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Discontinuity in Vedic Prose

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1. What does hyperbaton mean in Vedic prose and under which conditions does it arise?
2. Data mostly from the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (AB), a middle Vedic text made esp. accessible by Aufrecht's edition (1879), Keith's translation (1920), Verpoorten's study of AB word order (1977), etc., as well as its comparative prolixity:

Auch ist die Form der Darstellung im Kaushītaki viel knapper gemessen als im Aitareya, das sich in einer gewissen Breite zu ergehen liebt. (Aufrecht *ibid.* iv) —

Upshot: relatively little pronominalization and ellipsis, nice full NPs

3. Subtype under discussion today: discontinuous Noun Phrases (dNPs) of the type Modifier ... Noun, including
Adjective ... Noun (A...N): *svargam ... lokam* 'the heavenly world' (AB 1.7.1)
Determiner ... Noun (D...N): *teṣām ... asurāṇām* 'of these Asuras' (6.36.2)
Quantifier ... Noun (Q...N): *sarvābhyaḥ ... devatābhyaḥ* 'to all the deities' (1.1.3),

4. Exclude dNPs that arise via relatively well-described processes:

- 4.1 the movement of enclitics, e.g.

sarvās ca devatāḥ 'and all the deities' (1.3.19 etc.)

apriyāya_enām bhrātṛvyāya dadyāt 'he should give it [the rejected dakṣiṇā] to the unbeloved rival' (6.35.3);

- 4.2 and WH-elements (interrogatives, subordinators, relatives), e.g. *yāvāntam ... lokam* 'how much space', where *yāvāntam* undergoes WH-movement and *lokam* apparently remains in the direct object position.

<i>yāvāntam</i>	<i>ha</i>	<i>vai</i>	<i>saumyena</i>	<i>adhvareṇa</i>	<i>iṣṭvā</i>	<i>lokam</i>	<i>jayati</i>
how.much:ACC	PTCL	PTCL	somic:INS	sacrifice:INS	having.sacrificed	space:ACC	he.wins

'However much space he wins by performing a soma sacrifice(, he wins that much with each Upasad)' (3.18.8)

5. We are interested in As that form an NP with the noun they modify in neutral word order. So we will also exclude As that are secondarily predicated of the noun, including

5.1 depictive As such as *avihṛtān* ‘untransposed’, which describes the state of the Pragāthas during the recitation

<i>avihṛtān</i>	<i>eva</i>	<i>caturtham</i>	<i>pragāthāñ</i>	<i>chamsati</i>
untransposed:ACC.PL	PTCL	fourth:ADV	Pragāthas:ACC	he.recites

‘The fourth time, he recites the Pragāthas untransposed.’ (AB 6.24.11)

5.2 and participles such as *kriyamāṇam* ‘being performed’

<i>yat</i>	<i>karma</i>	<i>kriyamāṇam</i>	<i>ṛg</i>	<i>abhivadati</i>
which:ACC.SG	deed:ACC	being.performed:ACC.SG	verse:NOM	describes

‘the deed that the verse describes as is it being performed’ (AB 1.4.9),

5.3 Note that this holds for English as well

I eat Kumamotos raw, but Bluffton oysters, I eat steamed,

in contrast to attributive adjectives

*I eat Kumamotos Japanese

*Bluffton oysters, I eat small.

6. This should leave us with As that modify the referent of the noun in general, e.g.

dakṣiṇena ... jānuṇā ‘with (his) right ... knee’ (8.6.4)

triṣamṛddham ... vajram ‘the triperfected ... vajra’ (2.16.4)

7. Two issues that go back at least to Delbrück, whose discussion of particular examples is often reminiscent of modern literatur on pragmatics/information structure.

7.1 What motivates fronting (a type of *occasionelle Stellung*) of the adjective: topicalization or focalization?

7.1.1 Regarding the fronting of predicate nominals (1878: 27):

Der Gund für diese Stellung liegt auf der Hand. Das Subject nämlich ist bekannt, das Praedikatsnomen aber bringt etwas Neues hinzu, und tritt also nach dem allgemeinen Gesetzt der occasionellen Wortstellung vor.

⇒ Focus (or more precisely, fronting of new information, which is typically focused).

7.1.2 Regarding the fronting of predicate genitives (1878: 32):

Die Worte *tváṣṭur* und *mánor* sind aber hier nach vorn gerückt, weil sie das Stichwort der Erzählung bilden. Da begreiflicherweise zu einem solchen Erzählungsanfang häufig Gelegenheit ist, so sind diese Genitive in occasioneller Stellung häufiger anzutreffen, als in traditioneller.

⇒ Topic.

7.2 Does the fronting encode topicalization/focalization of the A alone or can it also encode topicalization/focalization of the entire NP? He very clearly states that preverb fronting emphasizes the entire preverb+verb and apparently suggests the same about A fronting in his remarks on

<i>vi bhajante</i>	<i>ha</i>	<i>vā</i>	<i>imām</i>	<i>ásurāḥ</i>	<i>prthivīm</i>
distribute	PTCL	PTCL	this:ACC	Asuras:NOM	earth:ACC

‘Es verteilen ja diese Erde die Asuras’ (ŚB 1.2.5.3),

where he writes, “weil das Objekt durch *imām* bereits hinreichend hervorgehoben ist” (1888: 16–17).

8. Both questions persist — understandably — in more recent studies that focus on syntax, e.g. Hale’s excellent 1995 treatment of the syntax of “Topicalization”

I use ‘topicalization’ without prejudice as to ultimate assessment of the pragmatic function of this position. (103 n. 20)

... the initial position is the landing site for topicalized or emphatic material. It is not *a priori* obvious what in detail the pragmatics of this position are, but that there is a position to the left of everything else in the clause is beyond doubt. That this position is further to the left than, e.g., the landing-site for WH-movement can be seen from examples such as ... (114)

and — regarding Preverb ... Verb discontinuity — in Lowe 2011:

There are two competing justifications for this: either the preverb itself is focused, or the preverb serves to focus or topicalize the verb with which it is associated. (§3.3.2)

9. Tentative answer to both questions: in A...N dNPs, the adjective is focused and the noun is not. I will assume that “Focus indicates the presence of alternatives that are relevant for the interpretation of linguistic expressions” (Krifka 2007 with refs). Relatively clear examples are found in answers to (implicit) questions and parallels/contrasts.

9.1 During the Upasads, the sacrificer fasts; he only drinks fasting milk (*vrata*). The implicit question is: how many teats of milk may he drink on which day of the Upasads?

caturo 'gre *stanān* *vratam* *upaity* *upasatsu*
 4:ACC beginning:LOC **teats:ACC** fasting.milk:ACC he.has.recourse Upasads:LOC

‘In the beginning, he has recourse to FOUR teats for fasting milk during the Upasads.’ (1.25.4)

In this case, alternatives {three teats, two teats, one teat} are explicitly mentioned:

trīn stanān vratam upaity upasatsu ... ## *dvau stanau* ... ## *ekam stanam* ...

9.2 What does the King do with the ritual throne that he has just prepared? How does he do it?

etām *āsandīm* *ārohed*
 that:ACC throne:ACC he.should.mount

dakṣiṇena *agre* *jānuna* *atha* *savyena*
right:INS *_beginning:LOC* **knee:INS** *_then* left:INS

‘He should mount that throne, first with his RIGHT knee, then with his LEFT.’ (8.6.4)

10. A less obvious case of A_F...N is *triṣamṛddham* ... *vajram* in the following context.

The gods were afraid: “The Asuras will take this morning sacrifice from us” Indra said to them, “Fear not!

triṣamṛddham *ebhyo* *'ham* *prātar* *vajram* *prahartāsmi* *iti*
tri-perfected:ACC them:DAT I:NOM morning **vajra:ACC** will.hurl_QUOT

‘I will hurl the triperfected vajra at them in the morning.’ (2.16.4)

11. Further support. Which classes of adjectives (don’t) appear in hyperbaton? (Cf. Devine and Stephens 2006: 542ff. for the approach.)

11.1 In contrast to restrictively used *triṣamṛddham* above, descriptively used As do not appear in hyperbaton in the AB, e.g.

surabhi ghr̥tam ‘sweet-smelling ghee’ (1.3.5 in a list with melted butter, slightly melted butter, etc.)

apriyam bhr̥tṛvyam ‘unbeloved rival’ (6.32–33, multiple repetitions)

apriyāya_enām bhr̥tṛvyāya dadyāt ‘he should give it to a hated rival’ (6.35.3)

Descriptively used As are not compatible with focus. In a world where all rivals are hated (and hate you), it is impossible to say

the HATED_F rival = *apriyam* ... *bhr̥tṛvyam*

because there are no alternatives.

11.2 But adjectives that are especially compatible with focus do, such as ordinals, comparatives, and superlatives, which pick out members of a set (contrasting with other members)

ordinals *prathamayā ... ṛcā* ‘with the first verse’ (4.7.6),

superlatives *bhūyiṣṭān ... paśūn* ‘the most cattle’ (6.24.16),

identity adjectives (*same, other, different*), who use a logical operation relative to (and in a sense, contrasting with) an anaphoric antecedent

identity As *itarāḥ ... devatāḥ* ‘the other/rest of the gods’ (2.16.1),

demonstratives, which pick out a referent via deixis or anaphora (often contrasting with other potential referents)

demonstr. *etām ... yajñām* ‘that (particular) sacrifice’ (ŚB 11.1.6.16)

12. Where in the syntax? They precede non-dropped subject pronouns, *eta*-deictics, *tad* ‘thus, that way, etc.’, and one interrogative.

triṣamṛddham ebhyo 'ham *prātar vajram prahartāsmi*

asapātnām vā etābhir *devā vijitīm vyajayanta* (1.24.1)

tāvāntam eva tad *dviṣate lokam pariśiṃṣanti* (5.24.10)

itarā me kena *devatā upāptā bhaviṣyanti* (2.16.1)

In the highest functional projection: Hale’s SpecTopP (1995), Lowe’s highest DF position (2014).

13. Is A_FN always realized as a dNP? No. Compare the following cases, where fronting of A_F would result in

13.1 continuous word order

(*caturo* ‘gre *stanān* *vratam upaity upasatsu ...*) *trīn stanān* *vratam upaity upasatsu ... dvau stanau ...*

13.2 clitic-interrupted NPs

sarva enam pañcajanā vidur
all:NOM him:ACC five.peoples:NOM know

‘all the five peoples know him’ (3.31.6)

14. Where nothing intervenes between the neutral position of the NP and the “topicalization” position, continuous NPs and clitic-interrupted NPs are ambiguous, because the same order results whether the A is focused and fronted (as above) or not:

apriyāya enām *bhrātrivyāya dadyāt*
 unbeloved:DAT_it:ACC rival:DAT he.should.give

‘He should give it to a hated rival’ (6.35.3).

15. The cautious result: A...N dNPs arise under the same conditions in Vedic prose as they do in Greek prose (D&S 2000: 112–113)

“Basically, an adjective can only be used in Y₁ hyperbaton if it has narrow strong focus. Consequently descriptive adjectives, emphatic or otherwise, and restrictive adjectives not in strong focus never, or hardly ever, occur in Y₁ hyperbaton in prose ...”

and Latin prose (D&S 2006: 548)

“It emerges clearly from this analysis that the pragmatic values in premodifier hyperbaton are not random. In general it is difficult to find examples of the adjective that cannot be read with focus, and it is difficult to find examples of the noun that are not either tail material (anaphoric, implicit or accommodated) or at least subordinated focus.”

16. Since dNPs of this type exhibit these pragmatic characteristics cross-linguistically (cf. Fanselow and Féry Ms.), A ... N discontinuity falls squarely into the category of things that could be inherited, but are common enough that they presumably arise independently as well.

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