bhadrāṃ te and bhadanta

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(1)

In Valmikis Ramayana the expression bhadrāṃ te occurs as a formula of blessing, of averting evil or of formal greeting inserted in the midst of a sentence in the speech of a character, breaking the syntactical order—without any connection with the preceding or succeeding portion of the sentence—i.e. as an asyndeton.

The following few occurrences from the first and the second Kanda would illustrate this peculiar usage:

तत्त्वं नाम भद्रं ते भार्यं मुन्द्रस्य धीपति: । (I 23 25a)
एवं भवतु भद्रं ते इक्ष्वाकु-कुल-वर्धन । (I 41 21)

इमी कुमारेः भद्रं ते देव-तुल्य-पशुकमणी ।
करथं पद्भयामिह प्राती क्रिमथं कस्य वा मुने ॥ (I 47 2)

इमी कुमारेः भद्रं ते देव-दुल्य-पशुकमणी ।
गज-सिंह-पाती चीरी शारदूल-वुश्योपमो ॥ (I 49 17)

सत्यापित्यो महाराज पुरोहित-पुरस्कृत: ।
शीघ्रमागच्छ भद्रं ते दूधमांसिं गयवः ॥ (I 67 11)

लक्ष्मणागच्छ भद्रं ते अमिलामुदां यथा ।
प्रतीच्छ पांगुण्य गुरुन्नक्ष ना भूति कालस्य पर्ययः ॥ (I 71 18)

स त्या पश्चातु भद्रं ते गमः सत्य पराक्रमः ।
सर्वां सुहद्य आपृक्ष्य लक्ष्मिनानि दिदृश्यते (I 31 4)

श्यालोकोऽक्षमं कं शेषे निषादरिपितं गृहम् ।
शीघ्रमाणं भद्रं ते तारधायिति वाहिनीम् ॥ (I 83 2)

It is to be noted that the formula is used in a fixed metrical position—as the last two words in the first or the third of the Anustubh.
(2)

*bhadanīṭa* is quite well-known in Pali as a term of respectable address or adjective with respect to Buddhist mendicant, monk etc.

Its contracted form *bhante* (for *bhadantte*) is frequently used similarly in the Jain Āgamas. (Pischel §§ 165, 349, 366 o, 417, 463, 465).

The root *bhanda* is given in the Dharupatha (2, 11) with the meanings *kalyāṇa, sukha-, bhadanta-* derived from it is noted in the Uṇādi-sutra-vṛtti (3, 130) according to Monier Williams dictionary.

Semantically, *bhadanta* can be possibly explained as meaning *kalyāṇakāraka*. But its very frequent use in speech as a respectful term of address leads me to suspect that it may have been also influenced by the MIA. form of the traditional blessing formula *bhadrām te* (> *bhaddram te* > *bhadante*).

The addresser thereby expresses his or her reverence and good wishes ‘Bless you!’ ‘Let no evil visit you’.

This is comparable to the utterances *jaya, jiva, nanda*, *vardhasva* shouted as blessing for a great person on a festive occasion.

A parallel case is that of Sk. *jīva* ‘long live’, Ap. *jīu, jiu*, occurring in various NIA. languages as *jīu! jīu, ji* etc. as a particle of assent or respect and also as an honorific particle added to names (Turner, 5240).

From the respectful term of address *bhadante* was created the address *bhadanīṭa* which later became specialized as applying to the Buddhist monks and mendicants.