Development of verb-verb complexes in Indo-Aryan

Benjamin Slade [*]

To appear in *Verb-Verb complexes in Asian languages*, Prashant Pardeshi, Taro Kageyama, Peter Hook (eds.). Oxford: Oxford University Press

1   Verb-verb compounds in Indo-Aryan

One feature of modern Indo-Aryan [IA] languages – and South Asian languages more generally – is the employment of verb-verb compounds, which involve collocations of two verbs, where one (the "light" or "vector" verb) acts as a grammaticalised version of its full verb counterpart. Thus, the verb GO[1] in many IA languages can appear as a light verb in verb-verb [VV] compounds, contributing various more functional semantic components including completion.

(1) a. us-ne   khānā (nahī̃) **khāy-ā**
    he/she.sg-agt food.sg.msc (neg) **eat.perf_ptcp-sg.msc**
    "He/she (didn't eat)[2]/ate the food."   [Hindi]

  b. vah   khānā **khā** **gay-ā**
    he/she.sg.nom food.sg.msc **eat.abs** **go.perf_ptcp-sg.msc**
    "He gobbled up the food."   [Hindi]

[1]ALLCAPS signals the light verb use of a verb, the gloss in caps is the English sense of the verb when it occurs as a full/main verb. As discussed herein, the light verb senses are sometimes related transparently to their main verb meanings, e.g. Hindi GIVE, often signalling other-benefaction and/or outward-directed beneficiality; but sometimes are related rather opaquely, as in Hindi SIT, signalling regret.

Historically, the morphological form of the main or polar verb of the CV is an absolutive, a fixed, indeclinable form also used in earlier converb constructions, which also survive in to the modern IA languages, sometimes (as in Hindi) with in extended forms distinguishing them from the absolutive used in CVs, compare (1) with (2), where the latter show the sequential ordering of events use of the converb in (2-a) or the co-eventual (Raina 2011) use of the converb in (2-b).[3]

(2) a. vah khānā **khā-ke** ghar gayā
   he/she-NOM food.SG.MSC **eat-CONV** home go.PERF_PTCP-SG.MSC
   "(After) having eaten food, he went home."   [Hindi]

  b. vah **haṁs-ke** bol-ī   'hāṁ'
   he.she **laugh-CONV** say.PERF_PTCP-SG.FEM 'yes'
   "Laughing(ly) she said 'yes'."   [Hindi]

Although VV compounds are a clear areal feature of South Asia (Masica 1976; Abbi 1991/1992), at lower levels of analysis we find obvious and substantial differences in the structure, interpretation, and frequency of use of VVs across South Asia, including significant differences even between closely related languages. Hindi VVs occur in a more restricted range of contexts (see Hook 1988, 1991, 1993, this volume), while VVs in Nepali and Marathi are less restricted (see Section 4.4). The strength of restrictions on licensed environments for VVs appears to co-vary with the frequency of occur of VVs overall. Thus Hindi VVs appear to display an overall greater frequency of occurrence than do Nepali VVs.

In this chapter, I discuss the historical development and properties of VV compounds in IA, with reference to VVs in Dravidian. For an overview of studies of VVs in IA, see Slade (2016); for an overview of studies of VVs in Dravidian, see Annamalai (2016); and for an overview of studies of VVs in Munda and Tibeto-Burman languages of South Asia, see Hock (2016).

In Section 2 I review the history of modern IA VVs, including precursors of modern IA VVs in Section 2.1, VVs in Middle Indo-Aryan languages of Sri Lanka in Section 2.2, and VVs in early modern IA in Section 2.3. Section 3 examines later developments in modern IA VVs, including further grammaticalisation into auxiliary elements of various types (including tense/aspect-related auxiliaries). Section 4 focusses on the range of variation of morphosyntactic properties of IA VVs found even in closely

---

[2]In Hindi VV constructions are very common in perfective contexts with only special environments, like negation, triggering the use of simplex forms in non-marked uses (Hook 1974).

[3]On 'non-past' readings of Sanskrit gerunds, see Hock (1992).

related languages like Hindi and Nepali. Finally, Section 5 discusses the similarly-varying inventories of light verbs used in VV constructions, not only in IA but also in neighbouring Dravidian languages, and suggests that the culmination of the facts regarding variation in VV constructions throughout South Asia points to potential independently developed VV systems, with subsequent partial convergence.

2 Historical Development of Indo-Aryan VVs

2.1 Prehistory of Indo-Aryan VVs

The morphological form of the main or polar verb in many modern IA VV constructions derives from the so-called Old Indo-Aryan (OIA) past gerund of prefixed verbs in *-(t)ya/(t)yā* (Chatterjee 1926; Hendriksen 1944; Tikkanen 1987), an element which has the "virtual value of an indeclinable participle" (Whitney 1879/1889: §989), which in general functions as a converb, meaning something like "having X-ed" (though it does not always have a past tense value; as in modern IA, converbs in OIA can have the co-eventual type readings discussed by Raina 2011).[4] Modern IA VV compounding ultimately derives from a reanalysis of structures involving a gerund combined with another verb (which, for ease of reference I will refer to as V_2, as it usually occurs following the gerund), so that the Sanskrit example in (3) can in a certain sense be seen as the formal precursor of Hindi (1-b), repeated below as (4).[5]

> (3)　annam　sam-**khād-ya**　**gataḥ**　　　　asti
> 　　　food.ACC together-**eat**-GER **go**.TA_PTCP.NOM.SG be.PRES.3SG
> 　　　"He ate up the food and left" (Lit., "Having eaten up the food, (he) left.")
> 　　　[Sanskrit]

> (4)　vah　khānā　**khā**　**gay-ā**
> 　　　he/she food.MSC.SG **eat**.ABS **go**.PERF_PTCP-SG.MSC
> 　　　"He gobbled up the food."　　　　　　　　　　　[Hindi]

The change from (3) to the VV construction of the type exemplified by (4) took place via the reanalysis of gerund + V_2 as a single predicate, in which the semantic contribution of the gerund was taken to be primary, and the V_2 as a modifying element (i.e. a vector or light verb). This only happened with a subset of verbs occupying the V_2

---

[4]Peter Hook (p.c.) notes that in some IA languages (e.g. Marathi, Kashmiri) the form of the conjunctive participle is something other than a reflex of the OIA past gerund of prefixed verbs.

[5]Example (3) and all subsequent examples from Sanskrit are shown in unsandhied form.

position, specifically with verbs with broad semantic values, e.g. verbs meaning "go", "give", "take", etc. Further, converb constructions did not disappear from modern IA; rather a sort of morphosyntactic split took place, with some gerund + V$_2$ constructions being reinterpretable/reinterpreted as VVs.

Clear examples of VV constructions of the modern IA type in (4), (5), and (6) do not appear until the modern period (see Masica 1991: 325 and Slade 2013), with the exception of Sinhala (discussed in Section 2.2 below). Throughout the remainder of this chapter, whenever VVs are referred to, these are to be understood as full-verb+light-verb compound verb combinations of the prototypical modern IA-type.

(5)   Hindi

     a.   maiṁ yah bāt   bilkul   **bhūl**
         I   this matter completely **forget.ABS**
         cukā   thā
         used.up.PERF_PTCP.MSC.SG PAST.MSC.SG
         "I had completely forgotten about this matter."

     b.   gusse meṁ us-ne   merā   reḍyo **toṛ**
         anger in   he/she.OBLQ-AGT my.MSC.SG radio **break.ABS**
         ḍālā
         throw.PERF_PTCP.MSC.SG
         "In anger, he broke my radio."

(6)   Nepali

     a.   āṭh **baj-i-sakyo**
         eight **strike.ABS-finish.PAST.3SG**
         "It's already eight o'clock!"

     b.   anju-le   bibek-lāī   gupta kurā **bhan-i-hālyo**
         Anju-AGT Bibek-OBLQ secret thing **speak-ABS-throw.PAST.3SG**
         "Anju told Bibek the secret."

While Butt (2010); Butt & Lahiri (2002, 2013) argue that the modern IA system of VVs does not represent an innovation but rather continues a system of light verb constructions found throughout all stages of IA, and that examples like (7), taken from Rgvedic Sanskrit (the earliest attested form of IA), represent VV structures comparable to those found in modern IA, the historical developments in IA examined in this section make it clear that this is not the case, and that *contra* Butt (2010); Butt & Lahiri (2013) VVs

are just as susceptible to historical change as other verbal elements (see also Slade 2013; Hook & Pardeshi 2005; Coelho 2018 for additional evidence of the susceptibility of South Asian VVs to historical changes of various sorts).

(7)   imé te   indra   té   vayám purustuta
here yours Indra.VOC REL_PRON we.NOM praised-by-many.VOC
yé   tvā+**ārábhya**   **cárāmasi**   prabhūvaso
REL_PRON you.ACC+**grasp**.GER **move**.1PL.PRES rich-one.VOC

    a.   "We here, O Indra, are yours, O one praised by many, [we] who **keep holding on to you**, O rich one." (complex predicate reading following Graßmann 1873: 437)

    b.   "We here, O Indra, are yours, O one praised by many, [we] who **having taken hold of you, move** (around), O rich one." (literal converb reading)

        (R̥gveda I.57,4 (Bandhu 1963–1966); cf. Graßmann 1873: 437, Delbrück 1888: 406, Tikkanen 1987: 175)[6]   [Vedic Sanskrit]

While, as Delbrück (1888: 406–7) observes, *car-* "move" does seem to be able to bear an idiomatic sense when used with a gerund in examples like (7)[7], there are several differences between modern IA VVs and light verb constructions in Sanskrit like (7). Firstly, unlike modern IA VVs, the use of *car-* in (7) represents a grammatically peripheral construction, in the sense that it is not part of the central tense/aspect system of Vedic or Classical Sanskrit. Secondly, unlike modern IA VVs, which overwhelmingly impart a perfective sense, (7) and similar examples in Vedic where a combination of a gerund with another verbal form bears a non-compositional interpretation all involve a durative/continuitive sense.

Rather, examples like (7) are actually similar to more grammatically-peripheral constructions found in modern IA languages involving combinations of present participles with a small set of light verbs:

(8)   a.   vah   din bhar **so-tā**   **gay-ā**
              he/she day full **sleep.IMPF_PTCP.MSC.SG go.PERF_PTPC-MSC.SG**
              "He kept on sleeping all day."   [Hindi]

---

[6]Example (7) is shown in unsandhied form.

[7]See Hock (2008) and Slade (2013: 540–1) for further examples of VVs in Sanskrit like (7) which bear idiomatic interpretations.

b. vah   din bhar **so-tā**
he/she day full   **sleep.IMPF_PTCP.MSC.SG**
rah-ā
continue.PERF_PTPC-MSC.SG
"He kept on sleeping all day."   [Hindi]

(9) a. ma **bhan-dai**   **jān-chu**,   taṁ   **lekh-tai**
I.NOM **speak**-IMPF_PTCP **go**.PRES-1SG, you.NOM **write**-IMPF_PTCP
jā
go.IMP
"I will keep dictating, and you keep writing." (Pokharel 1991: 194)
[Nepali]

b. **āun-dai**   **garnu**
come-IMPF_PTCP **do**.INF
"Keep on coming (from time to time)." (Pokharel 1991: 194) [Nepali]

Butt & Lahiri (2002: 23) point out the apparent similarity of Hindi constructions like
(10) to a construction from in classical Sanskrit, (11).

(10) makkhī   **uṛ**   **gayī**
fly.FEM.SG.NOM **fly**.ABS **go**.PERF_PTCP.FEM.SG
"The fly flew off."   [Hindi]

(11) tataḥ makṣikā+ **uḍḍīya**   **gatā**
then fly   **fly-up**.GER **go**.TA_PTCP.FEM.SG
"Then the fly, having flown up, left." (literal converb reading)
(*Pañcatantra* 1.22, Tikkanen 1987: 176)   [Classical Sanskrit][8]

Notice that (11), however, can be interpreted naturally as a co-eventual use of the
converb *uḍḍīya*, i.e. "the fly left 'flyingly' ", and does not require assuming a modern
IA VV analysis.

In the next section I examine further potential early examples of IA VVs, including
indubitable cases from early Sinhala.

---

[8]Example (11) is shown in unsandhied form.

2.2 Middle Indo-Aryan VVs in Sri Lanka

More convincing examples of early VV of the modern IA VV variety are found in Middle IA, in Pali texts from Sri Lanka; the most persuasive of these is given below in (12) (Hook 1993 also discusses these examples).

(12) so tassā saddaṁ sutvā … assamapadaṁ ānetvā aggiṁ
he her cry.ACC hear.GER … hermitage.ACC bring.GER fire.ACC
katvā **adāsi**
make.GER **give**.PAST.3SG
   a. "He, having heard her cry, having brought her to his hermitage, made a fire (for her)." (complex predicate reading)
   b. "He, having heard her cry, having brought her to his hermitage, having made a fire, offered it (to her)." (literal converb reading)
   (Jātaka I,296,10; between 300 B.C.E. and 400 C.E.; cited Hendriksen 1944: 134) [Pali]

(13) ath' assa satthā udakasāṭakaṁ **khipitvā** **adāsi**
then him master water-cloak **throw**.GER **give**.PAST.3SG
   a. "Then the master threw a bathrobe to him." (complex predicate reading)
   b. "Then the master gave him a bathrobe, throwing (it)." (literal converb reading)
   (Dhammapad-Aṭṭhakathā II,61,10; post 5th-c. C.E., cited Hendriksen 1944: 134) [Pali]

Example (12) is reminiscent of Hindi constructions like:

(14) rām-ne sītā-ke liye āg **jalā** **diyā**
Ram-AGT Sita-for fire **burn(vol)**.ABS **give**.PERF_PTCP.MSC.SG
"Ram made a fire for Sita." [Hindi]

It is significant that these are found in Sri Lankan texts, as the earliest examples of undoubtable IA VVs occur in Old Sinhala, many centuries before the earliest clear examples of VVs in mainland IA.

In Old Sinhala (ca. 8th–10th c. C.E.) are found light verb uses of GO (*ya*), TAKE (*gan*), PLACE (*la*), and SHOW (*pa*);[9] examples of each are given below in (15)–(18).

---

[9]"The auxiliary verbs *ya* (past tense, *giya*) 'to go' and *gan* 'to take' emphasize the reflexive character of

(15) Suka   topa   vi   **divi**   **giya**
Happiness.NOM your.GEN become.PAST.3SG **run.ABS go.PAST**
"Your pleasure vanished." (Lit. "Your pleasure having run went.") [*Sigiri Graffito* 498; 750–800 C.E.]   [Old Sinhala]

(16) **Næga**   **gan**   Sihigiri
rise.ABS take.IMPV Sihigiri
"Ascend Sihigiri!" (Lit. "Having risen take Sihigiri!") [*Sigiri Graffito* 169; 850–900 C.E.]   [Old Sinhala]

(17) Mitalu **kiya**   **lu**   gī
Mitalu **speak.ABS place.PAST** song.FEM.NOM
"The song which has been recited by Mitalu." (Lit. "The song which having been spoken was placed by Mitalu.") [*Sigiri Graffito* 498; 750–800 C.E.] [Old Sinhala]

(18) Heḷa-divi a   Jabu-duvu datimi   pataka
Ceylon   come.PAST.PTCP Indian   know.PAST.1SG letter.ACC.SG.INDEF
di   kese **lami**
give.ABS how **place.PRES.1SG**
"To Sri Lanka has come an Indian; I know how to give (him) a letter." (Lit. "…I knew how to, having given a letter (to him), place (it).") [*Sigiri Graffito* 293; 700–800 C.E.]   [Old Sinhala]

Like the mainland IA VVs, Sinhala VVs also derive from a reanalysis of a combination of a verb in absolutive/gerund form with another verb, and such collocations are in fact in Old Sinhala still form identical with VV collocation; see the example of a converb below in (19).

(19) Mahamet-himiyā   abu Nāl himiyabuyun **ga**   liyu   me gī
Lord Mahamet.GEN wife Nāl Lady   **sing.CONV** written this song
"This song was sung and written down by Lady Nāl, wife of Lord Mahamet." [*Sigiri Graffito* 543; 800–900 C.E.]   [Old Sinhala]

Since clear examples of modern IA-type VVs are found in the colloquial language very early on, it is not surprising to find Sri Lankan Pali examples early on as well.

---

the preceding absolute. The auxiliary verbs *la* 'to place', 'to put' and *pa* 'to show' either emphasize the transitive character of the principal verb or are merely periphrastic." (Paranavitana 1956: §501)

Modern Sinhala still employs VVs (Paolillo 1989), though the set of light verbs is partially different from those of Old Sinhala, and includes TAKE (*gannəwa*), GIVE (*denəwa*), GO (*yanəwa*), COME (*enəwa*), and OPEN (*arinəwa* [volitive]; *ærenəwa* [involitive]).

(20) a. gunəpālə kǣmak **hadā**[10] **gatta**
Gunapala meal.INDEF **make.ØABS take.PAST**
"Gunapala made a meal (for himself)" (Paolillo 1989) [Modern Colloquial Sinhala]

b. gunəpālə mahatteaṭə kǣmak **hadə.la dunna**
Gunapala gentleman.DAT meal.INDEF **make.ABS give.PAST**
"Gunapala made a meal for the boss." (*Ibid.*) [Modern Colloquial Sinhala]

c. gewal pol atu-wəliŋ hewili kərə-la ē uḍətə
houses coconut branches.PL.INSTR roofing do.ABS that above.DAT
piduru **ihirō-la arinəwa**
straw **sprinkle.ABS open(vol).PAST_PTCP**
"Having roofed the houses with coconut branches, on top of that (they) cover it (up) with straw [i.e. sprinkle it completely with straw]." (*Ibid.*) [Modern Colloquial Sinhala]

Notably absent from modern Sinhala are either SHOW or PLACE, which occurred as light verbs in Old Sinhala VV constructions (as shown above). SHOW (*la*) and PLACE (*pa*) as light verbs evolved to serve other functions at some point during the period in-between Old Sinhala and the modern language:

> "The absolutive form of the verb *la* used as an auxiliary has … become the mark of the absolutive [in modern Sinhala]; similarly the imperative form of the auxiliary verb *pa* (e.g. *ela pan*) has in the modern langauge been reduced to the character of a suffix indicating the imperative mood." (Paranavitana 1956: §501)

Sinhala is thus interesting both in having developed VVs very earlier, and in that some of these early light verbs subsequently underwent further grammaticalising developments.

---

[10]Interestingly, VVs with *gannəwa*, unlike the others, use the (fossilised) old Sinhala absolutive form without *la* for the main/polar verb, glossed here and below as ØABS. See above quote from Paranavitana on the evolution of the old light verb *la* to a marker of the absolutive.

The next section examines the earliest uncontroversial examples of VVs in mainland IA languages.

2.3 Early modern Indo-Aryan VVs

The first unequivocal examples of VV constructions in mainland IA languages do not appear until the early modern IA period (16th–18th c.).[11] See the examples from early Braj Bhāṣā (a close relative of the ancestor of modern Hindi) in (21), (22), and the "Old Shah" Nepali examples in (24), (25).

(21) nātaru   jau vacchā **mari jāi**,   tau gāi
      otherwise if   calf.NOM **die.ABS go.PRES.3SG**, then cow.NOM
      cchiṃḍāī   jāi
      take_away.PERF_PTCP.FEM.SG go.PRES.3SG

   a. "Otherwise, if the calf dies, then the cow is taken away." (complex predicate reading)

   b. #"Otherwise, if the calf having died goes, then the cow is taken away." (literal converb reading)
       (ca. 1600 C.E., Indrajit of Orchā's commentary on the *Nītiśataka* of Bhartṛhari, f.18b4; McGregor 1968: 57)

(22) bhayabhīta   hvai-kari samudra kau mathivau na **cchāḍ-i**
      without fear be-CONV ocean   of churning not **leave-ABS**
      dayau
      give.PERF_PTCP.MSC.SG

   a. "Having become fearless, (he) did not leave off the churning of the ocean." (complex predicate reading)

   b. #"Having become fearless, (he), having not left the churning of the ocean, gave." (literal converb reading)
       (ca. 1600 C.E., Indrajit of Orchā's commentary on the *Nītiśataka* of Bhartṛhari, f.17a; McGregor 1968: 54)

(23) 2 ālā   motipur-kā 2 ālā   **vaks-i**
      2 field.MSC.PL Motipur.GEN 2 field.MSC.PL **bestow.ABS**
      diyā̃   chāu
      give.PERF_PTCP.MSC.PL be.PRES.1PL

---

[11]Masica (1991: 326ff) concurs on this point. It has been suggested that modern IA-type VV constructions are to be found in Apabhraṁśa (see discussion in Hook 1977; Bubenik 1998). Given the uncertainties around the interpretation of Apabhraṁśa (see Slade 2013: §3.4), I exclude it from consideration here.

"We have given two fields of Motipur."   [Old Shah Nepali, 1529 C.E.;
Wallace 1982: 164]

(24) tahāṁ kājikana   vujhāi   samjhāi   ñahā
      there Kazi.INSTR understanding understand.CAUS.CONV here
      paṭhā-i- dinu havas
      send-ABS- give.IMPV

  a.   "Persuade the Kazi there, and send him here." (complex predicate
        reading)

  b. #"Persuade the Kazi there, and having sent him here, give (him)." (lit-
      eral converb reading)
      (Old Shah Nepali, 1755/6 C.E. ~ 1812 V.S., Prithvinarayan Shah, let-
      ter to Paṇḍit Rājīvalocana; Pokharel B.S. 2020 [=1963C.E.]: 196)

(25) tyo   cāṁḍo māgera   **paṭhā-i- deu**
      that(thing) quickly request.CONV **send-ABS- give**.IMP

  a.   "Quickly request that thing and send it (to me)." (complex predicate
        reading)

  b. #"Quickly request that thing and having sent it, give (it) (to me)." (lit-
      eral converb reading)
      (1767/7 C.E. ~ 1824 V.S., Prithvinarayan Shah, letter to Haripaṇḍit,
      Pokharel B.S. 2020 [=1963C.E.]: 211)

(26) pachillā ciṭhi-ko   javāph hāmi-le **leṣ-i-**
      last.OBLQ letter.GEN.MSC.SG answer we.AGT **write.ABS**
      rākhyā-thyãu
      place.PERF_PTCP.MSC.PL-be.PAST.1PL
      "We wrote our answer to the last letter." [Old Shah Nepali, 1792 C.E.; Wal-
      lace 1982: 191]

(27) timiheru-le aneka prakār-kā   pāp **gar-i**
      you.PL-AGT many way.GEN.MSC.PL sin **do.ABS**
      rāṣyā-chau
      place.PERF_PTCP.MSC.SG be.2PL
      "You have committed sins in many ways." (? Or, "You kept committing
      sins in various ways.")   [Old Shah Nepali, 1798 C.E.; Wallace 1982: 191]

11

(28) unai-ki   maiyā   hã̃mi-le lyā-i   **pal-i**
     she.EMPH-GEN.FEM daughter we.AGT bring.CONV **nurture.ABS**
     rāṣyāki   chan
     place.PERF_PTCP.FEM.SG be.3PL.H
     "We took her daughter in and raised her." (? Or, "We took her daughter
     in and kept nurturing her.")   [Old Shah Nepali, 1800 C.E.; Wallace 1982:
     193]

GIVE seems by far the most common light verb to appear in early modern IA VVs,
though we also see an early instance of GO. The appearance of these two verbs is
perhaps unsurprising since these are two of the most well establish light verbs to
appear in VVs not only in IA but also in Dravidian (see Section 5 below).

VVs subjectively seem uncommon in Old Shah Nepali, with numerous comparable
passages containing simplex verbs.[12] And even in modern Nepali the frequency of
VVs seems significantly lower than in modern Hindi.

In the next section examples of VVs undergoing further grammaticalisation are ex-
amined, resulting in some cases in new tense/aspect auxiliaries or honorific auxiliar-
ies.

3   The fate of IA light verbs

Like other partially grammaticalised elements, light verbs sometimes experience fur-
ther grammaticalisation.[13] Despite suggestions to the contrary (Butt 2010; Butt &

---

[12]Compare:

(i)   van pāṣo inu tin janā-le hāmu **diyāko**   cha
       forest hill   these three man.AGT we.DAT **give.PERF_PTCP.MSC.SG** be.PRES.3SG
       "These three men have given us the forest and the hillside."   [Old Shah Nepali, 1590 C.E.;
       Wallace 1982: 164]

(ii)   kāṭhmāḍāu-le   khosyā   ādhā gorkhā-kana **dinu**
       Kathmandu.AGT open.PERF_PTCP half Gorkha.DAT **give.INF**
       "To give Gorkha half what is opened by Kathmandu."   [Old Shah Nepali, 1757 C.E.; Wallace
       1982: 192]

(iii) tati gharyāḍi-samet hã̃mi-le **vaksyāu**
       thus house-etc.-with we.AGT **bestow.PAST.1PL**
       "We have given thus the house and other things." [Old Shah Nepali, 1767 C.E.; Wallace 1982:
       179]

[13]See also Coelho (2018) for similar observations of change in the VV system of the South Dravidian
language Betta Kurumba.

Lahiri 2013), the light verbs which participate in modern IA-type VVs can thus undergo independent change – including both phonological change which does not affect the full verb counterpart, as well as undergoing additional grammaticalisation leading to functions more typical of elements we would call auxiliaries rather than light verb. Further, not all light verbs do in fact possess full verb counterparts.

3.1 Independent phonological change of light verbs

The Nepali light verb *baksinu* provides an example of change affecting a light verb independently of its full verb counterpart. Nepali *baksinu* is a light verb employed in VV constructions as an honorific when referring to Nepali royalty and other persons due great respect, e.g.:

(29)   mausuph-le   yo kuro ghosaṇā   **gar-i- baksi-yo**
      His Majesty-AGT this thing proclamation **do-ABS- bestow**.PAST.PTCP-3SG
      "His Majesty made this proclamation." (Sharma 1980: 131)   [Nepali]

Both *baksinu* and a phonologically-reduced form are also employed in upper-class Kathmandu families (e.g. by children to parents, wife to husband etc.), as discussed in Sharma (1980: 130–2). An example of the reduced form of *baksinu* is given in example (30).

(30)   buwā-le bhujā **khā-i- s-yo**
      dad-AGT rice   **eat-ABS- HON-3SG**
      "Dad ate rice." (Sharma 1980: 132)   [Nepali]

While *baksinu* is employed as a main verb (31), *-s-* is not (32).

(31)   mahārāni-le ma-lāi takmā **baksi-yo**
      queen-AGT   I-OBLQ medal **bestow-PAST.3SG**
      "The queen bestowed a medal upon me." (*Ibid.*)   [Nepali]

(32)   *mahārāni-le ma-lāi takmā **s-yo**
      queen-AGT   I-OBLQ medal **hon-PAST.3SG**
                                         [Nepali]

Thus while *baksinu* as a light verb can occur in both a reduced and an unreduced phonological form, the full verb form can occur only in unreduced form.[14]

---

[14]Nepali *baksinu* is ultimately a loanword from Persian *bakhś* "to give", and obviously was borrowed as

3.2 Light verbs lacking full verb counterparts

Though there seems to be some tendency for light verbs to continue to have full verb counterparts, this is not always the case. Nepali, for example, employs *ṭopalnu* as a light verb indicating pretense, as in example (33) below, but *ṭopalnu* does not exist as a full verb.[15]

(33) u   gā-i-   ṭopal-dai-   cha
      he/she sing-ABS- pretend-IMPF_PTCP- be.PRES.3SG
      "He is pretending to sing." (Pokharel 1991: 195)   [Nepali]

Turner (1931: 247) suggests that a full verb counterpart may have once existed, possibly meaning "to cover" (cf. Nepali *ṭopi* "helmet", cf. Hindi *ṭopī* "hat", Hindi *ṭopnā* "to cover"), cf. (34).

(34) *u   ṭopal-dai-   cha
      he/she pretend-IMPF_PTCP- be.PRES.3SG
      "He is pretending."   [Nepali]

Likewise, Hindi *saknā* "to be able to" behaves syntactically like a light verb, and also lacks a non-light/non-auxiliary full verb counterpart (see Slade 2013: §4.2.3 for further discussion).

3.3 Further grammaticalisation of light verbs

As discussed in section 2.2, the Old Sinhala light verb uses of SHOW (*pa*) and PLACE (*la*) underwent further grammaticalisation, ending up in the modern language as markers of the imperative mood and absolutive form, respectively. In this section I consider two further instances of vector-type light verbs developing into tense/aspectual auxiliaries in Hindi and Nepali.

3.4 The development of the Hindi auxiliary *rahnā*

The Hindi continuative auxiliary use of *rahnā* also originated as a light verb before being further grammaticalised as part of the core grammar of aspect in Hindi.

---

a full verb, not as a light verb, since, as shown by example (31), it can still be used as a full verb. See above section 2.3 for earlier examples of full verb *baksinu*.

[15]another instance of a light verb lacking its full verb counterpart observed by Hendriksen and noted a hundred years ago in Grierson: In Kotgarhi [aka, *kotguru*] the main verb GO is *DeuNau *while the corresponding (?) vector is *jaaNau. *See *LSI*, vol. 9, part 4, p. 657. —PE Hook

Though in Modern Hindi, the simple present and the present continuous are clearly distinguished, as shown in (35).

(35)   Present-Day Hindi

    a.   maiṁ skūl   jātā   hūṁ
           I   school go.IMPF_PTCP.MSC.SG be.PRES.1SG
           "I (habitually) go to school."

    b.   maiṁ skūl   jā   rahā   hūṁ
           I   school go.ABS remain.PERF_PTCP.MSC.SG be.PRES.1SG
           "I am going to school (just now)."

However, Kellogg (1893: §404) cites forms like *maiṁ jātā hūṁ* as meaning either "I go" or "I am going".[16] Further, he categorises *rahnā* as a light verb (Kellogg 1893: §428) rather than an auxiliary, suggesting that—as in the case of Modern Nepali *rahanu*— the use of *rahnā* as indicating continuous action in 19th c. Hindi was more peripheral and not yet integrated as part of the core grammar as a clear aspectual auxiliary; see (36) and (37), taken from Kellogg (1893: §404), retaining his translations.

(36)   19th-century Hindi

    a.   donoṁ laṛke   khelte   the
           both   boy.PL play.IMPF_PTCP.MSC.PL be.PAST.3PL
           "The two children were playing."

    b.   donoṁ laṛke   khel   rahe   the
           both   boy.PL play.ABS remain.PERF_PTCP.MSC.PL be.PAST.3PL
           "The two children were engaged in play."

(37)   19th-century Hindi

    a.   vah suntā   hai
           he   hear.IMPF_PTCP.MSC.SG be.3SG
           "He hears." / "He is hearing."

    b.   vah sun   rahā   hai
           he   hear.ABS remain.PERF_PTCP.MSC.PL be.3SG
           "He is occupied in hearing."

The later auxiliary nature of Hindi *rahnā* represents a reanalysis which is part of larger

---

[16]A situation which persists marginally in modern Hindi, in much the same way as the modern English simple present can be employed with a progressive sense in certain contexts, e.g. "I am attaching a document to this email… " vs. "I attach a document to this email… ".

reconstructing of the Hindi verbal system (see further Slade 2013: §5.3).

3.5 Nepali *rahanu*: light verb > aspectual auxiliary

Nepali *rahanu* "remain, stay" behaves morphologically like other light verbs, selecting for an absolutive participle in *-i*. *Rahanu* is also identical to other light verbs with respect to restrictions on recursion and construction-specific restrictions (on which see below Section 4.5).

However, unlike other Nepali VV constructions, VVs involving *rahanu* (or *rākhnu* "keep") never require agentive-marking on the subject, regardless of the transitivity of the main verb. In this, the construction including *rahanu* in its light verb function appears to be a periphrastic counterpart of the Nepali synthetic imperfect construction, verb-stem + *dai* + inflected form of BE. In other words, *rahanu* as a light verb, (38) – with respect to agentive case-marking assignment – patterns with the synthetic imperfect in *-dai*, (39), not with other VVs (such as the light verb *di-* as shown in (40)).

(38)   Nepali

    a.   **ma** mandir-mā ga-i-   rah-eko   chu
         I   temple-LOC go-ABS- remain-PERF_PTCP.MSC.SG   be.1P.PRES
         "I am going to the temple." / "I have been going to the temple."

    b.   **ma** yo kām gar-i- rah-eko   chu
         I   this work do-ABS- remain-PERF_PTCP.MSC.SG   be.1P.PRES
         "I am doing this work." / "I have been doing this work."

(39)   Nepali

    a.   **ma** mandir-mā jāṁ-dai   chu
         I   temple-LOC go-IMPF_PTCP be.1P.PRES
         "I am going to the temple."

    b.   **ma** yo kām gar-dai   chu
         I   this work do-IMPF_PTCP   be.1P.PRES
         "I am doing this work."

(40) Nepali

    a.   **ma** mandir-mā ga-i-   di-eko   chu
         I   temple-LOC go-ABS- give-PERF_PTCP.MSC.SG   be.1P.PRES
         "I have gone to the temple (for someone)."

    b.   **mai-le** yo kām gar-i-   di-eko   chu
         I-AGT   this work do-ABS- give-PERF_PTCP.MSC.SG   be.1P.PRES
         "I have done this work (for someone)."

In contrast to normal VV constructions (like those in (40)), constructions in which *rahanu* functions as a light verb do not require agentive marking on the subject (even when the main verb is transitive); see (38). In this, the VV construction with *rahanu* closely resembles the synthetic imperfect construction, as in (39).

The Nepali light verb *rahanu* appears thus to be in the process of becoming an auxiliary like Hindi *rahnā*. Both *rahanu* and *rākhnu* are further interesting in that sometimes they maintain a more contentful light verb sense[17] – e.g. as in (41) and (42), respectively – another indication of their intermediate status in present-day Nepali.

(41)   bas na-āe-samma   ma yahīṁ **basi-rahan**-chu
      bus not-came-until I   here   **sit.ABS-remain**-be.1SG
      "I'll keep sitting here until the bus comes." (Matthews 1998: 236)[Nepali]

(42)   ḍākṭar-le   ma-lāī auṣadhi **khā-i-rākhnu**   bhanekā
      doctor-AGT I-OBLQ medicine **eat-ABS-keep.INF** say.PERF_PTCP.PL
      thie
      be.PAST.MSC.PL.H
      "The doctor had told me to keep taking the medicine."(*Ibid.*)   [Nepali]

In the following section, using data from a close examination of VVs in Hindi and Nepali, I outline various morphosyntactic parameters along which VV constructions may vary in different IA languages, some of which suggest differing degrees (or paths) of grammaticalisation.

4   Variation in morphosyntactic properties of IA VVs

The VV constructions of South Asia show considerable variation in their morphosyntactic attributes, and even within IA there are significant differences between the VV

---

[17]See also above Old Shah Nepali examples of *rākh-* as a light verb in (26)–(28).

systems of different languages.

4.1 Interruptibility

Hindi VVs are interruptible; that is, other words may occur in between the main verb and the light verb components of the VV, as shown in (43).[18]

(43) mai-ne khānā **khā**   *to*   **liy-ā**,   lekin phir ulṭī
      I-AGT   food   eat.ABS EMPH take.PAST.PTCP-SG.MSC but   then vomit
      bhī ā-ī
      also come.PAST.PTCP-SG.FEM
      "I did eat food, but then I also vomited."   [Hindi]

Nepali VVs are not interruptible, even by particles like *ta* (equivalent to Hindi *to*):

(44) *mai-le bhāt **khā-i-**   *ta*   **sak-eṁ**,   …
      I-AGT   food eat-ABS- EMPH finish-PAST.SG.MSC
      "I did eat food, … "   [Nepali]

This difference is possibly reflected in writing, as Hindi VVs are written as separate words, but Nepali VVs usually as a single word.[19] The inseparability of Nepali VVs suggests that they are either formed in the lexicon, or else composed at a much lower level of syntax than Hindi VVs. In other words, Nepali light verbs appear to be more affixal in nature than are Hindi light verbs.

---

[18]All Hindi speakers consulted allowed for particles like *to* to intervene between main verb and light verb, as in (43); most speakers also allow pronouns to intervene, as in (i-a); some also allow for full NPs, as in (i-b), (i-c).

(i)   a.   **ā**   *to*   *vah* **gay-ṁ**   hai,   lekin sabzi   nahīṁ
           come.ABS EMPH he   go.PAST.PTCP-SG.MSC be.3P.SG.PRES but   vegetables not
           lāy-ā
           bring.PAST.PTCP-SG.MSC
           "He has indeed come, but he didn't bring the vegetables."   [Hindi]

      b.   %**khā**   *to*   *khānā* **liy-ā**
           eat.ABS EMPH food   take.PAST.PTCP-SG.MSC
           "(I/he/she) did eat food."   [Hindi]

      c.   %**liy-ā**   *to*   *khānā* **khā**
           take.PAST.PTCP-SG.MSC EMPH food   eat.ABS
           "(I/he/she) did (in fact) have food."   [Hindi]

[19]This is unlikely to be just an artifact of the script, as both languages employ the same writing system (*devanāgarī*).

18

4.2 Recursion

Hindi allows for only one light verb per main verb, as shown in (45).[20]

(45) a. us-ne   kican sāf **kar** **dī**
     he/she-AGT kitchen clean **do**.ABS **give**.PAST.PTCP.SG.FEM
     "He/she cleaned the kitchen for me."   [Hindi]

b. us-ne   kican sāf **kar** **ḍāl-ī**
   he/she-AGT kitchen clean **do**.ABS **put**.PAST.PTCP-SG.FEM
   "He/she cleaned the kitchen straightaway."   [Hindi]

c. *us-ne   kican sāf **kar** **de** **ḍāl-ī**
   he/she-AGT kitchen clean **do**.ABS **give**.ABS **put**.PAST.PTCP-SG.FEM
   "He/she cleaned the kitchen for me straightaway."   [Hindi]

In Nepali, on the other hand, VVs may involve up to two light verbs[21], as in (46), where the main verb, *gari*, is modified by both *dii* (itself in absolutive form) and *hālin*.

(46) un-le   kican saphā **gar-i-** **di-i-** **hāl-in**
     he/she.MIDHON-AGT kitchen clean **do**-ABS- **give**-ABS- **put**-PAST.3SG.FEM
     "She cleaned the kitchen for me straightaway." (Peterson (2002: 107))
     [Nepali]

In certain respects this makes Nepali VV appear more "affixal" in nature, given that main verb + light verb behaves like a simplex verb for purposes of additional operations (including the addition of other light verbs).

Sinhala also allows multiple light verbs to collocate with the same main verb, as shown by example (47).

---

[20]Peter Hook (p.c.) points out that there are instances in Hindi which morphosyntactically involve a converb, but semantically behave not dissimiliarly to the Nepali type illustrated in (46), including *V-kar rakh de-* "(lit.) having V'ed, keep give" and *V-kar choṛ de-* "(lit.) having V'ed, leave give"; and example of the former type is given in (i).

(i)   lekin kharc   kī mār unke man   ko mārkar rakh detī
      but   expenditure of strike his/her mind/heart DAT kill.CONV keep give.PRES_PTCP.FEM.SG
      hai
      be.PRES.3SG
      "But the blow of the expenditure struck his/her heart." [from https://books.google.com/books?isbn=8189859951]

[21]Pokharel (1991) suggests up to three light verbs may be used in some cases in Nepali, but my primary consultant did not accept any examples involving more than two light verbs collocated with the same main verb.

(47) meyāge baⁿdinə   wayəsə dæŋ pahu wē   -gənə
      his/her marrying age   now past become.ØABS -take.ØABS
      -enəwa
      -come.PAST
      "Her marrying age is approaching (coming past) now." (Paolillo 1989,
      cited in Herring 1993)   [Sinhala]

4.3 Morphosyntactic form restrictions on light verbs

Nepali VVs can occur in conjunctive participles. Thus, for example, a converb in
Nepali may be composed from a VV, as in (48).

(48) bhāt **khā-i- sak-era**   u   sut-na   gay-o
      food **eat**-ABS- **finish**-CONV he/she sleep-INF.OBLQ go.PAST-3SG
      "Having finished dinner, he went to sleep." (Peterson (2002: 108)) [Nepali]

In contrast, Hindi converbs can only be formed from simplex verbs. Therefore while
(49-b) is grammatical, (49-a) is not.[22]

(49) a. *khānā **khā** **le** **kar** vah   gay-ā
          food   **eat**.ABS **take** CONV he/she go.PAST_PTCP-SG.MSC
          "Having eaten up the food, he left."   [Hindi]
      b. khānā **khā**   **kar** vah   gay-ā
          food **eat**.ABS CONV he/she go.PAST_PTCP-SG.MSC
          "Having eaten the food, he left."   [Hindi]

Hindi appears to have innovated: what is now the overt converb marker in Hindi, *kar*
or *ke*, derives ultimately from the pleonastic addition of a converb form of *kar* "do",
pointing to the possibility of forming converbs of VV collocations in earlier Hindi,
and suggesting that with respect to this property Nepali is conservative.

4.4 Construction-specific restrictions

IA languages vary with respect to the set of syntactic environments in which VV con-
structions are permitted or required. For example, Hindi VVs are fairly infrequent in
negative contexts and "semi-negative" contexts like *sirf … hī* "only", *śāyad hī* "hardly"
(Hook 1974, 1988), while the same constraint is not as strong in other languages; e.g. in

---

[22]Examples like (49-a) are possible in Dakkhini Hindi (spoken in Hyderabad), which has undergone
convergence with Dravidian Telugu; see Arora (2004).

Marathi certain VV combinations can be easily negated (Hook 1988; Pardeshi 2001). Similarly, in Hindi, VVs are nearly obligatory whenever an event/action is perfective/completive (Hook 1974), while the same requirement is not found in other IA languages like Marathi (Hook 1988) or Nepali (Slade 2013). Hook (1988, 1993) points out also that certain contexts in Hindi strongly prefer or disprefer the use of VVs; in Hindi strongly VV-preferring environments include clauses dependent on a verb expressing fear, as in:

(50) mujhe   ḍar thā   ki kahīṁ tum use   ciṭṭhī nā de
      me.DAT fear be.PAST.MSC.SG that lest   you he.DAT letter NEG give.ABS
      do
      give.IMP
      "I was afraid that you might give him the letter." (Hook 1993: 100) [Hindi]

Hook (1988, 1993) points out that other IA languages display such preferences more weakly or not at all. Thus in Marathi and Nepali, verbs of fear do not trigger use of VVs:

(51) ciṭhī ta dienas   holā   tai-le   bhanera ma-lāī
      letter PART give.PAST.2SG.NEG be.FUT.3SG you-AGT QUOT   me-OBLQ
      ḍar lāgethyo
      fear apply.PAST.1SG
      "I was afraid that you might give him the letter."   [Nepali]

The strength of restrictions of requirement/disallowing of VVs in particular environments seem to correlate with the overall frequency of use of VVs in a language, presumably both properties reflecting level of integration of VVs into the core grammar of tense/aspect in the language.

4.5 Dominance and transitivity issues

In both Hindi and Nepali, the question arises of how to reconcile clashes in transitivity between main verb and light verb in VV combinations.[23] Before going into detail, it is important to understand the basic patterns of case-marking morphology in these two languages. Both Hindi and Nepali (more or less)[24] employ a special marking for agents of transitive verbs in perfective tenses, *-ne* in Hindi, *-le* in Nepali. In Hindi,

---

[23]Cp. Hock (1985) on issues of transitivity and case-marking in Indo-Aryan more generally.
[24]Nepali also sometimes displays agentive case-marking in non-perfective contexts; the exact conditions on the use of *-le* in such cases is not entirely clear: see Poudel (2006) and Li (2007) for discussion.

the marking of agents correlates with verbal agreement: agentive case-marked nouns do not control predicate agreement.[25] In Nepali, (non-experiencer) subjects control predicate agreement regardless of whether they are agentive case-marked or not.

More relevant for the purposes of VVs is the fact that in Hindi it is the light verb member of the VV which determines whether the entire VV is treated as transitive or intransitive (and thus whether the subject receives agentive casemarking)—except in the case of intransitive main verb combined with transitive light verb (where we find variation in the assignment of transitivity to the compound for the purposes of case-assignment);[26] in Nepali, it is always the main verb which determines the transitivity of the entire verbal compound. This is shown in the examples in (52) and (53).

---

[25]The unmarked object usually controls verb agreement; if this is blocked by the oblique postposition *ko*, the verb takes default msculine, singular, third-person agreement.

[26]Combinations of intransitive main verb and transitive light verb are very rare in Hindi, apparently largely avoided by Hindi speakers. I have found only two examples from Nespital (1997: 1108-1109) where the case-assignment is clear (i.e. where the finite verb appears as a perfect participle).

> (i) śatru senā acānak hī hamārī senā par ā lī
> enemy army suddenly EMPH our army on come.ABS take.PERF_PTCP.FEM.SG
> "The enemy army suddenly pounced on our army."

> (ii) jab satīś apne ghar se nikl-ā to uskā kuttā bhī uske pīche
> when Satish his_own house from exit-PERF_PTCP.MSC.SG then his dog also his behind
> ho liy-ā
> be.ABS take-PERF_PTCP.MSC.SG
> "When Satish left his house, then his dog also followed him."

In both cases, the subject is not marked with an agentive marker, despite the light verb member being transitive. Remarkably, in both (i) and (ii), not only is the light verb transitive, but the VV itself appears to be semantically transitive (in the sense that both *pounce* and *follow* require complements). However, more generally combinations of intransitive main verb and transitive light verb seems to result in variation in Hindi (probably as a result of the rarity of such combinations). That is, some speakers prefer (iii), others prefer (iv) (yet others prefer to avoid such combinations altogether).

> (iii) vah baiṭh liy-ā
> he sit.ABS take.PAST.PTCP-MSC.SG
> "He sat down."

> (iv) us-ne baiṭh liy-ā
> he-AGT sit.ABS take.PAST.PTCP-MSC.SG
> "He sat down."

Speakers show similar variation with respect to other combinations, such as *dikh diyā* "appeared", and *ghum liyā* "roamed".

(52)   HINDI VVs

   a. Intransitive main verb + intransitive light verb = Intransitive:

   vah ā   gay-ā
   he   come.ABS go.PAST.PTCP-MSC.SG
   "He came."

   b. Transitive main verb + intransitive light verb = Intransitive:

   vah khānā khā   gay-ā
   he   food   eat.ABS go.PAST.PTCP-MSC.SG
   "He ate up the food."

   c. Transitive main verb + transitive light verb = Transitive:

   us-ne   khānā khā   liy-ā
   he-AGT food   eat.ABS take.PAST.PTCP-MSC.SG
   "He ate up the food."

   d. Intransitive main verb + transitive light verb = (variation) (see fn. 26)

   vah/us-ne   baiṭh liy-ā
   he.NOM/he-.AGT sit.ABS take.PERF_PTCP-MSC.SG
   "He sat down."

(53)   NEPALI VVs

   a. Intransitive main verb + intransitive light verb = Intransitive:

   u mandir-mā ga-i- ā-eko   cha
   he temple-LOC go-ABS- come-PERF.PTCP.MSC.SG be.PRES.3SG
   "He kept going to the temple."

   b. Transitive main verb + intransitive light verb = Transitive:

   us-le   yo kām gar-i- ā-eko   cha
   he-AGT this work do-ABS- come-PERF.PTCP.MSC.SG be.PRES.3SG
   "He has continued to do this work."

   c. Transitive main verb + transitive light verb = Transitive:

   us-le   bhāt khā-i- di-yo
   he-AGT food eat-ABS- give-PAST.MSC.3SG
   "He ate up the food."

d. Intransitive main verb + transitive light verb = Intransitive:

u rām ko-lāgi   bajār ga-i-   diy-o
he Ram for-sake-of market go-ABS- give-PAST.MSC.3SG
"He went to the market for Ram's sake/in place of Ram."

Thus, in Hindi the light verb usually determines the transitivity of the entire compound, for purposes of assignment (or non-assignment) of agentive marking to the subject. In Nepali, it is the main verb which determines the transitivity. Again, though it is unclear which of these represents the more conservative system, it is clear that change has taken place in the VV system of one or both languages. The uncertainty stems from the absence of extant Proto-Modern-Indo-Aryan, and the fact that for the predecessor gerund construction in earlier IA such issues did not arise: we do not find an ergative/absolute-type system in Sanskrit or Pali.

In the following and final section, I examine the inventories of light verbs which participate in VV constructions more broadly, considering both various IA languages – including not only Hindi, Bengali, Marathi and Oriya, but also Nepali, Shina and Sinhala – as well a range of Dravidian languages, and speculate on the implications of the great amount of variation in both lexical inventories and morphosyntactic properties of VVs not only between language families but also within them means for our understanding of the historical development of VVs in South Asia.

5   Reflections on light verb inventories across South Asia

Examining VV constructions in Dravidian languages, Annamalai (2016: 556) observes that "there are cognate and non-cognate light verbs across the languages; the meanings of the light verbs are a shared set, though not always expressed by cognate light verbs". Indeed, Table 1 represents a rough approximation of range of the full verb meanings (I have not space here to examine the different functions of Dravidian light verbs in depth) across a selection of Dravidian languages.[27]

The range of Dravidian light verbs that occur in VVs can be compared with those found in a selection of Indo-Aryan languages, as given in Table 2.[28]

---

[27]Tamil data is taken from Annamalai (1985, 2016); Steever (2005); Malayalam data from Nayar (1979); Betta Kurumba data from Coelho (2018); Kannada data from Bhat (1979); and Telugu data from Subbarao (1979).

[28]Compiled from Vale (1948); Singh et al. (1986); Abbi & Gopalakrishnan (1991); Pokharel (1991); Schmidt (2004) and my own data collection. Blanks indicate a lack of evidence for the existence of the form as a

	Tamil	Malayalam	Betta Kurumba	Kannada	Telugu
GO	*pō*	*pō*	*pōg*	*hōgu*	*pō*
SEE	*par*	*kāṇ, nōkku*	*nōḍ*	*nōḍu*	*cūs*
GIVE	*koṭu*	*koṭu, tar*	*koḍ, ṭār*	*koḍu*	
RELEASE/CAST/LEAVE	*viṭu*	*kaḷay*	*kāḷ*	*biḍu*	
PLACE/PUT	*vai*	*vay*		*hāku*	*wēs*
HOLD/CONTAIN	*koḷ*	*koḷ*			
TAKE	*eṭu*	*eṭu*			
BE	*iru*		*ir*		
BECOME	*āku*				
DROP	*pōṭu*				
SHOW	*kāṭṭu*				
LOSE	*tolai*				
TEAR-UP	*kiẕi*				
PUSH	*taḷḷu*				
DESTROY		*tulay*			
STAND		*nil*			
SIT		*iri*			
ACT SUITABLY		*aruḷ*			
BE-FINISHED		*kaẕi*			
JOIN		*ēku*			
PLAY				*āḍu*	
KEEP					*peṭṭ*
BUY					*kon*
FALL					*paḍ*
DIE					*caw*

Table 1: Light verbs that occur in VVs from selected Dravidian languages

Table 2 might even suggest more homogeneity than is in fact present in IA VV systems, for not only do these vary along various morphosyntactic parameters (as per Section 4 above), but even the semantics of the light verb uses of verbs with similar full semantics, and even cognate verbs, varies somewhat between IA languages, which Table 3 gives a small sampling of. Thus, sometimes the same light verb function is expressed using verbs with the same full verb meaning, e.g. Hindi *ḍāl-* and Nepali *hāl*. Sometimes the forms are even cognates, as is the case for Hindi *de-* and Nepali *di-*. But sometimes light verb functions are expressed using verbs with distinct full verb

---

light verb, many of these may in fact occur; '—' indicates a stronger belief in the actual absence of the form as a light verb.

[29]The Shina varieties in Gilgit and Skardu do not appear to exhibit use of VVs (Petter Hook, p.c.).

[30]Pokharel (1991: 191) lists *par-* as a light verb which can form a typical IA VV in Nepali, but without examples, and neither online searches nor consultation with my Nepali informant have revealed convincing instances.

	Bengali	Hindi	Marathi	Nepali	Oriya	Kohistani[29] Shina	Sinhala
GIVE	*deo-*	*de-*	*de-*	*di-*	*de-*	*doón*	*denəwa*
GO	*jāo-*	*jā-*	*jā-*	*jā-*	*jā-*	*bójoón*	*yanəwa*
COME	*āsi-*	*ā-*	*ye-*	*āu-*	*ās-*		*enəwa*
FALL	*paṛ-*	*paṛ-*	*paḍ-*	(*par-*)[30]	*paṛ-*	*dijoón*	—
SIT	*bas-*	*baiṭh-*	*bas-*		*bas-*	*byoón*	—
TAKE	*ne-*	*le-*	*ghe-*	—	*ne-*	—	*gannəwa*
KEEP	*rak-*	*rakh-*	*ṭhev-*	*rākh-*	*rakh-*		—
THROW	*phel-*	*ḍāl-*	*ṭāk-*	*hāl-*			—
RISE	*oṭh-*	*uṭh-*	*uṭh-*		*uṭh-*		—
MOVE	*cal-*	*cal-*	*cal-*		*cāl-*		—
DIE		*mar-*			*mar-*		—
KILL		*mār-*			*mār-*		—
SEND				*paṭhāu–*			—
OPEN							*arinəwa, ærenəwa*
LEAVE						*phátoon*	—
RELEASE						*mojoón*	—
TAKE OUT			*kāḍh-*				
COME OUT			*nigh-*				

Table 2: Light verbs that occur in VVs from selected Indo-Aryan languages

senses, e.g. Hindi *baiṭh-* and Nepali *paṭhau-*, and in some cases a light verb sense is expressable in some languages but not in others, e.g. Nepali lacks an equivalent to the light verb function of Hindi *le-*.

HINDI STEM	HINDI FULL VERB MEANING	LIGHT VERB SENSE	NEPALI FULL VERB MEANING	NEPALI STEM
ḍāl	throw	**immediacy**	throw	*hāl*
de	give	**other-directed**	give	*di*
le	take	**self-directed**		—
cuk	be used up	**completive**	complete / be able to	*sak*
baiṭh	sit	**regret**	send	*paṭhāu*

Table 3: Selected Hindi and Nepali light verbs compared

Considering the range of variation in morphosyntactic proprieties and particular inventories of light verbs, we might wonder if these really do represent even small significant pockets of common inheritance. One of the most common light verbs in IA, and one of the ones to make clear early appearances, is GIVE. But though GIVE is present in modern Sinhala, it is not found in Old Sinhala.[31] That leaves only GO. And

---

[31] Of the light verbs found in Modern Colloquial Sinhala, only two of these were also found in Old Sinhala: TAKE and GO. Old Sinhala also possesses PLACE and SHOW, which have subsequently undergone further

forms of GO are frequently found undergoing various types of grammaticalisation, being present, for instance, in the formation of passives and futures in Hindi.[32]

Annamalai (2016: 556) notes that "[t]he use of non-cognate light verbs for a shared meaning is not surprising because this is noticed between dialects of the same language as well. This raises a problem for comparative reconstruction: Can a grammatical phenomenon be reconstructed for the proto stage while the forms of particular light verbs that cannot be?" While the lack of cognates for a shared meaning between related languages is not itself necessarily an insurmountable problem,[33] the overall differences between even closely related Dravidian languages in terms of substantial differences in light verb inventories may weigh against positing VVs in Proto-Dravidian.

Turning back to Indo-Aryan, given the significantly earlier appearance of VVs in Sinhala, and the substantial and prolonged contact Sinhala has had with South Dravidian languages, it is tempting to suggest that VVs might find their origin in Dravidian and the late and varied appearance of VVs in IA represents Dravidian influence. However, while it would be tempting to attribute the strikingly early Sinhala development of VVs to Dravidian influence, VVs in Old Tamil are in fact apparently vanishingly rare: Annamalai (2016: 556) points out that "[g]iven the paucity of light verbs in Old Tamil texts before the Common Era, one may speculate that 'delexicalisation' of full verbs into light verbs is a development that is shared, but its time and instantiation are specific to individual languages".

So one possibility this suggests is that VVs in modern South Asia languages had somewhat independent paths of development – even probably in many cases including also languages within the same language family – with some amount of later convergent development. This would also be one potential explanation for the fact that the semantic similarities between the root meanings of light verbs seem to be largely restricted to those we might independently expect to liable to grammaticalisation (e.g. GO, COME).

---

grammaticalisation, see above.

[32] And compare, outside of South Asia, the grammaticalisation of GO in the English future construction "be going to" V.

[33] See Watkins (1995) on the notion of "renewal" of components of inherited formulaic phrases – essentially the phenomenon of a form within an idiomatic chunk being replaced by another form which bears the same/similar meaning – as well as Matasović (1996) and Slade (2008[2010]) who explore additional examples of preservation of formulae involving "renewal" or lexical replacements.

References

Abbi, Anvita. 1991/1992. India as a linguistic area revisited. *Language Sciences* 12(2). 107–316.

Abbi, Anvita & Devi Gopalakrishnan. 1991. Semantics of explicator compound verbs in South Asian languages. *Language Sciences* 13(2). 161–180.

Annamalai, E. 1985. *Dynamics of verbal extension in Tamil*. Trivandrum: Dravidian Linguistics Association.

Annamalai, E. 2016. Expanded verbs in Dravidian. In Hans Henrich Hock & Elena Bashir (eds.), *The languages and linguistics of South Asia: A comprehensive guide* (The World of Linguistics 7), 550–559. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Arora, Harbir K. 2004. *Syntactic convergence: The case of Dakkhini Hindi-Urdu*. Delhi: Publications Division, University of Delhi.

Bandhu, Vishva (ed.). 1963–1966. *Ṛgveda with the padapāṭha and commentaries of Skandasvāmin, Udgītha, Veṅkaṭamādhava and Mudgala* 8 vols. Hoshiarpur, Punjab: Vishveshvaranand Vedic Research Institute.

Bhat, D.N.S. 1979. Vectors in Kannada. *International Journal of Dravidian Linguistics* 8(2). 300–309.

Bubenik, Vit. 1998. *A historical syntax of late Middle Indo-Aryan*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Butt, Miriam. 2010. The light verb jungle: Still hacking away. In Mengistu Amberber, Brett Baker & Mark Harvey (eds.), *Complex predicates: Cross-linguistic perspectives on event structure*, 48–78. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Butt, Miriam & Aditi Lahiri. 2002. Historical stability vs. historical change. Ms., Universität Konstanz. http://ling.uni-konstanz.de/pages/home/butt/stability.pdf .

Butt, Miriam & Aditi Lahiri. 2013. Diachronic pertinacity of light verbs. *Lingua* 135. 7–29.

Chatterjee, Suniti Kumar. 1926. *The origin and development of the Bengali language*. Calcutta: Calcutta University Press. [Revised, 1971; reprinted, New Delhi: Rupa, 1985].

Coelho, Gail. 2018. Complex predicates in Betta Kurumba. *Journal of South Asian Languages and Linguistics* 5(1). 23–77. doi:https://doi.org/10.1515/jsall-2018-0007.

Delbrück, Berthold. 1888. *Altindische Syntax.* Halle, Germany: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses.

Graßmann, Hermann. 1873. *Wörterbuch zum Rig-Veda.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Hendriksen, Hans. 1944. *Syntax of the infinite verb forms of Pāli.* Copenhagen: Einar Munksgaard.

Herring, Susan C. 1993. Aspectogenesis in South Dravidian: On the origin of the 'compound continuative' *KONTIRU.* In Henk Aertsen & Robert J. Jeffers (eds.), *Historical linguistics 1989: Papers from the 9th International Conference on Historical Linguistics. Rutgers University, August 14–18, 1989,* 167–185. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Hock, Hans Henrich. 1985. Transitivity as a gradient feature: Synchronic and diachronic evidence from Indo-Aryan, especially Sanskrit. In Arlene R.K. Zide, David Magier & Eric Schiller (eds.), *Proceedings of the Conference on participant roles in South Asia and adjacent areas,* 247–263. Bloomington: Indiana University Linguistics Club.

Hock, Hans Henrich. 1992. Review of Tikkanen (1987): The Sanskrit gerund: a synchronic, diachronic, and typological analysis. *Kratylos* 37. 62–68.

Hock, Hans Henrich. 2008. Dravidian syntactic typology: A reply to Steever. In Rajendra Singh (ed.), *Annual Review of South Asian Languages and Linguistics,* 164–198. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Hock, Hans Henrich. 2016. Complex verbs: introduction. In Hans Henrich Hock & Elena Bashir (eds.), *The languages and linguistics of South Asia: A comprehensive guide* (The World of Linguistics 7), 549–550. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Hook, Peter Edwin. 1974. *The compound verb in Hindi.* Ann Arbor: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Michigan.

Hook, Peter Edwin. 1977. The distribution of the compound verb in the languages of North India and the question of its origin. *International Journal of Dravidian Languages* 6. 335–351.

Hook, Peter Edwin. 1988. Paradigmaticization: A case study from South Asia. *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society* 293–303.

Hook, Peter Edwin. 1991. The emergence of perfective aspect in Indo-Aryan languages. In Elizabeth Traugott & Bernd Heine (eds.), *Approaches to grammaticalization, volume 1,* 59–89. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Hook, Peter Edwin. 1993. Aspectogenesis and the compound verb in Indo-Aryan. In Manindra K. Verma (ed.), *Complex predicates in South Asian languages*, 97–114. New Delhi: Manohar.

Hook, Peter Edwin. this volume. Births, earthquakes, meteors, and other autogenous expressions: The Hindi-Urdu compound verb and its covert semantics, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hook, Peter Edwin & Prashant Pardeshi. 2005. Are vector verbs eternal? Paper given at the South Asian Linguistic Analysis (SALA)-25 Conference, University of Illinois, Urbana/Champaign, 16-18 September, 2005.

Kellogg, S.H. 1893. *A grammar of the Hindi language, in which are treated the High Hindi, Braj, and the Eastern Hindi of the Ramayana of Tulsidas, also the colloquial, dialects of Rajputana, Kumaon, Avadh, Riwa, Bhojpur, Magadha, Maithila, etc.* London: Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. (Reprinted 1990, Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal).

Li, Chao. 2007. Split ergativity and split intransitivity in Nepali. *Lingua* 117. 1462–1482.

Masica, Colin P. 1976. *Defining a linguistic area: South Asia.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Masica, Colin P. 1991. *The Indo-Aryan languages.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Matasović, Ranko. 1996. *A theory of textual reconstruction in Indo-European linguistics.* Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Verlag.

Matthews, David. 1998. *A course in Nepali.* London: Curzon.

McGregor, R.S. 1968. *The language of Indrajit of Orchā: A study of early Braj Bhāṣā prose.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nayar, Prabodachandran V.R. 1979. Aspectual system in Malayalam. *International Journal of Dravidian Linguistics* 8(2). 289–299.

Nespital, Helmut. 1997. *Hindī kriyā-koś/Dictionary of Hindi verbs.* Allahabad, India: Lokbharati.

Paolillo, John C. 1989. Deictic and dynamic interactions in Sinhala verb-verb compounds. Ms., Stanford University.

Paranavitana, Senarat. 1956. *Sigiri graffiti, Sinhalese verses of the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries.* London: Oxford University Press.

Pardeshi, Prashant. 2001. The compound verb in Marathi: Definitional issues and criteria for identification. *Kobe Papers in Linguistics* 38. 94–111.

Peterson, John. 2002. The Nepali converbs: A holistic approach. In Rajendra Singh (ed.), *Yearbook of South Asian languages and linguistics*, 93–133. New Delhi, Thousand Oaks & London: Sage Publications.

Pokharel, Balkrishna. B.S. 2020 [=1963C.E.]. *pañc śaya varṣa.* Kathmandu: Sajha Prakashan.

Pokharel, Madhav P. 1991. Compound verbs in Nepali. *Contributions to Nepalese Studies* 18(2). 149–173. (Reprinted in *Topics in Nepalese Linguistics*, Yogendra P. Yadava & Warren W. Glovers (eds.), 1999, 185-208. Kathmandu: Royal Nepal Academy).

Poudel, Tikaram. 2006. *Tense, aspect and modality in Nepali and Manipuri.* Kathmandu: Tribhuvan University dissertation.

Raina, Achla M. 2011. The co-eventual verb in Hindi. In Omkar N. Koul (ed.), *Indo-Aryan linguistics*, 135–152. Mysore: Central Institute of Indian Languages.

Schmidt, Ruth Laila. 2004. Compound verbs in the Shina of Kohistan. *Acta Orientalia* 65. 19–31.

Sharma, Tara Nath. 1980. *The auxiliary in Nepali.* Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin at Madison dissertation.

Singh, Udaya Narayana, Karumuri Venkata Subbarao & S.K. Bandyopadhyay. 1986. Classification of polar verbs in selected South Asian languages. In Bhadriraju Krishnamurti (ed.), *South Asian languages: Structure, convergence and diglossia*, 244–269. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Slade, Benjamin. 2008[2010]. How (exactly) to slay a dragon in Indo-European? PIE *bheid-* {$h_3 ég^w him, k^w ṛmi$-}. *Historische Sprachforschung* 121. 3–53.

Slade, Benjamin. 2013. The diachrony of light and auxiliary verbs in Indo-Aryan. *Diachronica* 30(4). 531–578.

Slade, Benjamin. 2016. Compound verbs in Indo-Aryan. In Hans Henrich Hock & Elena Bashir (eds.), *The languages and linguistics of South Asia: A comprehensive guide* (The World of Linguistics 7), 559–567. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Steever, Sanford B. 2005. *The Tamil auxiliary verb system.* London: Routledge.

Subbarao, Karumuri V. 1979. Secondary verbs in Telugu. *International Journal of Dravidian Linguistics* 8(2). 268–276.

Tikkanen, Bertil. 1987. *The Sanskrit gerund: a synchronic, diachronic and typological analysis.* Helsinki: Finnish Oriental Society.

Turner, Ralph Lilley. 1931. *A comparative and etymological dictionary of the Nepali language.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd. (Reprinted 1980, New Delhi: Allied Publishers, Ltd.).

Vale, Ramchandra Narayan. 1948. *Verbal composition in Indo-Aryan.* Poona: Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute.

Wallace, William D. 1982. The evolution of ergative syntax in Nepali. *Studies in the Linguistic Sciences* 12(2). 147–211.

Watkins, Calvert. 1995. *How to kill a dragon: aspects of Indo-European poetics.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Whitney, William Dwight. 1879/1889. *Sanskrit grammar, including both the classical language and the older dialects of Veda and Brahmana.* Leipzig: Breitkopf and Härtel 1st/2nd edn. [reprinted, Delhi: DK Publications, 1995].