On the aoristic behaviour of the Hindi/Urdu simple past: from aorist to evidenciality

Annie Montaut

Indian languages in general, including Hindi/Urdu in the IA groups, are not referred to as languages including the marking of evidenciality in their verbal paradigms[1]. Only can we find depictions of a variant of the Nepali perfect (compound form involving the past participle and present auxiliary) as inferential (CLARK 1963, MICHAILOVSKY 1996), a meaning almost systematically associated with evidencial markers in languages which exhibit them. However the Hindi/Urdu "simple past"(-(y)ā form), which is generally analysed as referring to a past definite process, also presents quite a range of "mirative"values which are also usually associated with evidencial markers. On the other side, there are many other uses of the form which do not refer to past, but rather behave as classical aoristic forms. The fact that a single form can behave both as a marker for aoristic and mirative functions is in itself interesting for a given language, since it solves the problem of considering as exceptions the non past uses of the form and allows us to reconsider the relation of the three forms (simple, +h-, + th-) in the perfectal (accomplished) sub-system It also raises a more general question regarding the nature of the category of "evidenciality".

There has been a considerable amount of word devoted to this category in the last fifteen years, whose conclusions boil down to acknowledge in some languages the grammaticalization of a notional category, which primarily operates as a mediator between the direct source of information and the way the speaker represents it as an indirectly acquired information (hearsay, inference, then non assumption of the information by the speaker, surprise and polemical or rhetorical attitudes): hence the terms of distantive of French mediative (?) often used. Such an epistemic modality is very often grammaticized (grammaticalized?) by means of forms derived from the perfect (equivalents of has read), and it is argued that perfect owes this affinity with evidenciality (including inference) to its functional nature of referring to the speaker's

---

[1] Except Tibetan and related languages, which exhibit paradigm of evidencial markers (TOURNADRE 1996).

present state, a state consequent to -- contiguous to and caused by -- a past process. Since it includes the resultant state of the past event, the speakers uses this continuity between a past event and the present of the utterance to express the relation between the event and his own present judgement, a subjective opinion. If an aorist form, expressing the event with no relation to the speaker, assumes in some languages part of the meanings of evidencial category, we may question the universality of the relation between a form like perfect pertaining to discourse (utterance) and evidencial markers, as well as the centrality of those meanings of evidencial markers that express subjective distanciation (distance?) from the source of knowledge.

The paper will first attempt to grasp at the core value of the simple past (the -(*y*)*ā* form) by briefly contrasting it to the auxiliated form in the same paradigm and define the notions of perfect, aorist and accomplished as distinct from perfective (section 1). Then it will analyse a range of special evidencial-like meanings of the simple form which give more arguments to its analysis as an aorist (section 2), and try to integrate aoristicity within an interpretation of evidenciality.

1. The simple form in contrast with perfective, perfect (present- and plue-perfect) and past: why an aorist?

A wide spread term used to refer to this type of form in Hindi/Urdu but also in IA languages is that of perfective[2]. Apart from the fact that the perfective/imperfective opposition comes from Slavonic languages and is only acceptable as a metaphor for an accomplished process (Hindi *pūrṇ*), in IA languages and specially H/U the drawbacks of such a metaphor is complicated by the separate existence of a really perfective form, contrasting at all tenses and moods with the non perfective ones: after NESPITAL's masterpiece *Hindī Kriyā koś* (1997) it should be clear that the only correct use of such terms should be in reference to the compound (with vector: VC) as opposed to the simple formation (VS): *nikal jānā* vs. *nikalnā* (*nikal gayā, nikal jāegā*, vs. *niklā, niklegā*):

(1a) *uskī pustak kab niklī / niklegī?*   (VS)
      his book when appear-fs / appear-fut-3fs
      When did his book appear? / will his book appear?

---

[2] Almost all English literature on IA verb follows this terminology, including PANDHARIPANDE in the *Marathi Reference Grammar*, (year), Routledge. Strictly speaking, perfective implies that a final term is reached (he ran a marathon / he has run a marathon), whereas accomplished does not (he ran with pleasure, he has run this morning).

(1b)   *uskā parīkṣāphal to kal hī nikal gayā* (NESPITAL 798) / *nikal jāegā*   (CV)
         his exam results particle to-morrow only appear go-ms /appear go-fut-3ms
         (but) his exam results only appeared yesterday / will only appear to-morrow

Then, if the B(y)$\bar{a}$ form is not perfective, the contrasts it presents with the other forms of the paradigm should enable us to grasp at its nature. There are two other members of the paradigm involving the B(y)$\bar{a}$ form and the ergative structure (let us call it for now the accomplished since it is used to represent a process as a whole, bound, with no discrete occurrence distinct from any other, as opposed to boundless processes involving the *-tā* form and a nominative-accusative structure, the so-called "imperfective"[3]). These two other forms are built with a present and past auxiliary respectively added to the *-yā* participle, which accounts for the earlier designation (KELLOGG for instance) of respectively present and past perfect[4]. The present perfect is traditionally described as having some incidence on the present situation, or some present relevance for the speaker, since it includes the resulting state opened by a past event T_1. Formally it can be represented as an opened interval adjacent to the right limit of the bound event T_1, this open interval being related to the speaker's present (time of utterance: T_0). The following representation is borrowed from DESCLÈS's topology (1990):

    ---[---]$_{T1}$ ////[$_{T0}$----

The past event is closed (bound) but not separate (it involves no disconnection) from T_0 and that is congruent with its present relevance in (2a), which can be used to explain the absence of somebody at the time of utterance, or experiential meaning (acquired experience: 2b)[5]. The form *gayā hai* (went is) is a perfect in the traditional meaning of the term, coming from the Greek tradition (*parakeimenos*: adjacent, translated into Latin by *perfectum*):

(2a)   *vah bāzār gayā hai*   "he has gone to the market"
(2b)   *vah kaī bār Amrīkā gayā hai*   "he has been to America several times"

---

[3] *maĩ caltā thā, maĩ caltā hũ.*

[4] The simple B(y)$\bar{a}$ form being labelled by KELLOGG "indefinite perfect", neither marked for present nor for past. In GURU (1920: 222-3) both auxiliated forms are termed respectively *pūrṇ vartamānkāl* and *pūrṇ bhūtkāl* sometimes as translated as perfective present and past, but the simple form is a *samānya bhūtkāl*, simple past.

[5] Both meanings eventually emphasized by the adjunction of stative or completion aux: *vah amrīkā gayā huā hai* "he has gone to America" (example by NARANG 1984, as opposed to (2b) she translates by "he has been to America"), *vah ilektraniks mẽ kām kar cukā hai*: "he has already worked in electronics" (and knows what it is like).

As opposed to this structure, the simple form only expresses a bound interval with no relation to the present time of speech (no adjacent state is taken into account): there is a disjunction with the speaker. Topologically it can be represented by the following diagram:

$$----[////]T_1----T_0 \quad \text{or a sequence: } ---[////]---[////]---[////]---T_0$$

Most of its uses (the ones mentioned in grammars) refer to past events, which make it the privileged tense of narration for events (like a preterit) contrasting with the well-known "frame" or "background" of the descriptive imperfect for habits or states: since there can be no involvement of the speaker (no adjacent state for the speaker to involve his personal assumption of the process and validate the process), it is conceivably the most adequate form for the objective narrative where events are supposed to be told by nobody, "to speak by themselves" as BENVENISTE puts it. The famous distinction between historical story (impersonal, objective) and discourse (involving the subjective viewpoint of the speaker) stems from this grammatical difference accounted for by the two distinct topological scenarios associated with the (present) perfect and the "simple past" or aorist[6] respectively. Example (3) shows (in bold characters) a sequence of such globalized process, which can be described as compact and closed bound intervals[7], with no relation to the speaker:

(3a)   *vah dobārā **bolā** "koī hai?" aur pattõ ke bīc āvāz **āī** "Yhai". Koī bol rahā thā. Hairānī se ūpar **dekhā** lekin tabhī ghās par koī nīce **kūdā***   (ECS)
He **said** for a second time "somebody is here?" and a voice **came** from inside the leaves "Yis here?". Somebody was speaking (progressive imperfect: background / frame). Puzzled, he **looked** above, but suddenly somebody **jumped** down on the grass"

Although this "tense" is essentially the one selected by narrative story, it can be used also with the first person, in the discourse (within the same topological scenario), a behaviour which is shared by aorist too in some languages (Bulgarian, Armenian, Greek: GUENTCHÉVA 1990, DONABEDIAN 1998(1996 or 7?), VASSILAKI 1995 respectively). The fact that the corresponding form in Nepali (*garyo*) is most often treated as an aorist (CLARK 1963, MICHAILOVSKI 1996) is one more argument for the terminology I adopt.

---

[6] From now on, I will use the term perfect in its standard meaning, not present perfect (linked with English grammar), and aorist to refer to the *-(y)ā hai* and *-(y)ā* forms respectively.

[7] For the notion of "closed bound intervals", see the clarification of CULIOLI (1978 (not in Lit.!)): a bound interval is axiomatically closed at left, and may be either closed (closed bound) or open at right.

(3b)   *usne merā hāth **pakṛā** aur ham **cale gae***
         "he took my hand and we went"

Whether in discourse or in historical narrative, it clearly contrasts with the perfect as offering no relevance with the speaker's present (in (4a) narrator's) whereas the perfect is clearly related to it: a perfect may serve as an apology for the present delay of speaker and co-utterer "you" in direct speech of (4a), and in (4b) it summarizes a general behaviour stigmatised for its present negative result, the discrete occurrences provided as specific examples of such a behaviour being on the contrary represented in the aorist as a series of past events, isolated and simply part of an enumeration of discrete processes (the comment is given in the perfect, in italics, the occurrences which motivate this judgement are given as objective past events in the aorist):

(4a)   *"āpko yād nahī̃ hai? **bhūl gae haĩ** kyā?"*.
         "you don't remember (pres)? you have forgotten (**pft**), that's it?".
         *Usne dūsrī taraf yũ **dekhā** jaise usne vah dekhī hī na thī*
         He looked (**aor**) the other way as if he had not even seen (ppft) her.
         *vah **bolī**: śāyad der se **pahũcī hū̃**, kāfī **intazār kiyā hai**, kyā?*
         She said: "may-be I have come late (**pft**), you have been waiting (**pft**) for quite long?".
         *manoj tab bhī kuch na **bolā**.*   (BBP)
         Manoj still said (**aor**) nothing.

(4b)   *bahut **kar liyā hai** āpne; gā̃v mẽ kyā kuch kam **kiyā hai**? bhaṇḍāriyõ ko rāvtõ se **bhiṛvā diyā**; khandhuriyõ aur jyośiyõ mẽ puśtainī-duṣmanāī **karvā dī**, aur kuch na banā, to 'kha-ba' kā hī cakkar **calā diyā** Y*   (KP)
         "You have done quite a lot indeed **(pft)**; have you neglected anything **(pft)** in the village? You set (**aor**) the Bhandari to fight against the Ravats; you started off (**aor**) quarrels between the Khanduriya and the Joshi, and (as) nothing worked (aor) then you played the trick (**aor**) of inner rivalriesY"

As for the temporal reference sensu stricto, it is clear from (3a) that it is no more and no less past than the imperfect, and the often alleged notion of less remote past as contrasted with the plueperfect (remote past) does not hold better[8]. If as it is generally the case in

---

[8] Rightly criticised by NARANG (1984: 74) for the reference of present perfect and past perfect according to GURU, and MONTAUT (1989) for simple past and plueperfect.

languages which have a plueperfect form (+ past aux), the plueperfect is used to indicate a past process relatively to a past one, as in (4a)[9], it also happens in Hindi/Urdu that it can behave as an absolute tense. In this use it is not necessarily remote (5a), in the same way that the simple form does not necessarily refer to a near past (5b)[10]:

(5a)   *maĩne tumse abhī-abhī kahā thā*
         I-erg you-abl just-now say-ppft   "I just told you (had told)"

(5b)   *Akbār ne pacās varṣ rājya kiyā*
         Akbar erg fifty years reign do-yā   "Akbar reigned for fifty years"

If both forms (*-yā* and *-yā thā*) seem to account for similar representations of a bound process with no inclusion of the resulting state linked to T_0, here a past event (and both could commute), then what is the difference?

This difference hardly shows in such contexts, where both forms clearly contrast with imperfect (*-tā thā*) and perfect (*-yā hai*). But only the simple form can exhibit meanings which are not past and can even be future in (6)[11] or refer to the unspecified general present of an untemporal property (7), the plueperfect being necessarily marked for past[12].

(6a)   *billī rasoī mẽ ghus gaī (*gaī thī) to kuch nahī̃ bacegā*
         cat kitchen in enter go-aor (*ppft) then no thing be-saved-fut
         "if the cat happens to enter the kitchen then nothing will be saved"

(6b)   *sitambar āyā nahī̃ ki barf girne lag jāegī*
         September come-aor neg that snow fall incept go-fut
         September will not have come that snow will start falling (already before September arrives).

---

[9] COMRIE's "absolute-relative tense" (1976): ppft transfers perfect into the past.

[10] No more near past than "punctual" events supposedly limited in their duration.

[11] Very often in the perfective aspect in the protasis of a conditional system with future reference like in (6a).

[12] The well-known "future" meaning in statements like *abhī āyā* "I am coming at once", rather than being an exceptional pragmatic use of the past, relies on the fundamental aoristic (not a specifically past one) meaning of the simple form. It is also the tense used for liveliness and present immediacy in sport reports in alternation with the progressive present (NARANG 1984: 109-10): *gẽd sambhālī*Y *aur ab doṛ rahe haĩ*Y "he **secures (aor)** the ballY and now he is running (progr pres)Y"

(7)   *āp ṭhahare baṛe zamīndār, h̃ā bhāī, vah bhī kāphalpāṇī ke, jahā̃ ke kutte bhī bhasmātī kā bhāt khāte haĩY ham garīb log ṭhare*
        "you are (were, will always remain) big landlords, yes brothers, and from Kaphalpani on top of that, where even the dogs eat bhasmati riceY We are (were, will always remain) poor people"

Such examples, most common in dependant clauses (and especially hypothetical) are clearly examples of aoristic behaviour. It appears that the simple B(y)ā form has no temporal meaning in itself (as opposed to the perfect and plueperfect, which are marked as present or past by the auxiliary), and that its temporal meaning is constructed by the syntactic or discursive context (6), a well-known property of aorist[13]. This suggests that the narrative context itself endows the B(y)ā form with a preterite meaning, and that in itself it has no temporal meaning, in congruence with its morphology[14]: given the fact that the form is essentially characterised by compacity (?), close bound interval, in disjunction from the speaker's present (as a regular aorist) the very fact that it is used for narrative purpose restricts its temporal plasticity to the past and shapes the process as a past event. Languages which have an aorist (a terminology usually associated with the history of their grammatical tradition) also use it for typically historical narration. It is also the case for the French "simple past" ("passé simple"), rightly labelled as an aorist du récit (BENVENISTE) although it is not historically related to an aorist theme and has no other aoristic value than the narrative one. Nepali, although its modern aorist *garyo*, *āyo*, does not come from a Sanskrit aorist (but from the past passive participle in B*ta*, like its Hindi equivalents *kiyā, āyā*) also uses it as a narrative past.

We have now arguments to label the simple form an aorist, a convenient designation since it spares us the ambiguity of perfective (see above) and perfect, does not restrict its meaning to past, and since the designation of accomplished (current in French but not so in English)[15] does not fully account for its specificity[16]: the various "evidencial" meanings it assumes are not grasped by the simple designation of accomplished.

---

[13] The Greek grammatical tradition (Stephanos) defines it as "indefinite", without temporal limitations. See KELLOGG's terminology (indefinite) in note 4.

[14] Synchronically, the only affix on the verbal basis is that of gender and number. For historical evolution accounting for morphological features and syntactic behaviour, see MONTAUT (1996).

[15] A designation previously proposed by MONTAUT (1989; 1996).

[16] A specificity best grasped by the ancient label of "*indefinite* perfect [my italics]" proposed by KELLOGG. The relation between aorist and accomplished is yet to be worked on, since it is often the case that the aorist is part of the general system of the accomplished (VASSILAKI for modern Greek).

2. Special meanings of the Hindi/Urdu aorist: a partial pattern of "evidencial" meanings

2.1. Mirative values: surprise, puzzlement

A person who, when opening the door, startles at the sight of an old friend accompanied by his young son he has not seen for long, will express his surprise by using the aorist form and not the present perfect. In (8) the aorist of *ho jānā* "to become" has not the value of a past event, and it is marked by contrast with the present perfect (unmarked constatation), as also by contrast with the same aorist in a narrative context (8c):

(8a)   *are! kitnā baṛā **ho gayā**!*
        interj. how much tall become-aor
        "oh, he has grown so tall! / how tall he has grown!"

(8b)   *vah kāfī baṛā **ho gayā hai***
        3s fairly/rather tall become perfect   "he has grown quite tall"

(8c)   *vah kāfī baṛā **ho gayā***
        3s fairly/rather tall become-aor   "he grew quite tall" (within those years)

Similarly, with the same intonation as (8a) Bwith or without the surprise interjection *are*, Fr "Tiens!"B (9a) will express in the aorist the present surprise of the speaker (a contrast with some other expectation) at a process represented by the co-speaker as an unmarked constatation with the present perfect (9b):

(9a)   A - *are! tumhāre bāl **pak gae**! (*pak gae haĩ)*
        God! your hair has become (aor) all white!

(9b)   B - *hã̄ hã̄, mere bāl safed **ho gae haĩ,** par fizūl nahĩ̃!*
        Yes indeed, my hair have grown (pft) white, but not in vain!

(10) provides one more illustration of such interactions, A expressing surprise at a the arrival of somebody (aorist in the well known expression *kaise āe*, "how comes", what a good/bad surprise to see you here), B reasserting the same process with no such connotation in the present perfect, for instance giving an explanation for his coming as a process linked to his presence, hence transforming the surprising fact in a logical causal frame:

(10a)   *are! yahẽ kaise **āe** (*āe ho) beṭā?*[17]
         hey! here how come-**aor**
         my! you, here! how comes? how comes you are here?

(10b)   *bhagvān se dhan mẽgne **āyā hū̃***   (CDC)
         God from money demand-inf **come pft**
         "I have come to ask prosperity from God"

The shift from aorist to perfect illustrates a psychological shift from surprise to the simple acknowledgment of a fact, the first representing a marked contrast (break-off, disconnexion, discontinuity in respect to the frame of expectations), whereas both processes relate to the same temporal reference and aspect. In (11) the same speaker successively uses both forms in accordance to his mental change of appreciation of the situation (surprise, then inscription of the present state within a logical sequence of actions):

(11)   *"Sant bābū!", baṛe bābū mujhe āścarya se dekh rahe the. - "namaskār baṛe bābū!" maĩne kahā. - "rāt mẽ idhar kaise **ā gae**? Mujhse koī kām hai?", unhõne kahā (Y). "ab tum **ā gae ho**, to mere sāth calo!"*
         "Sant Babu!". The boss was looking at me with astonishment. "Namaskar, Chief!", I said. "What are you doing here **(aor)** in the mid of night? Do you have something to ask from me?" he said. (Y) "Now that you have come / are here **(pft),** come with me"

2.2. "Emphasis": marked fulfillment of expectation, no expectation, saliency

An apparently opposed use of the aorist is in relation to a long expected process which finally happens: there is no contrast with any different expectation when long expected guests finally arrive and are welcomed by the expression *ā gae*, "here they are! at last they have come!", or "you have come!" (perfective aorist). There is no surprise, there may be a relief, but the most significant feature of the verbal choice is that it emphasizes the process and gives it a saliency (comparable to the rhematic part, new, focalizing the whole statement), since we find it both in the guest like contexts (12) and in contexts where no more expectation than surprise is recoverable (13):

---

[17] Eventually a single speaker may reassert the same process, first as a marked one (surprise: aor) then, once he has understood the reason behind it, as a constatation: *are, kaise āe?* (Y) *tum log mere ko manāne āe ho* "what a surprise (Y) (I see), you have come to convince me".

(12) *āp zarā jaldī **pahũc gae** mahārāj. Vah log pīche rahe gae haĩ*
You have really come early (aor)[18] Maharaj. Those[19] people have stayed behind (pft) /are late
lekin bas, ā hī rahe hõge. Āp zarā dekhie, maĩ dekhtā hũ̃
but wait, they are probably (presumptive) on their way. Just look, I look (pres)
*vah dekhie, **ā gae** phūl ke gajre* (CDC)
look, **here they are** /**they have come** (**aor**), the garlands

The arrival of the minister is expected later (first verbal form), the flowers are expected earlier, and the presumptive reflects this anticipation (they must be coming), the aorist marks a discordance (discrepancy), but it is not the case in (13a): a woman, abandoned by her husband ten years before, relates her hardships, and adds as a significant factor, in the aorist, the growing up of her daughter (although of course she is not surprised by this growing up), since this adds weight to the necessity of a man for arranging the marriage. In (13b), the speaker is simply mentioning a fact that caught his attention and wishing to call the other's attention:

(13a) *kahtā thā, jaldī lauṭ jāũ̃gā. Abhī tak uskī koī khabar nahī̃. Jāne kab āegā?*
*Laṛkī bhī to itnī **baṛī ho gaīY***
he used to say, I will come back soon. Till now no news from him. Who knows when he will come back? And there is also the girl who is growing (aor) / the coming of age of the girl (French, et c'est qu'il y a la petite, qui devient grande, et c'est que la petite grandit, aussi)

(13b) *dekho! khargoś **niklā*** "look, a rabbit coming out!"
look! rabbit come-out-aor (Fr.: Tiens, un lapin! / voilà un lapin qui déboule)

As it is, Armenian uses the evidencial (mediative) and Russian the marked (non final) accent for similar meanings of a sudden realization, or actualization, of a fact which is given special pregnancy, but may very well be known already. AKSU-KOÇ/SLOBIN (1986: 160-4) insist upon the importance of similar values (a fact previously external to awareness suddenly becomes conscious, without previous preparation).

In (14) the boys, exhilarated rather than surprised by the sudden appearance of the sun, both express with the aorist that they have long been longing for it and that they announce it as a striking fact, whereas when the narrator plans to announce it to

---

[18] *pahũc gae*, lit. "you came", as opposed to **pahũc gae haĩ*, lit. "you have come", suggests a slight surprise ("already? I was not expecting you so early").

[19] *vah*, sg, instead of *ve*, pl., is frequent in non standard Hindi with a plural meaning.

his landlord, in the present perfect, he makes it, not a striking fact, but a past event with resulting state inducing various consequences (repairing the roof), an observation from which a certain behaviour is to be derived [20].

(14)   *'dhūp **nikal gaī**, dhūp **nikal gaī**' kī āvāz se maĩ ekdam uṭh baiṭhā thā. Ḍākṭar ke batīje ko batlā dũ dhūp **nikal gaī hai**, kal parsõ tak kārīgar bhijvā dẽge?*
                                                                                            (NKK)

To the shouting '**here it is,** the sun! the sun **has come out! (aor)**', I had jumped. Should I go and tell the Doctor's nephew (that) ***the sun has come out (pft)****,* (that) he may send me his men to morrow or day after?

Now, what does it mean for a process to be presented as a striking fact, a saliency? It is similar to the above contrasts (2.1 surprise can be analysed as a contrastive focus between the present fact and the expectation, eventually a nil expectation), to the extent that it gives the process absolute prominence and makes it a non contrastive (non restrictive) focus. Significantly, the intonation is exclamative-like in both cases: the process is isolated as something detached and valid in itself, without the speaker's participation. As soon as the speaker makes the process a regular assertion (descriptive) and appropriates it by giving it a logical continuation for instance (then come with me, then I should tell the landlord to send the workers), it shifts to the present perfect[21]. Significantly, such uses as 2.1 and 2.2 are found in Nepali with the inferential perfect (*garecha*), a variant of the ordinary perfect (*gareko cha*), that CLARK associates with a sudden consciousness of an already pre-existing state of affairs (1963: 83). Also in Hindi, when one suddenly realizes that he has forgotten his umbrella, he will use the aorist (*maĩ apnī chatrī bhūl gayā*: I refl umbrella forget go-aor): he is not describing some actual fact (which is represented by the perfect

---

[20] See the use of the perfect for "it has rained" when it is linked to a consequent process, *bāriś huī hai*, (now we can go for a walk, now we don't need to water the plants: *ab ham ghūmne jā sakte haĩ / ab sĩcne kī zarūrat nahĩ hai*). A similar example to (14), in the context of a festival where people are waiting for the arrival of the local deity's effigy shows the first two verbs in the perfective aorist (*ā gayā*), the last one in the perfective perfect (*ā gayā hai*) :

   ā gayā** bhāī,* ***ā gayā, *kāphalpāṇī kā hungot* ***ā gayā hai***   (KK?) (cf. Lit.)
   venir aller-**aor**, frère, venir aller-**aor**, Kaphalpani de Hungot venir aller **pft**
   "here he is brothers! here he is! Kaphalpani's hungot has come (pft)!"

[21] Or to the present for an illustrative statement or some proof, an evidence that here the aorist has no preteritic meaning but present relevance although this relevance is not assumed by the speaker: *dekho! ãtẽ ūpar* ***caṛh gaī*** *(Y). Dekho, ab sujan dikhāī detī hai* "look! here is my hernia showing (my bowels come-up go aor). Look, now the swelling is showing", says the speaker to a friend who asked him to show him when the hernia gets visible (NKK).

in 4a), but rather insisting on the sudden arrival to his consciousness of a previously unaware fact, somewhere between surprise and the experiential state suddenly surfacing to the mind. Such effects are well analysed as an effect of sudden awareness (AKSU-KOÇ/SLOBIN 1986) and immediateness ("effet d'immédiateté") by MICHAILOVSKY (1996) for Nepali.

2.3. Polemical contrast and rhetorical reassertion

In a number of contexts, the order seen above (a process represented in the aorist with connotation of surprise or salience reasserted in the perfect) is reversed. The effect is pragmatically very different, since the second occurrence (aorist) is generally interpreted as a parody or polemical quotation of the first. In a famous street play, a treasurer is supposed to wait for the visit of the newly elected minister who wants to check the treasure. A wrong minister comes, is duly welcomed, and leaves with the treasure. Some time after, arrives the right minister, asserting his coming and its goal in the perfect (15). The treasurer, astonished and furious to be mocked, reacts by quoting the Minister's phrase in the aorist (16) and then tells his story, that the true (so he thinks) minister already came and left (narrative aorist 17):

(15)   - *kyā mujhe pahcānte nahĩ ho? maĩ nayā mantrī hũ; khazāne kī jãc ke lie **āyā hũ***
          Don't you recognize me (present)? I am the new minister (pres); I have come **(perfect)** to check the treasure"

(16)   - *baṛā **āyā** mantrī kā baccā*   *great-sg/much **come-aor**-sg minister of child*
          "that's it, he has come, minister yourself", "and you think I am going to believe that crap? Y"

(17)   *nae mantrī āke cale gae*
          new (pl) minister coming leave-aor-mpl   "the new minister already came and left"

Example (16)'s aorist clearly shows parody, with a derogative singular instead of the respectful plural in (17), and a rather strong insult (son of minister)[22]. The reiteration in the aorist of the process stated by the Minister allows the speaker (the treasurer) to express his non involvement in the statement, and even his utter disapproval (you say

---

[22] A kind of insult systematically associated to the use of aorist: *baṛā āyā sālā manaijar kā bāp* [big come-aor fucking Manager of father] "he/you fucking manager". *baṛī āyī beṭā kahnevālī* (big-fs come-aor son saying (GHZ), "how can this (bad) woman say 'son' "?

it, I do not agree): to refuse any personal participation in the statement and rather to invalidate it (as opposed to the perfect by which the minister validates his own coming, although here the aspect-temporal meaning is the same). On the contrary, when he relates the whole episode to the queen, he uses a present perfect to relate his own inner discourse at the arrival of the first visitor (the wrong minister he thought to be the true one), with regular respectful forms:

(18)   *maĩne socā, nae mantrījī āe haĩ*
         "I thought, the new-pl minister-hon has come-perf-mpl"

The polemic value is not always as strong, but the rhetorical use still very clear, when for instance in a friendly argument A wants to discard B's argument and uses for this purpose the aorist shift of the perfect in B's assertion. The first aorist expresses surprise (see 2.1) with the usual answer in the present perfect, but the second (last reply) aims at discarding the very problem that B is presenting:

(19)   A.- *āie āie Ghapolā jī! baiṭhie! āj savere-savere kaise kaśṭ kiyā?*
         Come come Ghapola Sir! Sit down! What brings you here so early (how take trouble **aor**)

         B- *Sundar Singh bhāī, maĩ tumse āj ek zarūrī salāh lene āyā hū̃*
         "Sundar Singh brother, I have come (**pft**) to to ask you some important advice"
         mere beṭe kā patr āyā hai ki vah amrikā se lauṭ āyā hai
         a letter from my son has arrived (**pft**), that he has come back (**pft**) from America
         āj mere sāmne baṛī-baṛī samasyā ā paṛī hai
         "Now I have got (has fallen: **pft**) a very big problem on my hands"
         - *Kyõ, ismẽ samasyā kyā ho gaī! yah to baṛī khuśī kī bāt hai ki āpkā laṛkā lauṭ āyā hai*   (KP)
         "why, where is the problem in this (in this problem interr become-**aor**!)? / I don't see any problem in this. It is rather a great happiness that he has come back."

Even if the co-utterer is the same person ('I' in (20) is evaluating the present situation) there is a kind of intrasubjective dialogue when he "translates" his previous perfect into an aorist: the aspecto-temporal reference has not changed, but the pragmatic

effect of this re-statement is to emphasize (see 2.2.) the process and make it into a rhetorical (with negative valuation) statement[23]

(20)   *Are, ghor kaliyug **ā gayā hai**; chokrā kahtā hai, dom biṭ sabhī to barābār haĩ. He rām, kyā zamānā **ā gayā***   **(KP)**
         "my god, the real kaliyug **has come** (come go-**pft**); youth says, low and high casts are all equal. He, Ram, what a terrible time! (what time come go-**aor)**"

2.4. Subjective emotions, feelings and sensations

The three previous series (2-1 to 2.3) fairly well correspond to the mirative-like meanings of most evidencials in languages which exhibit the full scope of evidencial meanings (Turkish, Armenian, etc.). The following seems to be less frequent with evidencial particles or perfect-derived verbal endings, but it is well attested for the Greek aorist[24]. It consists in using the aorist in reference to a present inner state (pleasure, pain, tiredness, involuntary processes like forget and remember etc.[25]), otherwise representable in the present perfect or in the present progressive (given in brackets), and is generally perceived as more "intensive" even if it often gets lexicalized in idiomatized phrases (21c-e):

(21a)   *mazā **ā gayā!***   pleasure come go-**aor**
         "this is great!"   (*mazā ā rahā hai*: progr present "I enjoy myself")[26]

(21b)   *mujhe kaisī bhūkh lag āī*   I-dat what-sort hunger stick come-aor
         "I feel so hungry!"   (*lag rahī hai*: prest progr)

---

[23] Similarly, in the same sequence, all the aorists (which do not refer to past events in a narrative fashion) stigmatise the process, within a rhetorical interrogative frame:
  *bhāī! yah kām pavitr kaise **ho gayā**? saĩkṛõ varṣõ se hamāre purkhe jis kām ko karte āe āp use band karānā cāhte haĩ aur phir kahte haĩ ki pavitr **hai**. kaise pavitr **huā** bhāī yah?*   (KP)
  "Brothers! How is this (**aor**) a sacred action? Whatever our ancestors have been doing for centuries, you want to put an end to it, and then you say it is (pres) a sacred action. (But) how (the hell) **can it be** (**aor**) sacred, brothers?"

[24] Another meaning shared by Hindi and Greek aorist forms is that of completion with a connotation of conclusiveness, like in *ho gayā* "it is done" (and not "it was done"), which could be substituted by *ho cukā hai* (and not *ho cukā*) with the unmarked completive auxiliary.

[25] *yād āyā* "I remember" (in present contexts), *thak gayā* "I am tired", *samajh gayā* "I understand". For *bhūl gayā* "I forgot, I have forgotten", see 2.2. For the unwillfulness (?) feature (involuntary process) expressed in the evidential, see FRIEDMAN (1986).

[26] *iskā man **lag gayā**? ab to Ilāhābād jāne kī zid nahī̃?* (ECS) "he **likes** (aor) it here? now he does not insist any more on going back to Allahabad?"

(21c)   *baṛī kuśī **huī***   great happiness be-**aor**
        "most please"

        *afsos **huā***   unhappiness be-aor
        "sorry"   (*baṛī kuśī kī bāt hai, afsos kī bāt hai*: present)

(21d)   *kamāl ho **gayā***   miracle become-**aor**
        "what a miracle! it is a miracle! (fantastic!)"   (*kamāl kī bāt hai*: present)

(21e)   *hāy, maĩ **mar gaī***   / hāy **mār ḍālā**
        alas, I die go-aor-fs   / alas kill throw-aor-ms
        "Hay, I'm finished   / he has finished me off / has killed me"

Although there seems to be no possible discontinuity between one's intimate feelings and there is even an absolute coincidence between such physiological or psychological emotions and the speaker's utterance, the choice of a form characterized by its discontinuity with T_0 marks that the subject is in a way overwhelmed by his internal kinaesthesia which comes to his consciousness as a compact state, unanalysable: here compacity is responsible for the use of aorist. The wide-spread expression *tumhẽ kyā huā*, "what's the matter, what's wrong with you?" points to this vague yet strong inner state. It is appropriate for questioning (asking?) somebody who looks emotively or physiologically shocked, not in his normal state. It cannot be substituted with *kyā ho rahā hai*, what is happening/ going on, in the present progressive, more objective, nor with *kyā huā hai* in the present perfect, "what was wrong with you, have you been sick?", a question appropriate to ask the reason of an absence or details about a supposed sickness. The following examples clearly show the non past reference and the non factual nature of the question:

(22a)   *"āp kājū khā rahe haĩ?", maĩne āścarya se pūchā. B "kyõ, kyā **huā**?"*
        "vous mangez des noix de cajou?" demandai-je stupéfait. B "So what?
        What's wrong with it (interr be-aor)?" (what the hell have you in mind)
        - *"agar āp kājū khā rahe haĩ to maĩ samjhū̃gā mahāvīr mū̃gphālī ke badle kājū becne lagā hai"*
        "If you are eating cashewnuts I am going to think that Mahavir has started selling cashewnuts instead of peanuts   (NKK)

(22b)   *kyā **ho gayā** inko, kaisī matī **mārī gaī** inkī!*
        what become **aor** they-dat, how brain beat passive-**aor** their!
        "what's the problem with them, they have lost their brain!"

In the same way, it is quite natural to ask in the aorist and not in the present "are you feeling better, are you alright now?": *ab tumhārā mūḍ ṭhīk huā*? (your mood right be-aor): moods, like emotions and sensations, offer this kind of compacity, unanalyzability, which escapes any objective (assertable) representation and makes them a good candidate for an aorist representation.

3. Hindi aorist in assertive and modal statements

3.1. Aorist and alterity (?)

If we now try to summarize all the various uses of the simple form, always denoting an aoristic effect, CULIOLI's theory appears the best fit to account for the various contextual meanings, which all relate to a common operation of localization of a compact process in disjunction with the time of utterance (the process is disconnected from T_0), since it is not localized in relation to the speaker. As opposed to the perfect, the aorist relates a fact in discontinuity with the speaker's present T_0 (utterance time). The continuity of the perfect with T_0 allows the speaker to get involved in the process, and validate it. To validate a process, standing as its warrant, amounts at stabilizing it in CULIOLI's terms, assign a stable definite value to the occurrence of the process[27]. The aorist allows no validation by the speaker, since it cannot be located in relation to the speaker. If we take the first meaning (narrative past), we get the representation of events which are located, stabilized (as a definite occurrence of the process): such a situation is described by de VOGÜÉ (1995) as an auto-validation, an operation typical of the aorist, and very well suited to the historical narration, where events are supposed to "speak by themselves", without reference to the speaker. The narrative context, adverbial localizers (setting the frame in the past) or the simple sequence of bound processes, are enough to ensure the past temporal reference of a compact process or series of processes and its interpretation as a specific stabilized occurrence. In non narrative contexts (gnomic truth, general properties, commonly expressed in the aorist in languages which have one, but rarely in Hindi), the inherent non specificity (non stabilization) gives the general reference (unlocalized: unstabilized). In the second series of examples (dependant clauses), the main clause provides for the temporal reference and the aorist means that the process is not

---

[27] CULIOLI (1991) (not in Lit.!): 199-200. Any occurrence of a notional domain (including processes) has to be properly localized in order to be stabilized and fit in a well-formed statement. The "aoristic effect" has the typical property of involving a "rupture" (disconnection) with speaker's utterance.

stabilized (not located) independently. It receives its stabilization from the dependant clause. This dependant clause (if-clause) provides an alterity, since the speaker constructs a fictive localizer which is the anticipated arrival of the cat in (6a). The fictive location allows a possibility for p' to be thought of in contrast with p: if the cat comes in means he may come (p) or may not come (p'), both paths remaining possible at T_0. Consecution clauses like (6b) exhibit another type of alterity, also with the construction of a fictive localizer by anticipation of the situation, but with a reverse entailment: what will happen is what is not expected, p' (non arrival of December) entailing q (snow), whereas p (non arrival of December) normally entails q' (no snow), and p' (December) normally entailing q.

The context of surprise suggests a different type of contrast, in the absence of syntactic dependancy: what is stated is stated as contrasting with what was expected, p being validated, not as a normally asserted process, but as contrasting with p'. Whether or not it is formally marked besides the verb, the exclamative intoneme of such statements makes it similar to the exclamative (high degree) where there is no definite stable value one can assign to any occurrence, and we have to scan all the possible occurrences up to the ultimate one, disconnected from any localizer[28]. Cases where saliency is implied without specific contrast obey the same logic of disconnection. Similarly the polemical and rhetorical uses of the aorist create the distortion and alterity since the speakers choses not to agree with the previous statement and to deliberately imply p' (non p) as opposed to p. Furthermore, the use of a verbal form in disjunction with the speaker's time enables him not to validate the statement, and to voice his non assumption. As for the last series, emotions and feelings, a more complex class, the non assumption is probably to be accounted for by the fact that such compact states not relevant for conscious judgements are grasped through a sudden irruption in the consciousness and overflow it. There is no contrast and alterity, but an inability of any specific occurrence (a stabilized tense form) to account for non discrete state-processes.

3.2. The aorist in the evidencial system

This configuration partly coincides with the values conveyed by evidencial markers in languages which clearly distinguish unmarked assertions (subject assumption) and statements which the speaker choses not to take responsibility from, showing

---

[28] On the notion of scanning (Fr. "parcours"), as opposed to the definite occurrence, see CULIOLI (1991: 182-3, 200). (1991 not in Literature!)

disinvolvement to a certain degree. Usually the core-values of such evidencial markers are said to be the hear-say, and inference (processes that have not been witnessed by the speaker), accessorily presumption (according to what I know or see, 'he *must be* doing this'). The mental maps aiming at accounting for this specific "epistemic modality" locate it at the border between assertion and modality (ANDERSON 1986) are ground on the idea that the basic fact in such modalities is the relation to the source of knowledge, the direct observation being mediated in various ways. It is well-known that Hindi has no specific grammatical device for hear-say, and uses a different device for presumption (a future form of verb "be"): (23a) is the "evidencial" correspondent to the unmarked assertive statement (23b).

(23a)   *ve 5 baje pahũc gae hõge*   (23b)   *ve 5 baje pahũc gae*
        they 5 hour arrive go will-be   they 5 hour arrive go-aor
        they must have arrived at 5   they arrived at 5

As for the inferential meaning, when it is expressed by means of the aorist, it is always with a connotation of surprise:

(23b)   *(are!) bāriś **ho gaī***   *(*ho gaī hai)* / *pānī **gir gayā***   *(*gir gayā hai)*
        (Hey!) rain become **aor** (*pft)   / water fall go **aor**   (*pft)
        "(oh!) it has rained"[29]

Hindi aorist, like Nepali inferential, never shows hear-say meanings. It shows only the "secondary" values of evidencial markers. Now the question is: are they secondary? Or: are grammatical evidencials really "the linguistic coding of epistemology", as CHAFE/NICHOLS put it, understood as the relation with the source of knowledge? And does the morphological nature of the marker make a difference on the values it assumes?

To briefly answer the first question, I shall only mention the contribution of BASTURK (et al. 1996), DANON-BOILEAU/MOREL (1996), on Turkish, who tend to consider that the mirative values are not in the least secundary, and might very well be primary, then BONNOT/DONABEDIAN (1997) et DONABEDIAN (1996), on Armenian, who argue that we should not assume that there is anything like a core value, and avoid the tentation of equating this core value to some cognitive primitives

---

[29] Which we can contrast with non inferential in note 20, but also with true (unsurprised) inferential: when the bears come back and look at the plate and bed after Golden Lock has come and eaten and slept, they will say: *us palãg mẽ kaun (koī) soyā hai*?, who (somebody) has slept (pft) in that bed.

based on iconicity (?) (the distance with the direct source of information). Rather, we should try to grasp at a more abstract operation of a linguistic nature which is not necessarily iconic of concrete primitives, something akin to the p, p' contrast they themselves convincingly use.

As it is in Hindi, the form which came to assume various evidencial meanings is an old perfect. The Sanskrit verbal adjective, first used as a predicate with a stative meaning, came to refer to the past event and the resulting state, and then restricted its use as a past event when the copula got generalized as a marker of the resulting state[30]. This diachronical evidence makes the present use of a "simple past" as a marker of meanings ordinarily assumed by perfects or derived forms less atypical. It may pattern with other perfect derived forms, although, having no specific form, and being mostly oral, it has not caught the attention of describers. The perfect indeed has obvious affinities with the marking of evidenciality, if evidenciality is seen as basically a linguistic coding of the distance with the source of knowledge (GUENTCHÉVA 1996: 21-156, "le médiatif et ses relations avec le parfait"). Yet in synchrony B and the modern uses commented above, being mostly oral, in contexts allowing for inter-subjectivity relations like dialogues, are not historically documented B the use of an aorist for marking evidenciality may be relevant in the restriction of the pattern (only mirative and related meanings). It is clear that the fact that the modern form now contrasts with the perfect explains why the meanings hear-say and inference, supposedly central, are not represented among its present "evidencial" values. But the inferential perfect of Nepali presents similar restrictions, being mainly used for giving a sense of immediacy, a meaning rather opposite to "mediation" (MICHAILOVSKY 1996: 120), and never for hear-say. What is to be questioned is the centrality of those hear-say meanings. Since the interest for evidenciality started with the study of languages exhibiting the complete pattern of meanings, it is natural that the most widely attested meaning (relate facts indirectly known) first appear as a kind of prototype and be interpreted as a core-value, the other meanings being thought as derived. But they also may be the most wide-spread surface manifestation of a more abstract operation, a deeper, so to speak, core-value, which could surface in actualizing a various display of meanings according to the linguistics devices available in a given language: less in Hindi, more in Armenian or Bulgarian, more mirative-like in Albanian (DUCHET/REMZI 1996) and Nepali than in Turkish, only mirative-like in Hindi, etc. As MICHAILOVSKY (1996: 119) puts it, the

---

[30] Probably as a conversational implicature (see MONTAUT 1996).

supposedly core values of hear-say might be the effect of a more extensive grammaticalization, and the derivation argument should be avoid even for languages which have hear-say values. "The fact that Nepali [we may add Hindi] does not have the hear-say meaning implies that non of its uses can be derived from the hear-say", a conclusion which echoes DONABEDIAN's for Armenian which presents all the meanings including hear-say.

References

AKSU-KOÇ, Ayhan & Dan I. SLOBIN, 1986, "A Psychological account of the develop-ment and use of evidencials in Turkish", in CHAFE & NICHOLS, 159-167.

ANDERSON, Lloyd B., 1986, "Evidencials, paths of change and mental maps: typologically regular asymetries", in CHAFE & NICHOLS, 273-312.

BASTURK, Mehmet, Danon-Boileau LAURENT & Marie-Annick MOREL, 1996, "Valeur de B*mis* en turc contemporain, analyse sur corpus", in GUENTCHÉVA, 145-154.

BONNOT, Christine & Anaïd DONABEDIAN, 1997, "Enoncés à accent non final en russe et énoncés au médiatif en arménien occidental: une convergence fortuite?", *Proceedings of the 16th Congress of Linguists*, Oxford, paper no. 0323, 18p.

CHAFE, Wallace & Johanna NICHOLS, 1986, *Evidenciality: the linguistic coding of epistemology*, Advances in Discourse Process, vol. XX, Norwood, New-Jersey.

CLARK T.W., 1963, *Introduction to Nepali,* Cambridge.

COMRIE, Bernard, 1976, *Aspect,* Cambridge.

CULIOLI, Antoine, 1999a [1978], "Valeurs aspectuelles et opérations énonciatives", reprint in *Pour une Linguistique de l'Enonciation* 2, Paris, 127-144.

CCC, 1999b, "Representations, referential processes and regulations", *Pour une théorie de l'énonciation*, Paris, 177-214.

DESCLÈS, J.-Pierre, 1990, *Langages applicatifs:Langues naturelles et cognition,* Paris.

DONABEDIAN, Anaïd, 1996, "Pour une interprétation des diverses valeurs du médiatif en arménien occidental", in GUENTCHÉVA, 87-108.

DUCHET, Jean-Louis & Pernaska REMZI, 1996, "L'Admiratif albanais, recherche d'un invariant sémantique", in GUENTCHÉVA, 31-46.

FRIEDMAN 1986, "Evidenciality in the Balkans: Bulgarian, Macedonian and Albanian", in CHAFE & NICHOLS, 169-87.

GUENTCHÉVA, Zlatka (ed.), 1996, *L'Enonciation médiatisée*, Louvain.

GURŪ, Kamtā Prasād, 1920 [re-ed 1977], *Hindī Vyākaraṇ,* Benares.

KELLOGG, S.H., 1872, *A Grammar of Hindi Language*, reed. 1975, Delhi.

MICHAILOVSKY, Boyd, 1996, "L'inférentiel du népalais", in GUENTCHÉVA, 109-124.

MONTAUT, Annie, 1989, "On the Temporal Reference of Some Peculiar Uses of the 'Perfective' in Modern Hindi", *Indian Linguistics* 50: 95-110.

CCC, 1996, "L'évolution des systèmes perfectal et futur en indo-aryen occidental et oriental", *Journal Asiatique* 284-2: 325-360.

CCC, 1999, "Le Renouvellement des formes verbales en hindi / ourdou", *Journal Asiatique* 287-2: 587-628. (not in text)

NARANG, Vaishna, 1984, *Communication of Situation Time* (in Hindi), Delhi.

NESPITAL, Helmut, 1997a, *Hindī Kiyā Kośs, A Dictionary of Hindi Verbs*, Allahabad.

CCC, **1997b**, "Les verbes composés dans les langues d'Asie méridionale", in MONTAUT (ed.), *Les langues d'Asie du sud*, *Faits de langues* 10, Paris, 37-50. (not in text)

TOURNADRE, Nicolas, 1996, "Comparaison des systèmes médiatifs de quatre dialectes tibétains", in GUENTCHÉVA, 185-214.

VASSILAKI, Sophie & Irène TSAMADOU-JACOBERGER, 1995, "Aspects du grec moderne", *Lallies* 15, Presses de l'ENS, 7-69.

DE VOGÜÉ, Sarah, 1995, "L'Effet aoristique", in BOUSCAREN J., J.J. FRANKEL & S. ROBERT, *Langues et langages. Problèmes et raisonnement en linguistique*, Paris, PUF, 247-59.

corpus écrit: KK: *Kāphalpāṇī*, Kamleśvar Prasād Bhaṭṭ; NKK: *Naukar kī kamīz*, Vinod Kumār Śukla; ECS: *ek cithṛā sukh*, Nirmal Vermā; CDC: *Carandās cor*, Habīb Tanvīr; GHZ: *guzarā huā zamānā*, Kr̥ṣṇā Baldev Vaid; BBD: *bũd-bũd pānī*, Svarūp Dauḍiyāl.

* (years of publ. and editions)
* (KK and BBD are not mentioned in the text)