

Linguistic Study of Malayalam Astrological Terms Such as Raasi-rāṣi (Zodiac) With Special Reference to Borrowing

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Abstract

Borrowing also known as the lexical borrowing is the process by which a word from one language is adapted for use in another. The word that is borrowed is called a borrowed word or a loan word (Richard Norquist). Aim and Objectives of this study is to analyze the commonly used Malayalam Astrological terms such as Raasi - rāṣi (zodiac) in Malayalam with special reference on the linguistic concept Borrowing. The present paper discussed the Borrowing aspects of astrological terms in Malayalam especially Raasi (rāṣi). Astrological terms are linguistic signs representing a concept as well as an image. Majority of the technical terms are derived from Sanskrit language tradition. All terms have diverse linguistic and cultural origin. So this leads the researcher to take this aspect in terms of Linguistics, because linguistics is a science and through this scientific study of language, language of astrology can be studied.

Keywords: Malayalam Astrological Terms, Borrowing, Loan words, Tatsama terms, Tadbhava words, Raasi, Medam, Kumbham, Dhanu, etc.

Introduction

There are thousands of words that are common to both Malayalam and Sanskrit with some minor differences. The major South Dravidian languages are Malayalam, Tamil, Kannada, Tulu, etc. Tamil and Malayalam, both languages show abundant similarities with each other so they might have originated from a common Proto language called Proto Tamil Malayalam. Many scholars and common people assume that these words are from Sanskrit origin and are borrowed in Malayalam. This paper describes the identification of phonological sounds and Morphological analysis of astrological terms such as *Raasi* in Malayalam in detail. Raasi terms are pure astrological terms and the detailed descriptions are given bellow.

Aim of the Study

The main aim of this study is to analyze the commonly used Malayalam Astrological terms such as Raasi– rāśi (zodiac) in Malayalam with special reference on the linguistic concept Borrowing.

Objective

The main objective of the study is to describe the collected Malayalam astrological terms such as Raasi, to be analysed through the Linguistics concepts Phonology, Morphology and Borrowing.

Review of Literature

'Encyclopedia of Indian Astrology' by N. E. Muthuswamy, 2006, A Comprehensive Encyclopedia on Indian Astrology (Volume 1 & Volume 11) offer a detailed description of the concepts encompassing the various branches of Indian Astrology, Predictions, Combinations, Prasna, Ashtamangalaprashna, Stellar Astrology, Muhoortha, etc.

'Key Words for Astrology' by Hajo Banzhaf & Anna Haebler explains key words and key phrases for planets in signs, houses, aspects, and more. The list includes aspects for the Sun through Pluto, the Ascendant, Midheaven, and Nodes of the Moon. The interpretations are excellent even though terminologies offer some concern.

'Personal names of Kerala Christians', is the research study was done by Dr. A.M Marykutty in 1997, Published by Indian Institute of Christian Studies. This work provides an extensive coverage of most of the topics related to the identification, classification and interpretations of Kerala Christian personal names.

'A Rectification Manual: The American Presidency by Regulus Astrology', Published by Regulus Astrology LLC, 2007 Reviewed by Thomas Callanan. The title of this work, A Rectification Manual is accurate. That is exactly what this is but think about how much solid astrology is required to complete an accurate rectification.

'A linguistic study on Technical Terms of Science in Malayalam' by Mrs Meena Raveendran. R provides a comprehensive coverage of most of the topics related to the interpretations of technical terminology and the language of science.

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Methodology and Data Collection

Descriptive and objective methodologies were taken for the study. The data for the present study is collected from different sources. Secondary Data is collected through sources like books, dictionaries, other electronic Medias, Official records etc. The primary data is collected from traditional astrologers through their personal interviews.

Research Problem

The main research problems were faced through the entire data collection procedures. Terminology may vary in their pronunciation itself. Each of the astrologers' interviews was recorded properly but the style of the pronunciation and the dialectological differences in the morphological level is different as concerned with places. Also, the influence of Sanskrit and Tamil languages is a bit confusing. And, in borrowing process identification and derivation of each of the terms are difficult to judge the etymology of a particular term.

Significance of the Study

The present study provides a deeper insight into the basic structure of technical terms and gives adequate description of the phenomenon involved in its coinage. Astrological terms in Malayalam are considered as the Technical terminology and it is a specialized vocabulary. The astrological terms are used to express a great deal of information in a compact form.

Raasi

Raasi or (zodiacal sign) is the most important components of astrology. There are total of 12 Raasis (signs) are present in the astrological point of view. The zodiac of 360 degrees is divided into 12 signs. So, each sign measure 30 degrees (Muthuswami, N. E. – 1998). Every point in each sign has numerous characteristics which express themselves in the natives born on each sign. So also, when a planet during its transit, touches a point in these signs its characteristics find way in the native.

Names of Raasi or Months

Malayalam	Sanskrit	English
/mēṭam/	/mēṣa/	Aries
/iṭavam/	/vṛṣabha/	Taurus
/mithuṇam/	/midhuṇa/	Gemini
/karkkiṭakam/	/karkkiṭaka/	cancer

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/ciññam/	/simha/	Leo
/kaññi/	/kañya/	Virgo
/tulām/	/tulā/	Libra
/vṛścikam/	/vṛścika/	Scorpio
/dhañu/	/dhañus/	Sagittarius
/makaram/	/makara/	Capricorn
/kumbham/	/kumbha/	Aquarius
/miñnam/	/miñña/	Pisces

Table. 1

Phonology of Raasi

Phonology of Astrological terms consists of Phonology of Nakshathras and Raasis. Here, separate charts of Vowels and Consonants are given bellow.

Vowels

	Front	Central	Back
High	i, ī		u
Mid	ē		
Low		a, ā	

Table. 2

Consonant

		Bilabi al	Labio dental	Dental	Alveola r	Retrofl ex	Palata l	Velar	Glotta l
Plosiv e/ stop	vl			t		ṭ	c	k	
	vl as p			th					
	vd								
	vd as p	bh		dh					
	Fricative						ś		
Trill					ṛ				
Flap				r					

Nasal	m		ṅ				ñ	
Lateral				l				
Appro- ximant								
Semi vowel		v						

Table. 3

Distribution of the vowel phonemes in Raasi

Five vowel phonemes /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/ and /u/ have been found in the Astrological terminology. The short vowel phonemes found in the Raasi /i/,/u/, and /a/. Long vowel phonemes present in Raasi /ii/, /ee/ and /aa/. But in the vowel phoneme description some short and long vowel sounds are missing in Raasi. After the complete analysis of Raasi terms it is observed that the short vowel phonemes /o/ and /e/ are missing. In Raasi, the long vowel phonemes present are /ii/, /ee/ and /aa/. Here, the long vowel phonemes /oo/ and /uu/ are absent respectively. Here, Raasi terms are abbreviated as ‘RS’. Following are the descriptions of the various vowel phonemes along with their occurrences are given bellow.

Short and Long Vowel Phoneme List of Raasi (‘RS’)

Raasi (‘RS’)

Short vowels list → [i, a, u]
Long vowel list → [ii, aa, ee]

Vowels

Vowels are sounds in the production of which there is no obstruction to flow of air as it passes from larynx to lips.

Short Vowels

There is only one short vowel [i].

Word Initial Position

/rāśi/ [i,]
 Eg: / i / /iṭavam/ (RS)

Word Medial Position

/rāśi/ [i, a, u]

Eg: /i/	/karkkitakam/	(RS)
/a/	/mēṭam/	(RS)
/u/	/kumbham/	(RS)

Word Final Position

Here, Raasi has no central low vowel sound /a/ in the word final positions.

/rāṣi/		[i, u]
/i/	/kaṇṇi/	(RS)
/u/	/dhaṇu/	(RS)

Long Vowel

Word Initial Position

For Raasi, the long vowel sound /aa/ /ii/ , /ee/ and /oo/ are absent in the initial position.

/rāṣi/	Nil
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Word Medial Position

Here, for Raasi the long vowel sounds /uu/ and /oo/ in the word medial positions are absent.

/rāṣi/		[aa, ii, ee,]
/aa/	/tulām/	(RS)
/ii/	/mīṇam	(RS)
/ee/	/mēṭam/	(RS)

Word Final Position

For Raasi, there are no long vowel sounds in the word final position.

/rāṣi/	[Nil]
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Consonants

Consonants are speech sounds during the articulation of which there is an obstruction. It also occurs in word initial, medial and final positions.

/rāṣi/

Stops

There are eight stops sounds. They are **[/bh/, /k/, /ṭ/, /c/, /th/, /t/, /dh/]**

Fricatives

There are four Fricative sounds. They are [ʃ/]

Trill

There is trill sound [r/]

Flap

There is only one Flap sound /r/

Lateral

There is only one Lateral sound /l/

Nasal

There are four Nasal sounds. They are [m/, n/, ŋ/,]

Approximant

Nil

Semivowel

There are two Semivowel sounds. They are [v/]

Word Initial Position

The consonants present in Raasi /t/, /c/, /k/, /d/, /v/ and /m/. The consonants absent in Raasi is /n/, /ŋ/, /l/, /h/, /ʃ/, /j/, /t̪/, /R/, /g/, /s/, /ś/, /y/, /l/, and /l̪/. /r/, /b/ and /p/

/rāśi/ [m/, /k/, /c/, /t/, /v/, /d/]

/p/	---	(RS)
/b/	----	(RS)
/t/	/tulām/	(RS)
/d/	/dhaṇu/	(RS)
/c/	/ciñnam/	(RS)
/k/	/karkkiṭakam/	(RS)
/g/	----	(RS)
/s/	----	(RS)
/ś/	-----	(RS)
/r/	-----	(RS)
/v/	/vṛścikam/	(RS)
/y/	----	(RS)
/l/	----	(RS)
/l̪/	-----	(RS)

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/m/	/mēṭam/	(RS)
/ṇ/	-----	(RS)

Word Medial Position

The consonants which are present in Raasi are /b/, /t/, /R/, /k/, /ṇ/, r/, /l/, /v/, and/ś/. The consonant which are absent in the Raasi are /n/, /g/, /p/, /s/, /ḷ/, /ṣ/and /ḍ/.

/rāṣi/		(RS) [/t/, /v/, /ṇ/, /k/, /m/, /r/, /c/, /ṭ/, /ṇ/, g/, /l/, /ś/, /bh/ /dh/,]
/p/	-----	(RS)
/bh/	/kumbham/	(RS)
/ t/	/karkkiṭakam/	(RS)
/ R/	/vṛścikam/	(RS)
,/ ṭ/	/mēṭam/	(RS)
/m/	/kumbham/	(RS)
/dh/	/midhuṇam/	(RS)
/ḍ/	-----	(RS)
/ j/	-----	(RS)
/k	/karkkiṭakam/	(RS)
/g/	-----	(RS)
/c/	/vṛścikam/	(RS)
/ h/	-----	(RS)
/s/	-----	(RS)
/ṣ/	----	(RS)
/ ś/	/vṛścikam/	(RS)
/r/,	/karkkiṭakam/	(RS)
/v/	/iṭavam/	(RS)
/y/	-----	(RS)
/l/	/tulām/	(RS)
/ḷ/	-----	(RS)
/ḻ/	-----	(RS)
/ ṇ/	/kaṇṇi/	(RS)
/n/	-----	(RS)
/ṇ/	-----	(RS)
/ṇ/	-----	(RS)
/ṇ/	/ciṇṇam/	(RS)

Word Final Position

The consonant /m/ has terms for rāsis

/rāśi/	(RS)	[/m/]
/m/	mēṭam/	(RS)
	/iṭavam/	(RS)

Gemination

Gemination is nothing but the long consonants. The long consonants occur only medial position.

[kk, nn]		
/rāśi/	(RS)	[nn, kk]
/kk/	/kañni/	(RS)
/nn/	/karkkiṭakam/	(RS)

Consonant Cluster

When two or more consonants occur together, they are called a consonant cluster. “Cluster” means “group.”

Cluster of two consonants

Consonant cluster occur initially (-C1-C2)
/vR/ /vṛścikam/ (RS) 8thRaasi

Consonant cluster occur medially (-C1-C2)
/rk/ /karkkiṭakam/ (RS) ‘4thRaasi’

Consonant cluster occur finally (-C1-C2)
Nil (RS)

Syllable

In a linguistic system the smallest distinctive sound unit is the phoneme. Phonemes combine to form the next higher unit of expression called syllable. A syllable consists of one or more phonemes and a word is made up of one or more syllables. A syllable is a unit consisting of one vowel or syllabic consonants, which may be preceded or followed by a consonant or consonants. Syllables generally classified in to Open Syllable and Closed Syllable.

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Open syllable

If a syllable ends in a vowel it is known as Open syllables.

/kaṇṇi/ (RS) Raasi

Closed syllable

If a syllable ends in a consonant it is known as closed syllables.

/m/ /mithuṇam/ (RS) star

/m/ /mēṭam/ (RS) star

Syllabic structure

After analyzing the data collected from various source, it has been identified that , Raasi has no monosyllabic terms but have disyllabic, and trisyllabic and poly syllabic types of words. The structure of a syllable can be shown by mentioning the vowels and consonants that constitute it. The nucleus (vowel) is represented by the symbol ‘V’ and the marginal element (consonant) is represented by the letter ‘C’

Monosyllabic

Nil (RS)

Disyllabic

CVCV /dhaṇu/ (RS) 9thRaasi

Trisyllabic

VCVCVC /iṭavam/ (RS) Raasi

Polysyllabic

CVCCVCVCVC /karkkiṭakam/ (RS) 4thRaasi

CCVCCVCVC /vṛścikam/ (RS) 8thRaasi

Classification of Raasi terms based on Borrowing

Borrowing is the process of importing linguistics items from one linguistic system in to another, a process that occurs any time two cultures are in contacted over a period of time (Hoffer.L. Bates. (2002). Bloomfield (1933) is one of the first studies in which an attempt is made at classifying lexical borrowing. He distinguishes between “dialect borrowing, where the borrowed features come from within the same speech-area and Cultural borrowing, where the borrowed features come from a different language.” (Bloomfield 1933: 444). Astrological Terms are normally words, analyzable into the smaller segments. Some of the terms are compound in

structure, ie, they are the derivational terms and have at least, one free form combined with one or more bound forms. Some terms are phrasal in structure, i.e., they are longer than words and smaller than sentences. Further, it is also very difficult to trace out the correct etymology of such astrological terms. In the absence of the authentic information about such terms, it is a complicated problem to analyse them. Most of the terms have been morphemically analyzed. On analysis, it is discovered that the simple astrological terms constitute smaller number of the entire data under analysis. Such terms are purely single morphemic, ie, they have single root, and are not liable to be further segmented into more than one free form (exceptional case are there). Such terms are monopartite. They are made of one part only, called nuclear constituent. Terms are traced out under this sub class are liable to be segmented in to two or more free forms, with or without one or more bound forms. They are mostly bi or multipartite. All terms are loan words from Sanskrit and there is no change with regarded to both languages concern. In this classification Loan words with change, Loan words without change ie, Tatbhava terms are described and analyzed in detail.

Sanskrit Loan words in Raasi

Loanwords are words adopted by the speakers of one language from a different language i.e., source language. Here, minor changes in the forms of Tatsama Loanwords, since Malayalam doesnot follow the Sanskrit gender system, but follows the natural gender, words of masculine gender in Sanskrit, which are only neuter gender naturally take the suffix /-m/ (Kunjuni Raja).

/mithuṇam/	<	/mithuṇa/	coupled, mated paired
/karkkiṭakam /	<	/karkkiṭaka/	‘peshkar’ or ‘flock’
/tulām/	<	/tulā /	‘a balance’
/vṛścikam/	<	/vṛścika/	‘Obscure’
/makaram/	<	/makara/	‘a kind of a big fish’, ‘whale’
/kumbham/	<	/kumbha/	‘a kind of a big pot’
/miṇam /	<	/miṇa/	‘ fish’

Derived words in Raasi

/mēṭam/	<	/mēṣa/	‘upper storey of storeyed building’, ‘platform’
/iṭavam/	<	/vṛṣabha/	‘quarrel or compete’ and ‘time’
/ciñṇam/	<	/simha /	‘first month of the Malabar Era’
/dhaṇu /	<	/dhaṇus/	‘arc of a circle’ and ‘bow’
/kaṇṇi /	<	/kaṇṇya/	‘virgin’ or ‘mai

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Description of the derived terms

1. /cińńam/

/cińńam/ < /cińńam/ < /simha /
/cińńam/ Noun 'first month of the Malabar Era'

The Malayalam word /cińńam/ is derived from Prakrit /sińgha/. /-s-/ changes to /c-/ aspirated /g/ changes to unaspirated /g/, become /cińga/. By assimilation and suffixing of neuter suffix /-m/, get /cińńam/.

/cińńam/ < /cińga/ < /cińgha/ < Pkt. /sińgha/ < Skt. /simha/

2. /kann̄i /

/kann̄i / < /kann̄ya/
/kann̄i / Noun 'virgin' or 'maiden'

The word /kann̄i/ in Malayalam is derived from Sanskrit /kann̄ya/ by the deletion of /y/ and the /a/ is replaced by /i/

3. /dhaᅇu /

/dhaᅇu / < /dhaᅇus/
/dhaᅇu / Noun 'arc of a circle' and 'bow'

The word /dhaᅇu/ is a free morpheme and having meaning 'arc of a circle' and 'bow'. /dhanu/ in Malayalam is derived from Skt. /dhanus/ by the deletion of the final fricative sound /-s/.

4 /mēᅇam/

/mēᅇam/ < /mēᅇa/
/mēᅇam/ < /mēᅇa/ < /mēᅇa/
/mēᅇam/ → /mēᅇa/ + /m/
/mēᅇa/ Noun 'upper storey of storeyed building', 'platform'
/m/ Suffix

The Malayalam word /mēᅇam/ is derived from Skt. /mēᅇa/ by the sound change /-ᅇ-/ to /-ᅇ- / and the suffixing of the neutral form /-m/.

5 /iᅇavam /

/iᅇavam / < /ᅇᅇabha/
/iᅇavam/ < /iᅇava/ < /ᅇiᅇava/ < /ᅇiᅇava/ < /ᅇᅇabha/

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Initial /ṛ/ replaced by /i/, /bh> /v/ and /ṣ/ > /ṭ/

And an addition of /m/

/iṭavam/ → iṭa + v + am

/iṭa/	verbal root	‘quarrel or compete’
	Or	
	Noun	‘time, space between, place intervals’
/am /	Suffix	

Malayalam term /iḍavam/ id derived from Sanskrit /ṛṣabha/ by the following changes
Initial /ṛ/ replaced by /i/, /bh> /v/, /ṣ/ > /ṭ/ and the suffixing of the neuter form /-m/.

Conclusion

The present study on ‘Linguistic Study of Raasi (Zodiac) with Special Reference on Borrowing’ is an attempt to collect all the Malayalam Raasi words in Astrology and study all these words in linguistic perspectives.

For example, the constellations such as

Raasisor /rāśi/or ‘Zodiac’

/kumbham/	11 th Raasi
/makaram/	10 th Raasi

Phonological level analysis of astrological terms includes description of the vowels and consonants. And descriptions of Borrowing are also given. Those words which are in Sanskrit language have been transliterated to Malayalam. The original Sanskrit word in Devanagari scripts is translated to English and then transliterated. The Malayalam Tatbhava and Tatsama terms are emphasized in the linguistic analysis. This is intended to help anybody to be familiar with the correct pronunciation of the word. However, the structures of overall alphabetization of the words have been based on the standard Phonological principles.

This study is to enquire in to the structure of Malayalam astrological terms and the proliferation of Sanskrit and other languages influences in the formation of Malayalam astrological terminology. Most of the astrological works are done by the Aryan era during the Vedic region. So, the majority of the words are from Sanskrit. Here, the researcher studied and analyzed majority of Malayalam astrological terms and, the changes and influence between Sanskrit and Malayalam terms. At first frequently used Astrological terms are selected for linguistic analysis. I.e., the Raasis. It’s a comparative study of these astrological terms among Malayalam and Sanskrit languages. These comparisons very relevant and useful to know

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changes in Dravidian etymology and to compare it with Sanskrit. There are total of twelve Raasi's. From this study it was clear that Malayalam and Sanskrit languages has lots of similarities in many of the Linguistic levels of study.

And next study topic phonology. In this, first segment of study consists of distribution of the vowel and consonants in the collected astrological terms such as Raasi, the long and short vowels are /a/, /ā/, /ē/, /i/, /ii/, /u/. And consonants are /bh/, /c/, /dh/, /g/, /h/, /k/, /l/, /m/, /ń/, /ñ/, /r/, /R/, /ś/, /t/, /ṭ/, /th/, /v/ and /y/. And vowels in the initial, medial positions are /a/, /i/, /u/ and final positions are /i/ and /u/ respectively. Here word initial position long vowels are nil, word medial positions are /ā/, /ē/ and /ii/ and word final positions are nil respectively. And for consonants in the initial positions are [/m/, /k/, /c/, /t/, /v/, /dh/], medial and final [/t/, /v/, /ñ/, /k/, /m/, /r/, /c/, /ṭ/, /ń/, /g/, /l/, /ś/, /bh/, /dh/,] and /m/. Next is the germination process, the long consonants occur only medial position. Consonants are /tt/, /dd/, /pp/, /jj/, /vv/, /nn/, /cc/, /mm/, /kk/, /ss/, /yy/, /ṭṭ/, /ḍḍ/, /ll/. And next step is to analysis the cluster formation with two, three consonants and then the syllabic structures of Mono, disyllabic, trisyllabic and poly syllables. Then other linguistic properties like syllable, simple, compound, complex or obscure sentences. And then properties like Affixation, Compounding, Reduplication, Initialism, Acronym, Backronym, Syllabic Acronyms, Bifurcation, Amalgamation, Clipping, blending and Borrowing were, discussed. In borrowing, the loanwords, loan shift, loan blend were discussed in detail. The Tatbhava and Tatsana word list and examples are given. And the rules for the combinations in the Tatbhava and Tatsama terms are emphasized. Malayalam has appropriated a large number of Sanskrit words as Dravidianized derivative ie, Tadbhavas in the early period, and directly as Tatsamas without much change during the middle and later periods. Tadbhava forms predominate in the early literature, later Tatsama forms became numerous. As far as an Astrologer's language is concern style of the language may vary in some context of Astrological interpretations, Variations will may occur in the semantic, Socio and colloquial level. Astrological interpretations consist of two or more contextual pragmatic situation. In Astrology common factors are vast, in term of languages. The names and Raasis of grahams, AyanamsakasPramanas, etc. also little bit common in different regions in the field of Astrology. All compound and complex Astrological words have affixes. Some astrological words are combined with suffixes and some are with prefixes. While languages can be segmented into 'roots' or basic elements that constitutes words, the number of roots again are far lesser than the words and the number of combinations in which they could occur in a given language are limited.

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