

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 (c) 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; , I; A , aM

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

Example:

+ = **y**

k^ + I = kI

e+ =

p^ + O = pO

f + A =

$$b^{\wedge} + aM = baM$$

$$\mathbf{\ddot{o} + \mathring{n} = \mathbf{l}}$$

$S^{\wedge} + r^{\wedge} I = SrI$; **Category (s)**: A single vowel followed by one or more pure consonants.

Example:

$$+ \mathbf{\ddot{o}} + \mathbf{\acute{a}} = \mathbf{\mathring{o}}$$

$I + s^{\wedge} + T^{\wedge} = IsT = \text{East}$ **Category (d)**: One or more pure consonants, followed by a pure vowel followed by one or more pure consonants.

Example:

$$+ \mathbf{\acute{a}} + \quad + \mathbf{\ddot{e}} = \mathbf{\mathring{s} \ddot{e}}$$

$$s^{\wedge} + T^{\wedge} + EM + p^{\wedge} = sTEMP^{\wedge} = \text{stamp}$$

Now we will systematically study specific cases that are of much use in learning Telugu.

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 $32 \times 11 = 352$ 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 are shown below.

		ā	ū	ī	ḥ	ḡ	
k^{\wedge}	ka	kA	ki	kI	ku	kU	
	ke	kE	kai	ko	kO	kau	kaM

Note 1. Notice that \mathring{c} and \mathring{ch} 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 ā, ū, ī, E, O, and go on the top of the consonant symbol. For U, this rule is violated; the intra-syllabic forms are appended to the right of the CV combination, ka. The intra-syllabic form of \mathring{c} 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 \mathring{c} (sc[^]) runs as follows:

u							
c^	ca	cA	ci	cI	cu	cU	
	ce	cE	cai	co	cO	cau	caM

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).

s							
s^	sa	sA	si	sI	su	sU	
	se	sE	sai	so	sO	sau	saM

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

- While writing the SV combinations for (ya), the combination $y + l = yi$ (ya + i = yi). Note how this departed from the general rule. The pronunciation of this letter is almost identical to that of the vowel l (i).
- The SV combination c + O is written as cO and SeuA. However, the SV combination $\ddot{i} + i$ is preferentially written as $\ddot{i}i$.
- The correct way of writing the SV pair m + I is VIu, not ViU.
- The correct way of writing the SV pair j + u is jΣ, not ju and not jw.
- The correct way of writing the SV pair p + u is pw not pu.
- The correct way of writing the SV pair v + u is vw not vu, because the latter is the letter 'ma'.
- The correct way of writing the SV pair bh + a is 6, not b\$.

4. Vocabulary Session

Read the following aloud.

- The following words are of CA-Ca format, that is, a consonant + the long vowel A followed by consonant + the short vowel a .

tA-ta grandfather

mA-ma uncle, father-in-law

vA-na rain

pA-Ta song

bA-Ta path

u kA-ya unripe fruit

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

pA-lu milk

cA-lu enough

cA-vu death

vA-Du he

tA-Du rope

rA-ju king

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.

sU-di needle

dUdi cotton

pU-ja worship

mU-Ta bundle

nU-ru hundred

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.

paM-Du fruit

baM-Di cart

baM-ti ball

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

pE-ru name

mEka goat

nE-la ground, floor

nE-nu I

mE-nu we

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

ce-vi ear

me-Da goat

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

nA my

mA our

mI your

mE May

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

A a-di that

A a-Tu that way

E ? e-Tu? which way?

A a-vi those

? E-vi? which ones?

A-me she (remote)

l i-di this

l i-Tu this way

l i-vi these

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

mA-di ours (possessive, singular object)

- mA-vi ours (possessive, plural object)
 nAdi mine (possessive, singular object)
 nA-vi mine (possessive, plural object)
 vA-ru they ((respectful, singular or plural object)

10.) The following three-syllabic words are of V-CV-CV format.

- E ? e-va-ru? who?
 E **p**? eM-du-ku why?
 E ? eM-da-ru? how many (people)?
 ? E-mi-Ti? what?

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

- | | | | |
|---------|---|-----------|-------|
| pau-nu | | pa-vu-nu | pound |
| au-nu | A | a-vu-nu | yes |
| mai-lu | | ma-yi-lu | mile |
| pai-kaM | | pa-yi-kaM | money |
| mai-naM | | ma-yi-naM | wax |

12.) The following are simple sentences.

- | | | | |
|---|------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| | vA-ru rA-ju | He (respectful) king | He is a (the) king |
| 0 | vA-ru o-ka rA-ju | He is <i>a</i> king | |
| | vA-rE rA-ju | He is <i>the</i> king | |
| | paM-Du ti-nu | fruit eat | eat (the) fruit |
| | pA-Ta pA-Du | song sing | sing (a) song |
| l | 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.

- (i. verb) pa-Du fall

(t. verb) pA-Du sing

ka-laM pen

u kAlaM time

ma-naM we

mAnaM dignity

2. Read the following compound words and pay attention to their meaning.

dU-di mU-Ta cotton bundle

u kA-li bA-Ta foot path

mE-ka tO-ka goat's tail

Avu pAlu cow's milk

uu kA-ki na-lu-pu raven black

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

nA ga-di my room

nA- ce-vi my ear

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 and those in English begin with 'w' or 'h'.

? E? which?

? E-mi-Ti? what?

E ? e-ppu-Du? when?

E **p**? eM-du-ku? why?

E ? e-lA? how?

E **s**? e-kka-Da? where?

E ? e-va-ru? who?

E ? eM-ta? how much?

E ? eM-da-ru? how many (people)?

E **o**? e-nni? how many (things)?

E ? e-Tu? which way?

5. Read the following.

	ú	?	E-mi-Ti kA-vA-li?	what (do you) want?	
E	᳚	?	e-ppu-Du va-stuM-di?	when (will it or she) come?	
E	¼		e-lA ve-LLA-li?	how (does one) go?	
E	¼		e-Tu ve-LLA-li?	which way (to) go?	
E	»	?	eM-da-ru pi-lla-lu?	how many children?	
E	š	U	?	e-kka-Da uM-di?	where (is) she or it?
E			?	e-va-ru vAru?	who (are) they?
I	E	?	idi eM-ta?	how much is this?	

6. Write the following words on a ruled paper.

U ; ; ; ; ; **p**; ; ; l

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

		?	mI pE-ru?	
			?	mI ci-ru-nA-mA?
		?	mI U-ru?	
I	E	?	i-vi e-va-ri-vi?	
I			i-lA rA	
I	š	y	¢	i-kka-Da kU-rcO
A	š			a-kka-Da Agu
I				i-di cU-Du

8. *Read the following sentences and guess their meaning

	ú			I kA-ru nA-di
	ú	?		E-mi-Ti kA-vA-li?
E	pú	?	>	eM-du-ku kA-vA-li?
I	E	?		i-vi e-va-ri-vi?
I				i-di A-vu
				A-me sI-ta

vA-Du doM-ga
E ? e-va-ru vA-ru?

9. *Write in the Telugu the following words and phrases shown in RTS.

(a) ta-la (b) gu-Di (s) po-ga (d) se-vi (e) tO-Ta (f) vA-na (g) sU-di (h) pE-ru (i) pi-lli (j) mu-kku

10. *What are the Telugu equivalents of the following?*

(a) I, (b) My, (s) Mine, (d) Our's, (e) We, (f) Us, (g) Why? (h) What?, (i) Who?, (j) This, (k) These, (l) Those, (m) Head, (n) Fruit, (o) Name, (p) Ball, (q) Goat, (r) Leg, (s) Crow, (t) Cow, (u) Milk

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 $\text{v}\mu$, Here the primary form is $\text{v}\mu$ 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 $\text{v}\mu$ is written as $\text{A-}\ddot{\mu}$ - ; 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 $\text{v}\mu$ is written as $\text{A-}\bar{\mu}$ - ; 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 $\text{v}\mu\text{a}$, amma. In Hindi this is written as $\text{am}^{\wedge}\text{ma}$. In Tamil this is written as $\text{am}^{\wedge}\text{ma}$. Notice, in both sases, how the secondary form of the consonant appeared first followed by the primary form. In Telugu, the primary consonant 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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