Root Semantics and Stative Present Perfects in Vedic

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The polysemy of the perfect in Vedic is striking. In the Rigveda, this includes present stative readings such as (1) beside existential readings such as (2) and readings denoting the result state such as (3).

(1) *ká īṣate tujyáte kó **bibhāya*** (1.84.17a)
'Who retreats and is thrust back? Who **is afraid**?'

(2) *śáśvat káṇvānāṃ sádasi priyé hí kaṃ   sómam **papáthur** aśvinā* (1.47.10cd)
'Because at the dear seat of the Kaṇvas, you **have** always/often **drunk** soma, o Aśvins.'

(3) *táṃ pr̥cchatā sá **jagāmā** sá veda* (1.145.1a)
'Ask him! **He has come [and is here]**, he knows.'

Attempts at explaining this polysemy differ with respect to how much of the variety of readings is attributed to language change (cf. for instance Renou's 1925 account of the development result state > resultative), and how much work is done by the synchronic grammar.

In this contribution, we explore the suggestion that in Vedic the reading of the perfect depends on the Aktionsart — à la Vendler 1957 — of the verbal root and, more specifically, that it is perfects derived from achievement predicates that have present stative readings (Kiparsky 2002).

References:

Kiparsky, Paul. 2002. Event Structure and the Perfect. In *The Construction of Meaning*, ed. David I. Beaver et al. Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications.

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