

Gender in Colloquial Sinhalese

SYNTACTIC criteria for the setting up of Gender as a grammatical category in Colloquial Sinhalese are limited to the Nominal-Pronominal interrelations. Morphologically, however, much more criteria could be analysed and stated. Also, in Sinhalese it is difficult, and also uneconomical, to treat Gender independent of the categories of Number and Case. Case inflexions differ from Gender to Gender and even from word group to word group within the same Gender. These Case inflexions constitute distinct Number correlations which are, again, distinct from Gender to Gender. I find it necessary to set up Gender, Number and Case as three interdependent formal categories to handle the Nominal piece in Colloquial Sinhalese, but in the present paper which is devoted to an exponential statement of the category of Gender it is not proposed to delve into the realms of Number and Case in any detail. For the present purpose it is sufficient to state that one needs to set up two Numbers and four, or in some instances five, Cases to make a statement of the data presented in this paper. Examples quoted here are drawn from what may be labelled as Case 1.

The traditional statements on Gender are based on notional rather than formal criteria. Such notional grammars are a product of an attempt to study the functioning of linguistic phenomena in relation to extralinguistic concepts and notions from a 'one-to-one' point of view. Language, however, has no one-to-one logical correlation with extralinguistic phenomena which may be dragged into the field of grammar. If in any language the forms constituting a certain grammatical category happen to show some parallel with the external world, that should be treated as a mere coincidence. Why is the French word 'la table' Feminine? Why is the Sanskrit word 'kalatra' Neuter? These are not for the linguist to answer. For the linguist, that is how the French and Sanskrit languages are in use, and the linguist labels them Feminine and Neuter because they exhibit certain phonological and grammatical characteristics which distinguish them from the forms labelled in a different way.

The tradition in Sinhalese has been to treat such forms as *gonaa*¹, *miniha*, etc. as the Masculine of *denə*, *gæəni*, etc. which are supposed to be

1. The transcription used in this paper is adopted from the I.P.A. Long vocalics are indicated by writing the symbol twice.

Feminine. This classification is entirely notional and no linguistic criteria could be adduced to substantiate the statement that one is the Masculine of the other. I feel that if one form is to be labelled as the Masculine or the Feminine of another the two forms should exhibit certain common characteristics which may be abstracted and stated as a common stem. In this paper, common stems are postulated for all forms which are treated as Masculine-Feminine correlates.

A stem, however, is not a pronounceable entity. The minimum pronounceable entity in a language is the word which has the potentiality of being used as a sentence by itself. All further classifications within the word are statements in abstraction. Abstractions are not meant to be pronounced; they can only be quoted.

It is necessary to classify the nominal forms in Sinhalese into two groups from the point of view of the category of Gender. Firstly, there are those forms which can be arranged in pairs that may be labelled as Masculine-Feminine correlates.² Secondly, there are those forms which do not exhibit any criteria for such an arrangement. The main purpose of this paper is to make a statement on the first group from a prosodic point of view³ in order to illustrate certain characteristic features in the Nominal piece in Sinhalese which would be of interest to the structural linguist as well as to the comparatist. In doing this a comprehensive phonological statement of the M/F correlates is not attempted; only certain prosodic correlations are stated. And, stem abstractions are postulated only for the examples under consideration. The forms constituting the second group will be handled in even lesser detail.

M/F correlates are of three types :

- (i) Those whose correspondences and differences are storable mainly in phonological terms.

kukula/kikili (cock/hen)
balla/bælli (dog/bitch)

2. Henceforth named 'M/F correlates.'

3. For prosodic theory of linguistic analysis see,
 Allen, W. S. 'Some Prosodic aspects of Retroflexion and Aspiriation in Sanskrit.' *BSOAS* XIII 4.
 'Retroflexion in Sanskrit,' *BSOAS* XVI, 4.
 Carnochan, J. 'Glottalization in Hausa', *TPS*, 1952.
 Firth, J. R. *Papers in Linguistics 1934-1951*.
 Henderson, E. J. A., 'Prosodies in Siamese,' *Asia Major*, i, 2.
 Palmer, F. R., 'The Verb in Bilin,' *BSOAS*, XIX, 1.

- (ii) Those whose correspondences and differences are storable mainly in morphological terms.

sinhaya/sinhā denā (lion/lioness)
eluva/elu denā (goat : buck/doe)

- (iii) Those whose correspondences and differences are storable both phonologically and morphologically.

ataa/ætinni (elephant/she elephant)
nayaa/næyini (cobra/female cobra)
muvaa/muvætti (deer : buck/doe)

In order to state the phonological correspondences and differences between the M/F correlates of Type I two prosodic elements of structure are postulated as \bar{Y} and \bar{Y} . The exponents of \bar{Y} -prosody include frontness in articulation, whereas the exponents of \bar{Y} -prosody include absence of frontness in articulation. \bar{Y} -prosody is stated as an element of structure only in forms which are characterised by a front articulation all through. Where there is no front articulation all through, \bar{Y} -prosody is stated as an element of structure. In other words \bar{Y} and \bar{Y} in this paper are meant to be word prosodies and not syllable prosodies.

In correlates such as *kukula/kikili*, *balla/bælli*, *kukka/kikki*, *daruva/dæriivi*, the absence of front articulation all through the word in the first member and the presence of front articulation all through the word in the second member correspond to the stating of \bar{Y} and \bar{Y} prosodies for the two words concerned. Naming the \bar{Y} forms 'Masculine' and the \bar{Y} forms 'Feminine' it is possible to state for them the following generalised structure in which S = stem and E = ending.

Masculine	Feminine
\bar{Y}	\bar{Y}
—	—
S—E	S—E

As the Nominals in question also constitute the first member of certain compounds it is profitable to take those forms also into consideration in setting up the stems. For instance, there are the forms *balla*, *bælli* as well as *balu-kama*. Similarly

kolla/kella *kolu-gætaya* (boy/girl little lad)
kaakka/kæækki *kaaku-bææna* (crow/she crow a kind of crows)
vassa/væssi *vasu-pætiya* (calf/heifer little calf)
pissa/pissi *pissu-miniha* (mad man/mad woman mad man)

A consideration of all three instances, e.g. *kolla*, *kellə*, and *kolu-*, *vassa*, *vəssi*, and *vasu-*, *pissa*, *pissi*, and *pissu-* facilitates the setting up of common stems whence such features as gemination and absence of gemination can be brought into focus of attention. As far as *vassa*, *vəssi* and *vasu-* are concerned there is a long sibilant articulation in *vassa* and *vəssi* whereas there is a short sibilant articulation in *vasu-*, which characteristics can be abstracted and stated as gemination and absence of gemination respectively by setting up only one phonematic unit in the stem structure. Not so, however, in *pissa*, *pissi* and *pissu-*, where a long sibilant articulation is observable in all three forms, whence gemination and absence of gemination may not be stated.

The above note is to explain the final element in the stem structures set up henceforth.

An -ə ending is stated for both M. and F.

Then the generalised phonological structure (without marking gemination etc). of the M. form *kolla* will be

$$\frac{Y}{K\epsilon L - \text{ə}}$$

and that of the F. form *kellə* will be

$$\frac{Y}{K\epsilon L - \text{ə}}$$

In order to focus attention on this characteristic feature of M/F correlates I set out below the generalised phonological structures of some forms chosen at random.

$\frac{\bar{Y}}{D \alpha R - \text{ə}}$ <p><i>daruva</i></p>	D α R-	$\frac{Y}{D \alpha R - \text{ə}}$ <p><i>dəriivi</i></p>
$\frac{\bar{Y}}{PiSS - \text{ə}}$ <p><i>pissa</i></p>	PiSS-	$\frac{Y}{PiSS - \text{ə}}$ <p><i>pissi</i></p>
$\frac{\bar{Y}}{V \alpha S - \text{ə}}$ <p><i>vassa</i></p>		$\frac{Y}{V \alpha S - \text{ə}}$ <p><i>vəssi</i></p>

$\frac{\bar{Y}}{B \alpha L \text{ ə } L - \text{ə}}$ <p><i>balala</i></p>	B α L ə L-	$\frac{Y}{B \alpha L \text{ ə } L - \text{ə}}$ <p><i>bələli</i></p>
$\frac{\bar{Y}}{V \alpha D i R - \text{ə}}$ <p><i>vaṅḍura</i></p>	V α D i R-	$\frac{Y}{V \alpha D i R - \text{ə}}$ <p><i>vəṅḍiri</i></p>

II

In the M/F correlates of Type II a suffix *denə* is storable for the F. The generalised structure of these forms is as follows:—

- M. : S + inflexion
- F. : S + *denə* + inflexion

e.g.

M. <i>sinhəya</i> ,	F. <i>sinhə denə</i>	Lion, lioness
M. <i>eluva</i> ,	F. <i>elu denə</i>	goat : buck, doe.
M. <i>haava</i> ,	F. <i>haa denə</i>	hare : buck, doe.
M. <i>nariya</i> ,	F. <i>nari denə</i>	jackal, female jackal.

III

As for the correlates of Type III, non-front articulations are observed in the M. and front articulations in the F. forms, which correspond to the stating of \bar{Y} and Y prosodic features. In addition the F. forms have a suffix -ni or -ti. The juncture features between the stem and the suffix include a vocalic articulation and often also a tense consonantal articulation storable as gemination.

e.g.

$\frac{\bar{Y}}{\alpha T - \text{ə}}$ <p><i>əttaa</i></p>	α T—	$\frac{Y}{\alpha T - \text{ə} - NI}$ <p><i>ətinni</i></p>
$\frac{\bar{Y}}{N \alpha Y - \text{ə}}$ <p><i>nayaa</i></p>	N α Y-	$\frac{Y}{N \alpha Y - \text{ə} - NI}$ <p><i>nəyini</i> (non geminate junction)</p>

GENDER IN COLLOQUIAL SINHALESE

M i V—

Ȳ

M i V—_o
muvaā

Y

M i V—_o—T i
muvaṭṭi

The Pronominal forms substitutable for the M. Nominal forms include *uu* and *ohu* etc. which are not substitutable for the F. Nominal forms. The Pronominal forms substitutable for the F. Nominal forms include *ææ* which is not substitutable for the M. Nominal forms. Therefore the Pronominal forms *uu/ohu* and *ææ* are further criteria for classifying M. and F. forms into two compartments. On these grounds the forms which do not constitute correlates can also be classified as M. or F. according to the Pronominal functioning.

Among forms which do not fall into the group called M/F correlates, not all forms can be named M. or F. according to the Pronominal functioning. There are forms for which *uu* or *ææ* cannot be substituted. The Pronominal form substitutable for them is *eekə*. On these grounds those forms may be classified into a still different type which may be called the Neuter forms.

Thus for instance, *mali* (younger brother) will be M. *nangi* (younger sister) will be F., but they are not correlate forms. *potə* (book) will be Neuter.

The foregoing is an attempt to set up Gender as a grammatical category in Colloquial Sinhalese from a formal point of view. It is presumed that the observations made in this paper hold good for any Modern language. What, for instance, are the formal criteria for establishing 'hen' as the Feminine of 'cock' in English except where they have some inflexional status as in 'pea-cock' and 'pea-hen'?

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