

## The Vedic Perfect in typological-historical perspective

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Among the various inherited tense-aspect categories in the Vedic verbal system, the so-called Perfect represents an intriguing and elusive case. In previous work (e.g. Dahl 2010) I have tried to make a case for the claim that the Vedic Perfect is a present anterior category at the beginning of its attested history, a property that may be inherited from Indo-Iranian (cf. e.g. Dahl 2011). In later stages of Vedic, the Perfect develops first into a general past tense and then into an indirect evidential past tense (cf. Dahl 2014, 2016, and further Kümmel 2000). On this view, the development of the Vedic Perfect may be accounted for in terms of a neat and tidy grammaticalization path from anterior via past perfective and general past to inferential past, slightly aberrant from the characteristic grammaticalization paths associated with such categories developed in Bybee et al. (1994: 105), cf. the following Figure.

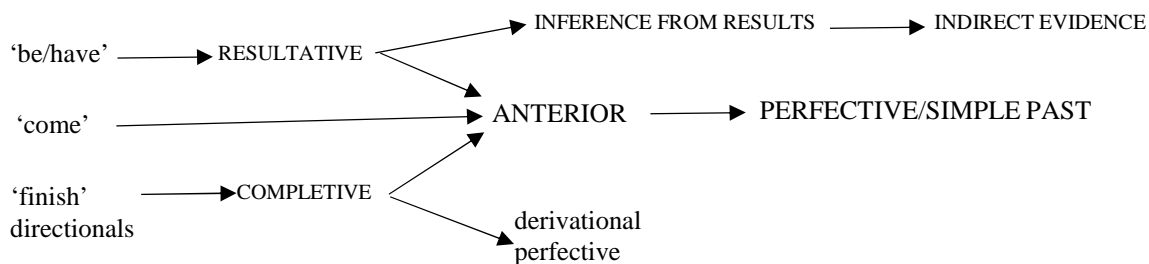


Figure 1. Paths of developments leading to simple past and perfective grams (after Bybee et al. 1994:105)

An important difference between the Vedic Perfect and the construction types considered by Bybee et al. (1994) concerns morphosyntactic realization, in that the former is synthetic throughout its recorded history, while the latter are analytic. However, given that the development paths abstracted by Bybee et al. (1994) are taken to be universally valid, one would expect them to apply independently of morphosyntactic type. As the development of the Vedic Perfect on my previous analysis apparently includes both the path involving RESULTATIVE-INFERENCE FROM RESULTS-INDIRECT EVIDENCE and the path ANTERIOR-PERFECTIVE/SIMPLE PAST, one might be tempted to explore the possibility that the Vedic Perfect does not follow a neat and unitary path of development through the historical stages of Vedic but rather fluctuates between two (or more) grammaticalization paths. If an analysis along these lines is successful, one might take Jamison's (2014: 158) characterization of the Early Vedic Perfect as a 'moving target', undergoing 'fairly rapid change' a step further, suggesting that the Vedic Perfect only gained a relative functional stability at the very end of its existence towards the end of the Vedic and at the beginning of the Classical Sanskrit period. At that time, the Perfect is exclusively used in

inferential past contexts, in accordance with Pāṇini's definition *paro'kṣe* 'beyond the sight' (cf. Dahl 2012).

My previous work has drawn heavily on a neo-Reichenbachian style model of tense/aspect semantics and I believe to have shown that it represents a fruitful way of accounting for the behavior of tense/aspect categories both synchronically and diachronically (cf. also Kiparsky 1998). However, due to its unruly behavior, the Vedic Perfect is difficult to describe, and it is unclear how one can account for a notion such as indirect evidentiality within a framework of this kind. In this paper, I therefore suggest to extend the model somewhat by including some of the ideas presented in Botne and Kershner (2008; cf. also Hewson and Bubenik 1997), who develop a multidimensional approach to tense based on different construals to time in language. I shall attempt to show that a neo-Reichenbachian approach to tense/aspect combined with a multidimensional approach to linguistic time provides a fruitful model for exploring the behavior of the Vedic Perfect at the different stages of its development.

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