

EYSTEIN DAHL

Early Vedic

Morphosyntactic structures – Part 2: Aspect, tense and modality

Roadmap

- Aspect and tense
 - The present indicative
 - The imperfect
 - The aorist indicative
 - The perfect indicative
 - The future indicative
- Modality
 - The subjunctive
 - The optative
 - The imperative
 - The injunctive

Aspect/tense/modality

- The Early Vedic aspect/tense/modality system based on four aspect/tense stems:
 - The present stem
 - The aorist stem
 - The perfect stem
 - The future stem
- Each stem base of subparadigm

The present indicative

- Present stem – neutral or unspecified aspect
- The present indicative expresses present tense
- Present indicative with strictly present time reference

kvà nūnám̐ sudānavo mádat^hā (RV VIII 7.20)
where now of.good.drops:VOC.PL become.exhilarated:PRS.2PL

- Present indicative with present habitual time reference

yám devāsas trír áhann āyájante (RV III 4.2)
who:ACC.SG god:NOM.PL thrice day:LOC.SG honour:PRS.3PL

The imperfect

- Simple past:

devānām yugé prat'amé 'sataḥ
 god:GEN.PL generation:LOC.SG first:LOC.SG not.being:ABL.SG
sád ajāyata (RV X 72.3)
 being:NOM.SG be.born:IPF.3SG

- Habitual past:

ávasam̐ rátrīḥ śaradaś cātasraḥ
 dwell:IPF.1SG night:ACC.PL autumn:ACC.PL four:ACC
gḥrtāsya stokám̐ sakīd áhna āsnām
 ghee:GEN.SG drop:ACC.SG once day:GEN.SG eat:IPF.1SG
 (RV X 95.16)

The aorist indicative

- Perfective aspect, past tense
- Immediate past

asmábhīr ū nū praticákṣiyā abhūd (RV I 113.11)
we:INS and now see:GER.NOM.SG become:AOR.3SG

- Terminative-egressive reading with atelic predicates

bahvīḥ sámā akaram antár asminn
many:ACC year:ACC.PL do:AOR.1SG within he:LOC.SG

índraṃ vṛṇānáḥ pitáraṃ
Indra:ACC.SG choose:PRS.PRT.NOM father:ACC.SG

jahāmi (RV X 124.4)
leave:PRS.1SG

The aorist indicative

- Inchoative-ingressive reading with state predicates

anyó *anyám* *ánu* *gr̥b^hnāty* *enor*
another:NOM another:ACC after take:PRS.3SG the.two:GEN

apāṃ *prasargé* *yád* ***ámandiṣātām***
water:GEN.PL outburst:LOC when be.exhilarated:AOR.3DU

(RV VII 103.4)

The perfect indicative

- Perfect stem anterior aspect
- Perfect indicative analogous to the English present perfect and similar categories
- Resultative reading

úpa nūnám yuyuje vṛṣaṇā
 PRV now yoke:PRF.3SG horse:ACC.DU

hárī á ca jagāma vṛtrahā (RV VIII 4.11)
 bay:ACC.DU PRV and come:PRF.3SG Vṛtrakiller:NOM

- Universal reading

*ūtí^hir vayám purā nūnám **bub^hujmáhe*** (RV VIII 67.16)
 favour:INS.PL we:NOM before now enjoy:PRF.MID.1PL

The perfect indicative

- Existential reading

índro *vrtrāṇi (...)* ***jag^hāna*** *jag^hánac*
Indra:NOM enemy:ACC.PL smite:PRF.3SG smite:PRF.SBJ.3SG
ca nú (RV IX 23.7)
and now

The future indicative

- The future stem has a prospective meaning
- The future indicative has future time reference

staviṣyāmi *tvám* *ahám* (RV I 44.5)

praise:FUT.1SG you:ACC I:NOM

sākám *deváir* *yajñíyāso*

together god:INS.PL worthy.of.worship:NOM.PL

b^haviṣyat^ha (RV I 161.2)

become:FUT.2PL

The subjunctive

- The subjunctive expresses expectation or probability in assertive clauses

uvāsa *uṣā* *ucc^hāc* *ca* *nú* (RV I 48.3a)
shine:PRF.3SG Uṣas:NOM shine:PRS.SBJ.3SG and now

- In directive clauses, the subjunctive is most often used exhortatively

vácāṃsi *miśrā* *kṛṇavāvahi* *nú* (RV X 95.1)
word:ACC.PL mixed:ACC.PL make:PRS.SBJ.1DU now

The optative

- In assertive clauses, the optative expresses possibility

yuvábh̥yāṃ víśvāḥ pṛtanā jayema (RV II 40.5)
you:INS.DU all:ACC.PL battle:ACC.PL win:PRS.OPT.1PL

- In directive clauses, the optative expresses a wish of the speaker

páśyema śarādaḥ śatám
see:PRS.OPT.1PL autumn:ACC.PL hundred

jīvema śarādaḥ śatám (RV VII 66.16)
live:PRS.OPT.1PL autumn:ACC.PL hundred

The imperative

- Exclusively used in directive clauses to express directive modality

púrūravaḥ púnar ástaṃ párehi
Purūravas:VOC back home:ACC go.away:PRS.IMP.2SG

durāpanā vāta iva ahám asmi (RV X 95.2)
hard.to.get:NOM.SG wind:NOM.SG like I:NOM be:PRS.1SG

índra sómam imáṃ piba (RV X 24.1)
Indra:VOC soma:ACC.SG this:ACC.SG drink:PRS.IMP.2SG

The injunctive

- The injunctive appears in assertive clauses and in negative directive clauses
- Seemingly temporally and modally underspecified

nūnám̐ sṛjad *aśániṃ* *yātumádb^hyaḥ*
now throw:PRS.INJ.3SG missile:ACC.SG sorcerer:DAT.PL
(RV VII 104.20)

- Characteristically used in performative sentences

índrasya nū *vīryāṇi* *prá* ***vocam̐*** (RV I 32.1)
Indra:GEN now strength:ACC.PL PRV praise:AOR.INJ.1SG

The injunctive

- Coordinated with imperative

rákṣā (...) *śárd^ho* *agne* *váiśvānara*
guard:PRS.IMP.2SG host:ACC.SG Agni:VOC Vaiśvānara:VOC
prá ca tāṛī *stávānaḥ* (RV VI 8.7)
PRV and extend:AOR.INJ.2SG praise:PRS.PRT.MID.VOC

- Coordinated with subjunctive

yásad *vajrī* *b^hinát*
drive:AOR.SBJ.3SG mace.wielder:NOM.SG split:PRS.INJ.3SG
púraḥ (RV VIII 1.8)
fortress:ACC.PL

The injunctive

- The only modal category occurring in prohibitive clauses
- Present injunctive – inhibitive

akṣáir mā dīvyah kṛṣim ít kṛṣasva (RV X 34.13)
dice:INS.PL NEG play:PRS.INJ.2SG ploughing:ACC PTC plow:PRS.IMP.2SG.MID
'Don't keep playing with dice; just plow your own plowland.'

- Aorist injunctive – preventive

púrūravo mā mṛtḥā mā prá pāpto (RV X 95.15)
Purūravas.VOC NEG die:AOR.INJ.2SG NEG PRV fall:AOR.INJ.2SG

बहवो धन्यवादाः
Thank you for your attention!