

THE PARTICLE *GHA* IN THE *RGVEDA*

The particle *gha* in the Ṛgveda is unanimously declared as meaningless by both Indian and Western scholars. Yāska, the author of the *Nirukta*, does not include *gha* in his threefold classification of particles. Durga notices that Yāska left out *gha* and calls forth our attention to *gha* in Ṛgveda X.10.10 in which he finds it to be meaningless. Bertold Delbrück admits his inability to ascertain any meaning for *gha* and contends that all that Hermann Grassmann has said about *gha* should suffice the treatment of *gha*. To Grassmann, *gha* appears to be a kind of post-positive that emphasizes the preceding word, which can be a noun, pronoun, particle or combination of particles. He observes that *gha* with pronouns is often followed by a relative clause that qualifies the pronoun emphasized by *gha*.

At this point I wish to bring to your attention my general thesis regarding the three particles, *āha*, *gha*, and *ha* that I have studied for my Ph.D. dissertation. I discovered that the assignment of either emphasis or verse-filling function as the purpose of a great number of Ṛgvedic particles seems to be but a euphemistic way of admitting our failure to cognize their syntactic function.

Let us now first turn to the example of Ṛgveda X.10.10 in which Durga declares forthright that *gha* is superfluous.

**X.10.10**

ā ghā tā gacchān úttarā yugāni  
 yātra jāmayah kṛṇāvann ājāmi  
 úpa barbṛhi vṛṣabhāya bāhūm  
 anyām icchasva subhage pátim māt.  
 (Yama expresses his point of view)

Let such couples come to pass later in the future  
 when the brother and sister would do what is [considered]  
 unbecoming them. You lay your arm under a bull [like man].  
 Seek someone else than me as your husband, O charming  
 woman!

In the previous verse Yamī puts forth her request of choosing  
 Yama her brother, as her husband. The sentence in that verse is  
*yamīh... bibhryāt*, to which Yama's speech *ā ghā tā gacchān úttarā  
 yugāni* serves as a strong dismissal of Yamī's point. Yama discon-  
 tinues Yamī's line of thinking by uttering the sentence which is  
 grammatically discontinuous with the subject of Yamī's sentence.  
*Gha* indicates the abruptness of the change of subject and the  
 discontinuity of theme. With the anticipatory prefix *ā* the verb  
 attracts attention of the hearer and the plural of *gacchān* strikes  
 as opposite of the singular of *bibhryāt* in the previous verse.

I will explain now my conclusive understanding of the syntac-  
 tic function of *gha* and then I will cite for evidence a few examples  
 from the Ṛgveda. *Gha* is indeed a particle of attention and con-  
 centration. It demands at its utterance attention to the central  
 theme of the verse which is mostly indicated by a pronoun or a  
 preverb that precedes *gha*. In the Ṛgvedic syntax the words of espe-  
 cial significance within a verse tend to seize the position of empha-  
 sis which is at the opening of the verse. Whether they be noun, pro-  
 noun, verb, adverb or preverb, they mark the syntactically impor-  
 tant verse-initial position. If it is a noun, *gha* points to it as the  
 subject, and thereby to the main idea of the verse without any  
 additional indicative device. The pronouns by nature are anaphoric  
 since they substitute for the noun mentioned earlier. When  
 there is thematic continuity, the anaphoric pronoun acts as a  
 mild reminder of the main idea of the verse. Ṛgvedic *syá* and *tyá*,  
 which are used for persons too well known to need introduction

by name are used non-anaphorically with *gha*. Other pronouns are found right at the beginning of the hymn with the following *gha*. In one instance, *gha* follows a finite verb. In spite of such a variety of the elements preceding *gha*, we witness uniformity of function in all these verses, and that is, firstly, the verse with *gha* is syntactically and thematically intertwined with the previous verse, though in a very few cases with the following one, and secondly the particle *gha* indicates the breach of syntax as regards the subjects of the two verses that are interrelated. The audial effect of *gha* forewarns the hearer that what follows *gha* is going to be an abrupt change of the subject or the main theme with the effect of discontinuity of the context.

For example:

**I.18.4**

*sá ghā vīró ná riṣyati*  
*yám índro bráhmaṇaspátīḥ*  
*sómo hinóti mārtyam.*

(And) he, the hero, is never harmed;

The mortal to whom

Indra, Brahmaṇaspati or Soma

renders his support.

The verse-initial pronoun *sáh* anaphorically indicates that its referent would be in the previous verse. But that verse contains no referent of *sáh* in its principal clause, which is « *mā naḥ sám-saḥ... rákṣā ṇo brahmaṇaspate* » (Do not injure us, protect us, o Brahmaṇaspati). Naturally, after this sentence, the abrupt mention of *sáh* arrests our attention with the ambiguity and curiosity about its referent. The curiosity is fulfilled with the forthcoming relative pronoun *yám* that correlates with *sáh*. We then know that for sure the theme is now *not* Brahmaṇaspati but some one else. But once again there is suspension regarding the true subject which is referred to by the diptych *sáh... yám*. The *pādas b* and *c* together with the last word *mārtyam* provide us with the full epexegetis of the pronoun *sáh* that is proleptically emphasized by *gha*.

**I.27.2**

*sá ghā naḥ sūnúḥ sávasā*

*prthúpragāmā susévaḥ*  
*mīḍhvārī asmākaṁ babhūyāt*  
 May he [Agni] who is our son  
 [born] by strength,  
 be kind and compassionate to us.

The previous verse I.27.1 has « ... *tvā vandādhyā agnīm...* » « *sā naḥ sūnūḥ* » of this verse refers to the Agni of verse 1. The change from *tvā agnīm* in accusative to *sā agnīḥ* is marked by *gha* whereby the change of subject is indicated, « *asmākaṁ babhūyāt* » is the delayed predicate that serves as an epexegetis of *sāḥ*.

**I.30.8** *ā + gha*  
*ā ghā gamad yādi śrávat*  
*sahasrīṅbhir ūtibhiḥ*  
*vājebhir ūpa no hávam*  
 To [us] he will surely come, if he hears it,  
 with his thousand-fold aids;  
 with his rewards,  
 to our call.

The preceding verse has « *havāmahe... índram ūtāye* ». In this verse the unexpressed subject is *índraḥ*, the subject of *ā gamat*; thus there is a syntactic shift from the subject *vayām* (we) to Indra. This shift is marked by *gha*. The « hitherward action » of coming implicit in the prefix *ā* finds its accusative object of destination at the very end of the verse, thus *hávam* becomes the delayed predicate.

The next example is of *ghā* with the particle *utā* indicating antithesis.

**V.61.6 and V.61.8**  
*utā tvā strī śāśīyasī*  
*pūṁsó bhavati vásyasī*  
*ádevatrād arādhāsaḥ 6.*  
*utā ghā némo ástutaḥ*  
*pūmāṅṅ itī bruve paṇīḥ*  
*sā váiradeya' it samāḥ 8.*

On the one hand many a woman is better than a man (who is)

godless and ungiving 6.

And on other hand such and such a one, unpraised, miserly is called a man, but is of no more worth than his price in wergild 8.

The collocation *utá... utá* normally indicates « collection » in the sense of « both... and ». However, *utá... utá gha* indicates that the emphasized correlate is not only « not on par » but is antithetical to what it is alligned with. *Utá... Utá* construction makes us expect the equal or comparable phenomena but *gha* upsets this balance and emphasizes one of the two comparable units with antithetical indication.

When *gha* accompanies *utá vā*, the situation becomes more interesting. Here the two comparable ones stand as options on par when there is no *gha*, but when emphasized by *gha*, that option becomes amplified by a sense of preference or intensity of comparative degree. This can be illustrated by —

### I.109.2

*áśravam̐ hi bhūridāvattarā vām  
vijāmātur utá vā ghā śyālāt ,  
áthā sómasya práyati yuvábhyām  
indrāgnī stóman̐ janayāmi návyam.*

For I have heard that you are more generous than a *vijāmātr̥* (son-in-law),

or, better still, than a wife's brother,  
so, at the offering of the *soma*

I have produced a new song of praise for you.

Here the *vijāmātr̥*, the son-in-law, is compared with the *śyāla*, wife's brother. The latter is more generous than the former. To indicate the better one of the two comparable ones, *gha* is used; consequently the inclusive force of *utá* is abated and the option indicated by *vā* is turned into a preference.

With the negative *ná*, the particle *gha* does not emphasize the idea of negation as is suggested by Grassmann. See that Grassmann is wrong in the following example:

### VIII.2.22

*á tū śiñca kánvamantam*

*ná ghā vidma śāvasānāt  
yaśástaram śatāmūteḥ*

Pour forth that (*soma*) which has a Kaṇva  
(for its offerer).

Than the strong Indra of a hundred aids  
we know no one more glorious.

Here the *pāda a* has *tvām* as the unexpressed subject of *ā śiñca*. *Pāda b* has *vayām* as the unexpressed subject of *vidma*. The negative *ná* does not negate the preceding idea but the verb following *gha*. *Gha* simply separates the imperative sentence and the following present indicative statement with a clear indication of the change of subject and theme.

The combination *cid gha* appears to create an interesting nuance of comparison. I am taking *cid* to mean « even » which implies poetically the sense of *vyatireka*. *Cid gha* together tone down the sense of *vyatireka* to that of *ananvaya*. To give an example, here is the verse:

### VIII.33.17

*īndraś cid ghā tād abravīt  
striyā aśāsyām mānaḥ  
utó āha krátum raghúm*

*No less than* Indra said this: On the one hand, woman's mind cannot be controlled (by others).

And on the other hand, her will-power is weak (at the same time, so she cannot control herself).

Instead of saying « even Indra said this » which would be *īndraś cid abravīt*, the verse has *gha* that modifies the sense of « even ». *Gha* thus indicates that Indra as the standard of comparison is not really a standard in this case, but being the one who he is, he had said this, though in his own right, he may be great.

Thus, *gha* in the Ṛgveda as illustrated by the above representative examples is a particle of syntactic logic.

It is concerned with the syntactic continuity between two verses. Where the subject is abruptly changed in person, gender, number or referent with or without simultaneous change of tense or mood, *gha* intercedes to mark the jarring syntax of the two verses.

By indicating such abruptness or grammatical discontinuity, it functions as a kind of adversative particle. Being concerned with the two verses, *gha* generates hypotaxis or relational syntax. Through its insertion, the two verse-contexts are clearly separated, though with the epexegetical indication and the underlying thematic unity the synthesis of the contexts is also indicated. A particle that divides the syntax while unifies the semantics of the two clauses is indeed the same as what Yāska calls a *karmopasaṁgraha*. I therefore call *gha* as a *karmopasaṁgrahanipāta* or a synthesizing particle.

The Greek particle γε is comparable with the Ṛgvedic *gha*. Greek ἐγώ-γε, σὺ-γε, ὅ-γε, σέ-γε, appear parallel with the vedic *vayám̐ gha*, *tvám̐ gha*, *yó ha*, *sá gha*, etc. *á gha vīro* (1.18.4) is comparable with ὁ γ' ἄνθρωποι. *Trītye ghā savane* is comparable to Greek γε after adjectives. VIII.44.23: *yád agne syám̐ ahám̐ tvám̐/tvám̐ vā gha syá ahám̐* is comparable to πατήρ δ' ἐμός ... ζῶει ὃ γ' ἢ τέθνηκε: (« When, O Agni, I should become you, or even you should become I... » and « my father whether he is living or in fact whether he is dead... »).

Both *gha* and γε are adversative, e.g. Greek γε in σὺ δ' οὐ λέγεις γε (αἰσχρά), δρᾶς δέ με, that is, You do not indeed say, but do shame ful things to me (Euripides Andromache 129). Vedic *gha* does not occur with the relative *yád* whereas Greek γε does.

Vedic *ha* and *gha* together account for the function of Greek γε. Therefore these three particles are comparable.