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MIRATIVE MEANINGS AS EXTENSIONS OF AORIST IN HINDI/URDU

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Abstract

Mirative meanings (surprise, sudden awareness, high degree, polemic) have recently been described as distinct from evidentiality. Languages with evidential markers such as Nepali or Kalasha, Khowar are already known to have grammaticized the expression of such meanings. Hindi/Urdu, which have no specific marker, displays non the less a wide sets of such meanings systematically attached with its aorist (the simple form used for narrative past). The paper attempts to test the claim that mirativity is a category distinct from evidentiality, a claim supported by such languages that attach mirative extensions to verbal forms other than evidentials. I will first define the standard meanings of the *-yâ/-â* form, argue in favour of the aoristic behaviour of the whole set of meanings, then try to relate the aoristic effect to the special (mirative) meanings, and finally suggest an interpretation derived from the enunciative (utterance) theory of Culioli.

Typology started about twenty years ago (Chafe & Nichols 1986, then Guentcheva 1996 and Aikhenvald 2004) to describe evidentiality as a linguistic category¹. More recently, it started to describe mirativity as a distinct linguistic category (Delancey 1997, Aikhenvald 2004), although evidentials are now well known to display “mirative extensions” (to behave as markers of mirative meanings too). The empirical facts which were described because of the new interest in evidentials is certainly responsible for the change in the representation of the category (less focusing on the distance from the source of information) and eventually for the distinction of two categories. At the same time descriptive grammars now get a proper frame for describing related forms or meanings and are more and more aware of the existence of the category. The reason why this category (or these categories) has long been ignored in languages where it existed is simply because it was unknown in most familiar European languages. Nepalese grammar for instance may now reconsider the “inferential” as a marker for evidentiality and/or mirativity, and there are many other examples of such welcome results of interactions between typology and description. However, Hindi/Urdu have not yet been described as displaying an evidential system, which is understandable since there is no morphologically specific marker for it².

As noted by Aikhenvald (2004: 210), “a major argument in favour of mirative meanings as independent from evidentials and information source comes from languages where mirative extensions are characteristic of categories other than evidentials”. I will try here to support this claim, pointing at the same time to the difficulties in identifying the “path” and origin of extension due to the labelling of these “other categories”.

¹ Or non-testimonial form, since it is widely used to related events not directly observed by the speaker (reported events). Aikhenwald (2004) however rightly points to the fact that markers for evidentiality relate in many languages to the mode of perception of the event (directly observed, heard, felt, even smelled) rather than to the distance from the direct source of information.

² Apart from the use of the future of verb “be” (*hogâ*) as an auxiliary for marking presumption or probability (hence the terminology of presumptive, putative, sometimes used to design it). Note that the use of *hogâ* is limited to cognitive inference (not requiring a material trace or observed event to infer from it the past event).

If the first attempt to identify mirative meaning as a linguistic strategy in Hindi/Urdu is recent (Montaut 2003, 2004), the reason for it is that no specific form in the verbal paradigm could previously lead to building a non tense-aspect-mood category to account for it, whatever its label. As opposed to Hindi/Urdu, Nepalese has a second (underived) perfect which has long ago drawn attention under the label “inferential perfect”. Apart from this second perfect, the past system in Nepali is very close to that of Hindi/Urdu³, two closely related Indo-Aryan languages, but is described with very different labels, so that comparison is blurred for those who compare the existing grammar or descriptions, specially for typologists having access to second hand sources only. I will then first give a general presentation of the aorist in the global economy of the Hindi verbal system, before focusing on its specific meanings in view of understanding what is really at stake in the operation and relating it to the ‘aoristic effect’.

1. The Hindi/Urdu aorist in the verbal system

Hindi/Urdu, as well as Nepali, are head final languages, with auxiliaries after the radical (R) in compound forms. Whether written in one word (Nepali) or separately, most of the verbal forms are compound, and use the verb *be* for marking tense (H/U *ho*, N *cho* for present, *th-* for past). The main verb is in the participial form (R-*a/o* in the accomplished, R-*tâ/dai* in the unaccomplished)⁴.

<i>Indicative tense-aspect system in Indo-Aryan</i>				
HINDI/URDU		NEPALI		
Unac.AspectTense	Acc.AspectTense	Unac.AspectTense	Acc.AspectTense	Inferential
	R-â aorist		R-yo aorist	
<i>R-tâ hai</i> present (<i>R rahâ hai</i> progressive prst)	<i>R-â hai</i> perfect	<i>R-cha, R-dai cha</i> present <i>R-rahe(ko)-cha</i> progressive prst	<i>R-eko cha</i> perfect	<i>R-e cha</i> inferential perfect
<i>R-tâ thâ</i> imperfect (<i>R rahâ thâ</i> progr)	<i>R-â tha</i> pluperfect	<i>R-dai thyo</i> imperfect <i>R-rahe(ko) thyo</i> progressive impft	<i>R-e(ko) thyo</i> pluperfect	

Let us first briefly justify the label “aorist”, and give at the same time its major meanings in standard Hindi.

The Hindi/Urdu simple form for expressing anterior was traditionally labelled *bhût* (past), and now in most of the English literature “perfective” (as opposed to the past

³ The present verbal paradigm as described in Clark (1963), Michailovsly (1996: 110-11) and Peterson (2000) in fact strongly echoes the Hindi system in the XIXth century: synthetic form still expressing non past (present-subjunctive-future) with a concurrent periphrastic present (unaccomplished participle + copula) still expressing both general and progressive meanings, with a concurrent periphrastic progressive (radical + *rah-* ‘stay’ + copula). The suffixing of *ko* to accomplished participles is worth discussing: do we consider it as a genitive suffix (Clarks followed by Michailovsly and Peterson) or do we relate the form to the ‘enlarging suffix’ *-kâ* widely used in Indo-Aryan after nominal basis (homonymous in Hindi with the genitive marker too). For *-o/-â* alternation, we find the *-o* ending equivalent to masculine singular Hindi *-â* in all Pahari dialects.

⁴ The choice of the term “accomplished” instead of the more usual “perfective” in the local tradition, will become clearer in the next paragraph. The opposition accomplished/inaccomplished has been used for a long time, particularly to oppose both paradigms in Roman languages (present, imperfect vs present perfect, pluperfect, simple past) by many respects very similar to the Hindi system. It is used for instance by Cohen (1989) to describe other language aspectual oppositions, as well as Creissels (1997).

imperfective), but it had also been labelled indefinite (Kellogg), because the form contains no mark for tense and can be used in non past meanings including future. Besides, there is in the verbal system an opposition close to the Slavic perfective/imperfective opposition: the simple verb (in all TAM) contrasts with the compound verb (+ semi-auxiliarized small set of movement verbs) in a way similar to the Russian preverbs, and the compound verb has been analyzed as a perfectivizer par quite a few scholars, from Porizka (perfective) to Hook (relative completion) and Nespital (perfective) although it is also used to indicate predicate orientation (transitive verbs with “give” acquire a externalised meaning, with “take” a self benefactive meaning or internalized orientation) and in depicting the manner (+ violence, impulsivity, etc.)⁵:

- 1.a) *ve log kab âenge ? / kab âe ?* (simple verb)
 these people when come-FUT? / when come-AOR
 when will these people come? when did they come?
- b) *jo kal ânevâle he ve âkhir â gae* (compound verb)
 REL yesterday come-suff were they inally come go-AOR
 those who were to come yesterday finally arrived
- c) *mâr Dâlo use !* strike throw-imper him “kill him!” (*mâro use* “beat him, strike at him”)

True, the simple form (similar to the past participle⁶ which is also used in the formation of the whole perfect system) is widely used in narratives to represent an anterior event or a sequence of anterior events:

- 2.a) *tab vah bolâ*
 then 3s speak-AOR-3ms
 then he said
- 2.b) *ghar se niklâ, postâfis gayâ, kuch samân kharîdâ, phir socâ ...*
 house of get-out-AOR post office go-AOR some things buy-AOR then think-AOR
 he (or I) got out from the house, went to the post office, bought some things, then thought...

However, it also has non-past non-narrative uses, the most common in the hypothetical system: in (3a) the temporal reference of the form *cal gayâ* in the protaxis is clearly future as suggested by the apodosis, even when the latter is omitted as in (3b):

- 3.a) *mân ko patâ cal gayâ to kyâ hogâ ?*
 mother dat knowledge walk go-AOR then what be-FUT
 if Mother comes to know, what will happen?
- 3.a) *aur barsât â gaî to? phisal paRoge? aur ThaNDî lagî to?*
 and shower come go-AOR then? slip fall-FUT and cold touch-AOR then?
 and in case it rains? you will slip and fall? and in case it gets cold?

Less commonly it may express non temporal static statements such as the conventional expression indicating the death of somebody, “X is no longer here”: *X nahîn rahe* (stay in the aorist). Similarly in (4), the occurrence of *Thahrnâ* “stay” in the aorist does not mean that the state has come to an end or is accomplished (?), but alludes to a general truth like the definition of the subject as a poet, by nature or essence, akin to the so-called gnostic truths:

⁵ Apart from his numerous papers, one can refer to Nespital’s landmarking *Dictionary of Hindi Verbs* (with Hardev Bahari, 1997).

⁶ Only difference with the participle in the plural feminine (nasalized in the predicative use, un-nasalized in the participial use). Whereas in Nepali it adds personal endings to the participial form: *garyo*

- 4) A- shair kahenge? B- kyon nahîn kaenge, shâyar jo Thahre
 A- poetry say-FUT-pl? why not say-FUT-pl poet REL stay-AOR-pl
 will he (honorific) tell a poem? B- Why not, since he is a poet? /he who is a poet

Given such facts, the latter attested in many languages with an aorist (like Greek), the label of aorist seems to better fit the concrete behaviour of this tense, specially having in mind the meaning of this label (with no definite limits), which suits Kellogg's intuition of "indefiniteness". Simply, in a narrative context, as is the case for other languages, the form is used to relate past events with no relation (non incidence) on the present hence not in relation with the speaker. The selection of aorist for "historical" or objective narratives has been described by Benveniste for the French simple past which he calls "aoriste du récit" (narrative aorist) in the following way: since in the standard narrative, and particularly in the representation of historical events, which are not supposed to be related to the speaker, and which are presented as objective statements, the use of aorist allows events to speak by themselves⁷. This is in contrast with the perfect (and its present relevance) which suits subjective discourse and personal assumption by the speaker. The aorist is the form par excellence in disjunction from the speaker and time of utterance, so that the process is not represented as validated by the speaker but "auto-validated" (De Vogue 1995), particularly fit for an objective representation of past.

According to this radical difference, we can propose the following topological representation of both tenses (adapted from Desclès):

- 5) topological representation of aorist ---[////]T₁-----T₀
 of perfect ----[---](////)T₁----- T₀

Whereas the Hindi perfect can have experiential connotations (he has been to Amerika: he knows what it is like), and resultant connotations (he has gone to the market: he is not home, you cannot see him)⁸, aorist cannot. For the same reasons, perfect, which has current relevance, is selected for summarizing the results of past processes, as in (6), even if the various processes (do in the perfect, provoke, cause, work, manage in the aorist) refer to the same temporal strata. The first two predicates state stock of what happened, the three following give the detailed sequence of events, in a non-chained enumeration leading to the initial balance-sheet

- 6) *bahut kar liyâ hai âpne ; gânv men kyâ kuch kam kiyâ hai ?*
 much do take PFT you-ERG village in what anything less do PFT

bhanDâriyon ko râvton se bhiRvâ diyâ; khandhuriyon aur jyoshiyon men pushtainî-dushmanî
 Bhandari ACC Ravat ABL split give-AOR Khanduri and Jyoshi in enduring-hostility
karvâ dî, aur kuch na banâ, to 'kha-ba' kâ hî cakkâr calâ diyâ ...
 do-CAUS give-AOR, and nothing be-made-AOR then kha-ba of just turn drive give-AOR

you have done (PFT) a lot; what haven't you done (PFT) in the village? You provoked (AOR) a clash between the Bhandaris and the Ravats; you caused (AOR) enduring hostility among the Khanduris and the Jyoshis, and since/ when nothing worked (AOR), you conducted (AOR) personal quarrels

Most of the above meanings of perfects and aorists (1-6) were noted long ago, whatever the label used for each form, but we still lack a systematic explanation of the system: what is the reason

⁷ « Les événements parlent d'eux-mêmes ».

⁸ Respectively *vah amerîkâ gayâ hai* and *vah bâzâr gayâ hai* (from Narang 1984, who calls the latter "inferential").

why the simple form *kiyâ* represents anterior events, eventuality, general truth and other non-past meanings? To say it is an aorist answers the first part of the question (ex (1-6)), since it is expected from a standard aorist to map precisely this configuration of meanings. But there are less frequently mentioned meanings which may help better characterize the function of this tense.

2. *Special meanings of the aorist: mirative extensions*

The following meanings are mainly found in oral interaction, most of them with a quasi-exclamative intonational pattern. We may grossly fit them in four categories: surprise, argumentative and polemic, saliency, subjective intensity, although there is overlap.

2.1. *Surprise*

Example (7) occurs in the context of a couple and their fifteen years old son visiting their old friend after a long time. The friend hardly recognizes the boy whom he had known as a child:

- 7) *Are! kitnâ baRâ ho gayâ !* (?* *ho gayâ hai*)
 Hey! how-much tall be go[become]-AOR (?* be go-PFT)
 My! how tall he has become!

The speaker confronted with an unexpected fact or situation (here the size of the boy) uses the aorist and not the perfect or present, which would only mean a neutral statement (less natural in the context and intonational pattern here)⁹. Similarly when some expected fact happens at a different moment (earlier or later than expected) as in (8) delayed guests almost no longer expected:

- 8) *âkhir â gae (*â gae hain) mahemân !*
 finally come go-AOR (*come go pft) guests
 here they are finally, our guests (French “les voilà”)

The above examples are found with the inferential perfect in Nepalese, the form (*echa*) used to represent inference but also surprise. They are classical ‘mirative’ extensions of evidential markers in the world language with evidential markers, and can be explained by a contrast between what is expected P’ and what occurs P, a contrastive validation of P rather than P’ possible and distinct from P (Donabedian 1996, Donabedian & Bonnot 1995): languages which express such extensions by a special perfect (Armenian, Nepalese) typically use the space adjacent to the time of utterance in the perfect (cf. 5). This space allows the speaker to comment, approve or disapprove, the event related, and this is why so many languages derive evidential markers from perfects.

The aorist, and not the perfect, conveys such contrasts in Hindi/Urdu. Similarly, the Hindi aorist is used in many occurrences where languages with an evidential system will use evidential markers.

2.2. *Argumentative and polemic use*

In (9), there is a first (neutral) statement in the perfect (*â gayâ hai*), and a requalification of the statement in the aorist (*â gayâ*). This requalification adds an emphasis which is a personal judgement in contrast with the bare statement, here aiming to counter speaker B who accepts the situation, and to express a stronger disapproval of the situation:

- 9) *ghor kaliyug â gayâ hai :* *chokrâ kahtâ hai, Dom bît sabhî to barâbâr haiN.*
 dire iron-age come go [become] PFT young says, low casts all but equal are.

⁹ The use of the same form in the aorist would of course have a different meaning in a narrative (“he became very tall”).

He râm! kyâ zamânâ â gayâ!

He Ram! what time come go[become]-AOR

The worst of dark ages have come: youngsters say, 'low or high cast, all are equal'. He

Ram! What times are we in!

Similar contrastive requalifications often result in polemical meanings such as (10), an almost lexicalized insulting expression conveying extremely aggressive connotations, *baRâ âyâ /baRî âyî*, big/great come-AOR, occurring as a requalification of *tû* "you" speaker B, an expression which is always in the aorist although always with present relevance. Note that the aorist in the first sentence of (10) is of the intensive type (allowing subjective emphasis, and perceived as stronger than a perfect *sharam nahîn rahî hai*):

10) A. *Behiyâ, terî ânkho men sharam nahîn rahî ? B. Mân, apnî hizzat apne hath hotî hai.*

A. Shameless, your eyes in shame neg remain-AOR B. Mother, self honour self hand be pres

A. *Arî, chal! baRî âyî mujhe dhamkiyân denevâlî*

B. Hey, go! big come-AOR I-DAT threats give-er

(**baRî âyî hai, *baRî â rahî hai*)¹⁰

(* great come PFT *great come PROG PRS

A. Shameless, and you aren't even ashamed! B. Mother, our honour is in our hands. A. Get out of here, who are you to threaten me (what a high horse you are riding)

Examples (9) and (10) can be explained by the same operation of contrast as (7-8), since a requalification necessarily involves two distinct notions, the initial statement or thought and its rephrasing.

2.3 Saliency

The contrast in (11) is not so obvious, when speaker hearing a knock at the door opens and finds that a totally unexpected person has come, a very usual expression found in Nepali (11b) as well as in Hindi (11a):

11 -a) *are! kaise âe ?* (Hey! how come-AOR)

how come you are here? / what's up? / What a surprise!

11 -b) *timî po rahechau* (Nepali)

you but be-inf.pft

here you are, how come (Fr 'c'est toi que voilà': Michailovsky), Clark 1963 : 247

(11) certainly expresses surprise, but it does not represent a fact as contrasting with some previous expectation, except if we admit as the contrasting frame an initial undefined situation. The statement in the aorist then would contrast with the mere indeterminacy of the previous state. Significantly, such statements simply representing a salient event occur in a kind of blank situation and do not so much deliver an information than comment on its salient (exciting, interesting) character as in (12). The first exclamation ('sun is here!') in the aorist occurs as an expression of sudden awareness, of not yet integrated into the store of knowledge. When it gets integrated in the speaker's conceptual framework (second statement), it is expressed in the perfect: in the context of (12) it is integrated as a fact allowing for roof reparation after the rains, that is to say it is reframed into a causal logic, entailing other processes: aorist is ruled out.

¹⁰ *baRâ âyâ, paNDit kâ bacchâ*

you are riding such a high horse, son of a pandit (= faked pandit = don't pretend to know)

- 12) *‘dhûp nikal gâ! dhûp nikal gâ!’ kî âvâz se maiN ekdam uTh baiThâ thâ.*
 ‘sun get-out go-AOR! sun get-out go-AOR’ of voice by I at-once get-up sit PPFT
mâlik ko batlâ dûN dhûp nikal gâ hai, kal tak kârîgar bhijvâ deNge ?
 landlord DAT say give-SUBJ sun leave go pft, tomorrow till worker send-CAUS give-FUT
 “Here is the sun, here is the sun (aor) !”, hearing this I had suddenly got up. Should I tell
 the landlord that the sun has come out (pft), (that) he may have the workers sent by
 tomorrow?”

Suddenness of awareness is the feature central to the Turkish evidential *mis* according to Aksu-Koç & Slobin (1986), and DeLancey too (1985) gives it as the reason for selecting the Tibetan inferential marker *red*, fit for new information which has not yet been integrated into the speaker’s conceptual marker (as opposed to *yin/yod* fit for well integrated information).

As has been pointed by Bonnot for the Russian statements with non-final accent in similar contexts (‘look, a sputnik flies’, *sputnik letit*)¹¹, the statement here is given as a preconstructed relation. With the term of preconstruct or preconstruction, borrowed from Culioli’s enunciative theory, I am not referring to presupposition, but to the fact that usually a well formed statement has to be constructed as such, by an operation of localization (or situation) of the predication in relation to a localizer (the situation involving in a more or less direct way a relation to the speaking subject S)¹². In such statements as (12) and the followings, the relation (sun – rise) is given as a block already constructed as such (no pause is possible) and does not represent an information constructed by the speaker. Rather than constructing the representation of the event (sun – rise), such a statement comments a fact by saying that it is remarkable. This relation taken as a whole occurs in disjunction with the indeterminacy of the initial situation. Significantly, French translations would tend towards nominal structures rather than predications (which predicate something about something): here the purpose of the speaker is not to predicate something about something but to point to a fact as remarkable. Examples (13a-b) in Hindi and Nepali too express simple saliency. This is not real information, but a hint towards the interest /saliency of a fact given as a whole, suddenly coming to consciousness as if out of the blue, for both speaker and hearer (unprepared mind):

- 13.a) *are dekho, karghosh nikhâ!*
 hey look-IMPER rabbit leave-AOR
 look at that! (there is) a rabbit coming out ! (Fr ‘un lapin qui déboule !’)

- 13.b) *ahâ ! kasto râmro pokhrî rahecha* (Nepali)
 ah ! what beautiful lake be-I.PFT “what a beautiful lake” (Clark 244)

One can discuss whether or not there really is a contrast between the previous indeterminacy of the situation (which could have been characterized by different possible relations P’) and the new fact. What is clear is the meaning, akin to open focalization (an operation involving extraction, hence the intuition of contrast although non restrictive) and therefore to exclamation.

The following subset of values is close to what Aikhenvald (2004: 209) calls differed realization (“post factum interpretation of a fact that they may have observed in some way”). This typically occurs with cognitive verbs like ‘understand’, ‘remember’, ‘forget’, when the process occurs as a sudden flash not yet processed by the mind, like an *Eureka* exclamation:

¹¹ Whereas the neutral statement would bear a final accent (first syllable of the verb). Non-final accent in Russian occurs in the same contexts as the Armenian evidential perfect, except for hearsay and inference (Donabedian & Bonnot 1995).

¹² For a more detailed explanation of the operation of localization (qualification, quantification) see Culioli 1999, 2003 (a few of the chapters are in English).

14a). *samajh gayâ ! vs tumhârî bât samajh rahâ hûn*
 understand go-AOR your speech understand PROG PRS
 now I understand, got it (Fr “ça y est, j’ai pigé”) vs I understand your argument

14b) *jay mâtâ kî ! chhatrî bhûl gayâ! vs yâd nahîn; main sab kuch bhûl gayâ hûn*
 glory mother of! umbrella forget go-AOR ! memory NEG; I every-thing forget go PFT
 By god! I forgot my umbrella vs now I have forgotten all and everything

14c). *yâd âyâ! vahî laRkâ hai, jo... vs bacpanâ yâd âyâ hai /â rahâ hai*
 memory come-AOR! this-same boy is who... childhood memory come pft /come prog pst
 now I remember ! this is the very boy who...vs I remember my childhood

14d) *tyo kâgat ta bîrsen bhaneko ta, khâtî mâ pa hâlechu (Nepali)*
 this paper TOP forget-AOR having said TOP, pocket in but put-I.PFT-1s
 I thought I had forgotten this paper, but I have put it in my pocket (sudden discovery)¹³

If Nepali (14d) is clearly a differed realization, (14a) does not seem to involve any contrast nor even post factum realization¹⁴, because the realisation is immediately contemporaneous to the fact, and if (14b) allows for a differed realization of a previous fact (with a possible time gap), this does not seem crucially relevant (the non-aorist counterpart is also a differed realization). What is relevant is the sudden illumination in disjunction with the previously blank state of mind of the subject. The subject is in a way confronted with a fact (pre-constructed relation) which simply occurs to him and that he cannot process as a conscious construction, which he cannot really elaborate. In the opposite, with the non-aorist counterparts of (14), whether in the present or in the perfect, the speaker constructs the relation and states it as a processed information. Hence the effect of unwillingness, non participation of subject, non-deliberateness.

2.5. High degree of subjective feelings and emotions

Similarly psychic/feeling predicates often occur in the aorist to express the high degree of an inner emotion in almost lexicalized expressions like (15) instead of a progressive present or perfect which gives a flat matter of fact statement:

15) <i>mazâ â gayâ</i>	fun come go-AOR	“great fun, I do enjoy so much !”
<i>afsos huâ</i>	desolation be-AOR	“I am sorry”, “very sorry”
<i>baRî kushî huî</i>	big happiness be-AOR	“so pleased ”,
<i>kamâl ho gayâ</i>	miracle be go-AOR	“that is a miracle (fantastic ! super !)”
<i>mar gâi</i>	die go-AOR	“that is the end, I am finished

Here the speaker is overwhelmed by the feeling, as if discovering it at the same time of expressing it, hence expressing it by means of a pre-constructed (somewhat externally) relation, more akin to a ready-made result than to a dynamic construction (hence the translations by nouns or nominal predications). The commonly used aorist of verb “be” when

¹³ Cf. [now I realize] they lied (differed discovery) : *dhânTyachan*) vs bare statement (aor: *DhânTe*, pft: *DhânTekâ chan*).

¹⁴ In question it may have overtones of threat, sudden intimation:
abe, munh sambhâlke bât karnâ, samjhâ?
 hé, mouth controlling speech do, understand-AOR
 listen, mind your words, OK?

one is shocked by the appearance of a friend is similar, whereas the progressive in similar contexts would have a more matter-of-fact, less involved overtones, and simply ask for information, as well as the perfect:

- 16.a) (*tumhen*) *kyâ huâ?*
(you-DAT) what be-AOR
what is the problem? / what is wrong with you?
- 16.b) *kyâ ho rahâ hai?*
what be PROG PST
what is going on? what is happening?
- 16.c) *kyâ huâ hai*

3. Conclusions

To sum up, most of the mirative meanings which are associated with the inferential perfect of Nepali are associated with the aorist in Hindi/Urdu, except inference (Michailovsky 1996: 113), and plus high degree (intensive) in subjective predicates. In both languages the putative (hypothetic inferential in Nepali) is expressed by a different device (future of copula, *hogâ/ holâ*), hearsay by still a different device. Michailovsky concludes to the cruciality of the mirative category in the evidential system (in agreement with Aksu-Koç & Slobin for Turkish, further proposing that the extension to hearsay in some language like Turkish is the result of a further grammaticalization of evidentials and in no way their core meaning. Hearsay, ignored by languages with less grammaticization of evidentiality, such as Nepali where the related fact remains asserted as true and is never questioned, is the far end of the grammaticizing chain of the inferential perfect (Michailovsky 1996: 119). Bashir (1988) in her study of inferentiality in Kalasha and Khowar, mentions the hear-say meaning but privileges in the data and introduction the meanings connected with suddenness of information (surprise, new information, regret, inadvertence, annoyance (inappropriateness), compliment (a remarkable job). The Hindi/Urdu data provide further arguments to regard mirativity as a distinct category in its own right.

Now the question is: why an aorist should get mirative extensions? The Nepali perfect (past participle, originally < Sanskrit passive past participle, + copula) developed an inferential meaning and various mirative meanings (surprise, sudden awareness, saliency, differed realisation) while a derived perfect (+ nominalizing *ko* suffixed to the participle) conveyed the standard meaning of perfect, both distinct from the aorist. The *ko* distinction, which occurs with progressives and pluperfect, is meaningful only in the perfect, with the present auxiliary: the older (shorter) form, pertaining more to the action than the more stative new form, came to acquire the meaning of present awareness of a past event (Peterson 2000: 23-4). The relation of perfects and evidentials or miratives has been explored enough not to require further comment (cf. supra).

But such is not the case with the Hindi aorist. Since no other form was available in the language, mirativity could only get attached to a non specific marker, therefore more easily ignored in descriptions. But why to aorist and not perfect? There may be a couple of reasons. One, related to the nature of aorist itself, the other to its morphology and origin.

In itself aorist in a non tensed form, whose specific feature is the radical disjunction from speaker and time of occurrence (which confers to it the ability to be used in non assertive statements such as hypothesis with no independent localization, and, in narratives, to fit the historical objectiveness of events speaking as “by themselves”). Being radically disjuncted from S, it is also fit for expressing relations that occur as pre-constructs to the

speaker, as if S himself takes no part in the construction and does not use his own spatio-temporal correlates to construct a predication. This would suggest a path similar to the one described by Aikhenvald (2004) as non participation of speaker > distancing effect > surprise. All the examples in section 2 are perceived as “intensive”, intonationally close to exclamations, that is, highly subjective although ruling out the intellectual implication of S: confronted with a fact that he has not processed, which is given as a whole pre-construct relation, and which he is unable to integrate and construct as a predication, the speaker utters a simple comment (hence the emotional tones) rather than he delivers an information. The “suddenness of his awareness” or “immediacy”(Michailovsky) paradoxically compels S to resort to not-really assertions, nominal like sentences with no assumptive S, S being only a medium delivering a statement constructed outside of him (hence the tendency to lexicalize as idiomatic phraseology: 15, 14). Significantly, the aorist in modern Greek has almost all the meanings of the Hindi aorist (Vassilaky & Tsamadou-Jaboberger 1995).

The form too, clearly nominal in Hindi where the aorist has no personal endings (as opposed to the Nepali aorist) and no tense-aspect mark (like Nepali), may be considered as best suited for expressing auto-validated facts, results presented as a static whole and not as dynamic constructs (hence the nominal translations in French, often using no predicate). Aikhenvald notes that nominals added to the verb and copula display mirative extensions in Kham. Etymologically, the Sanskrit passive past participle first grammaticized into a resulting past in middle Indian and then into an anterior (in narratives). At that time the periphrastic perfect developed, but both kept their ancient syntactic meaning of static localizing predications, still materialized by the ergative construction (‘he did that’: *by him that done* in Hindi). It would be too long to fully account for this evolution, very similar to the birth of modern Roman “possessive” perfects (Benveniste), which were initially localizing stative predications too, and not representations of “actions” (Latin *mihi id factum* to-me this done = “I did this”, like Skr *maya tat kritam* of-me done, like modern Indo-Aryan *main-ne yah kiya* by-me this done). I have given a detailed account of such evolutions (Montaut 1996) and will only suggest here a possible relevance of localizing predications originated from nominal predications for the expression of mirativity. This is of course a limited inquiry which should be further explored, specially with numerous examples fully contextualised.

abbreviations:

A – ablative

ACC - accusative

AOR - aorist

CAUS – causative

DAT - dative

ERG - ergative

FUT – future

IMPER – imperative

I.PFT – inferential perfect

PFT – perfect

PRS – present

PROG – progressive

PPFT – pluperfect

SUBJ – subjunctive

TOP – topic

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