

## LIPI (ALPHABET, SCRIPT).

1) *Origin.* Lipi is the record in writing of the utterances by mouth. There are scientific and non-scientific statements about the origin of lipi. In the beginning people used figures of objects to express their ideas. They were called pictorial writings and are found even now in caves in Spain and France where the aborigines lived. Gradually the pictures vanished and letters took their place.

2) *Ancient conception.* Purāṇas give a different version. People of Java believe that the script originated from Java. The voice of Indonesia, a government organ, published once a purāṇic story relating to the origin of the script. Lipi came into being in 78 A.D. Ajaśikha, a saint among the Buddhists, was the originator of the lipi. He had two disciples named Dora and Sempādā. All the three went and stayed in a village in the valley of the mountains of Kōṭaṅg. The country of Menrāṅgkāmanāl was then ruled by a King called Baka. Ajaśikha heard about this wicked King who had ordered one of his subjects to go to him daily for his food. The people were worried. They tried in secret to find out someone to subdue this tyrant. One day they approached Ajaśikha and requested him to find out a way to get relief from this cruel King. Ajaśikha sent them back promising to do something to help them. Ajaśikha sat in meditation for some time and then told his disciples thus:— "I have decided to help the people of Menrāṅgkāmanāl. Dora also should come with me. Sempādā should stay here keeping guard over my sword and clothes. Never give them to anybody but me. You should be prepared to give your life for it."

Ajaśikha and Dora went to see Baka. People discouraged them and advised them not to go to the King. But they did not heed that and straight away went to the presence of Baka. Baka started to kill them but then Ajaśikha said, "Oh King, you can eat me tomorrow. In return please give me today land as big as my headwear". Baka agreed to that and Ajaśikha spread his clothes on the ground. As Baka looked with wonder that small piece of headwear began to grow big and it grew in size to cover the whole of the country. Baka got furious at this and attacked Ajaśikha. But Baka was slain in the duel.

The people burst into joy and made Ajaśikha their King. Ajaśikha then sent Dora to his āśrama to fetch his sword and apparels, little thinking of the instructions he had given to Sempādā. Dora went and asked for the sword and apparel. But Sempādā did not give and a fight ensued in which both were killed.

Ajaśikha felt very sorry when he heard about the death of his disciples. He cursed himself for giving contradictory orders to his disciples and so wrote four lines, each containing five letters, to keep alive the memory of his dutiful disciples. Those twenty letters are the first ones written not only in Java but the whole world. They were the following:

He no co ro ko — There were two disciples.

To to so vo lo — They became enemies because they obeyed the orders of their guru.

Po dho jo yo ṅjo — Both of them were brave men.

Mo go bo do ṅgo — Both of them died.

3) *Bhārata lipis.* Different kinds of lipis were prevalent in ancient Bhārata. Lalitavistara mentions about sixty-

four kinds of lipis in Bhārata during the time of Buddha. From inscriptions on stones and other historical records it can be gathered that the basis of all the lipis had been two main lipis named Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭrī. Kharoṣṭrī was used in the northwest of Bhārata and became extinct by the 4th Century A.D. Brāhmī was the lipi universally used in Bhārata. This lipi had different forms in the north and south. The lipi in use in the south was called Drāviḍī.

Kharoṣṭī lipi was written from right to left and the Brāhmī from left to right. Even the Brāhmī was written first from right to left and gradually for the convenience of writing it was changed to one from left to right.

Linguists consider Brāhmī lipi as the base of all the lipis of Bhārata. It underwent changes in different parts and took different names. The scholars of Europe are of opinion that the Brāhmī lipi was borrowed from foreign traders in B.C. 800. Others say that the Brāhmī lipi was born out of the pictorial lipi of the Chinese. There are those who say that the Brāhmī lipi originated in Greece and Phoenicia. The great linguist Bulhar says that the Brāhmī lipi came from the Semitic languages. But Lassen and Cunningham refuted it.

There is a bundle of leaves in the hand of the idol of Brahmā in the temple of Bādāmi. Hindus believe that the Brāhmī lipi found in those leaves was written by Brahmā himself. The Aryans forgot that lipi and Vyāsa found it out. This is a statement by the Arab traveller Albarūni who came to India in the 11th century A.D.

4) *Kerala Lipi.* The Brāhmī lipi came to south India by the 3rd century A.D. Many scholars on languages say that 'Veṭṭeluttu' is a changed form of the Brāhmī lipi. The great lipi expert L.A. Ravi Varma says that 'Ēluttu' has come from the word 'Ēlu' or 'Ālu' meaning 'to mark by cuts'. The common method of writing in South India was to use a pointed stick, long metal nail or chisel to make marks on leaves, rocks or copper plates. Writing by making marks with the pointed stick (Kol) got the name 'Koleluttu'. Veṭṭeluttu, Koleluttu and Malayāṇma were the three lipis in use in Kerala. Veṭṭeluttu was in vogue in Tamilnāḍu also. But the Pallavas who were using Prakṛta language when they conquered the northern Tamilnad introduced Granthākṣara and Granthatamil there. T.K. Krishna Menon says that Granthākṣara was a false creation to write Sanskrit easily. In Pāṇḍyadeśa and Malanāḍu Veṭṭeluttu was in use even then.

The influence of the Pallavas began to wane and the Tamil lipi slowly rose into prominence. Even then Veṭṭeluttu was in vogue in the empire of Cera comprising of Malanāḍu, Mysore, Coimbatore, Salem and Toṇḍamaṇḍalam. When Tamilnāḍu came under the emperor of Vijayanagara those kings introduced Nāgarī lipi there.

Veṭṭeluttu was called Nānam Monam also. In the south instead of using 'Hari Śrī' people used to say 'Namo-nārāyaṇāya' and the first syllable 'Na' and the second one 'Mo' were used to name the language 'Nānam Monam'.

When the Malayālis started liking the Maṇipravāla they started using 'Ārya eluttu' a form of Granthalipi. This script was known as Tulu-Malayālam also. This was also born of the Brāhmīlipi. Gradually Veṭṭeluttu and Koleluttu was in use in the north of Kerala among Muslims. The Alphabets now in use by the different