

Oriented verbs in Hindi-Urdu

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ABSTRACT: A characteristic feature of Indonesian (Windiar 2012), native American languages (Guillaume & Koch 2021) and grouped with "co-eventuals" (Raina 2011), oriented verbs (OVs) in Hindi-Urdu are composed of the gerundial form of a deictic preverb (आ *ā-* <COME>, जा *jā-* <GO>, ला *lā-* <BRING>, ले जा *le jā-* <TAKE AWAY>) preceding a main verb - usually one of motion - to indicate direction toward a telos. This paper describes Hindi-Urdu's OVs and differentiates them from other verb-verb constructions in the language that may appear to compete with them: CVs (compound verbs) and SVCs (serial verbs). END

Key words: reference point, orientor, deictic center, preverb, venitive, andative, valency harmony, serial verb

In mining the internet for data illuminating the distribution of OVs (oriented verbs) featuring the preverbs आ *ā-* <COME> and जा *jā-* <GO>, I observed a general distinction illustrated by (1) for *ā-* and (2) for *jā-*:

- (1) सड़क पर मलबे के साथ बड़े-बड़े पेड़ भी आ गिरे हैं।

sarak-par malbe-ke.sāth baṛe-baṛe peṛ bhī ā gire hāi
road-on debris-with big-big trees also <COME> fallen have

'Large trees have also fallen onto the road along with the debris.'

[etvbharat.com/hi/!state/live-blog...-monsoon-disaster-2025-himachal-pradesh-news-hps25091601228]

- (2) देर रात एक युवक अंधेरे में कुए में जा गिरा।

der rāt ek yuvak andhere-mē kue-mē jā girā.

late night one young.man darkness-in well-in <GO> fell

'Late at night a young man fell into a well in the dark.'

[bhaskar.com/local/uttar-pradesh/kanpur/ghatampur/news/ ... -131325479.html]

In a preponderance of instances reports of objects such as satellites, airplanes, boulders, and coconuts when falling from a height condition the preverb *ā-* rather than the preverb *jā-* whereas reports of animals, vehicles, careless humans falling into wells, rivers and ravines strongly prefer preverb *jā-* rather than the preverb *ā-*. These preferences indicate an imagined reference point that in general would correspond to an onlooker, often the narrator, a bystander or a person in his or her home or car or someone standing on the ground (3):

- (3) सड़क पर खड़ा था शख्स, अचानक पहाड़ी से आ गिरे पत्थर

sarak-par kharā thā šaxs, ačānak pahārī-se ā gire patthar

road-on standing was person suddenly hill-from <COME> fell rocks

'A man was standing on the road, when suddenly rocks fell from the hill.'

[news4himachal.in/accident/ ... /13992]

The choice of orientor depends not on the semantics of the main verb but on the location of the narrator. While we might expect the verb चढ़- *čarh-* 'climb' to involve upward motion, the choice of <GO> versus <COME> is determined not by the meaning of climb *per se*, but by the narrator's location as deictic center.

In (5) we may assume that center to be near the river's surface. In (6) the center is on or above the bench:

- (4) गंगा में कूदी महिला, मगरमच्छ देख पेड़ पर जा चढ़ी

gaṅgā-mē kūdī mahilā, magarmačč dekh peṛ-par jā čarhī

Ganges-in jumped woman crocodile seeing tree-on <GO> climbed

'A woman jumped into the Ganges, saw a crocodile, climbed a tree.'

[www.youtube.com/shorts/k-aGPcDIsoY]

- (5) बिल्ली बेंच के नीचे उस के कदमों में आ कर म्याऊँ-म्याऊँ करने लगी। उसने पुचकारा तो उछल कर बेंच पर आ चढ़ी।

billī bhñč-ke.nīče us.ke qadmō-mē ā.kar myāū.myāū karne.lagī. us-ne pučkāṛā to učhal.kar beṅč-par ā čarhī

cat bench-below his feet-among coming meowing began he-ERG caressed then jumping bench-on <COME> climbed

'A cat came to his feet under the bench and began meowing. He petted it and it jumped onto the bench.'

[awrhindi.com/ghulam-abbas-ki-kahaani-overcoat/]

An actual or imagined reference point can itself be in motion, constantly defined and redefined, as in the downward movements of prices (6) or heavenly bodies (7). These prefer **ā** to **jā**.

- (6) सोना स्टैंडर्ड 250 रुपए लुढ़ककर 30,300 रुपए प्रति 10 ग्राम पर **आ** थमा।

sonā stainḍard̥ 250 rupae luṛhak-kar 30,300 rupae prati 10 grām-par **ā** thamā.
gold standard 250 rupees tumble-GER 30,300 rupees per 10 grams-on <COME> stop.PST
'The standard price of gold fell by Rs. 250 to Rs. 30,300 per 10 grams.'
[bhaskar.com/news/MAT-RAJ-JAI-c-10-1785081-NOR.html/]

- (7) दोपहर का सूर्य पर्वत से लुढ़क कर क्षितिज पे **आ** थमा

dopaharī.kā sūry parvatō-se luṛhak-kar kṣitij-pe **ā** thamā
afternoon sun mountains-from tumble-GER horizon-on <COME> stop.PST
'The afternoon sun rolled down from the mountains and settled on the horizon.' [twicopy.com/jyot_ks/]

The upward movement of mercury (8) or horizontal motions, for instance, of gaze (9), usually prefer **jā** to **ā**:

- (8) गर्मी का असर कम नहीं हो रहा। शुक्रवार को पारा 42 डिग्री पर **जा** थमा

garmī.kā asar kam nahī ho.rahā šukravār-ko pārā 42 ḍigrī-par **jā** thamā
heat's influence less NEG becoming. Friday-on mercury 42 degrees-to <GO> stop.PST
'The effect of the heat is not lessening. On Friday the mercury went up to 42 degrees (Celsius).'
[naidunia.com/madhya-pradesh/raisin-ltvt-b-rlch-dbeo-ytih-wbm-2978863/]

- (9) जाह्नवी को इस अंदाज में देख लोगों की नज़रें उन पर **जा** थमी¹

Jāhnavī-ko is andāj-mē dekh logō.kī najarē un-par **jā** thamī
Jahnavi-ACC this style-in see people's glances her-on <GO> stop.PST
'Seeing Jahnavi in this style, people's eyes became riveted on her.'
[www.abplive.com/bollywood/ ... -727338/]

With some main verbs the effect of a reference point is not so clear. Attestations of speakers' choice between X के पास आ पहुँच- *X ke pās ā pahūč*- ' <COME> arrive to X' and X के पास जा पहुँच- *X ke pās jā pahūč*- ' <GO> arrive to X' in general differ little from flipping a coin. However, narrowing the search to मेरे पास आ पहुँच- versus मेरे पास जा पहुँच- 'to arrive to me' yields 50 on-line instances of the former (as of Jan 2026) and none of the latter:

- (10) पृथ्वी का भार ही जुटकर मेरे पास आ पहुँचा है

prṭhvī.kā bhār hī juṭ-kar mere-pās **ā** pahūčā hai
world's burden indeed gather-GER my-near <COME> arrived PRES
'The burden of the world has gathered and come to me.'
[vadicjagat.co.in/Srimadbhagavatamahapurān-D-58/]

The contrast between preverb **ā** and **jā** is diluted when a clear-cut distinction between the falling subject and the reference point is not present. For instance, when the faller is the same as the narrator, as in (11a)²:

- (11a) मेरा पैर फिसला और मैं नीचे आ गिरा

merā pair phislā aur mī niče **ā** girā
my foot slipped and I down <COME> fell
'My foot slipped and I fell down.'
[navbharattimes.indiatimes.com/ ... /47524564.cms]

¹ The fixing of eyes on someone prefers *jā tham*- to *ā tham*- by 14 to 2. Exceptions have first person targets:

(i) पति की दृष्टि चारों ओर से लोटकर मुझ पर **आ** थमी।

pati.kī dṛṣṭi cārō or-se loṭ-kar mujh-par **ā** thamī
husband's gaze all.four directions-from wander-GER me-on <COME> stop.PST
'Wandering here and there my husband's gaze came to rest on me.'
[archive.org/stream/dli.ernet.525459/525459-Dwidha_djvu.txt]

- (11b) मेरा पैर फिसल गया और मैं कीचड़ में जा गिरा था
 merā pair phisal gayā aur māi kīčṛ-**में** **jā** girā thā
 my foot slip WENT and I mud-in <GO> fallen PST
 'My foot slipped and I fell into the mud.'
 [www.kathaamrit.com/hindi-kahani-of-squirrel/]

The specific semantics conditioning the distribution of the preverbs **ā** versus **jā** varies depending on the identity of the main verb they modify. A dramatic example is provided by गोली * लगी *golī lagī* 'bullet struck'. When the injured party is a person either **ā** or **jā** may occur as preverb (although **jā** is strongly preferred):

- (12) अचानक एक गोली युवक के सीने में आ लगी
 ačānak ek golī yuvak.ke sine-mē **ā** lagī
 suddenly a bullet young.man's chest-in <COME> hit.PST
 'Suddenly a bullet struck the young man in the chest.'
 [www.naidunia.com/madhya-pradesh/ ... -1099509]

- (13) अचानक एक गोली दूल्हे के सीने में जा लगी
 ačānak ek golī dūlhe.ke sine-mē **jā** lagī
 suddenly a bullet groom's chest-in <GO> hit.PST
 'Suddenly a bullet struck the groom in the chest...'
 [hindi.news18.com/news/uttar-pradesh/ ... -1362370.html]

When लग- *lag-* 'hit' is the main verb and गोली *golī* 'bullet' is the subject (or Figure) the overall preference for **jā** is strong enough to over-ride a first person target's preference for **ā** <COME>:

- (14) मुझे एक गोली लगी जो मेरे दाहिने कान के ऊपरी हिस्से में जा लगी।
mujhe ek golī lagī jo **mere** dāhine kān.ke ūparī hisse-mē **jā** lagī
 me.LOC.DAT a bullet hit.PST that my right ear's upper part-in <GO> hit.PST
 'A bullet hit me which went through the upper part of my right ear.'
 [panchjanya.com/2024/07/14/343746/world/...]

If the entity hit by a bullet is inanimate, say, a wall or car, then **ā** does not occur (45 exx for **jā** vs zero for **ā**):

- (15) श्वेता के सात साल के बेटे ने पिता का हाथ पकड़ लिया और गोली दीवार पर जा लगी।
 śvetā.ke sāt sāl-ke beṭe-ne pita.kā hāth pakṛ liyā aur golī dīvār-par **jā** lagī
 Shweta's seven year-GEN son-ERG father's hand catch TOOK and bullet wall-on <GO> hit.PST
 'Shweta's seven-year-old son caught his father's hand and the bullet hit the wall..'
 [navbharattimes.indiatimes.com/state/uttar-pradesh/noida/ ... /78229280.cms]

So far we see a mix of lexical specificity in main verbs impinging on the (residual) semantics of the preverb. That is, with some main verbs the preverb clearly and unambiguously denotes direction of action. With others not so much.

Optionality

Orienting preverbs may be regarded as optional reinforcements, even embellishments, sometimes absent from headlines of stories, reports and blogs but occurring in the bodies of the same texts. Considering the secondary nature of their contribution to the overall meaning of a composite predicate it is not surprising that the preverb's presence is optional. Headings (vs. the body) of a report may lack the preverb as in (16a) where the orientor आ **ā** <COME> does not accompany the main verb गिरा but does so in (16b), the body of the report:

- (16a) Viral Video: बाइक सवार महिला के सिर पर गिरा नारियल, यूं हो गया एक्सीडेंट (heading of story)
 bāik savār mahilā.ke sir-par **girā** nāriyal, yū ho.gayā eksident
 bike riding woman's head-on fell coconut this.way happened accident
 'A coconut fell on head of bike-riding woman; in this way an accident occurred.'
 [dnaIndia.com/hindi/viral/news-coconut-fell-woman-road-accident-viral-video-4035671]

- (16b) महिला आराम से बाइक पर जा रही थी लेकिन अचानक उसके सिर पर एक नारियल आ गिरा (body of same story)
 mahilā ārām.se baik-par jā.rahī thī lekin ačānak us.ke sir par ek nāriyal ā girā
 woman calmly bike-on going was but suddenly her head-on a coconut <COME> fell
 'The woman was happily riding along on her bike when suddenly a coconut fell on her head.'
 [dnaindia.com/hindi/viral/news-coconut-fell-woman-road-accident-viral-video-4035671]

Transitivity harmony (aka, "arity parity")

While the preverbal orientors आ *ā*- <COME> and जा *jā*- <GO> most frequently modify main verbs of the same intransitive grade, they do occasionally modify transitive main verbs as in (17) and (18).

- (17) फिर इक नई नज़म की ख्वाहिशों ने तुम्हें जा लिया है?
 phir ik naī nazm.kī xvāhišō-ne tumhẽ jā liyā hai?
 then one new poem's desires-ERG you.ACC <GO> taken have
 'Then have the desires for a new poem taken you?'
 [rekhta.org/nazms/tumhen-khojtii-hain-jo-aankhen-arifa-shahzad-nazms?lang=hi]
- (18) मेरे बाद तुम किस पर बिजली आ गिराओगे
 mere-bād tum kis-par bijlī ā girā-oge?
 my-after you who-on lightning <COME> fall^{TR}-FUT
 'Who will you strike like lightning after striking me?'
 [facebook.com/100005501327053/videos/ ... /1135873015382404/hi]

While the intransitive preverbs आ *ā*- <COME> and जा *jā*- <GO> are the orientors most frequently encountered in on-line sources, they have transitive counterparts ला *lā*- <BRING> and ले जा *le jā*- <TAKE AWAY> that can be used to orient transitive main verbs, especially when used figuratively as in (19).

- (19) इन सब विचारों ने एकसाथ गुड़मुड़ होकर इन्हें एक नए लोक में ला गिराया |
 in sab vičārō-ne ek.sāth guṛ.muṛ ho-kar inhẽ ek nae lok-mẽ lā girā-yā
 these all ideas-ERG together mixed become-GER him.ACC one new world-in <BRING> fall^{TRAN}-PST
 'All these ideas mixed together cast him into a new world.'
 [/www.hindisamay.com/content/235/1/ प्रेमचंद-उपन्यास-रंगभूमि.cspix]

Both the preverb and the main verb of the intransitive idiom नौबत ... तक आ पहुँचना 'for the matter to reach the point (that)' in (20) rise together in valency to नौबत ... तक ला पहुँचना 'to bring the matter (that ...)' in (21).

- (20) नौबत रिश्ता टूटने तक आ पहुँची
 naubat rištā ṭūṭ-ne tak ā pahūčī
 situation relation break-INF up.to <COME> arrived 'The situation reached a relation-breaking point.'
 [sahityapedia.com/posts/page/62/?tag=लघु-कथा&sort_by=date&view_type=list]

Compare the intransitive आ पहुँच- *ā pahūč*- in (20) with (21)'s corresponding transitive ला पहुँचा- *lā pahūčā*-.

- (21) अब सब्जियों की कीमत ने भूखों रहने की नौबत तक ला पहुँचाया है।
 ab sabjiyō.kī kīmat-ne bhūkhō rah-ne-kī naubat-tak lā pahūčāyā hai
 now vegetables' price-ERG starving stay-INF-GEN point-up.to <BRING> made.arrive PRES
 'The price of vegetables has brought us to the point where we must starve ...'
 [sahityapedia.com/posts/page/62/?tag=लघु कथा&sort_by=date&view_type=list]

(22), (23), and (24) illustrate a similar co-ordination among intransitive *jā kharā.huā* '<GO> stood' (22) and corresponding transitives (23) *le.jā kharā.kiyā* '<TAKE AWAY> stood' and (24) *le kharā.kiyā* '<TAKE> stood':

- (22) भारत अपनी विकास यात्रा में ऐतिहासिक रूप से 50 साल पीछे जा खड़ा हुआ ।
 bhārat apnī vikās yātrā-mē aitiḥāsik.rūp.se 50 sāl pīche **jā** khaṛā.huā
 Bharat self's development journey-in historically 50 years back <GO> stood
 'India has historically gone back 50 years in its development journey.'
 [www.facebook.com/p/Manish-Shrivastava-100063848742314/]
- (23) भाजपा ने पिछले 10 साल में चंडीगढ़ के विकास को 40 साल पीछे ले जा खड़ा किया है।
 bhājap-ne piḥhle 10 sāl-mē čaṇḍīgarh.ke vikās-ko 40 sāl pīche **le.jā** khaṛā kiyā hai
 BJP-ERG last 10 year-in Chandigarh's development-ACC 40 year back <TAKE AWAY> stood.up PRES
 'In the last 10 years, BJP has taken the development of Chandigarh back by 40 years.'
 [www.newsxindia.com/archives/36347]
- (24) राजीव जी एक शिक्षित व्यक्ति थे जो दुनिया के साथ भारत को ले खड़ा करना चाहते थे।
 rājīv jī ek śikṣit vyakti the jo duniyā-ke.sāth bhārat-ko **le** khaṛā kar-nā čāhte.the
 Rajiv ji an educated person was who world-with Bharat-ACC <TAKE> stand make-INF wanted
 'Rajiv ji was an educated individual who wanted to make India equal with the rest of the world.'
 [facebook.com/JagadguruRambhadracharya/videos/ ... /1188114699616468/]

Competing construals 1: Sequenced verbs (SVCs) versus oriented verbs.

Some readers may object that many of the examples of oriented verbs (OVs) presented in this paper are actually sequences of two main verbs in which the first has assumed the form of a gerund (or conjunctive participle). Indeed, instances which involve physical displacement can often be read as concatenations of two main verbs. The alternation among sequenced verbs and conjoined verbs is shown in (25), (26), and (27):

- (25) एक अजनबी मेरे सामने आ खड़ा हुआ
 ek ajanabī mere sāmne **ā khaṛā huā**
 one stranger my in.front come standing became
 'A stranger came and stood in front of me.'
 [facebook.com/amitkaveeshwar/posts/... -/10165564253553572/]
- (26) दोनों हाथ कमर पर रखे वह मेरे सामने आकर खड़ा हुआ ।
 donō hāth kamar-par rakhe vah mere sāmne **ā-kar khaṛā huā**
 both hands waist-on placed he my in.front come-GER standing became
 'With hands on his hips he came and stood in front of me.'
 [dainiktribuneonline.com/news/archive/Top Ticker/प्रश्न-विचित्रा/]
- (27) अचानक से एक शख्स हमारे सामने आया और खड़ा हो गया
 achānak.se ek śaxs hamāre sāmne **āyā aur khaṛā ho gayā**
 suddenly one person our in.front came and standing become WENT
 'Suddenly a man came and stood in front of us.'
 [jansatta.com/entertainment/ ... /3551978/]

However, in most cases sequences like those in (25) and (26) that look like they might be a gerundial concatenation of main verbs cannot be reduced to a conjunction of fully inflected verbs. See an attempt in (28):

- (28) भारत अपनी विकास यात्रा में ऐतिहासिक रूप से 50 साल पीछे गया और खड़ा हो गया ??? [Compare (28) with (22).]
 'India has historically gone back 50 years in its development journey and stood.' ???

It seems that over time some sequenced verbs have taken on figurative meanings that prevent them from being analyzed as conjunctions of two full verbs. In other instances sequenced verbs may be neither fully integrated univerbations (22) nor duoverbations (25) but something somewhere in between.

Competing construals 2: Compound verbs versus oriented verbs

Occasionally there is some ambiguity in the proper analysis of oriented as opposed to compound verbs. For instance, depending on context, the two-word sequences *ā le-* and *jā le-* could be either OV's or CV's. However, if the subject of the clause does not take the ergative ने [like the subject पानी *pānī* 'water' in (29)] then *ā* 'come' must be the main verb in a compound verb with लिया *liyā* <TOOK> as its vector:

- (29) दोपहर तक घग्घर पानी यहां तक आ लिया, भाई
 dopahar-tak ghaggar pānī yahā-tak ā liyā, bhāi (*ā liyā* is a compound verb [CV])
 afternoon-by Ghaggar's water here-up.to come <TOOK>, Brother
 'By afternoon the Ghaggar's water had come up to here, Brother.'
 [facebook.com/babu.joshi.3705/videos/दोपहर तक घग्घर पानी यहां तक आ लिया भाई/1431593068072922/]

If the subject of the clause does take the ergative ने [like शैतान *šaitān* 'Satan' in (30)] then *ā* <COME> is a preverb orienting the main verb लिया *liyā* 'took' (the preterite form of ले *le-* 'take'):

- (30) जैसे शैतान ने तुम्हें आ लिया हो, वैसे गाड़ी चलाओ और तुम घुल-मिल जाओगे। (*ā liyā* is an oriented verb [OV])
 jaise šaitān-ne tumhē ā liyā ho vaise gāṛī čalā-o aur tum ghul.mil jā-oge.
 as.if Satan-ERG you.ACC <COME> taken has.SBJNC that.way car drive-IMPER and you blend GO-FUT
 'Drive like the devil has possessed you and you will blend in.'
 [reddit.com/r/longisland/comments/1637ryk/guide_on_long_island_speed_limits/?tl=hi]

OCVs (Compound forms of oriented verbs)

In Hindi-Urdu lexical verbs alternate with corresponding compound forms composed of an unsuffixed (or "bare") form followed (usually immediately) by a vector verb displaying the desinence determined by the syntactic environment (Hook 1974, 2021). Alternation with compound forms is a morphosyntactic affordance available to all lexical verbs. Oriented verbs do not enjoy the same universal scope. Their main verb participants are verbs of telic or bounded motion like the ones seen in the preceding examples: *gir-* 'fall', *pahūč-* 'arrive', *kharā ho-* 'stand (up)', etc. In compound forms verbs of unbounded motion also participate: *barh-* 'increase', *luṛhak-* 'roll', *uṛ-* 'fly', etc. In (31) and (32) the preverb जा shows direction away from a reference point while the post-verb vector गया puts a bound on the rolling of the truck or flight of the roof.

- (31) चालक ट्रक से नियंत्रण खो बैठा। इससे ट्रक सड़क से नीचे जा लुढ़क गया।
 čālak ṭrak-se niyantraṇ kho baiṭhā; is-se ṭrak saṛak-se nīče jā luṛhak gayā
 driver truck-from control lose <SAT> this-from truck road-from below <GO> roll <WENT>
 'The driver lost control of his truck and with this the truck tumbled down from the road.'
 [amarujala.com/himachal-pradesh/rampur-bushahar/one-died-in-truck- ... -hp-news-sml383628046]
- (32) गैस सिलेंडर फटते हीं मकान का छत जा उड़ गया।
 gais silenḍar phaṭ-te.hī makān-kā čhat jā uṛ gayā
 gas cylinder burst-as.soon.as house-GEN roof <GO> fly <WENT>
 'As soon as the gas cylinder exploded the roof of the house flew off.'
 [bhaskar.com/bihar/nawada/news/fire-at-gas-cylinders- ... -064057-4100857.html]

In (33) the preverb आ shows the direction of the growing burden's effect while गया indicates the crossing of some limit of ability or tolerability.

- (33) उन्होंने बताया कि पूरे सिस्टम पर बहुत ज़्यादा बोझ आ बढ़ गया है।
 unhō-ne batāyā ki pūre sistam-par bahut zyādā bojh ā barh gayā hai
 he-ERG said that whole system-on much more burden <COME> increase <GONE> has
 'He said that there is now a huge strain on the entire system.'
 [ndtv.in/india/icu-condition-amid-covid-crisis-challenging-situation- ... -2439857]

Although less commonly attested the transitive orientor ला *lā*- <BRING> also co-occurs with vectors in OCVs:

- (34) तालिबान ने आईपीएल को इस्लाम के खिलाफ बताते हुए इसके मैचों के प्रसारण पर रोक ला लगा दी है।
 tālibān-ne āī.pī.el-ko islām-ke.khilāph batā.te hue is.ke maičō.ke prasāran-par rok **lā lagā dī** hai
 Taliban-ERG IPL-ACC Islam-against saying its matches' broadcast-on ban <BRING> impose <GIVEN> has
 'Pronouncing the IPL to be against Islam the Taliban has imposed a ban on their broadcasts.'
 [jantaserishta.com/sports/ban-on-broadcast-of-ipl-matches-taliban-governments-decree- ... -1020326]

The distinction of centripetal vs. centrifugal action as an expressional trait of oriented verbs

A notable feature of compound transitive verbs in Hindi-Urdu is that the speaker may choose between vector ले- <TAKE> and vector दे- <GIVE> to indicate centripetal (35) versus centrifugal (36) direction of action:

- (35) खाते समय कभी कभार चटनी वटनी कपड़ों पर िगरा लेता हूँ
 khāte samay kabhī.kabhār čaṭnī-vaṭnī kapaṛō-par girā **le**-tā-hū
 eating time occasionally chutney-vutney clothes-on fall^{TR} <TAKE>-HAB-PRES
 'Occasionally while eating I spill chutney and what-not on my clothes.'
 [www.facebook.com/do.candrajita.yadava/videos/ ... /822048993906441/]

- (36) मैं सारा कचरा ज़मीन पर िगरा देता हूँ
 mǎi sārā kačrā zamīn-par girā **de**-tā-hū
 I entire rubbish ground-on fall^{TR} <GIVE>-HAB-PRES
 'I throw all the rubbish on the ground.'
 [www.reddit.com/r/duneawakening/comments/1nnch6y/ ... /?tl=hi]

Hindi-Urdu's intransitive compound verbs (most of which feature vector *jā* <GO>) do not allow speakers to make the distinction of outward action versus inward action with reference to an imagined or a real stable point. The use of the contrasting preverbs *ā* <COME> in (37) and *jā* <GO> in (38) as orientors provides one way to make that distinction.²

- (37) कचरा सारा मूँह पर आ गिरता है। कुसूर हवाओं का है ...
 kačrā sārā mūh-par **ā** girtā.hai - kusūr havāō.kā hai ... [centripetal action, compare (30)]
 trash all face-on <COME> falls fault winds' is
 'All the garbage falls on our faces. The wind is to blame...'
 [amarujala.com/kavya/mere-alfaz/deepali-kalra-rukh-hawao-ka]

² In some related languages it is (or was) possible to make that distinction. For instance in older forms of Rajasthani: "Noteworthy ... are *uro* and *paro* denoting respectively action directed toward the agent and action directed away from the agent." (Smith 1975: 454). This adverbial orienting distinction at one time applied to intransitive verbs:

- (i) पछे सेरिंघजी तो जालोर स् परा आया
- (ii) pačhe sersingh-jī to jālor-s **parā** āyā
- (iii) later Sersingh-jī TOP Jalore-from <THITHER> came
- (iv) 'Afterward Serasingh Ji came away from Jalore.'
 [archive.org/stream/in.ernet.dli.2015.347768/2015.347768.Maharaja-Mansingh_djvu.txt]
- (v) फितूर धौकछिसं घजी नू छोड अठे उरा आया।
- (vi) phitūr dhaukačhasingh jī-nū čhoṛ aṭhe **urā** āyā
- (vii) traitor Dhaukachsingh.Ji-ACC leaving here <HITHER> came
 'Leaving the traitor Dhaukachsingh Ji he came here.'

See Hook and Chauhan (1988) for discussion and examples of a similar phenomenon in Bhitrauti (southern Rajasthan).

(38) हर मिनट एक ट्रक जितना कचरा पानी में जा गिरता है

har minaṭ ek ṭrak jitnā kaṛā pānī-mē **jā** girtā.hai [centrifugal action, compare (31)]
each minute one truck as.much trash water-in <GO> falls

'Every minute, a truck's worth of garbage falls into the water.'

[cgtnhindi/posts/समुद्र-का-पुनर्जीवन-मछुआरों-की-नई-भूमिकासमुद्र-में-प्लास्टिक-का-कचरा-/1290524643101926/]

General observations

1. Oriented verbs (OVs) consist of a main verb modified by a preverb indicating direction of motion.
2. Preverbs come to the left of main verbs. Complements of main verbs come to the left of preverbs.
3. The main verb in an OV is almost always itself a verb expressing movement towards an end-point.
4. The venitive <COME> and andative <GO> often (but not always) determine or imply a deictic center.
5. Intransitive orientors (<COME> and <GO>) have transitive counterparts (<BRING> and <TAKE AWAY>).
6. Orientation of displacements in the real world via an OV may look like a sequence of events (SVCs).
7. When used in figurative registers OVs do not lend themselves to construal as sequences of events.
8. OVs run a gamut from integrated units to quasi-analyzable conjunctions of individual components.
9. OVs are optional modifiers of their main verbs and occur less frequently in running text than CVs do.

The Cobra Construction

In mining the internet for data illuminating the distribution of OVs (oriented verbs) featuring the preverbs आ *ā-* <COME> versus जा *jā-* <GO>, I encountered a specific pattern with *ā-* serving as preverb to predicates referring to events occasioning shock or surprise, a pattern illustrated ostensibly in (1)-(2)³:

(39) पेड़ के नीचे खाट पर लेटी महिला के पीठ में अचानक आ बैठा कोबरा

peṛ-ke.nīche khāṭ-par leṭī mahilā.ke pīṭh-mē ačānak **ā** **baiṭhā** kobrā
tree-under cot-on lying woman's back-in suddenly <COME> sat cobra
'A cobra suddenly landed on the back of a woman lying on a cot under a tree.'
[lalluram.com/tag/छत्तीसगढ़-समाचार/page/4343/?amp=1]

(40) पत्नी अपने प्रेमी के साथ बंद कमरे में थी, अचानक आ पहुँचा पति, आशिक ने लगाई पांचवीं मंजिल से छलांग

patnī apne premī-ke.sāth band kamre-mē thī, ačānak **ā** **pahūčā** pati, āshik-ne lagāī pāčvī manzil-se ṭhalāṅg
wife her lover-with closed room-in was suddenly <COME> arrived husband lover-ERG fifth floor-from leaps
'Wife is with her lover in a closed room. Husband suddenly shows up. Lover jumps from 5th floor.'
[hindi.news18.com/news/jaipur/lover-mohsin-jumped-from-5th-floor ... died ... -rjsr-3900441.html]

These examples (and hundreds of similar ones) share three distinctive traits:

1. The orienting preverb is आ *ā-* <COME>, (not जा *jā-* <GO>).
2. The subject (aka, Figure) comes after its verb, not (as it usually does) before its verb.
3. The verb appears in the preterite tense (never the present, the perfect, the future, etc.).

These three features are used together to depict events causing shock or surprise in some participant, either an explicit Experiencer (39) or an implicit one [as supposed of a guilty party, the adulterous couple in (40)].

Trait 1. Assuming that the Figure and event reported in a cobra construction *come* into the Experiencer's awareness as a package, the venitive preverb आ *ā-* <COME> is a more appropriate orienting auxiliary than the

³ The reader may wonder about the status of अचानक in these examples. While अचानक may be seen as sharpening the connotation of shock and surprise, it is not an obligatory component of cobra constructions. Rather including it in prompts makes trawling for examples of cobra constructions more efficient. (i) is an example that lacks अचानक:

(i) नदी से निकल हाईवे पर आ धमका मगरमच्छ, लोगों में मचा हड़कंप,

nadī-se nikal hāīve-par **ā** dhamkā magarmacch, logō-mē mačā haṛkamp
river-from emerge highway-on <COME> landed crocodile people-among arose panic

'A crocodile came out of the river and appeared on the highway, making people panic.' [ETVBharatUttarakhand]

andative जा *jā*- <GO>⁴. "Motion toward the deictic center can present the event first and introduce the Figure later as 'new information,' whereas motion away requires the Figure to be established earlier, in a more topic-like position." Miki Nishioka, pers. comm.) In general, thinking or speaking of the departure of a Figure presupposes its existence as a topic in speech or as a mental entity in cerebration.

- (41) खेत में ट्रैक्टर के सामने आ धमका तेंदुआ, जान बचाकर भागे किसान
 khet-mē ṭraikṭar-ke.sāmne ā dhamkā tenduā, jān bačā-kar bhāge kisān
 field-in tractor-in.front.of <COME> burst,forth leopard life save-INF fled farmers
 'All at once a leopard appeared in front of their tractor; farmers ran for their lives.'
 [amarujala.com/uttar-pradesh/balrampur/leopard- ... news-c-99-1-brp1010-154749-2026-09-14]

Trait 2. Word order. In cobra constructions the Figure is not presupposed, not present in the mind of the Experiencer. Consequently he or she experiences the shocking event at the same time as he or she recognizes the presence of the Figure. Seen from a Functional Sentence Perspective there is no distinction to be made between theme (topic) and rheme (comment). From the point of view of information flow the Figure and its predicate are at one and the same "zero level". These examples are not verbatim transcripts of mirative utterances. Although not mirative *in sensu stricto*, this lack of presence in the mind of the Experiencer, his or her "unprepared mind" (in the terminology of mirativity [see Bashir (1993) and prior authors]) is inferred by the narrator and reflected in the placing of the NP denoting the subject (or Figure) after its predicate (42). We may see the expression of the event before the expression of the Figure not as reflecting a conjectured sequence of stages of awareness (a problem for neuroscience) but as a partial simulacrum of mirative utterances used by narrators (usually bloggers or reporters) for stylistic purposes⁵.

- (42) छत पर कॉफी पी रही थी महिला, अचानक आ टकराया उल्कापिंड का टुकड़ा
 chat-par kophī pī.rahī thī mahilā, ačānak ā ṭakrāyā ulkāpiṇḍ.kā ṭukaṛā
 roof-on coffee drinking was woman suddenly <COME> collided meteor's piece
 'A woman was drinking coffee on the terrace when a piece of meteorite suddenly struck her.'
 [aajtak.in/trending/story/meteorite-hit-woman ... -said-i-felt-jolt-in-ribs-tstm-1740668-2023-07-21]

Trait 3. Exclusive use of the preterite tense. This is perhaps the most interesting or at any rate the least noticed of the three traits that inform cobra constructions. The use of the preterite tense can be seen as a consequence of a "causal chain". The causal chain is an approach to analysis in which an utterance (and the actions or events that it represents) is seen as a chain of stages which speakers are free to render in full or in part. Actions or events are seen as chains of sub-events bookended by an "Origin" and a "Termination". Speakers may choose to express such chains of cause and effect in full or may limit themselves to a representation in speech of a Termination or resultant state (Bashir 1993). Clearly the events expressed in a cobra construction have a very short causal chain, one in which the Origin and the Termination are one and the same, a "summary tense" that does not specify duration or relation to other events (Montaut 2001). Hence, neither the present perfect, the past perfect, the present habitual, the progressive, the conditional, the future or the subjunctive are candidates for use in a cobra construction, leaving the simple unmodified past (or "preterite") as the least inappropriate choice.

A gaping hole in this account is the absence of an explanation as to why cobra constructions always represent fearsome and potentially harmful or at least undesirable events.

⁴ Among a hundred or so examples extracted from the on-line data pool I encountered a single counter-example:

(ii) प्रेमी संग कमरे में बंद थी पत्नी, अचानक जा पहुंचा पति, वहीं बहा दी खून की नदी
 premī-saṅ kamre-mē band thī patnī, ačānak jā pahūčā pati, vahī bahā dī khūn.kī nadī
 lover-with room-in closed was wife suddenly <GO> arrived husband there flow^{TR} GAVE blood's river
 'Wife is in a closed room with her lover; husband suddenly shows up; unleashes a river of blood.'
 [facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1029026042658903&id=100066545510152]

⁵ In stylistic studies this practice is known as "free indirect discourse" or "ōrātiō oblīqua".

Abbreviations

ACC = accusative DAT = dative ERG = ergative FUT = future GEN = genitive GER = gerundial HAB = habitual IMPER = imperative INF = infinitive LOC = locative PRES = present PST = past SBJNC = subjunctive TOP = topic TR = transitive

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