and ‘the postmortal, the hereafter’. The plethora of meanings recorded in modern dictionaries were mostly derived from later, highly context-specific commentaries.

Keywords *saṃ+parā+i*. Death. Battle. Afterlife. Prakrit.

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1 Introduction

Sāṃparāya is a rare word in Sanskrit literature that has been translated in various ways, among them ‘battle’, ‘the next world’, and ‘transit to the next world’.¹ The aim of the present paper is to establish the basic meanings of *sāṃparāya* as well as of its base, *saṃparāya*, and to investigate how they are used in Sanskrit literature, with a focus on pre-medieval literature. To this end, a range of passages from texts pre-dating the eighth century CE are discussed. To cover different genres and historical periods, passages from the following sources have been selected:

- *Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa* (TB)
- *Mahāvastu* (Mvu)
- *Mahābhārata* (MBh)
- *Rāmāyaṇa*
- three *Dharmasūtras*: *Āpastamba*-° (ĀpDhS), *Baudhāyana*-° (BaudhDhS), and *Vasiṣṭha*-° (VasDhS)
- two *Gr̥hyasūtras*: *Hiraṇyakeśi*-° and *Baudhāyana*-°
- *Daśakumāracarita* (Daś)
- *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad* (KU)

I am aware of several other Sanskrit texts in which the two words occur.² However, a cursory examination has not revealed any pre-eighth-century instances in which the two words are used in meanings other than those identified using the small corpus defined above.

As will be shown, two basic meanings for the words *saṃparāya* and *sāṃparāya* were well established in the pre-medieval period: ‘mortal combat, battle’ and ‘the postmortal, the hereafter’. There is

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Unless otherwise indicated, translations are by the Author. Square brackets are used to mark explanatory additions to or modifications of quotations and translations; if they are part of original quotations, this is indicated. Hyphens after Sanskrit words indicate that the word is a sandhi form. Regarding the transcription of the Anusvāra sign with *m*, I have opted for the spelling used in the editions I have consulted.

1 Translations of the word are mentioned in this paper when discussing the relevant text passages; see also the dictionary entries cited below.

2 E.g. the *Amarakośa*, the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, the *Divyāvadāna*, the *Kāśikā-Vṛtti*, the *Kāvyaaprakāśa*, the *Kumārasambhava*, the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-Sūtra*, the *Mahāsudarśana-Avadhāna*, the *Mahāvānasūtra-Alaṅkāra*, the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, the *Rāṣṭrapāla-Pariprcchā*, and the *Śrāvakaḥbhūmi*.

nothing to suggest that these two meanings have ever become obsolete over the course of the last two millennia. However, medieval commentators also introduced alternative interpretations that were often guided by their own exegetical agenda. In this paper, only a few text passages dealing with such reinterpretations and explanations are discussed: Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad* as well as his *Brahmasūtra-Bhāṣya*, Raṅgarāmānuja's commentary on the *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad* (Prakāśikā), Śāṇḍilya's *Bhaktisūtras* with Svapneśvara's commentary, and Nīlakaṇṭha's commentary on the *Mahābhārata* (the *Bhāratabhāvadīpā*).

2 *sam+parā+i* and *samparāya*

The verb *parā+i* means 'to go away, to depart' and is already used in the *R̥gveda* in the sense of 'to pass away' or 'to de cease' (see e.g. *R̥gveda* X 14.1-2). It seems that the verb *sam+parā+i* essentially means the same as *parā+i* (the prefix *sam* may serve the purpose of intensification: 'to go away completely'). In contrast to *parā+i*, the verb *sam+parā+i* is not well attested in Vedic and Sanskrit literature: the pw (I, 200) only knows the participle *sampareta* in *Aitareya-Āraṇyaka*,³ the PW only *sampareta* in the much later *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*.⁴ A search (June 4, 2023) in the *Digital Corpus of Sanskrit*, the corpus of the *Göttingen Register of Electronic Texts in Indian Language*, and the *Thesaurus Indogermanischer Text- und Sprachmaterialien* yielded only a few more results, but essentially confirmed that this verb was used comparatively rarely.

The verb *sam+parā+i* can theoretically be nominalized as an action noun in at least four ways: *samparāya* (m.), **samparāyaṇa* (n.), **sampareta* (n.), and **sampareti* (f.); however, only *samparāya* is

³ According to *Aitareya-Āraṇyaka* III 2.4 (cf. *Śāṅkhāyana-Āraṇyaka* VIII 7), a man whose self (*ātman*) and the sun 'gape' (*vi+hā*; in reality, these two are one and the same; cf. Norelius 2023, 310) will not live much longer. The text explains that 'his self has gone away' (*sampareto 'syātmā*), which most likely means that the most important vital power has left the body.

⁴ PW V 1137: "Bhāg. P. 5, 2, 22. [= *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* V 2.23 in the edition used for the present study] 10, 44, 38 [in both editions]".

attested.⁵ The PW, pw,⁶ MW, and Apte⁷ attribute a variety of meanings to the noun *samparāya*. MW (whose dictionary is largely based on the PW),⁸ for instance, lists a total of six meanings:

1. decease, death;
2. existence from eternity;
3. conflict, war, battle;
4. calamity, adversity;
5. futurity, future time;
6. a son.

Most of these meanings seem to have been simply derived from various context-specific Sanskrit commentaries and glosses composed centuries after the word came into use – that alone makes it seem worthwhile to review them. In the following, I will argue that the word has only two basic meanings.

First, *samparāya* denotes the ‘passing away’ of a person as a consequence of the complete cessation of all vital functions of the body, and may in that sense be translated as ‘death’. Second, there is also a metonymic⁹ understanding of the word, which generally seems to be restricted to – and most likely originated in – Buddhist usage: *samparāya* does not only denote the process or event of passing away, but also the destination or target of this ‘movement’.¹⁰ Like

⁵ Curiously, *sāmparāyaṇa* is attested as a name of Death (*mṛtyu*) in the *Mantrārṣa-Adhyāya* of the *Kaṭha-Saṃhitā* (Weber 1855, 459). In *Yama-Smṛti* V 16cd, the word is used (obviously in another meaning) to qualify sons (*aputrasya ca putrāḥ syuḥ kartāraḥ sāmparāyaṇāḥ*), possibly because they are responsible for the fate of their ancestors in the hereafter; cf. Contexts 6-9 below.

⁶ pw VII, 737: 1. “Tod”, 2. “das von-Ewigkeit-her-Sein”, 3. “Kampf”, 4. “Ungemach, Unglücksfall”, 5. “Zukunft”; PW has the same meanings with slight variations.

⁷ 1. “Conflict, encounter, war, battle”, 2. “A calamity, misfortune”, 3. “Future state, futurity”, 4. “A son”.

⁸ Cf. fn. 6; see generally Steiner 2020.

⁹ According to Macdonell (1927, 159, §182), nouns derived from roots with a primary suffix (such as a in *samparāya*) “may be divided into the two classes of abstract action nouns (cognate in sense to infinitives) and concrete agent nouns (cognate in sense to participles) used as adjectives or substantives [...] Other meanings are only modifications of these two”. If one considers these two classes primary, using *samparāya* to denote both the action itself and its target or result involves a ‘metonymic modification’ of the meaning of the word. However, while primary suffixes are most often used to derive action and agent nouns, it remains open if these two constitute primary classes: one could argue that they may just as well be used to form ‘result nouns’ (e.g. in the case of *bhāga* [from *bhaj* ‘to share’], which denotes the result of sharing: ‘a share’) or ‘object nouns’ (e.g. in the case of *veda* [from *vid* ‘to know’], which denotes the object of knowing: ‘knowledge’), without any ‘modification’ being involved.

¹⁰ At least theoretically, speaking about the process of dying as a departure presupposes the existence of something that does not simply vanish after the moment of death, but leaves the body, and probably also moves to another place. However, verbs expressing a movement away from something can also easily be used metaphorically (as also in

sāmparāya (which will be discussed in the next Section), it refers in a general way to a place or state characterized by being reached or attained after death, and thus can be translated as ‘the postmortal’ or ‘the hereafter’, leaving open whether it refers to a state (‘death’) or a world and the life one leads therein (‘the next world, the afterlife’).

As a search in the UVC shows, the earliest text to mention the word *samparāya* in the sense of ‘passing away’ or ‘death’ is the TB:

*nāvedavin manute tāṃ bṛhāntam, sarvānubhūm ātmānam
sāmparāyé.*

One who does not know the Veda, does not think of the great, all-perceiving Self at death.¹¹

The passage probably suggests that it is important to think of the ‘cosmic’ Self upon passing away, that is, at the moment of death. In doing so, it expresses a common notion in South Asian religions, namely that the thoughts one has when (or possibly also before) dying have a strong influence on one’s destiny after death (e.g. in a next reincarnation).

In post-Vedic literature, the word frequently appears in Buddhist texts, where it is generally used in the meaning of ‘the postmortal, the hereafter’. It seems to be used in the same way as *abhisamparāya* and similarly to *gati*, words that are used to denote the various ‘destinations’ that beings can reach after death, that is, their ‘destinies’ in the cycle of rebirth. It is also found in Pāli texts, where it is apparently only used in its second original sense.¹²

The *Mahāgovinda-Sūtra*, a text contained in the *Mahāvastu* that was composed in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit and also has a (partial) parallel in the Pāli canon, illustrates the Buddhist usage of *samparāya*. In one passage, we read about a conversation between a Brahmin called Govinda and the god Brahmā. After waiting on the god, who is his guest, the Brahmin says the following:

the case of the English verb ‘to pass away’), even without elaborate notions of a moving soul or of a hereafter. While Buddhism embraces the idea of rebirth, it generally rejects the existence of an individual essence (such as an *ātman* or ‘self’) that is reborn (or at least it discourages clinging to the idea that such an essence exists; see Wynne 2011).

11 TB III 12.9.7. Cf. the somewhat inaccurate translation by Dumont (1951, 674): “He who does not know the Veda, does not perceive, after death, the all-perceiving great Ātman”. For remarks on the often-problematic translation of locatives with the word ‘after’, see Hopkins 1903, 4-6.

12 PTSD, see under *samparāya*; cf. also the entry on *abhisamparāya*: “future lot, fate, state after death, future condition of rebirth; usually in foll. phrases: *kā gati ko abhisamparāyo* (as hendiadys) ‘what fate in the world-to-come’”.

*“dṛṣṭe dharme hitārthaṃ saṃparāyasukhāni vā
kṛtāvakāśo pṛccheyaṃ yaṃ me manasi prārthitaṃ”*

*evam ukte bhavanto mahābrahmā mahāgovindaṃ brāhmaṇaṃ
gāthāya pratyabhāṣati*

*“dṛṣṭadharme hitārthaṃ vā saṃparāyasukhāni vā
kṛtāvakāśaḥ pṛcchāhi yaṃ tava syābhiprārthitaṃ”*

“Whether it be for the sake of welfare in the visible condition or happiness in the *saṃparāya*, having the opportunity, I would like to ask what’s on my mind!”

Thus addressed, O honorable ones, great Brahmā replied to great Govinda, the Brahmin, in verse:

“Whether it be for the sake of welfare in the visible reality or for happiness in the *saṃparāya*, having the opportunity, ask what may be on your mind!”¹³

Here, happiness in ‘the postmortal’ or ‘hereafter’ (*saṃparāya*) is clearly contrasted with happiness in the ‘visible reality’ (*dṛṣṭadharmā*), an expression referring to the present world or state. In the following, the text also uses derived adjectives to distinguish between goals profitable in the visible reality (*dṛṣṭadhārmika*) and goals profitable in the hereafter (*sāṃparāyika*):

*atha khalu puna bhavanto mahāgovindasya brāhmaṇasya etad abhūṣi
“pravāritaṃ me khalu mahābrahmaṇā praśnavyākaraṇena. kiṃ dān(”
imaṃ mahābrahmaṇaṃ praśnaṃ pṛccheyaṃ dṛṣṭadhārmikaṃ arthaṃ
ārābhya utāho sāṃparāyikaṃ?”. atha khalu bhavanto mahāgovindasya
brāhmaṇasyaitad abhūṣi “asti tāvad ayaṃ dṛṣṭadhārmiko artho yaṃ
idaṃ pañca kāmagaṇārābhya. yaṃ nūnāhaṃ mahābrahmaṇaṃ
sāṃparāyike arthe praśnaṃ pṛcchehaṃ”.*

But then, mind you, O honorable ones, the following occurred to great Govinda, the Brahmin: “I have been granted, mind you, an explanation of a question by the great Brahmā. Now what question should I ask that great Brahmā about? About benefit that’s profitable in the visible reality, or in the *saṃparāya*?” Then, mind you, O honorable ones, the following occurred to great Govinda, the

13 Mvu III 211 (cf. the translation by Jones 1956, 207). Parallel text of this stanza in *Dīgha-Nikāya* II 240: *diṭṭha-dhamma-hitatthāya saṃparāya-sukhāya ca, katāvakāso +pucchassu* [ed.: *puccha ssu*] *yaṃ kiñci abhipatthitaṃ* ti.

Brahmin: “It’s just this much, this benefit pertaining to the visible reality, namely this: it’s about the five qualities of desire here. I should rather ask great Brahmā a question about benefit pertaining to the *saṃparāya*”.¹⁴

Since the Mahāvastu is a Buddhist text, great Govinda is subsequently advised by Brahmā to go forth into homelessness – which he does.

As we shall see in the following Section, a very similar conception is found in non-Buddhist texts too; however, it is regularly referred to with the derived form *sāṃparāya*.

3 *saṃparāya* and *sāṃparāya* in Pre-Medieval Literature

The word *sāṃparāya* is a vṛddhi derivation from *saṃparāya*, and as such could theoretically denote anything ‘relating to passing way’ or ‘coming after death’. It is not always clear whether *sāṃparāya* is a masculine or neuter noun, or an adjective; the main reason for this is that in the vast majority of cases, the word is used in the locative (*sāṃparāye*) or as the first part in a compound.

As in the case of *saṃparāya*, the dictionaries offer an entire range of meanings and translations for *sāṃparāya*;¹⁵ MW, for instance, gives the following:

- adjective:
 - required by necessity or calamity;
 - relating to war or battle, warlike;
 - relating to the other world or to the future.
- masculine noun:
 - the passage from this world into another;
 - need, distress, calamity;
 - a helper or friend in need;
 - contention, conflict;

¹⁴ Mvu III 212 (cf. the translation by Jones 1956, 207). Partially parallel text in *Dīgha-Nikāya* II 240-1: *atha kho bho mahā-govindassa brāhmaṇassa etad ahoṣi: ‘katāvakāso kho ‘mhi brahmunā sanamkumārena. kin nu kho ahaṃ brahmānaṃ sanamkumāraṃ puccheyyaṃ diṭṭha-dhammikaṃ vā atthaṃ saṃparāyikaṃ vā ti?’ atha kho bho mahā-govindassa brāhmaṇassa etad ahoṣi: ‘kusalo kho ahaṃ diṭṭha-dhammikaṃ atthānaṃ. aññe pi maṃ diṭṭha-dhammikaṃ atthaṃ pucchanti. +yaṃ nūnāhaṃ [ed.: yannūnāhaṃ] brahmānaṃ sanamkumāraṃ saṃparāyikaṃ yeva atthaṃ puccheyyaṃ’ ti.*

¹⁵ PW (masculine noun): 1. “der Uebergang aus dieser Welt in die jenseitige”, 2. “Noth, Bedrängniss”, 3. “Kampf”, 4. “etwa so v. a. ein Retter in der Noth”; pw has the same meanings, but also adds an adjective: “durch die Noth geboten”; Apte (adjective): 1. “Relating to war, warlike”, 2. “Relating to the other world, future”; (masculine or neuter noun): 1. “Conflict, contention”, 2. “Future life, the future”, 3. “The means of attaining the future world”, 4. “Inquiry into the future”, 5. “Inquiry, investigation”, 6. “Uncertainty”.

- the future, a future life;
- inquiry into the future;
- investigation (in general);
- uncertainty.

As I shall argue in the following, it is again possible to identify two basic meanings: first, *sāṃparāya* denotes an activity that might result in death, a ‘death-activity’ – specifically, a deadly fight, mortal combat, or battle. This meaning is connected to the meaning of *sam̐parāya* (passing away). Second, *sāṃparāya* denotes ‘the postmortal’ or ‘the hereafter’ in the sense of what comes after death. This is in fact equivalent to the Buddhist usage of *sam̐parāya*, which also denotes the hereafter.

In the following, I shall discuss passages from various contexts using the words *sam̐parāya* and *sāṃparāya* in order to establish what meaning they have in each case.

3.1 Mortal Combat, Battle

3.1.1 Context 1: *Sabhāparvan* (*sāṃparāya*)

In one passage of the *Mahābhārata* (II 69.14cd-15ab), Vidura speaks the following words to Yudhiṣṭhira, who is about to go into exile with his brothers:

mā hārṣiḥ sāṃparāye tvaṃ buddhiṃ tām ṛṣipūjitām //
purūravasam ailaṃ tvaṃ buddhyā jayasi pāṇḍava /

In *sāṃparāya*, do not abandon your resolve/intellect/wisdom that is venerated by the Seers!

You surpass Purūravas Aila in resolve/intellect/wisdom,¹⁶ O Pāṇḍava.¹⁷

Yudhiṣṭhira’s *buddhi* – his ‘resolve’, ‘intellect’, or ‘wisdom’ – is what will enable him to deal with the difficulties to come, and to take action when it is time to reclaim his kingdom. Most likely, Vidura here

¹⁶ It is difficult to see why Yudhiṣṭhira’s *buddhi* is compared to Purūravas’s. Purūravas Aila is best known for his love for the *apsaras* Urvaśī, which, at least according to some accounts, even drove him mad; at the same time, he is also said to have brought the three sacrificial fires to earth (MBh I 70.21). Possibly, the comparison refers to the fact that Purūravas is the son of Budha, the planet mercury, whose name literally means ‘the wise one’. I would like to acknowledge the help of Valters Negribs and Christophe Vielle in making sense of this passage.

¹⁷ Cf. van Buitenen’s translation: “lest you lose in the world-to-come [*sāṃparāya*] this resolve that the seers honor! Pāṇḍava, with this resolve you surpass Purūravas Aila”.

thinks of the battles (and other potentially fatal situations) that still await the Pāṇḍavas; *sāṃparāye* (no manuscript reads *saṃparāye*) can thus be very well understood as ‘mortal combat’ or ‘battle’.

3.1.2 Context 2: *Karṇaparvan* (*saṃparāya*/*sāṃparāya*)

In *Mahābhārata* VIII 27.92-93, Karṇa says the following to Śalya:

*eṣa mukhyatamo dharmah kṣatriyasyeti naḥ śrutam /
yad ājau nihataḥ śete sadbhiḥ samabhipūjitaḥ //
āyudhānām saṃparāye yaṁ mucyeyam ahaṁ tataḥ /
na me sa prathamah kalpo nidhane svargam icchataḥ //*

We have heard that this is the most important Dharma of a Kṣatriya: that he lies slain in battle, honored by good people. That I should escape/be released, then, in an armed *saṃparāya* is not the first duty for me who seeks heaven in death.

This could mean that Karṇa does not want to be liberated (*muc*) from the cycle of rebirths in a ‘death’ through arms, but rather seeks salvation in heaven. It is much more likely, however, that he thinks of a deadly activity involving arms, an armed combat or battle of arms (B₅ even reads *saṃprahāra* ‘battle’), and would not want to ‘escape’ (*muc*) when being engaged in such a combat (if the author of this stanza had wanted him to say that he does not want to escape death, an ablative would be much more likely).¹⁸ According to the critical apparatus, ‘Some MSS’ read *sāṃparāye* (with a long *ā*).

Later in the conversation, Karṇa again makes use of the same word (MBh VIII 29.30cd). Referring to Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa, he says:

adya yuddham hi tābhyām me saṃparāye bhaviṣyati //

For today, I will have a fight with those two in/about *saṃparāya*!

Here, the situation is similar to that in the previous passage. If one interprets *saṃparāya* as ‘death’, the passage could refer to a fight about – that is, until – death. The meaning ‘mortal combat’, however, is more likely. Again, a number of manuscripts also read *sāṃparāye* (V₁; B; D [D₂ omits the stanza, D_{3m} reads *saṃ*^o]; T₁), which never means ‘death’.

¹⁸ Several MSS also read *mamaṣa prathamah kalpo*– “this is my first duty” in 93bc, in which case it is necessary to understand ab as “That I should be released/find salvation in an armed battle”.

3.1.3 Context 3: *Śāntiparvan* (*saṃparāya/sāṃparāya*)

In a passage of the *Śāntiparvan* (MBh XII 102.15), Bhīṣma describes the ideal characteristics of combatants. About a type of particularly muscular fighters, he says that they

*praviśanty ativegena saṃparāye 'bhyupasthite /
vāraṇā iva saṃmattās te bhavanti durāsadāḥ //*

enter a *saṃparāya* with great speed when it has come.
Like infuriated elephants, they become hard to deal with.

Here, the meaning 'mortal combat' or 'battle' is the most natural one. Again, several manuscripts read *sāṃparāye* (K_{2,4,5}; B [except B₁]; Da, Dn, D_{2,3,4,5,7}; S), and in this case the editors even decided to put a wavy line under *saṃ* in *saṃparāya* to mark the uncertain reading.

3.1.4 Context 4: *Rāmāyaṇa* (*sāṃparāya/saṃparāya*)

In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the word *sāṃparāya* is used only once. When Hanumat visits Sītā, he offers to carry her away on his back. Sītā tries to dissuade him, arguing, for example, that the *rākṣasas* might overpower him (V 35.53):

*atha rakṣāṃsi bhīmāni mahānti balavanti ca /
kathaṃcit sāṃparāye tvāṃ jayeyuḥ kapisattama //*

Then again, the *rākṣasas* – terrible, mighty, and strong – might somehow defeat you in *sāṃparāya*, O best of monkeys.

Here again, we must assume that 'mortal combat' or 'battle' is intended. The manuscripts D_{1-3,8,10-11} read *saṃparāya*, a word that is otherwise not to be found in the text of the critical edition.

3.1.5 Context 5: *Daśakūmaracarita* (*sāṃparāya*)

In the *Daśakūmaracaritra*, which was composed by Daṇḍin in the seventh or eighth century, *sāṃparāya* is mentioned in three passages, each time clearly meaning 'battle'. To illustrate this, I here quote Onian's translation (who has divided Daṇḍin's often long sentences into smaller units):

Daś I 21: *mānī mānasāraḥ svasainikāyusmattāntarāye saṃparāye
bhavataḥ parājayam anubhūya vailakṣyalakṣyahṛdayo vītadayo.*

Mānasāra is proud by name and proud by nature. After his defeat at your hands in the battle that finished his soldier's hope for a long life, shame pierced his heart and he became heartless. (Onians 2005, 49)¹⁹

Daś VI 18: *jaḡrhe ca mahati sam̐parāye kṣīṇasakalasainyamaṇḍalaḥ pracaṇḍapraharaṇasatabhinnamarmā siṃhavamā kariṇaḥ kariṇam avaplutyātīmānuṣapṛāṇabalena caṇḍavarmaṇā*.

In the great battle which was then joined, Siṃhavarman lost the entire army of his soldiers. Hundreds of violent blows smashed his armor. With superhuman innate strength Caṇḍavarman leaped from his own elephant to Siṃhavarman's. (177)

Daś VII 263: *mahati sam̐parāye bhinnavarmā siṃhavamā balād agrhyata*.

In the great battle with his far more numerous enemy Siṃhavarman's armor was smashed, and he was captured. (275)

3.2 The Postmortal (State/World), the Hereafter

3.2.1 Context 6: *Hiraṇyakeśi-Gr̥hyasūtra* (*sāṃparāya*)

The *Hiraṇyakeśi-Gr̥hyasūtra* contains two mantras mentioning *sāṃparāya*, to be recited in the context of an Aṣṭakā, a ritual whose purpose is to feed the deceased ancestors. The first mantra reads as follows (II 14.3):

imam apūpaṃ catuḥśarāvaṃ nirvapāmi +kleśāpahaṃ²⁰ pitṛñāṃ sāṃparāye devena savitrā prasūtaḥ.

Impelled by the god Impeller, I offer this cake (prepared) from four cups, which removes the suffering in the *sāṃparāya* of the Fathers.

The second mantra reads as follows (II 15.2):

imāṃ pitṛbhyo gām upākaromi tām me sametāḥ pitaro juṣantām / medasvatīm ghṛtavatīm svadhāvatīm sā me pitṛṇ sāṃparāye dhi-notu / svadhā namaḥ.

¹⁹ In this and the following quotations, the original translation reads “Mana-sara”, “Chanda-varman”, and “Simha-varman”. I have adapted these spellings to the convention used in this article.

²⁰ Ed. *kleśāvahaṃ*; the emendation is suggested by Kirste in his edition.

I bring this cow to the Fathers. May my assembled Fathers be pleased with it – it has fat, it has ghee, it has *svadhā*.²¹ May it satiate my Fathers in the *sāṃparāya*. *svadhā*, obeisance!

As we know from other sources, the deceased Fathers (or forefathers) abide in the *pitṛloka* (the world of the Fathers). It is possible that *sāṃparāya* in the two mantras denotes this world;²² however, it could just as well refer to their postmortal state as forefathers.

3.2.2 Context 7: *Dharmasūtras* (*sāṃparāya*/*saṃparāya*)

Three *Dharmasūtras* contain a passage (with several minor variants) on the importance of keeping one's line of male descendants pure. I here quote and translate the version of the ĀpDhS (II 13.6 ≈ Baudh-DhS II 3.2; the last stanza is also found VasDhS XVII 9):

retodhāḥ putraṃ nayati paretya yamasādane /
tasmād bhāryāṃ rakṣanti bibhyantaḥ pararetasaḥ //
apramattā rakṣatha tantum etaṃ, mā vaḥ kṣetre parabījāni vāpsuḥ /
janayituḥ putro bhavati sāṃparāye, moghaṃ vettā kurute tantum
etaṃ iti //

Having passed away, the impregnator guides his son in Yama's abode.

This is why one guards one's wife, fearful of the seed of others. Diligently guard this line (of descendants), lest the seeds of others be sown in your field!

In the *sāṃparāya*, a son belongs to the begetter; (otherwise) a husband makes the line worthless.

Here, we are confronted with the traditional Brahminical worldview, according to which the salvation of a man depends on his male offspring. The passage makes clear that after death, only biological sons 'count'. The use of the word *yamasādana* 'Yama's abode' in the first stanza points to the idea that one reaches a certain place after death; however, whether *sāṃparāye* in the second stanza denotes this place, the place in which Yama's abode is located, or a state remains open.²³

²¹ *svadhā* is a technical term denoting an oblation to the ancestors (according to MW, it consists "of clarified butter &c. and often only a remainder of the Havis" and is "also applied to other oblations or libations"). At the same time, it is also an exclamation accompanying such an oblation.

²² Oldenberg (1892, 232, 234) translates *sāṃparāya* in both mantras as "the other world".

²³ Olivelle (2000, 93, 255, 417) translates *sāṃparāya* as "transit to the next world".

The ĀpDhS and the BaudhDhS both read *sāṃparāya*, the VasDhS *saṃparāya* (none of the manuscripts Olivelle used for the critical editions evince significant variants in each case). Judging from the age of the texts, the version with *sāṃparāya* is the oldest, whereas *saṃparāya* in the VasDhS (the youngest *Dharmasūtra*) is a simplification.

sāṃparāya is mentioned three more times (with basically the same meaning) in the *Dharmasūtras*. ĀpDhS II 24.3 again thematizes that sons are responsible for the postmortal fate of their ancestors:

te śiṣṭeṣu karmasu vartamānāḥ pūrveṣāṃ sāṃparāyeṇa kīrtiṃ svargaṃ ca vardhayanti.

By conducting the prescribed rituals, they (i.e. the sons) increase the fame and heaven of their predecessors in the course of the *sāṃparāya*.

The (tentative) translation of this passage is somewhat difficult due to the instrumental *sāṃparāyeṇa* – as in so many other passages, one would expect a locative *sāṃparāye* here. The interpretation underlying the present translation presupposes that *sāṃparāya* denotes the postmortal state in the sense of an ‘afterlife’, that is, something that has a duration (including a beginning and an end).

Another passage of the ĀpDhS (II 29.8-9) deals with witnesses and their obligation to answer truthfully, and locates hell in the *sāṃparāya*:

anṛte rājā daṇḍaṃ praṇayet / narakaś cātrādhikaḥ sāṃparāye.

If (his answer) is an untruth, the king should impose a penalty, and in addition, hell (awaits him) in the *sāṃparāya*.

What is meant by this is that hell awaits the liar ‘after death’; however, it remains open whether *sāṃparāya* denotes a postmortal state or a location.

Lastly, BaudhDhS II 11.31 quotes the passage TB III 12.9.7 mentioned above, with *saṃparāya* instead of *sāṃparāya* (which is given in the edition).

3.2.3 Context 8: Ādiparvan (*sāṃparāya*)

In the *Ādiparvan* of the Mahābhārata, the story of the Jaratkāru pair is told (both partners are called Jaratkāru). In the story, the female Jaratkāru complains to her brother, King Vāsuki, about her namesake husband Jaratkāru, who allegedly got her pregnant. Before his

claim can be proven, however, he left her. His wife considers whether his statement could be true (MBh I 44.11):

*svaireṣv api na tenāhaṃ smarāmi vitathaṃ kvacit /
uktapūrvam kuto rājan sāṃparāye sa vakṣyati //*

I don't remember him speaking an untruth even in jest in the past.
Why, O king, should he do so concerning the *sāṃparāya*?

The background of these deliberations is that the male Jaratkāru needs offspring, because the fate of his deceased ancestors (as well as his own) depends on it. This is clearly a matter concerning the hereafter,²⁴ an issue one does not make jokes about. The critical edition does not report any manuscript variants for *sāṃparāye*.

3.2.4 Context 9: *Baudhāyana-Gr̥hyasūtra* (*sāṃparāya*)

The *Baudhāyana-Gr̥hyasūtra* contains a hymn to the Lord (*īśāna*), one stanza of which (III 7.20) reads as follows:

*ekaḥ purastād ya idaṃ babhūva, yato babhūvur bhuvanasya gopāḥ /
yam apyeti bhuvanaṃ sāṃparāye, sa no havir ghṛtam ihāyuṣe 'ttu
devaḥ svāhā //*

He who here came into existence alone in the beginning, from whom the world's protectors came into existence,
he who is that world to which one goes in the *sāṃparāya* – may he eat our oblation here, ghee, for long life, (this) god! *svāhā*!

This stanza thus implies that after death, one goes to a certain 'world' (*bhuvana*) in 'the postmortal' or 'hereafter'; in this case, this world is the Lord himself.

²⁴ Van Buitenen (1973, 108) translated *sāṃparāya* in this stanza as "a matter of life and death".

3.2.5 Context 10: *Mokṣadharmaparvan* (*sāṃparāya*/
sam̐parāya)

In a philosophical passage in the *Mokṣadharmaparvan* (MBh XII 212.1), we read the following:

*janako janadevas tu jñāpitaḥ paramarṣiṇā /
punar evānupapraccha sām̐parāye bhavābhavau //*

Janaka, however, a god among people, being instructed by the supreme Seer, asked once again about existence and non-existence in the *sām̐parāya*.

The most natural way is to interpret *sām̐parāya* as a denotation of the hereafter. The passage suggests that it was not necessarily taken for granted that a person ‘exists’ (in whatever form) in the *sām̐parāya*. The word does not denote a specific state or world, but functions as a ‘placeholder’ for whatever comes after death (this passage also shows that translating *sām̐parāya* as ‘postmortal existence’ can be problematic). Only one manuscript reads *sam̐parāya* (Ś₁), which makes it possible to read *sam̐parāyabhavābhavau* as a compound: ‘existence and non-existence after death’.

3.2.6 Context 11: *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad* (*sāṃparāya*)

In the KU, *sām̐parāya* is used twice, once by the young Brahmin Naciketas and once by Yama, the god of death, who is being questioned by the former about the nature of human beings after death.²⁵ In KU 1.20, Naciketas first formulates his question thus:

*yeyaṃ prete vicikitsā manuṣye, ’stīty eke nāyam astīti caike /
etad vidyām anuśiṣṭas tvayāhaṃ, varāṇām eṣa varas tṛtīyaḥ //*

Concerning this doubt people have about a deceased one – some say he exists and some say he doesn’t exist – I would like to know about that, instructed by you. This is the third wish of the (three) wishes.

After Yama’s unsuccessful attempt to dissuade Naciketas from his wish, the latter asks again (KU 1.29):

²⁵ See generally Haas 2024.

*yasminn idaṃ vicikitsanti mṛtyo, <yat> sāṃparāye mahati brūhi
nas tat /
yo 'yaṃ varo gūḍham anupraviṣṭo, nānyaṃ tasmān naciketā vṛṇite //*

That about which they have doubts here – <which is in>²⁶ the big *sāṃparāya* – tell us about that, O Death!²⁷
This wish that penetrates into the mystery – Naciketas chooses none other than that.

As already noted by Alsdorf (1950, 63), *yat* in *pāda* b (in <>) is most likely an insertion made by a later editor of the passage, as it violates the meter. If removed, *yasminn*- and *sāṃparāye* belong to the same clause: “The big *sāṃparāya* about which they have doubts here, tell me that, O Death!” In this case, the *sāṃparāya* is also the object of *brūhi*. Thus, Naciketas either wants to hear about the *sāṃparāya* itself, or – with *yat* – about that which is in the *sāṃparāya*. In either case, it is plausible that *sāṃparāya* denotes that which comes after death, which Naciketas probably calls ‘big’ because it is a highly controversial subject among mortals and because Yama himself treats it as a big secret.²⁸

In his reply (KU 2.6-9), Yama states the following:

*na sāṃparāyaḥ pratibhāti bālaṃ, pramādyantaṃ vittamohena
mūḍham /
ayaṃ loko nāsti para iti mānī, punaḥ punar vaśam āpadyate me //
śravaṇāyāpi bahubhir yo na labhyaḥ, śṛṇvanto 'pi bahavo yaṃ na
vidyuh /
āścaryo vaktā kuśalo 'sya labdhā, āścaryo jñātā kuśalānuśiṣṭaḥ²⁹ //
na nareṇāvareṇa prokta eṣa, suvijñeyo bahudhā cintyamānaḥ /
ananyaprokte gatiḥ atra nāsty, aṇīyān hy atarkyaṃ aṇupramāṇāt //
naiśa tarkeṇa matir āpaneyā, proktānyenaiva sujñānāya preṣṭha /
yāṃ tvam āpaḥ satyadhṛtir batāsi, tvādṛṇ no bhūyān naciketah
praṣṭā //*

The *sāṃparāya* is not apparent to the fool who is careless and deluded by the delusion of possessions.³⁰

²⁶ <> mark an insertion.

²⁷ Cf. Olivelle's (1998, 381) translation: “The point on which they have great doubts – what happens at that great transit – tell me that, O Death!”.

²⁸ Cf. fn. 31.

²⁹ Several scholars have proposed the emendation *kuśalo 'nuśiṣṭaḥ* (see Olivelle 1998, 605); the translation of this would be “blessed is he who has been taught it”.

³⁰ Cf. Olivelle's (1998, 383) translation: “This transit lies hidden from a careless fool, who is deluded by the delusion of wealth”.

Thinking “this is the world, there is no other”, he falls into my power again and again.

That which many never get to hear about, that which many, even if they hear about it, don’t understand – rare is he who teaches it, blessed is he who obtains it, rare is he who knows it, having been taught by a blessed one.

If it is taught by an inferior man, it is not easy to grasp, even though one may think a great deal.

If it is not taught by someone else, one cannot gain access to it, because it is inconceivably finer than the size of the finest particle.

This insight cannot be gained by reasoning, only when taught by someone else is it easy to grasp, my dear,

that which you have gained. You are determined to (learn) the truth! May I have a questioner like you, Naciketas!

At first, one might think the ‘next’ (*para*) world mentioned in 6c might be synonymous with *sāṃparāya* in 6a: it is the world beyond that one needs to learn about in order to find salvation. The relative pronouns in 7ab (*yo-*, *yaṃ-*) could refer to either. In 9a, however, the object of knowledge is referred to with ‘this insight’ (*eṣā ... matir-*). This suggests that *mati* and *sāṃparāya* might be coreferential: both of them refer to what comes after death as an important object of knowledge. Thus, *sāṃparāya* (what comes after death) not only denotes the next world, but also encompasses the immortal self that remains after death and is the focus of the rest of the text.

4 Reinterpretations and Mistakes

4.1 A Means to Attain the Hereafter

4.1.1 Context 12: Śaṅkara’s Commentary on the *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad* (*sāṃparāya*)

For the first passage of the KU mentioning the word, Śaṅkara (c. eighth century CE) provides the following glosses (*Bhāṣya* on KU 1.29; original text in bold):

he mṛtyo, sāṃparāye paralokaviṣaye mahati mahatprajānanimitta ātmano nirṇayavijñānaṃ yat tad brūhi kathaya no ’smabhyam.

O Death, **tell**: explain **us**: to us – the definite knowledge about the

ātman – **that which is in the great:**³¹ **which** is the cause for the great goal *sāṃparāya*: whose object is the next world!

This passage shows that for Śaṅkara, *sāṃparāya* does not denote the *paraloka*, the ‘next world’, but something ‘that has the next world as its object’ (*paralokaviṣaya*). What he means by that becomes clearer in his commentary on the second KU passage mentioning *sāṃparāya* (2.6):

*sam̐pareyata iti sam̐parāyaḥ paralokas tatprāptiprayojanaḥ
sādhana viśeṣaḥ śāstrīyaḥ sāṃparāyaḥ / sa ca bālam avivekinaṃ
prati na pratibhāti na prakāśate nopatiṣṭhata ity etat.*

Because one passes away to it (*saṃ+parā+i*), it is called *sam̐parāya*, the next world. The *sāṃparāya* taught in the treatises is a peculiar means whose goal is the attainment of that (i.e. of the next world). And this (*sāṃparāya*) **is not apparent**: not evident **to the fool**: to an indiscriminating one; this means it is not at his disposal.

Here, Śaṅkara first defines *sam̐parāya* as something ‘one passes away to’ (note the passive voice of *sam̐pareyate*), that is, he understands it in a meaning well known to us from pre-medieval literature: *sam̐parāya* as ‘the hereafter’. He also equates the hereafter with the next world (*paraloka*), which indicates that he understood it as a domain or realm rather than a state or condition. In the next sentence, he defines *sāṃparāya* as a *sādhana*, a ‘means’ to accomplish (*sādh*) *tat*- ‘that’, which refers to the next world just mentioned before. This definition is in line with his earlier characterization of *sāṃparāya* as something whose object is the next world. While this reading of the KU probably does not reflect the intention of its original author (who probably took the word to mean ‘what comes after death’; see Context 11), interpreting *sāṃparāya* as the denotation of a means to pass away – or over – to the next world is not grammatically impossible.

³¹ In the KU, Naciketas’s characterization of the *sāṃparāya* is not intended to ‘glorify’ it, moreover, his tone seems rather informal. This justifies the translation ‘big’. In Śaṅkara’s case, it is probably the other way around, which is why ‘great’ is more appropriate.

4.2 Transit

4.2.1 Context 13: Śaṅkara's Commentary on the *Brahmasūtra* (*sāṃparāya*)

As mentioned in the Introduction, *sāṃparāya* is frequently translated as 'transit', a translation that is in conflict with the derivation of the word. None of the contexts discussed above provide any justification for it. Most likely, this reinterpretation of the word goes back to Śaṅkara, who in his commentary on *Brahmasūtra* III 3.27 strongly deviates from his explanation in the *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad-Bhāṣya*. The *Sūtra* deals with the doctrine that a liberated one 'loses' good and evil deeds after death, and specifies that this loss takes place in the *sāṃparāya*, "because according to others, in the *sāṃparāya*, there is nothing to be crossed" (*sāṃparāye tartavyābhāvāt tathā hy anye*).³² How exactly the *Sūtra* is to be understood is a question in itself and shall not be discussed further here. According to Śaṅkara, in any case, it refers to the opinion that a liberated person discards their good and evil deeds *on the way* to the hereafter – in his eyes an erroneous opinion that is backed up by a passage from the *Kauṣītaki-Upaniṣad*. For him, the *Sūtra* expresses that other authoritative texts clarify that this already happens at the time of death:

*sāṃparāye gamana eva dehād apasarpaṇa idaṃ vidyāsāmarthyāt
sukṛtaduṣkṛtahānaṃ bhavatīti pratijānīte.*

[The author of the *Brahmasūtra-Sūtra*] affirms that this loss of good deeds and bad deeds occurs because of the power of knowledge in the *sāṃparāya*, that is, exactly at the departure, when moving out from the body.³³

Perhaps it was this passage that inspired the authors of the dictionaries and modern scholars to translate *sāṃparāya* as 'transit'. In view of Śaṅkara's other explanation, however, one should not hastily accuse him of having understood the *word* in this meaning; probably he only used it as a 'hook' to present his interpretation of the entire *text* of the *Sūtra*.

³² Cf. Gambhirananda's (2009, 695) translation: "(A man of knowledge gets rid of virtue and vice) at the time of death, since nothing remains to be attained. For thus it is that others (i.e. the followers of the other branches) state". See generally Sharma 1978, 342-8.

³³ Cf. Gambhirananda's (2009, 696) translation: "[T]he aphorist asserts that at the very time of death, at the time of moving away from the body, occurs this discarding of virtue and vice as a result of the power of knowledge".

4.3 Otherworldly

4.3.1 Context 14: Hymn in the *Ādiparvan* (*sāṃparāya*)

A curious case is given in the *Ādiparvan* of the *Mahābhārata*, where Upamanyu summons the Aśvins by reciting a hymn in order to regain his eyesight. This hymn is said to consist of *ṛcs*; however, it is not to be found in the *Ṛgveda*. Its second stanza (MBh I 3.61) reads thus:

*hiraṇmayau śakunī sāṃparāyau, nāsatyadasrau sunasau vaijayantau /
śukraṃ vayantau tarasā suvemāv, abhivyayantāv asitaṃ vivasvat //*

Two golden birds belonging to the *sāṃparāya* (?), Nāsatya and Dasra, fine-beaked, belonging to the Victorious One (Indra?), swiftly weaving in the bright (sun?) on fine looms, weaving out the dark Vivasvat (= sun?).³⁴

This stanza is very difficult to interpret. As the editors note in the edition, “[t]he text of the Aśvin hymn (st. 60-70) is still highly uncertain, in part even quite unintelligible, the MSS being at this point all very corrupt” (n. on stanza 60). Moreover, it is difficult to avoid the impression that the author deliberately wanted to make the hymn enigmatic. Possibly, *sāṃparāya* is here used as an adjective in the dual and means ‘belonging to’ or ‘located in the postmortal’; the commentator Nīlakaṇṭha explains it to mean *sarvasya layādhiṣṭhānabhūtau*, “being in the place of the dissolution of everything”³⁵ (curiously, this explanation is also referred to in the PW to support the translation “ein Retter in der Noth”). Given the uncertainty of the text, it is impossible to draw firm conclusions.

4.3.2 Context 15: Raṅgarāmānuja’s Commentary on the Kaṭha-Upaniṣad (*sāṃparāya*)

Raṅgarāmānuja (c. sixteenth century CE) only briefly comments on the KU passages mentioning *sāṃparāya*. He paraphrases the first passage as following (*Prakāśikā* on KU 1.29; “That about which they have doubts here”):

³⁴ Cf. van Buitenen’s (1973, 47) translation:
“Birds golden, fine-beaked psychopomps,
Munificent Nāsatyas, surely triumphant,
Who on fine looms swiftly weave the light in,
And swiftly weave out that darker sun”.

³⁵ *Bhāratabhāvadīpā*, n MBh I 3.61”.

mahati pāralaukike yasmin muktātmasvarūpe samśerate tad eva me brūhi.

The great otherworldly proper nature of the liberated *ātman* about which they are undecided, tell me about that!

Here, Raṅgarāmānuja seems to interpret *sāmparāya* as an adjective with the same meaning as *pāralaukika* ('belonging to the next world' or 'otherworldly'), and relates it to the nature of the Self. This interpretation could hardly be applied to the second KU passage (2.6; "The *sāmparāya* is not apparent to the fool"), and indeed, Raṅgarāmānuja paraphrases this passage (echoing Śaṅkara's words) simply as *paraloko 'vivekinam prati na prakāśate*, "the next world is not evident to an indiscriminating one".

4.4 Beginninglessness

4.4.1 Context 16: Śāṇḍilya's Bhaktisūtras (*samparāya*)

According to the *Bhaktisūtras* attributed to Śāṇḍilya (eighth century CE),³⁶ the universe is divided into two entities: *cit*, the 'perceiver' or 'perception', and *cetyā*, the 'perceived' (*Sūtra* 40). *Sūtra* 41 states that

yuktau ca samparāyāt.

and they are joined because of *samparāya*.

The commentator Svapneśvara explains that *samparāyāt* means *anāditvāt*, 'because of beginninglessness'. While critical editions of these texts are still lacking, it seems to me that a conjecture is called for, namely replacing *samparāya* with *samavāya*, which as a philosophical term denotes "perpetual co-inherence, inner or intimate relation, constant and intimate union, inseparable concomitance" (MV, see s.v. *samavāya*).

³⁶ Johnson 2019, see s.v. "Bhakti Sūtra".

5 Conclusion

Based on the survey conducted in this article, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. *Samparāya* and *sāmparāya* are frequently confused or used interchangeably. This can be explained in two ways: first, the two words only differ in the quantity of a single vowel. In Prakrit, long vowels in closed syllables (such as *sāmp*) are usually shortened (Pischel 1900, 72-3). While this is not true for Sanskrit, it is plausible that Sanskrit authors, too, may have (occasionally) been influenced by Prakrit pronunciation. Moreover, from a metrical perspective, the syllable containing this vowel is heavy regardless of the length of the vowel. This means that using one ‘variant’ or the other does not affect the meter. Second, in many South Asian scripts, the difference between *saṃparāya* and *sāṃparāya* only lies in the presence or absence of a single line; in Devanāgarī, for example, *saṃparāya* is संपराय and *sāṃparāya* is सांपराय. Regardless of what the original reading was, a copyist may easily confuse one word with the other: either by simply overlooking the *ā* in the process of copying, by adapting the word *sāṃparāya* to a pronunciation the scribe was more accustomed to, or by ‘correcting’ *saṃparāya* to *sāṃparāya*.
2. *Sāṃparāya* is rarely used as an adjective. In the passages discussed in this article, only the enigmatic hymn to the Aśvins in the *Ādiparvan* (Context 14) seems to use it as such (though even in this case it is possible to read it as a nominalized adjective). Notwithstanding occasional reinterpretations (or ‘re-adjectivizations’), *sāṃparāya* is generally used as a noun.
3. Both *saṃparāya* and *sāṃparāya* are most often used in the locative (*°parāye*). Together with the fact that they are frequently used interchangeably, this is evidence that they are generally – if not always – considered as variants of one and the same noun. In the few cases where this noun is used in the nominative, it has the masculine gender.
4. The reason that *saṃparāya/sāṃparāya* is almost always used in the locative is probably because it was perceived as a fixed expression with (two) fixed meanings. *Samparāya/sāmparāya* could theoretically denote many death-related things, but in the locative always means either ‘in mortal combat/battle’ or ‘in the postmortal/hereafter’. (One may compare it to the word ‘charge’ in the phrase ‘in charge’: while the noun ‘charge’ has a variety of meanings, ‘being in charge’ only means ‘being responsible’).
5. The second sense is comparatively unspecific: as shown in Section 3.2, in most contexts dealing with postmortal (rather

than mortal or lethal) matters, it remains open whether the word denotes a concrete thing and if so, what: on the one hand, *sāṃparāya* is nowhere explicitly characterized as the 'state' of an individual (i.e. the state of having passed away, or being dead). On the other hand, it is also not necessarily a 'place' (i.e. the 'hereafter' or 'next world') – even though the verb *saṃ+parā+i* would suggest a destination in a spatial sense (even if only metaphorically). Rather, it denotes 'what comes after passing away' – 'the postmortal' or 'hereafter' in the broadest conceivable sense.

6. In only one of the passages discussed above, *saṃparāya* has the primary meaning of 'passing away' (TB III 12.9.7). In all other pre-medieval texts, it is possible to interpret *saṃparāya* as well as *sāṃparāya* as meaning either 'mortal combat, battle' or 'the postmortal'. Both meanings are derivative, which explains why they established themselves for the nominalized adjective *sāṃparāya*. However, even an author who was fully aware of the existence of the word *sāṃparāya* might have had a reason to use *saṃparāya* in the same meaning: first, the meaning 'the postmortal' for *saṃparāya* was well established in Buddhist Sanskrit as well as in Pāli (which does not even use the form *sāṃparāya*), and possibly even in other Sanskrit traditions (as was probably the case in the VasDhS; see Context 7). As for the meaning 'decease, death', an author might have understood it as a metonymical expression for 'mortal combat, battle'.
7. The interpretations by commentators such as Śaṅkara do not reflect the general usage of the word *saṃparāya/sāṃparāya*, but are guided by their exegetical agenda. While they might have been aware of the general meaning of this word (cf. Context 12), they took advantage of the fact that a form such as *sāṃparāya* can easily be reinterpreted.

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