PERFECT TENSE IN SPOKEN SINHALA

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0. A descriptive statement of the formation and the major syntactic usages of the perfect tense form in Spoken Sinhala (SS.) is presented in this paper. What we mean by the perfect tense form here, had been referred to as the past participle in previous works. We prefer to call it the perfect tense form because one of its major usages is to express 'the completion of an action, only the result of which the speaker notices. In this sense it is more reportive of a past action' and compares with the paroksãa perfect of Sanskrit.

1. Verb-base in SS. can be either simple or derived. Derivation involves either causativising or involutivising or both.

Simple bases can be classified under two major classes, the -o class, e.g. bal -a 'look', and the -i class, e.g. badi - 'fry'. There is also a small set of irregular verb bases e.g. ya- 'go', in- 'be', tiye- 'be' etc. Causative bases are derived by suffixing -Va to the base. An involutive can be derived out of a simple or a causative base by suffixing -e accompanied by the fronting of the base - vowels. A verb base in SS. can enter into inflection under three tense - stems, the present stem, the past stem and the perfect stem. This can be diagrammed as follows:

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(R \ (C) \ (I) \ T)
\]

where R = root; C = causative ; I= involutive; and T = tense.

Examples:

bala 'look' balonava 'simple present.
beleena 'involutive present.
balavanava 'causative present'.
*beleven va - belevenava 'involutive - causative- present.

2. Perfect-tense formation

2.1 Perfect - base
The perfect tense base is formed as follows.

2.1.1 Regular verbs ending in -o; (These can be either simple or causative bases.) No change.