4. Secondary Symbols and Consonant-Vowel Combinations

1. Review

Telugu vowels can be written either in their stand-alone (or primary) form or in a secondary (or intra-syllabic) form. The secondary symbols were discussed shown in Chapter 3. These intra-syllabic forms are essential to master the material in this chapter.

2. Telugu Syllables

In Telugu, a phonetic language, any of the consonants can form a syllable with any of the vowels. Using a notation popularized by computer scientists, a syllable can be defined as follows:

Syllable = [Onset +] Nucleus [+Soda]

The notation is interpreted as follows. Anything inside the square brackets is optional and can be repeated optionally many times. So a syllable is (a) the Nucleus occurring in isolation OR (b) one or more Onsets followed by a Nucleus OR (s) a Nucleus followed by one or more Soda OR (d) one or more Onsets followed by a Nucleus followed by one or more Soda. Using this notation, a Telugu syllable can be defined as follows:

Telugu Syllable = [Pure consonant +] Single Vowel [+Pure consonant]

Now, let us study the four categories of Telugu syllables.

Category (a): A single vowel in the place of the nucleus.

Example:

A, a; Ī, I; AṁaM

Category (b): A single pure consonant followed by a single vowel or several pure consonants followed by a single vowel.

Example:

ū + Ī = ġ
k̂ + I = kI
d̄ + 3 = ā
p̂ + O = pO
d + Aṁ= nm
### 3. Patterns in SV Combinations

Indeed, any consonant, in its pure form, can be combined with any of the vowels. These are called consonant-vowel combinations, or simply SV combinations. Assuming that we are interested only in the 32 consonants and the eleven vowels, there are 32 x 11 = 352 SV combinations. Although almost all these SV combinations occur routinely, it is not difficult to memorize them once the pattern is mastered.

For example, the combination of vowels with the first consonant û are shown below.

Note 1. Notice that وحدة and الوحدة are not included in the above two tables; they are rarely used, if ever, in practice.

Note 2. Notice the intra-syllabic forms of the vowels A, ü, «, », E, ², ³ and ⁴ go on the top of the consonant symbol. For Ù, this rule is violated; the intra-syllabic forms are appended to the right of the CV combination Ù ka. The intra-syllabic form of ² also deviates from the pattern; part of it goes above the character and part below.

With the above pattern in mind, it is not difficult to write the CV combinations of any other consonant. For instance, the sequence of CV combinations of the pure consonant Ð (sc^) runs as follows:
3. Exceptions to the Rules

The letters s and p seem to provide an exception to the general rule in writing SV combinations. Careful examination of these letters show that they are very similar in appearance; the difference is in the gap between the so-called "head band" and the base of the letters s and p. Due to this, it is instructive to list the pattern of SV combinations for these two letters. First, for (sa) and then for (pa).

There are some more exceptions. (We need images to show the differences)

(a) While writing the SV combinations for (ya), the combination (ya + i = yi). Note how this departed from the general rule. The pronunciation of this letter is almost identical to that of the vowel (i).

(b) The SV combination c + O is written as cO and SeuA. However, the SV combination Ė + 3 is preferentially written as ŧ .

(s) The correct way of writing the SV pair m + I is VIu, not ViU.

(d) The correct way of writing the SV pair j + u is j∑, not ju and not jw.

(e) The correct way of writing the SV pair p + u is pw not pu.

(f) The correct way of writing the SV pair v + u is vw not vu, because the latter is the letter 'ma'.

(g) The correct way of writing the SV pair bh + a is 6, not b$.

4. Vocabulary Session

Read the following aloud.

(1.) The following words are of CA-Ca format, that is, a consonant + the long vowel A followed by consonant + the short vowel a.
2.) The following words are of CA-Cu format, that is, a consonant + the long vowel A followed by consonant + the short vowel u.

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
dz & pA-lu \text{ milk} \\
\ddz & cA-lu \text{ enough} \\
\dd & cA-vu \text{ death} \\
\dd & vA-Du \text{ he} \\
\dd & tA-Du \text{ rope} \\
\dd & rA-ju \text{ king} \\
\end{array}
\]

3.) The following words are of CU-Cx format, that is, a consonant + long vowel U followed by consonant + short vowel x, where x is any short vowel sound.

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
j & sU-di \text{ needle} \\
\dd & dUdi \text{ cotton} \\
\dd & pU-ja \text{ worship} \\
\dd & mU-Ta \text{ bundle} \\
\dd & nU-ru \text{ hundred} \\
\end{array}
\]

4.) The following words are of CaM-CV format, that is, a consonant + the vowel aM followed by a consonant + a short vowel. Note, in this case aM is pronounced almost as an.

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
r & paM-Du \text{ fruit} \\
r & baM-Di \text{ cart} \\
r & baM-ti \text{ ball} \\
\end{array}
\]

5.) The following words are of CE-CV format.
6.) The following words are of Ce-CV format.

\[ ř\] pE-ru name
\[ Š\] mEka goat
\[ Ž\] nE-la ground, floor
\[ Ž Ž\] nE-nu I
\[ Ž Ž\] mE-nu we

7.) The following mono-syllabic words are of CV format.

\[ ě\] nA my
\[ Ŧ\] mA our
\[ Ž\] mI your
\[ Ž\] mE May

8.) The following two-syllabic words are of V-CV format.

\[ ěû\] a-di that
\[ ěf\] a-Tu that way
\[ Ŏ\] ? e-Tu? which way?
\[ ě\] a-vi those
\[ ě\] E-vi? which ones?
\[ ě\] A-me she (remote)
\[ Ū\] i-di this
\[ Ū\] i-Tu this way
\[ Ū\] i-vi these

9.) The following words are of CV-CV format.

\[ Ť Ū\] mA-di ours (possessive, singular object)
10.) The following three-syllabic words are of V-CV-CV format.

EEY? e-va-ru? who?
Enū G? eM-du-ku why?
EnvūY? eM-da-ru? how many (people)?
²E? E-mi-Ti? what?

11.) The following words illustrate the spelling equivalence of the vowel ́ (au) with the V-CV combination AA(a-vu) and the vowel ̀ (ai) with the V-CV combination AÂ (a-yi).

AÕ pau-nu  rəO pa-vu-nu pound
́O au-nu  AœO a-vu-nu yes
E mai-lu  y Â E ma-yi-lu mile
nm pai-kaM  rĂ wm pa-yi-kaM money
zm mai-naM  y Â zm ma-yi-naM wax

12.) The following are simple sentences.

vA-ru  rA-ju He (respectful) king He is a (the) king
vA-ru  o-ka rA-ju He is a king
vA-rE rA-ju He is the king
paM-Du ti-nu fruit eat eat (the) fruit
pA-Ta pA-Du song sing sing (a) song
i-di ma-na pa-ni this our work this (is) our work

Exercises 1. Read the following simple words and pay attention to their meaning.

rR (i. verb) pa-Du fall
2. Read the following compound words and pay attention to their meaning.

\[ \text{dž́} \] (t. verb) pA-Du sing
\[ \text{wxm} \] ka-laM pen
\[ \text{ĩ xũ} \] kAlaM time
\[ \text{y zm} \] ma-naM we
\[ \text{ț zm} \] mAnaM dignity

3. Read the following simple sentences and pay attention to their meaning.

\[ \text{k sũ} \] nA ga-di my room
\[ \text{k Rě} \] nA- ce-vi my ear
\[ \text{a ṭ} \] A-me sI-ta she (is) Sita

4. Read the following question words aloud and ask an associate to help correct the pronunciation. Notice all the question words in Telugu begin with \( E \) or \( ì \) and those in English begin with ‘w’ or ‘h’.

\( \text{ɛ} ? \) \( \text{E} ? \) which?
\( \text{ɛt} ? \) \( \text{E-mi-Ti?} \) what?
\( \text{ɛG} ? \) \( \text{e-ppu-Du?} \) when?
\( \text{ɛmù G} ? \) \( \text{eM-du-ku?} \) why?
\( \text{ɛB} ? \) \( \text{e-lA?} \) how?
\( \text{ɛwAŚ} ? \) \( \text{e-kka-Da?} \) where?
\( \text{ɛEY} ? \) \( \text{e-va-ru?} \) who?
\( \text{ɛmù} ? \) \( \text{eM-ta?} \) how much?
\( \text{ɛmù} ? \) \( \text{eM-da-ru?} \) how many (people)?
\( \text{ɛQ} ? \) \( \text{e-nni?} \) how many (things)?
\( \text{ɛf} ? \) \( \text{e-Tu?} \) which way?
5. Read the following.

± E ṣ d θ? E-mi-Ti kA-vA-li? what (do you) want?
E₃ R £θ nũ? e-ppu-Du va-stuM-di? when (will it or she) come?
EB 3f āũ? e-IA ve-LLA-li? how (does one) go?
Ef 3f āũ? e-Tu ve-LLA-li? which way (to) go?
EnpÝ ĝčÉ? eM-da-ru pi-lła-lu? how many children?
EvÁŠ Unũ? e-kka-Da uM-di? where (is) she or it?
EEÝ d Ŷ? e-va-ru vAru? who (are) they?
l ũ Enm? idi eM-ta? how much is this?

6. Write the following words on a ruled paper.

Unũ; nũũ; Hũũ; ũ ~ 8 ~ HũR G; y sR; Í R K; l nK £

7. *Read the following interrogative and imperative sentences. If you understand what they mean, answer them.

3 ṇ Ŷ? ml pE-ru?
3 dũ ḷ t? ml ci-ru-nA-mA?
3 ã Ŷ? ml U-ru?
l ə Efũθ? i-vi e-va-ri-vi?
l ũ ʊ o ˌ ð ˌ i-LA rA
l wÁš ʒ ] AÝ i-kka-Da kU-rcO
AwÁš a K a-kka-Da Agu
l ū ɹ R i-di eU-Du

8. *Read the following sentences and guess their meaning

« ŧ Ŷ k ū I kA-ru nA-di
± E ṣ d θ? E-mi-Ti kA-vA-li?
Enũ G ṣ d θ> eM-du-ku kA-vA-li?
l ə Efũθ? i-vi e-va-ri-vi?
l ũ ã ə i-di A-vu
̂ a η œ a A-me sl-ta
Appendix 3.

A Comparison of Telugu writing with other Indian Languages.

The beginner can safely skip this.

There are certain irregularities in composing Telugu letters. Some of these are briefly presented here. There is no suggestion that one system in one language is better. The intent here is to point out the differences for comparison purposes.

First, consider the task of writing double consonants. In general the rule is to use one of the consonants in its primary form and one in its secondary form. Consider the double consonant in åvuµ, Here the primary form is vu and the secondary form is µ. Notice how the secondary form is totally different from the primary. Now compare how the same letter is written in Tamil. In Tamil åvuµ is written as \( \text{A} \text{-} \text{Õ} \text{-} \text{మ} \); here the secondary form is merely the primary form with a dot on the top to signify that it is a secondary form. In Hindi åvuµ is written as \( \text{A} \text{-} \text{Õ} \text{-} \text{మ} \); here the secondary form is merely the primary form with the vertical line suppressed. So there is no need to memorize the shape of the secondary form. Furthermore, this scheme permits Tamil and Hindi writing to proceed linearly from left to right.

Second, consider the task of writing the double consonant-vowel combination in åvuµ, amma. In Hindi this is written as ????, am`ma. In Tamil this is written as ??? am`ma. Notice, in both sases, how the secondary form of the consonant appeared first followed by the primary form. In Telugu, the primary consonant \( \text{మ} \) appeared first and the secondary form follows.

Third, in many Indian scripts about 90% of the characters are written with strokes that move in a clockwise direction. In Telugu (as well as in Kannada) most of the strokes move in a counter-clockwise direction.

The fourth issue is relevant while comparing Tamil with Telugu. Tamil has only plosives and nasals in all the five categories of consonants and manages the entire system by using the same consonant for both the voiceless and voiced plosives. Aspirates are also de-aspirated. Telugu, in contrast, has a five-category system of consonants with separate characters for voiceless, voiced aspirates, un-aspirate and nasal. Thus for a novice Telugu appears much more formidable than Tamil.

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