
Vedic *aghalá-/akhala-*

The Abstract and the Handout

Presented at the 7th International Vedic Workshop,
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Preface

Late Masato Fujii, emeritus professor at Kyoto University, passed away on 11th October, 2024. One of his last works was a paper titled “Vedic *aghalá-/akhala-*” presented at the 7th International Vedic Workshop, August 19–24, 2019, Dubrovnik, Croatia. Its full paper was never finished. Here I reproduce the abstract and handout presented at the Workshop, hoping they will be of some help to scholars interested in this topic. The abstract will also be included in the forthcoming Proceedings of the Workshop; it is presented here under the kind permission of Professor Mislav Ježić, who is editing the Proceedings.

Please refer to Professor Fujii’s name when you use the materials below.

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ABSTRACT (Masato Fujii)

The word *aghalá-* is derived from *aghá-* with the suffix *-la-*. It occurs only at AVŚ 8.8.10 (AVP 16.29.10); ŚBM 12.7.3.20 (ŚBK 14.4.3.18); JB 2.266 (Malayalam mss.: *akhala-*); KB 2.2 (Sarma 2.3.4: *akhala-*). In the JB and JUB, *akhala-* occurs at four places (JB 2.66; 2.254; 3.262; JUB 1.5). In his edition and translation of the JUB, Oertel (1894) reads [*e*]ṣā *khalā devatā* (1.5.1; 4) for [*e*]ṣā*khalā devatā*, and gives the meaning ‘base’ to *khalā-*. Later, Caland (1915) notices that *akhala- deva-* is a euphemism for Rudra in the JB (*Over en uit JB*, 47, n. 69), and finds that *aghalá-* and *akhala-* are the same word (103, Addenda). Then Oertel (1942) examines all the occurrences of *aghalá-* and *akhala-* (except JB 2.66), and proposes the meaning ‘grausig, furchtbar’ for *aghalá-/akhala-* (*Kl. Schr.*, II, 1530ff.). *Akhala-* is a phonetic variant by the interchange of voiceless and voiced stops, or possibly, because of its occurrences only in Jaiminīya and Kauṣītaki texts handed down in South India, an orthographic variant to be pronounced ‘*aghalá*’, being influenced by local languages in which a voiceless stop between vowels is pronounced as a corresponding voiced stop.

In his study of *aghalá-/akhala-*, Oertel pays no attention to *aghá-*, which shows a semantic development in later Vedic texts. From the AV onward, *aghá-* increases its connection with death, and means an evil related with death or death itself. From the fact that the occurrences of *aghalá-* and *akhala-* are limited to later texts, it can be inferred that *aghalá-* is an adjective made from the *aghá-* that has a close semantic connection with death, and presumably has the meaning ‘related to or bringing the evil of death’ or ‘frightening to death’, which would be fit well for all the contexts of *aghalá-/akhala-*.

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Vedic *aghalá-/akhala-*

Masato Fujii (Kyoto)

1. *aghalá-* = *aghá-* + *-la-*

AiG [17] II 2, 863; cf. Walde [18] I, 41; Pokorny [15] I, 8; Hartog [8], 31ff.; KEWA [10], 19.

aghalá- AVŚ 8.8.10 (AVP 16.29.10); ŚBM 12.7.3.20 (ŚBK 14.4.3.18); JB 2.266 (Malayalam mss.: *akhala-*); KB 2.2 (ed. Sreekrishna Sarma 2.3.4: *akhala-*)

PW [2] “schlimm”; M-W [12] “fearful”; KEWA [10] “schlimm” (on *aghalá*); EWA [11] not listed; EncyDict [7] “wicked, bad”

akhala- JB 2.66; 2.254; 3.262; JUB 1.5.1; 4.

PW, M-W, KEWA, EWA: not listed
EncyDict [7] “not malevolent or cruel, benevolent (epithet of *Īśāna-Rudra*)”

aghalá- = *akhala-*

Oertel 1894 [13], JUB ed. & tr., 85: [*e/śā khalā devatā* “this base divinity” 1.5.1; 4.

Caland 1914 [4], *Over en uit JB*, 47, n. 69: *akhala- deva-* (JB 3.262) is a euphemism for Rudra; 103, Addenda: *aghalá-* and *akhala-* are the same word.

Oertel 1940 [14], *Euphemismen*, 30ff. (= *Kl. Schr.*, II, 1530ff.): he examines all the occurrences of *aghalá-* and *akhala-* (except JB 2.66), and proposes the meaning ‘grausig (horrible), furchtbar (awful)’ for *aghalá-/akhala*.

2. *aghalá-*

(1) AVŚ 8.8.10 (AVP 16.29.10)

mṛtyáve m̐n̐n̐ prá yacchāmi mṛtyupāsáir amē sitāh̐ /
mṛtyór̐ yé aghalá dhātās̐ tébhya enān̐ práti nayāmi bandhvā //

“To death do I deliver those yonder; with fetters of death [are] they bound (*sā*); the *sad* messengers that are death’s — them I lead them to meet, having bound (*bandh*) [them].” (tr. Whitney)

(2) ŚBM 12.7.3.20 (ŚBK 14.4.3.18) (Sautrāmaṇī)

tád̐ d̐huh̐. / etasyai vā etád̐ aghaláyai devatáyai rūpān̐ yád̐ eté ghorá āruṇyáh̐ pasávo. yád̐ etéśān̐ pasūn̐ān̐ lómabhīh̐ payograhān̐ chr̐v̐yáyád̐, rudrásyās̐yē pasūn̐ āpi dadh̐yād̐. āpasur̐ yájamānāh̐ syād̐. ... it̐i. surāgrahān̐ evātéśān̐ pasūn̐ān̐ lómabhīh̐ śr̐ṇ̐āti. suráyām̐ evá tád̐ ráudraṇ̐ dadh̐āti. ...

“As to this they say, ‘In that there are those wild beasts, this is a form of that cruel deity; and if he were to mix the cups of milk with hairs of those beasts, he would thrust the cattle into the mouth of Rudra, and the Sacrificer would be without cattle ...’ The cups of Surā-liquor alone he mixes with hairs of those beasts: he thus put into the Surā what belongs to Rudra ...” (tr. Eggeling)

(3) JB 2.266 (Aśvamedha)

sa vā eṣa vīryam eva yajñah̐. yarhi vā etena purejire, sarvam eva vīryavad āsa – r̐śir̐ ha sma mantrak̐d̐ brāhmaṇa ājāyate, t̐ivyād̐h̐ rājanyaś̐ sūruh̐ ... āpi ha smar̐ṇyē vīryān̐ yaj̐yante – aghalās̐ śimhā, aghalās̐ śārūlā, aghalā r̐kṣā r̐kṣikā, aghalā ahayo jagarāh̐.

“Thus this sacrifice is no other than vigor. Formerly, when they performed this [sacrifice], all became possessing vigor. The Brāhmaṇa used to be born as a sage who makes sacred formulas. The Rājanya [used to be born] as a hero who pierces [enemies]. ... In the wilderness, vigors used to be born such as lions being *aghalā*, tigers being *aghalā*, bears and *r̐kṣikās* being *aghalā*, snakes and serpents being *aghalā*.”

(4) KB 2.2: 4.22–24 (ed. Sreekrishna Sarma 2.3.1–4) (Agnihotra)

dv̐r̐ ud̐ic̐ṇ̐ srucam̐ udyacchati. rudraṇ̐ eva tat̐ svāyān̐ diśi pr̐th̐vāvas̐r̐jati. tasmād̐ dh̐ūyamān̐asyottarat̐o na tiṣṭhen. ned̐ etasyāghalasya (S.: -ākhalasya) devasya par̐pr̐r̐d̐he (S.: par̐pr̐r̐dhve) ’sūn̐āti.

“Twice he holds out the offering ladle to the north; verily thus having pleased Rudra in his own quarter he lets (him) go. Therefore one should not stand to the north of the offering as it is made, lest he be in the vicinity of this dread god.” (tr. Keith)

3. *akhala-*

(5) JB 2.66 (Gavāmayana) ed. Akiko Murakawa

satyaṃ me gṛhapatiḥ ity, eṣa vai satyaṃ ya eṣa tapati. (ed. Raghu Vira & Lokesh Chandra: *eṣa vai satyam. satyaṃ ya eṣa tapati.*) ... *sa vā eṣa svrataḥ. yad dhy eṣo ʾkhalas* (R. & L.: *yad dhy eṣa khalā*) *syāt sarvaṃ idaṃ pradāhet. tasmād gṛhapatis svratas syāt.*

‘[He (the sacrificer) says] ‘Truth is my Gṛhapati (the sacrificer at the Sattrā).’ Truth is the one that gives out heat (i.e. the sun). ... This one (the sun) observes vows well. For if this one were *akhala*, it would burn all this [world] . Therefore the Gṛhapati should observe vows well.’

(6) JB 2.254 (Aḥiṇa)

te devā ʾśānaṃ devam abruvaṃs. tvaṃ vai na śreṣṭho ʾsi. tam uddhāram uddharasveti. sa etāni trīṇi samāni sahasrasya rasaṃ pṛvāhatartanidhanam ʾnidhanam triṇidhanam iti. tāni vā etāni sāmāni sahasratrīrātṛeṇa kāryāṇīśānasya devasyoddhāra uddhṛtāni. ud uddhāram harata, uddhāryo bhavati ya evaṃ veda. tasmād etāni sāmāni sahasratrīrātṛeṇa kāryāṇīśānasya devasyākhalaṣya sāmānīśvaro yajamānasya paśūn abhāmantoḥ iti.

‘The Gods addressed the mighty God (*śānaṃ devam*, i.e. Rudra): ‘Thou art the most pre-eminent of us; take thou a part for thyself (*tam uddharasva*).’ He carried away these three sāmans, the pith of the thousand: the *ṛta-*, the *ṛ-* and *triṇidhana*. Therefore, these sāmans must be applied at a three-day-rite of a thousand (dakṣiṇās) ... These sāmans belong to the mighty God Akhala (on this name, cp. my paper ‘Over en uit het Jaiminīya-brāhmaṇa’ ... pages 47, 103); he could covet the cattle of the Sacrificer.’ (tr. Caland [5], 551, n. 4 on PB 21.2.9)

(7) JB 3.262 (Dvādaśāha)

devū vai satraṃ upajānto ʾbruvan – yan naḥ krūrān ātmanas tan nirmīmāmahai. mā sakrūrā upogāmeti. tad yad eṣāṇi krūrān ātmana āsū, tan nirmāya śarāvāyos saṃmārjyaṃ nyadadhū. atha satraṃ upajānt. tata eṣo ʾkhalo devo ʾjāyata. tad yac charvūbhyām ajāyata, tad asyaitan nāma.

‘The Gods, undertaking a sacrificial session, said: ‘what of us is horrid, that we will produce, in order not to undertake the sacrifice with (that) horrid (part).’ What was horrid of them that they produced, and cleansing it, put it down on (between) two earthen plates, thereupon they undertook the sacrificial session. Therefrom (from the two plates, the *śarāvās*) that *akhala* (‘not-wicked’, euphemistic as *śiva*) God was born. Because he was born out of the plates, that is his name (probably the author has in mind the name Śarva = Rudra).’ (tr. Caland [5], 166, n. 3 on PB 8.2.10)

(8) JUB 1.5.1–3

1. *sā haiṣākhalaḥ devatāpasedhanti tiṣṭhanti / idaṃ vai tvaṃ atra pāpam akar nehaiṣyasi / yo vai puriyakṛt syāt / sa iheyād iti* / 2. *sa brūyāt / apaśyo vai tvaṃ tat / yad ahaṃ tad akaravam / tad vai mā tvan nākāryajyāḥ / tvaṃ vai tasya kartāṣṭi* / 3. *sa ha veda satyam māheti / satyaṃ haiṣā devatā / sa (sā?) ha tasya neṣe yad enam apasedhet / tam upaiva hvayate /*

By means of the three repetitions of *o vā* of the *gāyatra-sūman* at the Bahiṣpavamāna-stotra in the Agniṣṭoma, the sacrificer climbs the three worlds and reaches the entrance to heaven.

‘This *akhala* deity (=the sun) stands driving away [the one who has come], ‘You has done this evil. You shall not pass here. One who is a doer of good deeds could pass here.’ He should say, ‘You saw what I did so. You would not make me do it. You are its doer.’ ‘He knows. He tells me truth.’ This deity is truth. He (the deity) is not competent to drive away him [who tells truth]. He invites him.’

The objects modified by *aghalā-/akhala-*:

Rudra (2) (4) (6) (7)

the sun (5), the deity at the entrance to heaven (= the sun) (8)

death’s messenger (1)

fierce animals (3)

4. *aghá-* cf. Hartog 1939 [8], 26–33; Bodewitz 2006 [1].

RV adj. 8 (Geldner [6] 7 ‘böse’, 1 ‘schlimm’);
n. 11 (Geldner 7 ‘Übel’, 2 ‘Unheil’, 1 ‘Böse’, 1 ‘Übeltat’)

AV + adj. none

n. not many occurrences, mostly having a close semantic connection with death
Caland 1896 [3], 28, n. 106 ‘das böse, die todtesbefleckung, der tod’;
Hoffmann 1967 [9], 51, n. 21 ‘Trauer, Todesfall’ → EWA [11], 805

(1) *páutra-* *aghá-*

AVŚ 12.3.14d

mā dáṃpatī páutram aghám ní gātām ‘Let not the husband and wife fall into [their] son’s *aghá*.’

Cf. MantrB 1.5.10 *māham pautram agham nigām* ‘May I not fall into [my] son’s *agha*!’

≈ ĀśvGS 1.13.7 (Anavalobhana: the prevention of miscarriage) *māham pautram agham niyām*

KauśU 2.8; 2.10 ... *māham pautram agham rudam iti. na hāsmāt pūrvā prajā pūviti*

‘(He throws two blades 2.8/ He touches his wife’s heart 2.10) [saying] ‘May I not weep for [my] son’s *agha*.’ His offspring, indeed, does not die before him.’

HGS 1,19,7; PGS 1.5.11; JGS 1.20

*tad ayam rājā varuṇo ’numanyatām yatheyam strī pautram agham na rodāt ...
āsūnyopasthā jīvātām astu mātā. pautram ānandam abhiprabudhyatām iyam*

‘May this king Varuṇa grant that this woman shall not weep for [her] son’s *agha*. ... With fertile womb may she be the mother of living [children]. May this [woman] experience delight in [her] son.’

pautra- *agha-* (miscarriage, stillbirth) ↔ *pautra-* *ānanda-* (birth)

AVŚ 8.1.19d *mā tvāgharūdo rudan* ‘Let not lamenters of *aghá* lament for you.’

Whitney “perhaps professional lamenters of death or other misfortune”

(2) ŚB 13.8.1–4: the construction of a grave-mound (*śmasānā-*)

aghá- 13.8.1,2; 4; 8; 10; 11; 15; 18; 13.8.3,10; 11; 13; 13.8.4,1; 2; 4.

ŚB 13.8.1.2 *tād vai ná kṣiprām kuryāt. nēn návam aghám karāvāṅyāti. cirā evā kuryād. aghám evā tát tirūh karoti. yātra samā nānu cana smāreyur, āśrutim evā tát aghám gamayati.*

‘He should not make it (grave-mound) soon [after the death], [thinking] ‘Lest I should renew the *aghá*.’ He should make it a long time after. Thereby he sets aside the *aghá*. When [people] do not remember [the *aghá*] during years, thereby he makes the *aghá* pass into oblivion.’¹

aghá-: Eggeling ‘sin’, Bodewitz ‘distress’ ([1] 117f.)

ŚB 13.8.1.4 *māghē vā, mā no ’ghám bhūd iti.*

‘Or [he should make the grave-mound] in [the month of] Māgha, [thinking] ‘Lest *agha* should arise to me.’”

aghá-: Eggeling ‘sin’, Bodewitz ‘distress’ ([1] 118)

ŚB 13.8.1.8 *yād vā udīcīnapravaṇe karōti, tād evā pratyūcchritam aghám bhavati.*

‘When he makes [the grave-mound on the ground] sloping to the north, thereby the *aghá* becomes obstructed.’ *aghá-*: Eggeling ‘sin’, Bodewitz ‘evil, harm or danger’ ([1] 119)

(3) *agha-* = death

ŚāñGS 4.7.6 *daśāham aghasūtakaṣu* ‘In the case of *agha* or birth, [the Veda recitation should be interrupted] for ten days.’ *agha* ↔ *sutaka* ‘birth’

ŚāñŚS 4.15.7 (funeral rites) *nāghāhāni vardhayeyuh* ‘They should not increase the days of *agha*.’

¹ Cf. MS 1.5.12: 81,5 *tāsmād āhur ahorātrāpi vāvāghām marṣayantīti* ‘Therefore [people] says, ‘nights and days make forget *aghá*.’”

Cf. Manusmṛti 5.84 *na vārdhayed aghāhāni*
(In Manu, *aghāha* is related with *āśauca* ‘impurity’ caused by death. Cf. 5.80)

5. Conclusion

From the AV onward, *aghā-* increases its connection with death, and means an evil related with death or death itself. From the fact that the occurrences of *aghalā-* and *akhala-* are limited to later texts, and the objects modified by *aghalā-* and *akhala-* are those related with death such as Rudra, the sun,² death’s messenger, and fierce animals, it can be inferred that *aghalā-* is an adjective made from the *aghā-* that has a close semantic connection with death, and presumably has the meaning ‘related to or bringing the evil of death’ or ‘frightening to death’, which would be fit well for all the contexts of *aghalā-/akhala-*.

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² For the relation between the sun and death, see Sakamoto-Gotō [16], 17-19.