

On the Function of Reduplication in the Sanskrit 3rd Class Presents

Giovanni Luigi Fabbri, Ph.D. candidate (Linguistics)

University of Rome – Sapienza

Reduplication is quite a common morphological device in Vedic Sanskrit, where it is the only or concurrent marking of five different verbal stems, namely, one type of present (3rd class in traditional Indian notation), one type of aorist, the perfect, the intensive and the desiderative. Among these stems, which are also generally reconstructed for Proto-Indo-European, the reduplicated present stands out, in that its specific semantic characterisation, unlike that of the other reduplicated stems, has up to now escaped a shared explanation among scholars. This is unfortunate, because an incomplete understanding of this stem leaves us with an incomplete understanding of the role of reduplication in the language, not to mention in the reconstructed protolanguage.

So far, the majority of Indo-Europeanists have been divided between two contrasting interpretations: while some highlighted values related to *Aktionsart*, i.e. iterative, durative or intensive, others noticed aspectual values instead, i.e. perfective, terminative or punctual (cf. among the former, Delbrück 1897:25, Adrados 1963:680-681, Joachim 1978:163, Kulikov 2005:442-444; among the latter, Vendryes 1918:123, Chantraine 1958:313, Meillet & Vendryes 1963:235, Giannakis 1997; for a concise summary with further references, *ibid.* 11-20). To this must be added the (rather marginal) hypothesis that different reduplication vowels marked different semantic values (Meillet 1905: 215, Thieme 1929:53 ff., followed by Lühr 1984:39, 64); also, it seems worth pointing out that, although seldom admitted in the literature (but see Watkins 1969:36), on the semantic side the reduplicated presents are quite often hardly any different from both the thematic and the athematic root presents (1st and 2nd class in traditional Indian notation).

In recent years, a couple of papers dealing with the reduplicated present stem in Vedic and Homeric Greek (Magni & Lazzeroni 2019, Lazzeroni & Magni 2020) claimed to have tilted the balance one way, i.e., to have shown that the range of attested values can receive a common explanation by relating them to the domain of pluractionality, or verbal plurality (on which, see the recent summary by Mattioli 2019, with references). Because these languages are known to be quite ancient and conservative (Fortson 2005[2004] chapt.10, 12), the marking of pluractionality should be reconstructed for Proto-Indo-European.

The aim of this presentation will be twofold: firstly, the merits of this most recent thesis will be assessed, by reviewing the Vedic data that the authors brought forth, and the interpretation thereof. Secondly, after showing that their conclusions are not actually convincing, an alternative explanation will be advanced, which will consider not only the evidence of reduplicated presents, but also the Vedic and Proto-Indo-European verbal system as a whole (on which, see LIV² 1-25 as a general reference, Lundquist & Yates 2017 for a thorough, up-to-date survey); namely, it will be argued that, even though traces of verbal plurality can indeed be found, the reduplication of the present stem is better understood as a morphological marker of an originally imperfective/eventive stem, built from perfective roots – i.e. that formed an athematic root aorist – and developing into a present stem over time (cf. Clackson 2007 chapt.5 for a concise summary about the restructuring of the PIE verbal system). Consequently, the attested semantic values will rather be due to a combination of factors, namely, the semantics of the root, the interactions with its arguments, and pragmatic factors.

References

Adrados, Francisco Rodriguez. 1963. *Evolución y estructura del verbo indoeuropeo*. Madrid: Instituto “Antonio de Nebrija”.

Chantraine, Paul. 1958. *Grammaire homérique. Tome 1 – Phonétique et morphologie*. Paris: Champion.

Delbrück, Berthold. 1897. *Vergleichende Syntax der indogermanischen Sprachen*, vol.2 Strasbourg: Trübner.

Fortson, Benjamin Wynn IV. 2005[2004]., *Indo-European Language and Culture*. USA – UK – Australia: Blackwell publishing.

Joachim, Ulrike. 1978. *Merfachpräsentien im Rgveda*. Bern – Frankfurt – Las Vegas: Peter Lang.

Kulikov, Leonid. 2005. Reduplication in the Vedic Verb: Indo-European Inheritance, Analogy and Iconicity. In Bernard Hurch (ed.), *Studies in Reduplication*, 431-454. Berlin – Boston: M. De Gruyter.

LIV² = Rix, Helmut, Martin Joachim Kümmel, Thomas Zehnder, Reiner Lipp & Brigitte Schirmer. 2001. *Lexikon der Indogermanischen Verben: die Wurzeln und ihre Primärstambildungen*. Zweite, erweiterte und verbesserte Auflage, Wiesbaden: L.Reichert.

Lundquist, Jesse & Yates, Anthony D. 2017. *The Morphology of Proto-Indo-European*. In Jared Klein, Brian Joseph & Matthis Fritz (eds.), *Handbook of Historical and Comparative Indo-European Linguistics*, vol.3, 2.079-2.195. Berlin – Boston: M. De Gruyter.

Magni, Elisabetta & Lazzeroni, Romano. 2019. Presenti a raddoppiamento e plurazionalità in greco e in sanscrito. In Paola Cotticelli Kurras e Stephan Ziegler (eds.), *Tra semantica e sintassi: il ruolo della linguistica storica / Zwischen Semantik und Syntax: die Rolle der historischen Sprachwissenschaft*, 1-13. Roma: Il Calamo.

Mattiola, Simone. 2019. Verso una tipologia delle costruzioni plurazionali nelle lingue del mondo, *CLUB – Working Papers in Linguistics* 3, 146-176.

Meillet, Antoine. 1905. Varia. *Mémoires de la Société de Linguistique de Paris* 12, 213-238.

Meillet, Antoine & Vendryes, Joseph. 1963. *Traité de grammaire comparée des langues classiques*. Paris: Champion.

Lazzeroni, Romano & Magni, Elisabetta. 2020. Reduplicated Presents and Pluractionality in Greek and Sanskrit. *Studi e Saggi Linguistici* 58(2), 9-32.

Lühr, Rosemarie. 1984. Reste der Athematischen Konjugation in den germanischen Sprachen. In Jürgen Untermann & Bela Brogyanyiela (eds.), *Das Germanische und die Rekonstruktion der Indogermanischen Grundsprache*, 25-90. Amsterdam – Philadelphia: Benjamins.

Thieme, Paul. 1929. *Das Plusquamperfektum im Veda*. Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung auf dem Gebiete der indogermanischen Sprache, Ergänzungsheft 7. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Vendryes, Joseph. 1918. Le type thématique à redoublement en indo-européen. *Mémoires de la Société de Linguistique de Paris* 20, 117-123.

Watkins, Calvert. 1969. *Indogermanische Grammatik. Band III: Formenlehre. 1. Teil: Geschichte der Indogermanisches Verbalflexion*. Heidelberg: Winter.