

A MONTHLY OF DRAVIDIAN LINGUISTICS ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

**42ND ALL INDIA CONFERENCE OF
DRAVIDIAN LINGUISTS**

(Continued from September 2014 issue)

The highlights of the conference were the academic sessions that inspired and illuminated the scholars who assembled at different venues of the Dravidian University. Session 9, held at Prof. Bh. Krishnamurti Hall, was chaired by Prof. K. Rangan. Four papers centering on *Morphology/ Lexicography* were scheduled in this session. While presenting the paper, *How to build Dictionaries for Tribal languages in Manipur?*, Heisnam Kenny Devi stressed the fundamental elements that are required for compiling a dictionary, which would bridge the gap among various groups of Manipur. Manipuri is the medium of communication among the tribes and

there are many tribal languages which have no written records. There are indigenous folk tales, cultural and religious beliefs and other stories which are written in their languages. In order to read or to learn these languages, a good 'user dictionary' is needed. P. Ramanathan in his paper, *Nostratic and Mother Tongue Studies*, spoke on the vital importance of historical and comparative studies in Dravidian including Proto-Dravidian for furthering the pace of Nostratic and mother tongue studies. He underscored the pioneer insight of Robert Caldwell that Dravidian or Proto-Dravidian was perhaps nearest to the mother tongue of man. He quoted Stephan Levitt who stated about the close affinities between Proto-Dravidian and Proto-Australian aboriginal languages which are likely to go back to thousands of years earlier than 10000 B.C. In the paper, *Dependency Constructions in Marathi*, Yogesh Vijay Umale tried to explore the dependency grammar which gives the idea that all the words except the main verb are depending on some other words in the sentence. In the present study, he brought out eight types of dependency constructions in Marathi. The next paper scheduled in this session was *Reciprocals and Reciprocal Markers in Punjabi* by Harjit Singh. His main concern is to discuss two main things in the case of reciprocals. Punjabi has its own reciprocals and they are lexically derived and examples were cited to show that these reciprocals behave like reflexives. At the end of the session, there was a lively interaction among the scholars regarding the features of Proto-Dravidian and the nature of dependency among words in the sentences.

Session 10 held at Prof. K. Nagamma Reddy Hall was chaired by Prof. B. Ramakrishna Reddy. The session had four papers dealing with Morpho-Syntax. Christiane Pilot-Raichoor in the paper, *Badaga Case Suffix - c(a) and Differential Object/Genitive Marking*, elaborated on the Badaga case system that can be presented into three sets. They are: i) an unmarked form called nominative, ii) set of forms carrying some kind of semantic information and supplemented by various postpositions and iii) forms covering the cases traditionally called accusative and genitive. The present study focused on the last set of forms which does not distinguish between accusative and genitive in most of the paradigms. In the paper, *Marathi Postpositions*, Aravind Jadhav stated that case-markers and postpositions are the most debated area of Marathi grammar and argued that Marathi

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postpositions include case-markers. The other two papers scheduled in the session were *Telugu Complex Predicates within First Phase Syntax* by Satish Kumar Nadimpalli and *Affixes and Word Formation of Poula* by Ch. Yashawanta Singh and Dune Antonia Pao.

Like Session 10, Session 11 conducted at Sri. Gidugu Ramamurthi Hall chaired by Dr. S.A. Shanavas was also on Morpho-Syntax. The paper, *A Journey through Bangla Postpositions: An Introduction*, was presented by Sanchari Boral. He looked into the occurrence and function of postpositions in a Bangla sentence referring to some special features with their diversities in use. They also carry out semantic information of the sentence as a whole. The paper titled *Tense and Aspect in Malayalam* by Amanda Swenson gave attention to the argument that Dravidian languages do not have a tense phrase in the syntax. He examined this fact from a semantic point of view and explored the semantics of perfect constructions in Malayalam. P.V. Raghava, in the paper, *Tense, Aspect and Agreement in Telugu*, stressed the fact that many languages do not have tense inflections although languages in general can invariably lexicalise time reference. There are two ways to mark tense - morphological and lexical. He made a comparative study of tense system and aspects of English and Telugu and showed that, in English, tense is morphologically realised invariably in the auxiliary verbs except in simple tenses whereas, in Telugu, tense distinctions are not indicated in the verbal inflection but indicated through temporal adverbs. In the paper, he proposed two aspects: imperfective and perfective for tense system in Telugu. The paper, *Subject-Verb Agreement in Telugu and English - A Comparative Study*, by Suman Kothakonda, also dealt with the comparative study of Telugu and English regarding subject-verb agreement. In Telugu, person, number and gender features are marked on the verb in the form of inflections. The grammatical features of the subject can be recovered from the verbal inflections especially from agreement. English shows distinctive agreement only in the third-person singular simple present tense forms of the verbs which are marked by adding *-s/-es*. During the interactive session, several issues relating to tense and aspect were discussed.

Prof. G.K. Panikkar chaired the session dealing with phonology, held at Prof. G.J. Somayaji Hall.

Arun K. Behera's paper, *A Rule-Governed Approach to Stress in English*, examined the stress pattern and rules governing the placement of stress both at the word level and at the sentence level. He made an endeavour to look into the issues of identifying the primary stress and the secondary stress and marking stress on the weak forms. His intent is to facilitate the non-native speakers of English to learn the rules of stress so that they can use English effectively. The paper titled *Boost up the Mind or to Update - A Study on the Significance of Forensic Linguistics* by Aiswaria G. Shajon was on the areas where linguists can provide evidence, i.e. in trademark and other intellectual property disputes, disputes of meaning and use, author identification, forensic stylistics, forensic phonetics, etc. Madhavi Madhupal, in the paper, *Phonology of the Languages of the Muthuva and Hill Pulaya Tribal Communities*, aims at the identification of the phonological systems of the languages spoken by the Muthuva and Hill Pulaya tribal communities settled at Chinnar in Idukki district in Kerala. She brought out the fact that both communities have similar but unique features which exhibit their culture as well as other linguistic aspects of their languages. Other papers in this session were: *Vowel Correspondence between Kakching Dialect and Standard Meiteilon* by Naorem Brinda Bala Devi and *Phonology of Malapandaram Tribe* by Gopika Krishnan. At the end of the session, the Chairman congratulated the paper-presenters for their effective presentations and other scholars for their active participation in the discussion.

[To be continued]

Y. Viswanatha Naidu & K.N. Geethakumari

OBITUARY

Padmabhushan Dr. N. Mahalingam, a leading industrialist and well-known Gandhian, expired while delivering a speech in connection with Gandhi Jayanthi celebrations at Mylapore, Chennai. He was a life-member of Dravidian Linguistics Association and was very much interested in the academic activities of the DLA and the ISDL. He has supported a good number of scholars who have engaged in the study and research on Tamil language and culture in various ways. On behalf of the DLA and the ISDL, we express our heartfelt condolences.

DERRIDA'S CONCEPT OF LANGUAGE

In the second half of the 20th century, the study of language encroached all fields of knowledge, especially all disciplines related to humanities¹. Knowledge systems like history, sociology, philosophy and literary criticism were exposed to the awareness that the real problem related to the production of knowledge is language. They tried to explore their own world of ideas through the analysis of language used. They were doubtful about the possibility of communication in its perfection. They began to accept that there is no real truth or real fact but only different texts of truth and reality. Each historian creates a new text of history and history is nothing but a narrative. Narration is done in language. So, to understand the content, one has to analyse the language. All these happened because of a significant turn in the course of western philosophy. This was prompted by Jacques Derrida.

Most of the scholars accepted the argument of Ferdinand De Saussure, the famous structuralist, that we understand the world through language, and idea originates only when it is articulated. After him, when Derrida appeared, the intellectual situation became complicated. Derrida raised some basic questions about language and meaning. Is there anything called meaning? Is it possible to convey a definite meaning through language? Can we say that a meaning is authentic? Derrida answered all these questions but his answers were not positive. According to him, any passage presented before us will be in a deconstructed form. It is the reader who constructs the meaning according to his taste and culture². Thus, when each and every reader constructs his own meaning by creating different texts out of the same passage, the authenticity of meaning becomes irrelevant. Either all meanings are authentic or all meanings are unauthentic. The passage or book is nothing but a source of multiple meanings. Thus, a poem, a philosophical treatise or a book of history opens the door for numerous possibilities of meaning. This concept created a revolution in the world of ideas.

Derrida was born in 1930 at Algiers. He was a member of a lower middle-class Jewish family. He specialised in philosophy and had served as Professor

of Philosophy in many universities including Paris, Sorbonne and Yale. He never had any training in linguistics.

For linguists, language is a concrete object. Their approach to language will be almost empirical by nature, but, for Derrida, language is an abstract phenomenon and he approached language with an unending scepticism³ of a philosopher. His treatise on language lacks precision and is often confusing. Levi-Strauss, the famous anthropologist who had a very good rapport with Derrida, once said: "I must confess that I haven't read him closely. He and I do not at all have the same way of writing. I find him difficult to follow".⁴

Derrida was highly influenced by Nietzsche, Heidegger, Freud and Marx. The influence of Nietzsche is very conspicuous. It was he who first proclaimed that "there are no facts but interpretations only". Derrida's concept of text is based on this premise. He was also influenced by Hebrew theology. He often finds examples for his statements from Old Testament which is the basic text of Hebrew Theology.

Notes

1. The moment we go on to systems where the sociological significance is more than superficial, we are once more *confronted with language*. Roland Barthe, *Elementary of Semiology*, Janathancape, 1967, p.10.
2. "To speak of meaning of the work is to tell a story of reading". Jonathan Cullar, on *Deconstruction*, 1985, p. 35.
Structure and meaning of the work emerge through an account of the reader's activity. Ibid. p. 35.
3. Derrida maintains an extreme and exemplary scepticism when it comes to defining his own methodology. Christopher Norris, *Deconstruction, Theory and Practice*, Methuen, 1982, p. 31.
4. Levi-Strauss, Boris Wiseman & Judy Groves, Icon Books Ltd., 1997, p. 34.

[To be continued]

D. Benjamin

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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 Smriti 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/-).

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[To be continued]

Reported by Bindu R.B.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BRAHUI LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

In order to preserve and revive Brahui, one of the Dravidian languages spoken mainly in Pakistan, an international conference is jointly organised by Brahui Academy and Participatory Development Initiatives from **17th to 18th January 2015** at Islamabad. The conference themes include origin of Brahui language, Brahui script and grammar, Brahui folk and contemporary literature, Endangered languages, Brahui culture, traditions and archaeology. The deadline for submission of abstract is **30th October 2014**. For further details, log on to www.brahuiconference.org.

NEW ENROLMENT FOR LIFE-MEMBERSHIP (September 2014)

1. **Dr. A. Munian**
Department of Linguistics
Madurai Kamaraj University
Madurai - 625 021, Tamil Nadu
2. **Mr. M. Alagirisamy**
1825/4, 6th East Street, Gnam Nagar
Manamman Koil Post
Thanjavur District - 613 501, Tamil Nadu

Recent Publications: **The Contribution of Melpüttur Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭatīri 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/-). **Veṭṭakka:ḍa Iruḷa Tuṇḍumallige - Ballads and Dictionary – Three Dialects**, R. Perialwar, 2014, pp. 8 + 112, Rs. 150/- (US\$ 15/-).

PUTHUSSERI RAMACHANDRAN HONOURED

Puthusseri Ramachandran, the renowned Malayalam poet, linguist and the Honorary Professor of the International School of Dravidian Linguistics, was honoured with *Bhasha Samman* in a function organised by Sahitya Akademi on 5th October 2014 at Kanakakunnu Palace, Thiruvananthapuram. It is in recognition of his exemplary contributions to classical and medieval Malayalam literature.

The other awardees were Viswanath Tripathi, Motiraj Bhajnu Rathod, Ramchander Ramesh Arya and B. Lalthangliana. Mahadeo Savji Andher and Sumerchand Kesarichand Jain were conferred the award posthumously.

KENNETH L. HALE AWARD TO ANVITA ABBI

Anvita Abbi, Professor of Linguistics, Jawaharlal Nehru University is the recipient of the 2015 *Kenneth L. Hale Award* given to scholars who have done outstanding work on the documentation of a particular language or family of languages on the verge of extinction.

Her dedicated work for decades in documenting and evaluating the minority languages, particularly Great Andamanese, shed light on the history of language migration in India and helped in revitalising local cultures. The documentation of a barely documented language to this level of sophistication is a Herculean task.

Her works on Great Andamanese include a dictionary, a grammar and a book on ethnornithology.

All of us are glad to congratulate her on this occasion for her meritorious service.

OBITUARY

It is with immense grief we report the demise of **Dr. Ashok R. Kelkar** (b. 1929), an eminent linguist and an excellent teacher of linguistics, particularly phonetics, on 20th September 2014.

His remarkable achievements are in the field of linguistics, covering the areas of phonetics, language typology, lexicography, stylistic analysis and Marathi literature.

He was the founder-editor of the literary magazine, *Vaikhari and Madhyama*. He was India's representative in the International Committee of Linguists (1980-1994).

His major publications include *Studies in Hindi and Urdu* (1968), *Prolegomena to an understanding of Semiosis and Culture* (1980), *Phonemic and Morphemic Frequency Count in Oriya* (1994) and *Language in a Semiotic Perspective* (1997).

On behalf of the members of the Dravidian Linguistics Association, we express our heartfelt condolences.

Informed by B.B. Rajapurohit

Contribution to Prof. V.I. Subramoniam Endowment Fund

TOTAL AS OF LAST MONTH	Rs. 4,25,000.00
CURRENT TOTAL (Including FD)	Rs. 4,25,000.00

DLA News Endowment Fund

TOTAL AS OF LAST MONTH	Rs. 1,87,511.00
CURRENT TOTAL	Rs. 1,87,511.00