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# THE SANSKRIT GERUND:

# A SYNCHRONIC, DIACHRONIC AND TYPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

by

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॥क्त्वा॥
॥समानकर्तृकयोः पूर्वकाले॥

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*To the memory of Jussi Aro (1928-1983)*

## ABSTRACT

# THE SANSKRIT GERUND: A SYNCHRONIC, DIACHRONIC AND TYPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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The morphosyntactic and semantic features of the Vedic and Classical Sanskrit past gerund ('absolutive', 'conjunctive participle') are described in a revised functional syntactic framework in relation to the systems of relative tense, aspect, voice and finite and non-finite clause linkage. The diachronic and typological analysis includes comparison with Middle and New Indo-Aryan, and relevant formations in other Indo-European and contiguous non-Indo-European languages.

The functional potential of the gerund increased after the early Vedic period due to the relaxation of its syntactic (constructional), semantic (temporal) and pragmatic (coreferential and operational) constraints. These changes are most conspicuous in texts of southern or late origin, being traceable to convergent tendencies with the Dravidian past verbal participle.

Of particular historical and typological interest is the modal-operational integratability of a non-finite formation. This value correlates positively with its capacity for paraphrasing a finite clause in modally marked contexts and negatively with its textually backgrounding effect. It may change over time and differ for propositionally restrictive and non-restrictive relations, explaining why the later Indo-Aryan gerund may paraphrase a coordinate clause more easily than a subordinate clause in negative and interrogative sentences.

Etymologically, the Sanskrit gerund is an instrumental verbal adverb with formal parallels in Iranian and other Indo-European languages. Contrary to previous etymologically biased accounts, traces of this value are hardly to be found even in the Rigveda, while the basically relative past tense and high operational integratability of the gerund cannot have developed spontaneously.

Indeclinable verb-forms comparable to the Indo-Aryan gerund are found in most South Asian languages, but Dravidian is the only extant family where they are sufficiently ancient to have been able to influence the use of the pre-Rigvedic gerund. Dravidian may also have caused the retroflexion of stops after liquids and palatalized sibilants. However, since the Indo-Aryan past gerund corresponds formationally to a non-past form in Dravidian and since the convergence of the early Indo-Aryan retroflex system with that of Dravidian is probably secondary, retroflexion and the roughly simultaneous syntactico-semantic reinterpretation of the gerund may have been due to some extinct North Indian substratum, which may account also for the large proportion of unidentified loanwords in Sanskrit.

# PREFACE

The original impetus to this dissertation was a semantic issue brought up by my teacher of Sanskrit and comparative Indo-European philology, Prof. em. Pentti Aalto. This issue had to do with the possibility of the Ṛgvedic gerundial allomorphs **-tvī** and **-tvā** encoding a (perhaps inherited) semantic or functional difference. To find this out I studied the uses and development of the gerund especially in the Ṛg- and Atharvaveda, but unfortunately the relevant data proved too small to be statistically meaningful.

However, this investigation brought up an array of other historical and theoretical problems, which led to pursuing the synchronc and diachronic study of the morphology, syntax and semantics of the gerund further. This implied enlarging the previously studied textual and comparative material considerably and deepening the analysis in the direction of a more general model of complex sentence formation. The controversial nature of many of the features of the gerund and the chronological and stylistic heterogeneity of its uses have caused the purely descriptive part of this work to grow almost out of proportion. If there is any other excuse for all the data presented in this thesis, it is that it makes the task of the critical reader and future researcher easier.

If now after all these years this study has reached some sort of an end, it is due to Prof. Pentti Aalto's initial guidance and the unfailing encouragement and help rendered by many scholars and friends. In particular, I am grateful to my academic advisor and teacher of Indology, Prof. Asko Parpola, whose generosity has known no bounds in providing information and material from his fathomless personal 'database' and collections. Without his constant spurring and helpful comments I would have abandoned this topic long ago.

No lesser is my feeling of gratitude to my teachers of General Linguistics, Prof. Fred Karlsson, Dr. Orvokki Heinämäki and Dr. Martti Nyman, who all have shown a genuine interest in my work, being always ready to comment and illuminate me upon any of the theoretical and methodological issues.

I am also reminded of the constant help and stimulation afforded by my friend Mr. Klaus Karttunen, Phil. Lic., whose monumental bibliographical files and erudition have provided so many invaluable references that would otherwise have long escaped my notice.

Among the many other persons that have contributed information to this work, I should like to thank especially Prof. Tapani Harviainen, Prof. Simo Parpola, Dr. Juha Janhunen and Mr. Pertti Seppälä, B. A., representing fields stretching from Comparative Semitistics and Sumerology to Finno-Ugristics and Sinology. In all practical matters, the resourcefulness of Mr. Harry Halén, Phil. Lic., has been irreplacable. He has also been my main source of information on Altaic and Tibetan. I am indebted to Mr. Eugene Holman, M. A., who has not only checked and improved on my English, but also acted as my English informant and corrected many lapses in my original manuscript. Thanks to Dr. Mahalingam

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Outside the sphere of my own university I have had the fortune to meet and learn from several foreign scholars. My special thanks go to my esteemed Japanese teachers and friends, Prof. Minoru Hara of the University of Tokyo, Prof. Yutaka Ojihara of the University of Kyoto, Dr. Yasuke Ikari of the National Institute of Ethnology, Osaka, and Mr. Kazuto Matsumura, M. A., of the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. The opportunity to spend a sabbatical year and a half in Japan (1980-1982) with my family and study the language and culture with Japanese Indologists and linguists has been an unparalleled experience in my life and one with profound impact on my understanding of language and linguistic typology.

I also wish to thank Prof. Oskar von Hinüber of the University of Freiburg for his helpful comments on my previous work and some important data regarding the Middle Indo-Aryan gerund. In the summer of 1985 I had the opportunity to complement my material at the University Library of Tübingen. I want to thank especially Dr. George Baumann, the Director of the Oriental Department, for affording ideal library research conditions and so generously placing his own unique bibliographical files and personal expertise at my disposal. During my research in Tübingen and brief visit to the Südasien-Institut in Heidelberg I also had the privilege to meet Prof. Paul Thieme, Prof. Karl Hummel, Dr. Renate Söhnen and Prof. Hermann Berger. The many long and vivid discussions with these erudite scholars on matters relating to the gerund and history of the Indian languages have been of great help, often forcing me to revise or find better proof for my own conclusions. Equally stimulating and challenging discussions I have had with Prof. Hans Henrich Hock of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champain and Dr. Paul Andersen of the University of Bielefeld.

Finally, I wish to thank my wife Leena for her scientist's point of view and my two daughters Meri and Riina for their patience and lack of prejudice.

I express my sincere gratitude to the Cultural Foundation of Finland for granting me two yearly scholarships (1982-1983) and to the Academy of Finland for a three years' research assistantship (1984-1986) and an allowance to visit the University Library of Tübingen. I am indebted to the Finnish Oriental Society for accepting my thesis for publication in its series *Studia Orientalia.*

Espoo, 2.11.1987 Bertil Tikkanen

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