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ON PERIPHRASTIC FUTURES IN SANSKRIT (SUMMARY)

0. *Introduction*

By virtue of its history, the periphrastic future is one of the most interesting of grammatical categories in Sanskrit. Not attested in the earliest Saṃhitās, it begins to make its appearance in Vedic prose, to gain fairly wide currency in Epic times. This tense, then, is an instance of a grammatical category evolving before our very eyes, a state of things which raises the question as to the factors that led to its emergence. Consideration of this problem should probably include a distributional feature of this tense that does not seem to have been given its proper weight.

1. *The semantic value of Periphrastic Futures*

The « meaning » of periphrastic futures has been established nearly a century ago: the category « is used if one wants to say something is going to happen at some definite date in the future » [1], says Delbrück. He goes on to show that actions described by using this form are expected to take place with a considerable degree of certainty.

This is a criterion very useful to contrast periphrastic as against simple futures. For whatever one might take as an abstract notion of futurity: certainty of expectation will not form a prominent part in this picture: there are sentences where the event envisaged does not take place, and which still show the verbal action expressed by means

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1. DELBRÜCK, *Ai. Synt.*, p. 295: « Es wird gebraucht, wenn man sagen will, dass etwas in einem bestimmten Zeitpunkt der Zukunft eintreten wird ».

2. In illustration of this truism, it will be sufficient to quote a sentence from MS (2, 4, 5; *Ai. Synt.*, p. 290): *átha yó yakṣyá íty uktvā ná yájate...* « But who does not perform a sacrifice after having said "I shall perform a sacrifice"... »: the event envisaged for the future does not take place.

of the simple future[2]. It tallies with this lack of certainty if we find simple futures used in the apodosis of conditional clauses, such as ŚBr 3, 2, 3, 5

bhāgáṃ nú me kalpayatãtha yajñáṃ drakṣyathãtha
prá jñāsyathéti

« Grant me a share (Aditi says), then you will see the sacrifice; then you will find out »[3]:

the effect will take place as soon as — and, presumably, only if — the condition has been fulfilled.

This looks like a neat division, certainty being denoted by periphrastic futures, while states or actions which lack this certainty are expressed by means of simple futures. The difficulty is that this statement holds good only for one side of the dichotomy. There are indubitable instances of simple futures being used in the description of events that the speaker definitely expects to happen, and that actually do happen:

yuṅgdhí me syantsyãmi (ŚBr 11, 8, 4, 2)

« Yoke (my horses) for me; I am going to hasten off »,
the king tells his charioteer — which he proceeds to do: *sá ha yuktvá yayāv ã jagāma* (*ibid.*, 3), « having yoked (the horses), he went off and came there ».

Or, to quote an example which is not free of problems[4]. It is taken from instructions to someone who desires rain. A pot has to be filled with water;

yádi purã saṃsthãnād dīryetādyá[5] *varṣiṣyatíti brūyād;*
yádi sáṃsthite śvó vrastéti brūyād;
yádi cirám iva dīryeta[5] *náddhá vidméti brūyād* (MS 2, 1, 8)

« If (the pot) should break asunder prior to the completion (of the sacrifice), he should say: "It is going to rain today"; if (it should break) when (the sacrifice) is completed, he should say: "It will rain tomorrow"; if it should break slowly, as it were, he should say: "We do not know for certain" ».

Now there can be no doubt the rain is being expected with the same degree of certainty for both days: the symbolism is most explicit. Yet we find *adyá varṣiṣyati*, but *śvó vrastá*.

Thus, there is no consistently maintained, clear-cut dichotomy on semantic lines, with *certainty vs. incertainty* being the criterion that automatically determines the choice between periphrastic futures on the

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3. Cf. *Ai. Synt.*, p. 291.
4. Cf. note 7.
5. Text: *víryeta°*; emendation Böhtlingk's (*Ai. Synt.*, p. 296).

one hand, and simple futures on the other. The texts rather suggest that certainty, and hence the entire opposition, is immaterial among the criteria which lead to the use of simple futures [6]. And again: the last sentence quoted shows that the periphrastic future does not necessarily have to employed when certainty is to be expressed [7].

2. *Contextual features of Periphrastic Futures*

2.1. *Predominance of first and second persons*

In reading through sentences containing periphrastic futures, one is struck by a peculiarity of distribution. This is the fact that in a disproportionately high number of instances, analytic forms are found in first and second persons. From random reading in Vedic prose and the Epics, augmented by the collections made by Delbrück, Gonda, Speijer, I have noted 86 examples. 48 of them have their subjects in the first or second person. Of the remainder, there are 18 which, though their subject is in the third person, yet have first or second persons represented in the sentence: cases like MBh 3, 53, 9

> *asty upāyo mayā dṛṣṭo nirapāyo nareśvara*
> *yena doṣo na bhavitā tava rājan katham cana*

> « O Lord of Men, I have seen an infallible means, through which no fault of whatever kind will accrue to you, o King ».

doṣo na bhavitā tava is an impersonal expression which can easily be transformed into a personalized equivalent. Hence, it seems legitimate to group such sentences together with those that have a first or second person as their agents.

Out of a total of 86, then, there are 66 examples — about three fourths, that is — which involve first or second persons. This is an inversion of the proportions one would expect. From this, one would

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6. This state of affairs would lend itself to a description in terms of R. JA-KOBSON's distinction of marked vs. unmarked forms: as to certainty, the simple future might be counted the unmarked form, certainty being neither affirmed nor denied, while marking is effected by means of the periphrastic formation.

7. DELBRÜCK seems to think the simple future is due to the presence of *adyá*: « Der Erwähnung wert dürfte nur sein, dass bei *adyá* das gewöhnliche Futurum, aber nicht das auf *-tar* steht » (p. 296). I understand him to mean that in such instances, the verbal action is regarded as certain, and as to MS 2, 1, 8, it does seem inconceivable to regard *adyá varṣiṣyati* and *śvó vraṣṭā* as distinct in this respect. However, we have seen simple futures are not necessarily determined as to the feature ± certainty; and certainty of expectation in the passage quoted is doubtless furthered, if not effected, by the presence of *adyá*, referring as it does, to the immediate and hence foreseeable future. No doubt the very same conditions apply to *śvó vraṣṭā*, the only difference between both utterances being the distance in time from the moment of enunciation, which seems hardly relevant in the present context. At least in post-Vedic times, *-tar-* ± *adya* was no downright impossibility: GONDA (p. 161) quotes two instances from the Epic.

conclude *direct speech* is one of the conditions that favour the appearance of periphrastic futures.

With this background, one examines the remainder. Among third persons, there is a group of five which is illustrated by

tád dhaíke dṛṣṭvópa vasanti śvó nódetéty (ŚBr 11, 1, 4, 1)

« Now some, after having seen this, perform a fast, (thinking:) " Tomorrow she (the moon) will not rise " ».

These are cases of direct quotation.

There is, then, a criterion which, as it were, allows us to tie our various observations together: it is direct or reported speech, dialogue, that contains a sizeable majority of attestations of the periphrastic future. To be sure, this is an observation referring to distribution rather than to semantics. Even so, it should be related to semantic description.

2.2. *Prominence of definite temporal adverbs with Periphrastic Futures*

Delbrück [8] has drawn our attention to the fact that periphrastic futures tend to occur in sentences which simultaneously contain such temporal adverbs as denote a definite length of time, as counted from the present, i.e. expressions such as *prātaḥ* « in the morning », « tomorrow morning », *śvaḥ* « tomorrow », etc. This is an observation that tallies with Pāṇini 3, 3, 137 *kālavibhāge cānahorātrāṇām* « Auch nicht (luṭ) bei Angabe der diesseitigen Grenze einer Zeit — es sei denn, dass es bestimmte Tage wären » [9].

In that they state a definite length of time, such adverbs by implication refer to the present moment, since this is the point in time that the future process is counted from and related to [10]. *Tomorrow* makes sense only with *today* as its foil; when this relation to the present is absent, we shall find expressions like *next day, anyedyuḥ*, in their stead.

3. *Conclusions*

Among the factors which favour the use of periphrastic futures, there are two distributional facts that appear to have a common trait, which is their distinct and well-marked relation to the moment of actual speech. This is not meant to substitute a distributional description for a semantic one; it rather seems that the distributional and the semantic features actually supplement each other.

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8. *Syntaktische Forschungen*, 3, p. 17.
9. BÖHTLINGK, *Pāṇini*, p. 129.
10. One easily sees how they fit in with the notion of certainty. We tend to put more faith in a promise worded « Let's meet again next Tuesday » than if it just runs « Let's meet again ».

We find a tense in Sanskrit which, taken semantically, attributes certainty to future events. We look at the conditions that attend such certainty, and find dialogue very prominent among them. This is nothing more than a reflection of the truism that dialogues usually occur with their subjects and actions well within the scope and control of their participants: it is when the probability of a future event can be gauged with greatest accuracy that we find the distinction being made most frequently, that we find a speaker, as it were, committing himself, not to his intentions, but to the reality of a future event. And definite temporal adverbs fit into the same pattern: it is the very definiteness of the future point in time the certainty stems from.

Among the conditions determining the use of the periphrastic future, the overt relation to the present serves as a focal point. This relation will manifest itself *either* by the distance from the present being stated clearly (which is the case of definite temporal adverbs), *or* by the agents of the future action appearing among the participants of the present action (which is the case of dialogues) [11]. The certainty of expectation which is so characteristic a feature of verbal actions expressed by means of the analytic formation, is but the semantic corollary to these conditions. This obviously does not mean that presence of these conditions automatically evokes periphrastic futures. It does mean, however, that situations of the type described offer the speaker a choice between representing a future action as definitely expected on the one hand, or as merely intended, conceived, desired on the other. Semantics and distribution thus unite to form a coherent picture.

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11. This looks like hypercharacterization, which raises the question of whether certainty actually stems from applying the category itself, or whether it is rather due to the nature of its contexts. In view of the high redundancy of Sanskrit, it is difficult to find cogent criteria for an answer.