

A MONTHLY OF DRAVIDIAN LINGUISTICS ASSOCIATION OF INDIA**ON ERAVALLA**

A South Dravidian tribal language, *Eravalla* has been discovered newly (Gnanasundaram 2012). Eravalla is spoken by one of the scheduled forest tribes of Tamil Nadu, viz. Eravallan. The Eravallan tribe lives in the Anaimalai hills spread over Pollachi and Udumalpet taluks of Coimbatore district. Eravallan settlements in Tamil Nadu and Kerala are contiguous. In Kerala, they live in villages such as Vellimedu, Kannimari, Chemmanam Pathi, etc. in Chittoor taluk of Palakkad district. It is stated that the Eravallans in Kerala migrated from neighbouring Coimbatore district, Tamil Nadu (Saraswathi 2002). *Tamil Lexicon* (1982: 363) gives the meaning for the word *iravuḷar* as 'inhabitants of the hilly tracts', 'hill tribes', *kuriñci nila mākkal* 'the people of the mountainous forest tract'.

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The 43rd All India Conference of Dravidian Linguists will be held at Annamalai University, Annamalainagar, Tamil Nadu from 18th to 20th June 2015. The conference is organized jointly by the Centre of Advanced Study in Linguistics – Annamalai University, Dravidian Linguistics Association and International School of Dravidian Linguistics.

The registration form can be downloaded from www.ijdl.org.

Eravallan is called by other names such as *İrava*, *İravuḷar*, *Eravallar*, *Eravāḷar*, *Vilvēṭar* and *Ampuvilluvēṭar*. Their indigenous mother tongue is denoted as Eravalla (Gnanasundaram 2012). As insiders, they call themselves as *karivināḷu*.

Characteristic Features of Eravalla

The Eravallans speak among themselves and narrate folk stories in their mother tongue Eravalla but sing folk songs in Tamil only (Vijayalatchumi 2008, Gnanasundaram 2012). Scarcely, they use their Eravalla words in the songs, such as *kūre* 'hut / house', *varu* 'will come', etc. This sociolinguistic aspect, viz. the use of Tamil in the domain of folk songs and the use of their tribal mother tongue Eravalla in all other domains is quite unique with the people of this tribe who reside both in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Some of the other characteristic features are as follows:

The Eravallar (who do not travel outside very much) generally use Tamil at ease not only with outsiders but also with their own people, especially with the younger generation.

It was found that about seventy percent of the basic vocabulary forms in Eravalla are common with Tamil basic vocabulary forms (Gnanasundaram 2013).

There are a few forms like *urumpi* 'ant', *paṭiñcare / paṭiññare* 'west', *nelavuḷi / nelabuḷi* 'call', *ā* 'that', *ṛ* 'this' that appear to share a commonness with Malayalam vocabulary.

There are certain old Tamil words like *varattam* ‘pain’ (Ta. Lex.: 3521), *vaṭuka* ‘branch of a tree’ [vātu (vātu ‘branch of a tree’, Ta. Lex.: 3591)], *pittānu* ‘father’s father’, *varaṭi* ‘barren woman’ (Ta. Lex.: 3560), *naṅke* ‘elder brother’s wife’ (Ta. Lex.: 2128), *nūlvaḷi kālvaḷi* ‘lineage/generation’ that are found in the Eravalla lexical stock.

There are words like *peṇṭati* ‘woman’, *colḷe* ‘mosquito’, etc. shared with Kannada vocabulary.

It may be mentioned that some Eravalla words like *layakāri* ‘younger sister’, *āṅkaḷe* ‘brother’, *cinnāṅkaḷe* ‘younger brother’, *kēraṭi* ‘priest’, *aiaṇu* ‘squirrel’, *ūtaṅṭi* ‘wasp’, *inici* ‘she (proximate)’, *aylu* ‘he (remote)’, *entukoḷi* ‘what/who’, *okuṭu* ‘to flow’, etc. appear not to be found in any other Dravidian language.

Eravalla is an endangered language, especially in Tamil Nadu. In one of the settlements, viz. Karattupathi near Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary in Amaravathi, Udumalpet, it was found that only women of the elder and middle-age groups speak/maintain their mother tongue Eravalla while men of all age groups, female children, i.e. women of the younger generation, have lost Eravalla (Gnanasundaram 2013).

Consonant clusters in the initial position are common in Eravalla. E.g. *ktāru* ‘cry’, *mrāmu* ‘tree’, *kyāṅku* ‘tuber’, etc.

Aphesis, i.e. loss of initial vowel, is prevalent like in Irula (Perialwar 1978): *urakkam* > *rakkam* ‘sleep’; *uṭaintu* > *ḍ-ṭeñci* ‘having broken’; *iḷaiyavaḷ* > *ḷayakāri* ‘young girl / younger sister’; *irāṭṭu* > *rāṭṭu* ‘honey comb’.

The structure of negation as *verbal participle* + *negative suffix* in Eravalla shares its commonness with Kannada and Old Tamil.

No gender distinction is found in verb-predicate constructions when third-person (pro)nouns are the subjects. In other words, there are no exclusive pronominal termination markers referring to masculine, feminine and neuter, i.e. the markers denote person and number only; gender distinction is found in the

subjects of the verb predicates only. E.g. *aylu* / *anicci* / *atu* / *raṅkuṭu* / *raṅkittu* / *raṅkuku* ‘he / she / it sleeps / slept / will sleep’; *aylu* / *anicci* / *atu* / *keṭu-pp-aṭ-a* / *keṭu-ṭṭ-a* / *keṭu-kku-* ‘he / she / it / extinguishes / extinguished/ will extinguish the fire’.

The present tense formative suffix for strong verbs (and also in the infinitive form) is *-p-* like in Old Tamil, not *-k-* as in Modern Tamil: *kaṭi-p-aṭ-ay-ā* > *kaṭippaṭayā* ‘do you bite?’; *pūvē keṭa-p-illa* > *pūvē keṭappilla* ‘no flower is / was available’.

Documentation of Eravalla

Under the Scheme for Protection and Preservation of Endangered Languages (SPPEL) in the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore, the Eravalla(n) language is documented with its socio-cultural and ethno-linguistic aspects using audio, video and print media. Most of the material is given in phonetic transcription using IPA symbols. A trilingual dictionary, *Eravalla-Tamil-English*, with audio (*Eravalla* pronunciation), is under preparation. Further, the collection of folklore material such as folk stories, folk songs, riddles, etc. with English translation is also underway. A sketchy descriptive grammar for Eravalla tribal mother tongue is also prepared. Different kinds of data so as to document different aspects of Eravalla, as mentioned earlier, are collected through fieldwork, both in Tamil Nadu and in Kerala.

Prof. V. Gnanasundaram, Mysore, Karnataka is the principal investigator. Mr. P. Suresh, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu and Mr. N. Vijayan, Mysore are the Junior Resource Persons / Investigators for the Eravalla documentation work under the overall coordination and supervision of Dr. L. Ramamoorthy (In charge of the scheme) and Prof. Awadesh Kumar Mishra, Director, CIIL, Mysore and the work commenced from March 2014.

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V. Gnanasundaram, N. Vijayan & P. Suresh

**42ND ALL INDIA CONFERENCE OF
DRAVIDIAN LINGUISTS**
(Continued from October 2014 issue)

Session 13 held at Sri. Gidugu Ramamurthi Hall chaired by Dr. S. Kunjamma had three papers. Sijitha Krishnan in the paper *Study of Kinship Terms of Kasargod* elaborated on the features of language spoken by the Malayalee community in Kasargod district, which is described as *Saptabhāṣa Saṅgama Bhūmi* 'the land of seven languages'. The paper revealed the influence of the seven languages, i.e. Malayalam, Kannada, Tulu, Byari, Marathi, Urdu and Konkani, in forming the kinship terms. The paper *Sociolinguistic Aspects of Kasargod Malayalam* by Swetha S. aimed at describing the variations of languages in Kasargod in relation to age, castes and occupation. The paper brought out the high density of language contact and the influence of other languages on the language of Kasargod. While describing the communicative value of signs and symbols, Fr. Philip Chempakassery shed light on their close associations with verbal language. He pointed out that each word and sentence framed by the combination of different words are signs. There are symbols, signals, pictures and diagrams which were used to convey the idea of

signs. He also described signs and symbols used in religious rituals. At the end of the session, a host of issues relating to Kasargod dialect and the significance of signs in rites and rituals was discussed.

Prof. Uma Maheswar Rao chaired session 14 conducted at Prof. Bh. Krishnamurti Hall. Dr. S.A. Shanavas spoke on lexicon formation from corpus. Uma Maheswar Rao and Christopher Mala presented the paper *CALTS - Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) through Android Applications for Telugu*, which stressed the application of devices like cell phones to help in language teaching and learning. *CALTS - MATA* is one such application that helps to learn and teach Telugu. It contains many applications like Telugu morphological analyser, word synthesizer, a wide range of glossaries, multilingual dictionaries, etc. CALTS NLP team in *An Overview of NLP Research at CALTS* highlighted their aim in developing various NLP tools for Indian languages. It has built multifarious language-technology tools like morphological analyser, tools for analysing corpora, shallow parser tools, machine translation systems, multilingual lexicons, spell-checkers, Android applications, etc. The paper provided information about CALTS NLP activities and their achievements in language technology. Another paper titled *A Demonstration of Telugu-Tamil Bidirectional Machine Translation Systems* was presented by Uma Maheswar Rao, Parameswari K., Sreenivasalu N.V. and Christopher M. They pointed out the development of Machine Translation (MT) systems which translate texts from Telugu to Tamil and vice versa. The MT system demonstrated is a completely automatic translation system without human interference involving Telugu and Tamil. Amrutharaj Babu made a brief study of voice-print creation that can be used in speaker and dialect recognition systems for Malayalam. The paper proposes a framework for voice-print creation to extract, characterise and recognise the information about speaker identity and dialect region. The recognition system uses the Gaussian Mixture Model (GMM) technique in combination with the

Recent Publications: **Swami Vivekananda and South India (A Collection of Seminar Papers)**, Sourav Chakraborty (Ed.), 2013, pp. xii + 300, Rs. 350/- (US\$ 35/-). **Tulu: An Intensive Course**, M. Rama, 2013, pp. 12 + 132, Rs. 200/- (US\$ 20/-). **Bangla Basic Vocabulary**, Tapas Kayal & Dhruvajyoti Das, 2014, PB, Demy 1/8, Pp. xvi + 128, Rs. 150/- (US\$ 15/-).

Expectation Maximisation (EM) algorithm to build voice prints. Swetha P.K. in the paper *Noun Morphological Analyser for Tulu* made an attempt to develop a morphological analyser for Tulu nouns which can be classified into two major categories: rational nouns and irrational nouns. Tulu has eight cases of which the nominative is unmarked but the remaining seven case markers can be suffixed directly to the nominal base.

[To be continued]

Y. Viswanatha Naidu & K.N. Geethakumari

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Prof. C.J. Daswani & Prof. Tilottama C. Daswani
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[To be continued]

Reported by Bindu R.B.

A NOTE FROM CHINMAY DHARURKAR

Correction: 'Kelkar Obituary' -
DLA News October 2014

It says "He was the founder-editor of the literary magazine, *Vaikhari and Madhyama*."

Vaikhari and *Madhyama* are two books that are anthologies/collections of essays, articles written

by Ashok R. Kelkar in Marathi. Indeed, he was the founder-editor of a linguistics magazine called *BhaaShaa aaNi Jeevan* ('Language and Life'). It is a tri-monthly published by Marathi Abhyas Parishad ('Marathi Study Council'), Pune.

Marathi Abhyas Parishad was also initiated by Kelkar. Another institution that acts as a nodal institute for the development of Marathi under the aegis of the Government of Maharashtra called Rajya Marathi Vikas Sanstha ('State Institute for Development of Marathi'), Mumbai was an outcome of Kelkar's efforts. It is still functioning in Mumbai.

HON. D.LITT. TO PROF. B. RAMAKRISHNA REDDY

It is with pride and rejoicement we report that Professor B. Ramakrishna Reddy, the eminent linguist and a former Professor of Linguistics at Osmania University and Telugu University, Hyderabad was awarded the degree of Doctor of Letters by Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute, Pune at the 9th convocation ceremony held on 6th October 2014.

The award is in recognition of his outstanding contributions in the field of Indian linguistics in general and in the exposition of lesser known tribal languages in particular. He has made important contributions to Indian linguistics for the past four decades by documenting many tribal languages like Kuvi, Manda, Kui, Gondi, Parengi-Gorum, Kharia, Didey, Pengo, Sadri, Banjara, Adivasi Odiya, Savara, Konda, Gadaba, Irula and Indi-Awe. He authored, co-authored and edited several books on Dravidian languages. His field experiences and constant writings sensationalised the linguists in India about the endangerment of tribal languages which need immediate attention.

He is closely associated with the Dravidian Linguistics Association and International School of Dravidian Linguistics even from the period of their origins. In the development of ISDL, DLA and IJDL, he stood ardently with Prof. V.I. Subramoniam.

Recent Publications: **The Contribution of Melpüttur Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭatiri to Sanskrit Literature with Special Reference to Vyākaraṇa**, P. Visalakshy, 2013, pp. 428, Rs. 900/- (US\$ 81/-). **A Contrastive Analysis of the Phonological Systems of Bengali and Malayalam**, Dhruvajyoti Das, 2014, pp. xii + 140, Rs. 220/- (US\$ 20/-). **Veṭṭakkaḍa Irula Tuṇḍumallige - Ballads and Dictionary - Three Dialects**, R. Perialwar, 2014, pp. 8 + 112, Rs. 150/- (US\$ 15/-).

So also his support to Prof. VIS in the formation of the Dravidian University, Kuppam. As a person closely associated with DLA and ISDL, he has contributed much for their developments.

We are extremely happy that Professor Ramakrishna Reddy has secured the highest academic award, i.e. Hon. D.Litt. from the Deccan College, Pune. On behalf of the members of the Dravidian Linguistics Association and the International School of Dravidian Linguistics, we offer our heartfelt congratulations to Prof. Ramakrishna Reddy for this creditable achievement.

DERRIDA'S CONCEPT OF LANGUAGE

(Continued from the last issue)

In general, the established academic world of philosophy was reluctant to accept him as a genuine philosopher. According to them, Derrida always trespassed the boundaries of the basic logic of philosophy. Some of them even degraded him as a literary critic⁵. Actually, he was trying to efface the margins of different disciplines. Derrida never meant to create a revolution in linguistics. He was interested in tumbling down the age-old tradition of western philosophy. He called this tradition logocentric and questioned its sanctity. It created some resonance in linguistics also. Western philosophers gave prominence to speech in their discourses. Even linguistics up to the period of Saussure considered speech as their subject. They gave some kind of religious hallow to speech and they considered writing as a negative capability. If one can store knowledge in written form, why should he bother about memorizing? This will diminish the power of memory. So, for them, speech is real and writing is its shade. Rousseau argued that writing is only a supplement to speech⁶. Many philosophers and

linguists quoting the Biblical Verse, "In the beginning there was the word", thrust upon speech some elements of divinity. Derrida considered the speech-oriented approach as a manifestation of logo-centrism and he called it phono-centric. He rejected both these concepts. Western philosophers believed that there are ready-made ideas before language, and language is nothing but a transparent vehicle of these ideas. Derrida called this concept logo-centrism. Logos refer to the word of God and by extension church, clergy, law, personality, wisdom or anybody who assumes power. Derrida believed that it is a "metaphysical presence".

Notes

- In this sense, Derrida's writings seem more akin to literary criticism than philosophy. Christopher Norris, *Deconstruction, Theory and Practice*, 1985, p. 33.
- Derrida discusses this argument in a whole chapter. See the chapter "The Violence of the letter: From Levi-Strauss to Rousseau". Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Trans.), 1994.

[To be continued]

D. Benjamin

Contribution to Prof. V.I. Subramoniam Endowment Fund

TOTAL AS OF LAST MONTH	Rs. 4,25,000.00
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DLA News Endowment Fund

16.10.14	Sri. C.P. Gautom	Rs.	500.00
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TOTAL AS OF LAST MONTH	Rs. 1,87,511.00
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