

7. Enunciative Vowel in Dravidian

HERE seems to be two groups of words in the Dravidian languages in which the vowel endings *u* and *a* occur. In one group these vowels behave in the same way as the rest of the vowel sounds of the language when they are combined with other sounds. But, in the other group they behave differently. An attempt is made here to prove that these vowel sounds as occurring in the second group are later additions.

Tolkāppiyam, the earliest extant grammar of the Tamil language, states that the sound *u*, joined to a plosive, coming at the end of words is pronounced with less quantity of sound than the normal *u*, if the plosive is preceded by a long syllable or polysyllable.¹ In classifying the words which have this *u* sound it says that they are those words in which the plosive, to which the *u* is added, is immediately preceded by (1) a long syllable, (2) polysyllable, (3) a semi-vowel, (4) the aspirate *h* (*āyṭam*), (5) a plosive, or (6) a nasal.² The following examples may be given for these six different classes of words:—

nāku "a cow," *varaku* "a kind of grain," *teḷku* "a flea," *chku* "steel,"

koḷku "a crane" and *kurāṅku* "a monkey."

It also states in another sūtra that in the noun denoting relationship, which begins with the syllable *nu*, the quantity of the *u* sound is less than normal.³ The commentator Naccinārkkīyār gives the word *nuntai* meaning "your father" as the example.

¹ Tol. Eḷ. Sūt. 36.

² Tol. Eḷ. Sūt. 406.

³ Tol. Eḷ. Sūt. 67. The expression *murai ppeyar* used in the sūtra may also be taken as plural; in which case it should be translated as "nouns denoting relationship." If the expression is taken as plural, it would mean that there existed in the time of *Tolkāppiyam* several words denoting relationship beginning with the syllable *nu*. But the commentator takes the expression as singular. Is it to be inferred from this that all other such words except *nuntai*, mentioned by him, were lost in his time?

The old grammarians held the view that the full quantity of the sound of the vowel *u* was one *mātrā*, whereas the quantity of the *u*, thus shortened, was half. Evidently the difference of the quantity of the sound between the two was determined by the ear. Naccinārkkiniyar thinks that the difference between the *u* sounded fully, and the *u* sounded less than the quantity apportioned, is due to the fact that the former is pronounced with the lips rounded fully whereas the latter is not. He gives the following words as examples:—*kātu*, *kaṭṭu*, *kattu*, *murukku* and *teruttu*. In these examples when the final *u* is pronounced without properly rounding the lips, the words are nouns; whereas when they are pronounced properly rounding the lips, then they become imperatives.⁴

Reduced Sound.	Full Sound.
<i>kātu</i> "a ear"	"(you) dig"
<i>kaṭṭu</i> "a knot"	"(you) tie"
<i>kattu</i> "a cry"	"(you) cry"
<i>murukku</i> "a kind of tree"	"(you) destroy"
<i>teruttu</i> "informing"	"(you) inform"

Tolkāppiyam says that words of this kind vary in meaning in accordance with the way in which the final *u* is pronounced. But in the noun of relationship shown before, where the *u* occurs in the initial syllable with the dental *n*, there will be no difference in meaning due to the way in which the *u* is pronounced. *Tolkāppiyam* gives only this word with the reduced sound of *u* in the first syllable. From this it may be conjectured that many more words with the short *u* in the initial syllable existed before the time of *Tolkāppiyam*. But all of them except the word *nuntai* are lost.

It is clear from this that there existed two groups of words in the language wherein the reduced sound of *u* occurred. One group had the reduced *u* in the initial syllable, and the other had it at the end of the word. In the first group of words the reduced quantity of the *u* sound might have resulted through laziness of pronunciation.

Let us now analyse the reduced *u* sound which occurs at the end of words. This *u* disappears as soon as a word beginning with a vowel immediately follows it. Examples:

<i>nāku</i> + <i>aritu</i> > <i>nāk-aritu</i>	"the cow is precious."
<i>pattu</i> + <i>ātai</i> > <i>paṭṭ-ātai</i>	"the silk-cloth."
<i>teḷku</i> + <i>iḥtu</i> > <i>teḷk-iḥtu</i>	"this is flea."

When a word beginning with a vowel follows them, these words behave as if they ended in consonants. In fact it is possible that words of this kind might have originally ended in consonants, and the *u* may be a later addition. It is owing to this fact that, when a word with initial vowel comes after it, the

4. See comm. of Nac. under *Sūt.* 68 of *Tol. Eḷ.*

speaker is unconsciously reminded that the preceding word had the consonantal ending and he simply joins to it the initial vowel of the succeeding word. In this circumstance he entirely forgets the *u* sound.

Again, in the chapter on prosody in *Tolkāppiyam*, the plosives attached to the reduced *u* are sometimes counted for purposes of metre and sometimes not. In the examples given under the *sūtras* 348-352 which give the number of syllables that have to come in each line, the commentator Pērāciriyaar takes the plosives attached to the reduced *u* as consonants. Under *sūtra* 356⁵ also *Tolkāppiyam* prohibits the short *u* being counted for purposes of metre. During the period of *Tolkāppiyam*, grammarians were wavering as regards the plosives joined to the reduced *u* sound as to whether they should regard them as consonants or distinct syllables. This fact also proves that this *u* sound was a later addition.

In the grammar *Nannūl* it is mentioned that when the semi-vowel *y* follows words ending in consonants other than *y*, an euphonic vowel *i* is sometimes joined to these consonants.⁶ Examples:

<i>vēḷ</i> + <i>yāvaṇ</i> > <i>vēḷ-i-yāvaṇ</i>	"who is the Vēḷ?"
<i>maṇ</i> + <i>yātu</i> > <i>maṇṇ-i-yātu</i>	"which is the soil?"

In a similar connection *Tolkāppiyam* says that when the semi-vowel *y* follows a word ending in a short *u*, the short *u* sound disappears, and an *i* sound appears in its place.⁷ This *i* sound is called short *i*. Example:

<i>nāku</i> + <i>yātu</i> > <i>nāk-i-yātu</i>	"which is the cow?"
<i>kuvaṅku</i> + <i>yātu</i> > <i>kuvaṅk-i-yātu</i>	"which is the monkey?"

From these statements it is clear that the words ending in short *u* were considered as having consonant endings when the semi-vowel *y* comes after it. This also shows that the words now having the short *u* ending were originally consonantal endings.

Let us now see what happens to this sound when it is followed by a consonant. It has been already shown that the quantity of sound for this short *u* is half a *mātrā*. But in a word wherein the plosive to which it is joined is preceded by another plosive (No. 5 of the classification shown above) the sound of this vowel is still further reduced, when it is followed by a word beginning with a plosive.⁸ The commentator gives the following examples:

<i>kokku-k-kaṭitu</i>	"the crane is tough."
<i>kokku-k-kaṭumai</i>	"the toughness of the crane."

5. *Tol. Ceyyuliyal.*

6. *Nannūl. Sūt.* 206.

7. *Tol. Eḷ. Sūt.* 410.

8. *Tol. Eḷ. Sūt.* 37 and 409

But, in other cases, when a consonant follows it, there is no reduction of its half *mātrā*. Examples :

<i>nāku karitu</i>	" the cow is black."
<i>nāku ciritu</i>	" the cow is small."
<i>nāku litu</i>	" the cow is bad."
<i>nāku pēritu</i>	" the cow is large."
<i>nāku nanru</i>	" the cow is good."
<i>nāku māṭi</i>	" the greatness of the cow."
<i>nāku valitu</i>	" the cow is strong."

As regards this vowel, Caldwell thinks that it is a very weak vowel, which is largely used at the end of words, for euphonic purposes or as a help to enunciation. If it is an enunciative vowel it has to be analysed as to when it could have been added to these words. Perhaps the Dravidian language, the ancestor of the present Dravidian group of languages, might have had words ending in plosives—a phenomenon which is against the rules of all the present cultivated Dravidian languages. But, this fact is still to be found in some of the ruder dialects of the Dravidian group.

Kōta :	<i>tinalik</i> , the infinitive of the root <i>tin</i> —" to eat."
Gond :	<i>ōrk</i> —" they."
	<i>āndurk</i> —" they are " or " they were."
	<i>nāwork, tammurk</i> —" my brothers."
	<i>selārk</i> —" my sisters."
	<i>amāt</i> —" we."
	<i>imāt</i> —" ye."
Rājmahāl :	<i>ari, ort</i> —" one."
Orāon :	<i>nāch</i> —" four."
Brahui :	<i>hulīk</i> —" horses."
	<i>irat</i> —" two."
	<i>asit</i> —" one."
	<i>musit</i> —" three."
	<i>pāhlt</i> —" milk."
	<i>telt</i> —" scorpion."

The ending of the words in plosives when the plosives are preceded by a long syllable or polysyllable might have synchronised with the period of the Aryan language when it was possible for words to end in plosives. But when the Aryan language moved on to its Prakrit stage, it was not possible for it to have the plosive ending any more.⁹ All the plosive endings were changed to vowel-endings. Since the two languages Aryan and Dravidian were in the same linguistic field this change might have affected the Dravidian language also. Therefore, when the Dravidian language split up into various dialects such as Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Tulu and others, similar changes might have taken place. But Tamil seems to have preserved the final plosive without any change by suffixing this vowel.

The suffixing of this enunciative vowel though it at first originated in Tamil to preserve the final plosives, was later on extended to all consonant

are in the Sangam Texts a few instances of words ending in this vowel in it is joined to consonants other than plosives. Examples :

<i>ioṇannu</i>	" melody."
<i>iiṇpullu</i>	" encircling."

Examples like these are not many in the Sangam Texts. But in the later age they are frequently met with. Examples :

<i>ponnu</i>	" gold,"	<i>villu</i>	" bow,"	<i>kaṇṇu</i>	" eye,"	<i>kallu</i>	" stone,"	<i>vinṇu</i>	" heaven,"
<i>maṇṇu</i>	" earth."								

In the case of words in which the short *u* is attached to the plosive, the *u* also disappears when it is followed by a vowel. Examples :

<i>villu</i>	+ <i>otintatu</i>	>	<i>vill-otintatu</i>	" the bow broke."
<i>kallu</i>	+ <i>erintān</i>	>	<i>kall-erintān</i>	" he threw a stone."
<i>vinṇu</i>	+ <i>aṭaintān</i>	>	<i>vinṇ-aṭaintān</i>	" he reached heaven."

In the other cultivated Dravidian languages also the use of this vowel is found. In Telugu every word ends in a vowel. But if the word does not normally end in a vowel, then the *u* is suffixed to the last consonant. Examples :

<i>gūnu</i>	" a humped-back."
<i>kolanu</i>	" a tank."
<i>pēnu</i>	" a louse."
<i>illu</i>	" a house."
<i>kaṇnu</i>	" an eye."
<i>mullu</i>	" a thorn."
<i>kālu</i>	" a leg."

Caldwell says that though the *u* is written in Telugu, it is often dropped in pronunciation. In combination with another vowel, as in Tamil, the *u* is dropped. Example :

Rāmudu + *iccenau* > *Rāmud-iccenau*.

In the Tulu language also this enunciative *u* is frequently met with. Examples :

<i>ānu</i>	" a boy,"	<i>dēveru</i>	" god,"	<i>mardu</i>	" medicine,"	<i>jivcdu</i>	" in life,"	<i>belegu</i>	" to work."
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This *u* is dropped when a vowel follows it. Examples :

<i>tūdu</i>	+ <i>itte</i>	>	<i>tad-itte</i>
<i>gontu</i>	+ <i>ijji</i>	>	<i>gont-ijji</i> .
<i>baredu</i>	+ <i>āṇdu</i>	>	<i>bared-āṇdu</i> .

The Kannada language too has words with the enunciative *u*. Examples :

<i>mātu</i>
<i>avanu</i>

Patirruppattu : Stz. 65, line 15.

Kalittokai : *Pālai*, Stz. 3, line 13.

9. See p. 76. *L'Indo-Aryan*—J. Bloch.

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This *u* is elided when it is followed by another vowel. Examples :

mātu + ādu > māt-ādu
avanu + illa > avan-illa.

Originally, Malayalam seems to have had the enunciative *u* attached to the plosives. Examples :

nēppu " fineness."
noccu " minute."
paḱatu " a small bit."
paṅku " a share."

This seems to have been extended later on to other consonants. Examples :

nonnu " gums."
nōvu " pain."

This *u* is elided when a vowel follows it. Examples :

veytu + illa > veyt-illa.
avannu + alla > avann-alla.

So far we have discussed the *u* used as the enunciative vowel. From the earliest times the vowel *a* also seems to have been used as the enunciative vowel.

In the sūtra No. 389 in *Eḷuttatikāram* in *Tolkāppiyam* the last line ends with the word *ācīriyarka*. The term *ācīriyarka* means " to the author." Also in another sūtra in *Collatikāram* *Tolkāppiyam* says that the post-position *ku* denoting the dative may also have the form *ka* in poetry.¹² When this post-position *ku* is added to a word, the expression naturally becomes one with the short *u* ending. In the same way, if *ka* is permissible as a dative post-position, then the expression will also become one with a short *a* ending. *Tolkāppiyam* says that it is a poetic form ; hence it must be older than *ku*.

This kind of vowel *a* used for enunciative purposes in place of the vowel *u* is very often met with in Tamil literature. There are examples in the Saṅgam as well as in the Medieval texts. In the following examples the final *a* is elided when a vowel follows it :

tuvaitta + amp̄ir > tuvaitt-amp̄ir. (*Puram* 4).
taruka + ena > taruk-ena. (*Patirruppattu* 38).
ūt̄aruka + ena > ūt̄aruka-ena. (*Cīlap* I, line 62).
unta + it̄am > unt-it̄am. (*Tirukkōvai* 233).
inta + it̄am > int-it̄am. (*Tirukkōvai* 223).

Along with these examples the following colloquial forms are worthy of consideration :—

cit̄ara + aṭ̄ittan > cit̄ar-aṭ̄ittan.
anta + anta > ant-anta.
enta + enta > ent-enta.

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The enunciative vowel *a* exists in Tulu also. It is elided when a vowel follows it. Examples :

prītita + ākuḷa > *prītit-ākuḷu.*
bēleda + ākuḷu > *bēled-ākuḷu.*

In Malayalam also this reduced sound of *a* exists. Caldwell observes that the short *a* sometimes replaces the short *u* of Tamil. This process is peculiar to the people in South Malabar. In the following examples the short *a* is elided when another vowel follows it :—

ceyka + upakāram > *ceyk-upakāram.*
panna + atu > *pann-atu.*
nalla + antam > *nall-antam.*
amma + accan > *amm-accan.*
iḷaya + appar > *iḷay-appar.*

Though *u* was the enunciative vowel used by *Tolkāppiyam*, we find from these instances that the vowel *a* also was used for that purpose. This may be due to the fact that the original vowel that was used for the purpose of enunciation might have been a type of vowel sound which was capable of being confused as *u* or *a*.

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