

Sanskrit Lesson

From the Vajra Prajna Paramita Sutra

continued from issue #182

कृतभक्तकृत्यः

...KṚTABHAKTAKṚTYAḥ (KṚTA-BHAKTA-KṚTYAḥ)

"...when he had taken care of the business of eating,..."

The previous lesson's sentence is continued in this lesson. It began: *atha khalu bhagavān śrāvastīm mahānagarīm piṇḍāya caritvā...* That is now followed by *kṛta-bhakta-kṛtyaḥ* "when he had taken care of the business of eating." Root *√kṛ-* "do/make/take care of" is at the base of two words forming this three-word compound: *kṛta* and *kṛtya*. *kṛta* is the past passive participle, the first example of that form in this Sutra.

The Past Passive Participle

The past passive participle, also called a "verbal adjective," is a widely used part of speech in Sanskrit. It is formed by adding the suffix (ending) *-ta* directly to the root in its weakest form. Examples:

root	past passive participle
<i>√kṛ-</i> "do"	<i>kṛta</i> "done"
<i>√śru-</i> "hear"	<i>śruta</i> "heard"

In a small number of verbs, the suffix added is *-na*. Any regular sound changes required by internal sandhi take place after the addition of *-ta* or *-na*.

Examples:

<i>√chid-</i> "sever"	<i>chinna</i> "severed"
<i>√budh-</i> "awaken"	<i>buddha</i> "awakened"

Sometimes an auxiliary vowel *-i-* is added before the suffix *-ta*.

Examples:

<i>√pat-</i> "fall"	<i>patita</i> "fallen"
<i>√car-</i> "move"	<i>carita</i> "moved"

There are some irregularities as well. If the verb is intransitive, then this participle doesn't have passive meaning but just refers to the indefinite past.

Examples:

<i>√ga-</i> "go"	<i>gata</i> "gone"
<i>√bhū-</i> "be"	<i>bhūta</i> "been" or "become"

The word *kṛtya* is a feminine noun formed from the root *√kṛ-*. It means "what is/was to be done," that is, "deed," "action," "business," "matter," and so forth. *bhakta* is a neuter noun meaning "food" or "a meal." It began as the past passive participle from root *√bhaj-* "divide/distribute/share." *√bhaj-* + *-ta* by internal sandhi gives *bhakta*. *bhakta* "divided/distributed/shared" by extension is used as a noun meaning "food" or "a meal."

We have remarked that Sanskrit likes to put one, two or more words together to make one long compound word. Here the compound *kṛta-bhakta-kṛtyā* is a special type of compound known as a "possessive adjective compound."

Possessive Adjective Compounds

The long word formed from the combination of two or more words is used as an adjective to modify a noun or other part of speech, saying the noun "possesses" the things or situation described by the words making up the compound. As a noun by itself, the compound, like all compounds in Sanskrit, takes its gender from its "final member" (last word in the compound). Since the final member of the compound *kṛta-bhakta-kṛtyā* is *kṛtyā*, a feminine word, the entire compound by itself would be feminine. But when it is used as a possessive adjective compound as here, modifying *bhagavān* "Honored One," it is masculine singular nominative and appears as *kṛta-bhakta-kṛtyaḥ*. It means literally that the Honored One "possesses the business of a meal done/taken care of." "When he had taken care of the business of eating" is a free, non-literal translation, for English does not have any exact equivalent of the Sanskrit construction.

The possessive adjective compound, therefore, is a very compact and handy way of expressing what would ordinarily require an entire subordinate clause. This method allows one to avoid having to use a complex finite verb form with subject, object, and so forth. For that reason it is often employed, as here, in describing a series of actions completed prior to the action expressed by the finite verb which is the main focus of attention in the sentence.

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