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## **NOTIZ** – **NOTICE**

# A Note On Rg Veda III.54.21(c)

ALAKA HEJIB / ARVIND SHARMA

I

Rg Veda III.54.21 runs as follows:

Sádā sugáh pitumān astu pánthā

Mádhvā devā ósadhīh sám piprkta /
Bhágo me agne sakhyé ná mrdhyā

Úd rāyó aśyām sádanam puruksóh //1

The word  $mrdhy\bar{a}$ - in  $p\bar{a}da$  (c) of this verse raises a syntactical problem; namely, whether it is to be properly connected with  $bh\acute{a}go^2$  or with agne. This problem regarding the concordance of the verb and the noun is caused by the nature of the verbal ending. The form  $mrdhy\bar{a}h$  is second person singular of the optative agrist from the root mrdh (to neglect)<sup>3</sup>. If the verb is taken to be in syntactic agreement with the vocative form agne, then the noun  $bh\acute{a}go$  is left unconstrued. If, however, one tries to construe  $mrdhy\bar{a}h$  with  $bh\acute{a}go$ , as Geldner<sup>4</sup> and Renou<sup>5</sup> seem to, then the verb does not agree with the noun and is made to agree with the noun through various devices<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> F. Max Müller, *The Hymns of the Rig-Veda in the Samhita and Pada Texts*, Vol. I, Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1965, p. 253.

<sup>2</sup> Hermann Grassmann reads bháyas for bhágo in Wörterbuch zum Rig-Veda, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1964, p. 1060, but this seems to be a printing error as in his translation of the verse under discussion he obviously reads the text as cited above (see Hermann Grassmann, Rig Veda, Erster Theil, Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1876, p. 97). This is further confirmed by the fact that the verse under discussion is cited by him under the entry bhágas in his Wörterbuch zum Rig Veda, p. 922.

See Arthur Anthony Macdonell, A Vedic Grammar for Students, Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 407; Hermann Grassman, Wörterbuch zum Rig-Veda, p. 1060. Louis Renou, however, takes mrdhyāh as "pseudo-précatif", to be juxtaposed with asyām in pāda (d), which is a "pure optative form" (see Etudes Védiques et Pāṇinéennes, Tome IV, Paris: E. de Boccard, 1957, p. 50).

- <sup>4</sup> Karl Friedrich Geldner, *Der Rig-Veda*, Erster Teil, Harvard University Press, 1951, p. 399.
  - Louis Renou, op.cit., Tome V, p. 14.
- <sup>6</sup> Geldner seems to read *mrdhyāt* for *mrdhyāh* (Bhaga [das Glück] möge in meiner Freundschaft nicht fehlen, O Agni) and Renou takes *mrdhyāh* as third person singular pseudo-precative (O Agni, puisse Bhaga ne pas me faire défaut en alliance!).

The purpose of this paper is to examine whether syntactic agreement can be achieved within the  $p\bar{a}da$  consistently with the form  $mrdhy\bar{a}h$  taken as a second person singular of the optative mood.

II

The three key words involved in the syntactic situation in  $p\bar{a}da$  (c) are (1) Agne, (2) bhágah, and (3) mṛdhyāh. Out of these three, there is little difference of opinion regarding Agne, which is accepted on all hands as the vocative form for Agni. The syntactical difficulties arise in the case of the other two.

The word bhágah, being nominative (singular), cannot agree with mṛdhyāḥ (which is second person singular of the optative mood). If, however, one takes the word bhágaḥ as relating not to the verb directly, but indirectly through the word Agni, then it seems to pose less of a problem. There are three ways of connecting bhágaḥ with agne: (1) to take bhágaḥ as a vocative rather than a nominative<sup>7</sup>; (2) to take it as a predicative adjective of Agni<sup>8</sup>; and (3) to take it as an adjectival clause forming a parenthetical unity by itself, with the verb 'to be' understood (bhágaḥ san). The first two options involve emendation of the text, as do the suggestions by Renou and Geldner; hence the third option seems preferable. Indeed, it is precisely this option which seems to have been used by Hermann Grassmann, who translates the clause as follows:

... Vertheilend, Agni, denk an meine Freundschaft ... 9

Thus Grassmann takes the word *bhágas* as applying to Agni<sup>10</sup> in the sense of the distributor of gifts or riches.

This procedure is tempting, as the Rg Veda does contain double vocatives with the verb in the singular, e.g. Rg Veda VII.6.1. This would mean that we take Bhágas to be a separate deity, and not take it as in the nominative, which it clearly is. Hence, though tempting, the option does not seem to be desirable.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> In this case *bhágas* is no longer taken as a separate deity but is only understood as an epithet of Agni. This, however, also involves disregarding its nominative inflexion and hence this option too does not seem to be desirable.

Hermann Grassmann, Rig Veda, Erster Theil, p. 97.

Hermann Grassmann, Wörterbuch zum Rig-Veda, p. 922, meaning (1) "der Zutheiler", etc., and "so auch in Vergleichen (mit na, iva) . . . von Agni".

III

Grassmann's translation, however, although it seems to resolve the problem regarding the syntactic status of bhágas in connection with mrdhyāh, creates other difficulties. He uses the verb "andenken" (to remember)<sup>11</sup> to translate (ná) mṛdhyāḥ. Such a meaning can only be obtained if "ná mṛdhyāḥ" is read together as a unit, for the verb mrdh means to neglect 12, and to remember means not to neglect. It must be borne in mind, however, that Grassmann, in translating bhágas with Agni, has already taken the particle ná into account as a particle of comparison  $^{13}$ . Now he is again using the same  $n\acute{a}$  as a particle of negation, which is implied in his translation of (ná) mrdhyāh as "denk an". It is true that the particle ná can be a particle of comparison and/or negation<sup>14</sup>, but whether it can be both simultaneously, or whether an extra ná can be supplied analogically 15, in two different senses, remains to be established<sup>16</sup>.

## IV

On the basis of the foregoing discussion it now seems possible to offer a translation of Rg Veda III.54.21(c) without doing violence to the text as follows:

O Agni, (being) the distributor (of gifts), do not neglect my friendship.

<sup>11</sup> Dr. Otto Springer, ed., Langenscheidt's Encyclopaedic Dictionary of English and German Languages, Part II, Berlin: Langenscheidt, 1974, p. 79.

Arthur Anthony Macdonell, op.cit., p. 407. Hermann Grassmann himself assigns the meaning "nachlassen, lässig werden" to this particular occurrence of mrdh (Wörterbuch zum Rig-Veda, p. 1060).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 922.

<sup>14</sup> William Dwight Whitney, Sanskrit Grammar, Harvard University Press, 1971,

p. 413, para. 1122 c and h.

Geldner, for instance, supplies a comparative na after somāh in his translation of X.46.7(d): vanarsado vāyavo na somāh, vide op.cit., Dritter Teil, p. 204. Also see his translation of Rg Veda IV.2.17.

16 It may be argued that the examples from classical Sanskrit do create room for suggesting that such a simultaneous use of ná may be a possibility. Thus the use of the kākāksigolakanyāya (P. K. Gode and C. G. Karve, eds., V. S. Apte's The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary, Vol. III, Poona: Prasad Prakashan, 1959, Appendix E, p. 58) and the existence of slesa as a figure of speech in later Sanskrit (vide Viśvanatha, Sāhityadarpana X. 643) could be cited as examples. However, it must be borne in mind that the former is largely current in colloquial usage and the slesa as a figure of speech does not in general seem to apply to indeclinables.