



# DLA NEWS

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### A MONTHLY OF DRAVIDIAN LINGUISTICS ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

## r->t IN LATIN AND MALAYALAM: Implications for Historical Linguistics\*

### Introduction

Context dependent inflection of verbs is an almost universal grammatical characteristic in ancient and modern languages. Verbs are modified to derive words of other lexical categories like noun, adverb, adjective etc. In view of the extensive role played by verbs, it will not be surprising to find comparable alterations in verb forms of languages that have been juxtaposed for long; or to put it in another way, presence of similar modifications in verbs of two languages could very well be an evidence of their long-term association.

Malayalam is a classical language of the Indian subcontinent spoken by the people of the state of Kerala lying in

the most southwestern part of India. Kerala is bound on the west by the Arabian Sea giving it a coastal line of about 800 km. dotted by numerous ports and on the east by a mountain range of almost equal length; the land in between is crossed by more than forty rivers. The state, noted for its variety of spices, has had intense spice trade which goes back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C. (Sreedhara Menon, A. 2008). The word *dravid*, from which Dravidian arises, also means cardamom (*Elam*), one of the important spices that prompted trade association between Kerala and Europe. The earliest Dravidian word in Greek is *quinnamon*, Ctesia's name for cinnamon (a spice), derived from *karuva*, a Malayalam word (Caldwell, R. 1853). Incidentally, *Elam* could be related to Elamite which has close association with Dravidian languages (McAlpin, D.W. 1981). Roman coins dating from 117 B.C. to A.D. 123 have been unearthed in Kerala, emphasizing its early relationships with the west (Sreedhara Menon, A. 2007). Kerala has been found mentioned in the Bible and St. Thomas, the Apostle, had reached Kerala in A.D. 52 and established seven churches (Cherian, C.V. 1973). Christians constitute about 20% of the population of Kerala. The land had been referred to or visited by Pliny the Elder, according to whom Muziris (now Crangannore) is the nearest port in India (Pliny's *Natural History*, Book 6, Canto 26).

Malayalam, a language belonging to the Dravidian family, is very much influenced by Sanskrit which belongs to the Indo-European family. The Aryans supposedly migrated to Kerala from North India around A.D. 600, hence the Sanskrit influence on Malayalam might have started at least from that period. Malayalam is also influenced by English, a Germanic branch of Indo-European language, which itself has borrowed extensively from Latin. Malayalam has been affected by English grammatically (Girish, P.M. 2005). A notable feature, the usage of English words with addition of Malayalam suffixes, is peculiar to Keralites; e.g. ബോറൻ (*bōRan* for boring person), ബോറടിക്കുക (*bōRaTikkuka* for getting bored), ബോറടിച്ചിരിക്കുക (*bōRaTippikkuka* for

\* The author is not a linguist. Hence, this article need not be viewed only from a linguist's angle.

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it differs from t. This cannot be labelled as transitivisation (though Caldwell terms it so), since that can be done differently in Malayalam in the case of the same words. Adjectives are routinely formed from either the radical or the modified verb with the addition of the appropriate suffix which is the same for both forms; e.g. മാറിയ (māriya) meaning 'that which altered' from the verb മാറുക (māruka, alter), and മാറ്റിയ (māttiya) meaning 'that which was altered' from the verb മാറ്റുക (māttuka, to alter).

In view of the ancient association of Kerala with Europe, the presence of r->t alteration in verbs and the absence of orthographically representable and phonemically similar t in any other major Indian language, it is possible that it was borrowed from an ancient European language; and this language may have similar verb alterations and influenced Malayalam grammar too.

[To be continued]

V.N. Bhattathiri

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**NATIONAL SEMINAR ON  
DRAVIDIAN TRIBAL LINGUISTICS:  
RETROSPECT AND PROSPECTS**

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The Department of Dravidian and Computational Linguistics, Dravidian University is organizing a two-day National Seminar on *Dravidian Tribal Linguistics: Retrospect and Prospects* on 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> March 2015 at Dravidian University, Kuppam. Those who are interested in participating and presenting papers may please contact the coordinator Prof. G. Balasubramonian (E-mail: [gbalu123@gmail.com](mailto:gbalu123@gmail.com)).

**Important Dates**

Abstract submission	6.3.2015
Acceptance of abstracts	10.3.2015
Submission of full paper	20.3.2015

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**“MANY RAMAYANAMS” – SAYS THUNCHAT  
SHRI RAMANUJAN EZHUTHACCHAN? –  
A RESPONSE**

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Prof. T. Madhava Menon wrote in the January 2015 issue of *DLA News*, asking for a clarification about the verse in the Ayodhya Kanda, wherein Sita

contends with Rama that “I have heard many Ramayana-s recounted by many gifted poets, but in none of them did rāghava (rāma) go to the forest leaving Sita behind.”. He quoted the relevant section from the *Adhyatma Rāmāyaṇa* of Ezhuttacchan and notes that a corresponding text is found in the *Adhyatma Rāmāyaṇam Kīṭipāṭṭu* as well.

This episode is noted by A.K. Ramanujan in his essay *Three Hundred Ramayanas* (Dharwadker 1999, pp. 143) as well. He traces it to the Sanskrit *Adhyatma Ramayana*, but does not furnish an explanation. My current note is in response to the selfsame point. There are two distinct Sanskrit sources that record this peculiar statement and there is a satisfactory explanation provided within the mythopoetic universe of the *itihāsa-purāṇā-s*.

1. The *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* in Sanskrit – very popular in the North, particularly with the sect of Kabir and his guru Ramananda (who is sometimes said to be the author of the text). It can be assigned to 15-16<sup>th</sup> century, since the Marathi poet Eknath (died 1608) calls it a modern text (vide Bhandarkar Vaishnavism etc., pp. 48).

Here is the Sanskrit verse relevant to the discussion:

*rāmāyaṇāni bahuśaH śrutāni bahubhir dvijaiH |  
sītām vinā vanam rāmo gatah kim kutracid vada || 77 ||  
atastvayā gamiṣyāmi... etc.. || 78 ||*

*Ayodhya Kāṇḍa, Canto 3.77-78*

2. The *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa* (Sanskrit)

Popular tradition ascribes the text to Vālmiki but the internal evidence points otherwise. This text has elaborate descriptions of many *tirtha-s* and pilgrimage spots of South India, like Gokarna and Rāmeśwaram. While searching for a bride for Lava, even the Southern kingdoms of Kānci and Vijayanagara are visited. The language is rather modern and the title *Chatrapati* is used, as a consequence of which Prof. V. Raghavan assigns it to early 18<sup>th</sup> century, suggesting that it was produced in the Tanjore Maratha courtly milieu. This text is popular amongst the Tamils, since Mahākavi Subrahmanya Bharati has translated it into the Tamil language.

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Recent Publications: **Studies on Bangla and Dravidian**, Syamala Sasidharan, Sourav Chakraborty & G.K. Panikkar (Eds.), 2014, pp. 208, Rs. 220/- (US\$ 20/-). **Tulu: An Intensive Course**, M. Rama, 2013, pp. 12 + 132, Rs. 200/- (US\$ 20/-). **Bangla Basic Vocabulary**, Tapas Kayal & Dhrubajyoti Das, 2014, PB, Demy 1/8, Pp. xvi + 128, Rs. 150/- (US\$ 15/-).



*Ayodhya Kānda*, canto 6.11 of the *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa* has a verse with Sita insisting that she will accompany Rama to the forest, giving the same explanation as seen in the *Adhyatma Rāmāyaṇa* above.

### The Solution – Kalpabheda or Kalpāntara

In the circumstance of discussing the *Ahalyā śāpa* episode, Prof. V. Raghavan discusses the concept of *kalpa-bheda*, or *kalpāntara*, which is crucial for a coherent exegesis of *purāṇic* mythopoesis. It entails the use of the cyclic nature of the various temporal units in a nested loop to explain variants or repetitions of a certain adventure, act or curse in each age (*kalpa*).

Hence, there are countless *kalpa*-s, each with a quartette of *yuga*-s [*Kṛta*, *Treta*, *Dwāpara* and *Kali*], and each *kalpa* has a repetition of the events of the previous *yuga*, with minor or major variations. Every *kalpa* will have the lives of the same characters re-enacted, and the multiple variants on the themes of stories of well-known characters will be reconciled by saying that both versions of the tale occurred albeit in different *kalpa*-s.

### The Poet as a Narratologist

The *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa* has frequent, deliberate and self-conscious use of the device of *Kalpabheda* and seems to have been written with a view to document alternative accounts of many episodes in the Rāma story. Further, within the story, he uses a metadiscursive strategy to introduce *Kalpabheda*, wherein a character Viṣṇudāsa questions a certain Rāmadāsa about these deviations in the Rāma story, and the latter explains it using the trope of *Kalpabheda*; saying that while Rāma incarnated in each *kalpa*, he played his role differently, accounting for the multiple narratives, all of which are equally valid.

As evidenced by many variant episodes in the *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa*, and this oft-used device of *kalpabheda*, the poet establishes himself as a student of the Rāma tale and its variants. He is in this aspect, an intellectual predecessor of A.K. Ramanujan, in being a narratologist of the Rāma epos.

### References

Bhandarkar, R.G. 1965. *Vaishnavism, Shaivism and Major Religious Systems of India*, Varanasi. Pp. 48.

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Raghavan, V. 1998. *Sanskrit Ramayanas other than Valmiki's. The Adbhuta, Adhyatama, and Ananda Ramayanas*. Chennai: The V. Raghavan Centre for Performing Arts.

Richman, P. (Ed.). 1992. *Many Rāmāyaṇas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Naresh Keerthi

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### NATIONAL SEMINAR ON MALAYALAM GRAMMATICAL STUDIES AND CONTEMPORARY LANGUAGE

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The Department of Linguistics, Malayalam University is conducting a three-day National Seminar on *malayāḷa vyākaraṇa paṭhanaṅgaḷum samakālika bhāṣayam* from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> March at Akshara Campus, Tirur. Eminent linguists, grammarians and researchers will participate and present papers.

#### Important Dates:

Abstract submission	15.3.2015
Submission of full paper	20.3.2015

For more details, log on to [www.malayalamuniversity.edu.in](http://www.malayalamuniversity.edu.in).

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### SPECIAL LECTURE BY PROF. HANS HENRICH HOCK AT ISDL

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A special lecture was delivered on the *Development of Stop Consonants from Proto Dravidian* by Prof. Hans Henrich Hock, Emeritus Professor of Linguistics and Sanskrit, University of Illinois at the International School of Dravidian Linguistics on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2015. The members of the Council of Direction, the research fellows of ISDL and the faculty members of the Departments of Linguistics and Tamil, University of Kerala attended the meeting. Prof. G.K. Panikkar, Hon. Director, ISDL chaired the session.

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Recent Publications: *The Morphosyntax of the Dravidian Languages*, P.S. Subrahmanyam, 2013, pp. xxx + 687, Rs. 1,000/- (US\$ 100/-). *A Survey of Smṛiti Literature*, N.P. Unni, 2013, pp. 8 + 164, Rs. 200/- (US\$ 20/-). *A Contrastive Study of Case in Bengali and Tamil*, Sourav Chakraborty, 2012, pp. 136, Rs. 120/- (US\$ 5/-).