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**Caste - Gender Ideology in  
Gundert's Malayalam-English Dictionary**

**Deepa Mary Joseph M.A., M.Phil.**

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### 1.1 Social Variables in Dictionaries

Language, a medium for communication, represents a speech community. 'Speech community' signifies a society that shares the same language and culture. Nevertheless, linguistic variations, on the basis of region, religion and caste differences of a social group, could also be seen in a speech community.

Social structure and social mobility are the prominent factors of language hierarchy and variations. These linguistic variations reflect overtly the different social facts of a society. In short, language and society are inter-locked.

Sociolinguistics is the study of language in relation to society (Hudson, 1980). Sociolinguistic is not only to study language in its social context but also to analyze the society from the point of view of language. This study takes up the linguistic and the social variable of a specific speech community and scientifically interprets the relation of the community and its language.

The present paper takes two social variables i.e. caste and gender to examine the Sociolinguistic nature of the Dictionary with particular reference to the Kerala society. This paper aims to study

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the significance of Sociolinguistic nature of *Malayalam-English Dictionary* by Hermann Gundert (1814-1893), a German missionary. It is written according to the western logic and includes words from the social domain. This dictionary was published in 1872; hence, it represents, among other features, the social structure of nineteenth century Kerala.

## 1.2 The Social Nature of the Kerala Society

Social stratification is one of the determining factors for social structure. Caste is the basic factor for analyzing the social stratification of Kerala. This caste consciousness is a fundamental factor for the power sphere of the socio-political culture in Kerala. The caste system in Kerala is into two major categories such as *Savarna jaati* and *avarna jaati*. The upper castes like Nambuttiri, Kṣatriya, Naayar and Ambalavasi like Warier, Nambiar, and Nambessan etc are included in to *Savarna jaati*. The lower caste as Tiiya (Ezhava), Cheruma, Pana, Pulaya and other subaltern group etc belongs to *avarna jatti*. *Avarna jaati* had been considered as untouchable and impure. The stratification based on caste in Kerala make the socio-political power hierarchy. This hierarchy made a specific language for communication.

## 1.3 Dictionary and Society

Dictionary is a book, which arranges the words in their alphabetical order with meanings, pronunciation and etymology for each of entry word or headword in same or other languages. This definition may vary according to the scientific resource. As a social production dictionary has social implications too. It means that dictionary is not merely a systematic (i.e. alphabetized) compilation of words.

Language is not a neutral and transparent means of representing social realities. Rather, it is assumed that a particular vision of social reality gets inscribed in language. The vision of reality does not serve the entire speakers equally (Ehrlich Susan and Ruth king, 1994.). These differences are created by the distinctness of social variables such as religion, caste, race, gender, age and so on. These variations reflect on the text of a dictionary.

For substantiating the sociolinguistic theory, four hypothesis are used in the analysis of the Gundert's *Malayalam-English Dictionary*.

1. Dictionary is not only a list of words but also a record of socio-political history of a given society.
2. Language plays a significant role in social construction. Therefore, it exhibits the social nature of a speech community.
3. Semantic meaning represents social mobility.
4. Ideology of a speech community may be found in the Dictionary's entry words, usages, citations etc.

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5. Social change may reflect the word meaning and its distribution. Therefore, the dictionary also reflects its own history of social evolution and social context. Social change and meanings are reciprocally connected.

#### 1.4 Methodology

According to Sociolinguistics theory, the linguistic variables is varied based on the social factors like social class, caste, gender etc. In the present study, social variables are selected from the linguistic variables like address terms, kinship terms, reference terms, dialects, castlect, usages such as citations, proverbs, example sentences etc, and loan words. This reflects the socio-political situations implicitly or explicitly. The data of the present study is collected from the *Malayalam- English Dictionary* of Gundert (1872). The Sociolinguistic methodology is used for analyzing the data.

#### 1.5 Gender Discrimination and Dictionary

Sex is a biological category that serves as a fundamental basis for the differentiation of roles, norms, and expectations in all societies. It is these roles, norms and expectations that constitute gender, the social construction of sex. (Eckert Penelope, 1997). Gender discrimination can also be found in the Gundert's Dictionary. Here are some:

**1.5.1** Gundert gives a lot of meaning for the word 'akam'(p:1). This word generally represents the specific meaning 'inside'. 'akattə', 'akattammamāṟ', 'akattavar'(p:2)etc, some compound words are also given under the head word 'akam'. The Dictionary also gives an additional meaning, for the word 'akattə' is 'in the house', followed by a citation "purekkakattu ninnu"(at home) (TR) (1)(from within). Therefore the Dictionary carries the social attitude of so called male about women means that, women should not interact in the public sphere instead they take care of the man. The descriptive meaning given by Gundert for the compound words 'akattammamāṟ', 'akattavar', 'akattar' are "Brahminichis as keeping within their house". This description signifies the restricted social space of Brahmin women confined to their own houses.

**1.5.2** 'Akattar', 'akattar' (p: 2) are the two words which have the same sense like the above reference terms. These compound words represent the man and woman respectively. Nevertheless, the meaning of the words consists of contradictory ideas. Its entry word 'akattar' refers 'master' and 'akattar' 'mistress of the house' (v1) (2). 'akattar' represents master of the world where as akattar's meaning does not have such wide representation of the society. It means both words express attitude of patriarchal division of space where men occupy the possible space and woman are confined to the domestic space. It reflects the gendered perception of power ideology of Kerala society. The compound word, 'akamaṭaṅṅuka'(p:2)also expresses the same social meaning. The dictionary meaning is 'dwell retired' and the citation is "manamaryadayode akamaṭaṅṅi irikkunna strii" (MR) (3) (the woman who respects the social codes of behavior and remains inside). This also gives the same thought and the reference "of a mussulman woman" in the bracket. Here the woman is expected to be inside the house and her respectability is founded on her being confined to the four walls of the house. Therefore, these

words and the descriptions reflect the connotative interpretation of the women's social status in Kerala society.

**1.5.3** The dictionary meaning of 'antarjanam'(p:32) as given in the dictionary is a Brahmin woman('A Brahminee'). Besides dictionary gives the reference term 'akattamma'(refer 1.5.1) in the bracket. Along with these lexical presentations, the dictionary also gives the citation "nambuutiriyute illattu oru antarjanattinu aparadham undayi" (TR) (a Brahmin woman of Nambuutiri family has committed an offence). This notion is not different from the above word construction. The subsequent headword 'antapuram', and the following usages "antapurikamaar" (females of the palace), "antapurannail visvasam" (Nal4) (faith in women) and the reference term "aattoot" (Nambuutiri's wife (explained – akathamma, akatteeyavat) (p: 79) (ref1.5.1)) are consequent to the above words. According to P Baskaranunni, a married Brahmin woman's life is strictly caged and they are not allowed to speak to other men and are not allowed even to walk on the public road.

**1.5.4** Here are some more example. The nature of caste prejudice is reflected in the word 'aparadham'(offence)(p:35). "Antarjanattinu putuccheeri muusatinte aparadham undu (TR) (She fell through putuccheeri muusatē), "Oonnte amaratam ootkku" (TP) (the blame of his offence cast on her)(p:36), "aparadha strii"(a fallen woman), "antarjanattinu vaidhavyam vannatu aparadhikkayal"(TR) (as the Brahmin woman transgressed the rules of widowhood) are the citations of the above word. The word 'aparadham' correlates equally with man and woman. Nevertheless, the dictionary gives more importance to the compound word "aparadha strii". But the word does not have male equivalent as "aparadha puruṣan"(a fallen man).

Here the usage "aparadha strii" is also related to the chastity of woman. It also highlights the horrible life of the woman. The word 'azippikka'(p:35) also reflects the same meaning. The citation is "vratam azippiccu oru kanyakaye koṭuttu" (KU) (6) (dispensed a Brahmachari from his vow). These words and citations are overtly expressing the social status of men and women in the early society.

**1.5.5** The word 'aṭannuka' (p: 12) (to submit, yield, be possessed, ruled) gives an example sentence "avali aṭanni"(she yielded). Another word 'aṭakkam'(p:11)(self-control, modesty, chastity)(V1)also gives the citation "aṭakkamua mangayavaril mumbundivaṅku"(RC117) (7)(the woman most chaste). When women are chaste, they guard themselves and require no overt coercion to remain devoted to their husband to ensure their chastity; when they are errant, force can be used by kinsmen to keep women firmly within their *striidarma* as defined by men (Uma Chakravarti, 2006). 'Aṭakkam' connotes the glorified character of a woman as prescribed by the patriarchal culture.

These ideologies get reflected in the dictionary according to the selection of the entries. The word 'anucaran', 'anucari' (follower) (p: 28) gives the citations for meaning description i.e. "anucaranmarumaayi" (AR) (the man with his followers), "anuchariyayirikkuka sarvada (KR) (follow the husband always) etc. According to these citations, the lexicographer describes the social positioning of men and women.

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**1.5.6** The words ‘uṭukka’, ‘uṭuttu’ is ‘to dress’. (p :25) . Citations are “oru peṇṇinu uṭuppan koṭutta naayar”, “uṭuppan koṭukkunnavan”(temporary husband) , “uṭuppan taratte naan”(may I marry you?).These words and citations express the marriage customs of Nairs in nineteenth century. The essential item in real marriage was not ‘tali’ tying, but the giving of a dress (*pudavakoda*) by man.

**1.5.7** Most of the lexical entries are not giving, women this due recognition. For example, the words like ‘atikaayan’(gigantic figure)(p:20), ‘atidayaaparan’(merciful man)(p:20) , ‘atipriitan’(man with great fondness)(p:21), ‘atimanuṣan’(man with super human powers)(p:21), “atimanyan”(respectable man)(p:21) refer only to masculine gender. The word “ucitam”(suitable)(p:122)is given in the dictionary along with the example sentence “sundari ratnam laphippaan ucitan”(deserving to get a beautiful woman). It also gives another masculine gender usage ‘ucitakkaran’ (a man of honor) (V1) (p: 122). The words ‘ujjvalikkuka’(shine brightly)(p: 123)and ‘uttamam’(best)(p:128) also give the usages are “ujjala veeryanaayi vazunnu” (brilliant courage) (Mud) (12)and “uttama puruṣan”(excellent man).

If we look at the description of women, we find a different usage of term, which point to women’s body, physical beauty and the like. For example the word ‘indu’ (moon) deserves to get attention based on its following citations and usages like “indumukhimaar” (simile, to refer ladies face) , “induneer aananamaar” (one whose face reflects like the moon), (CG) (13), “induneernaṭayaaḷ (Bhg) (14)(beautiful woman)etc. Along with the word “aṇi”(decoration)(p:18) give the citations like “muttaṇimulayaaḷ”(one whose breast is attractive like pearls), “aṇimalarkuzhalimaar”(one with scared hair) (RC) etc. As shown in the above examples projected on the physical terms whereas men are portrayed as bearers of virtue. The metaphorical usages reference to the woman focus on aesthetics. It represents the gender aesthetic consciousness of the lexicographer. It also expresses the male defined metaphorical expression. The metaphor and metonymy are also used to depict woman as an aesthetic object.

**1.5.8** Now, draw your attention to another aspect of gender definition. The words ‘uṭama’, ‘uṭayavan’ etc (p: 124) gives the citations are “aa peṇṇuṇṇaluṭe uṭamakkar” (TR) (owner of those women) and “aa peṇṇinte uṭayavan”(owner of that woman). All these connote woman are the property of man. Besides there the above citation “aa peṇṇuṇṇaluṭe utamakaran” also give a meaning ‘natural protector’. But this also have a negative impact on woman growth as if creates in the dependency on man.

**1.5.9** Generally occupation oriented expressions refer only to the masculine gender. For example, “accatikkaaran”(printer)(p:9), “anjalkkaaran”(postman)(p:10), “atakkakkaaran”(proprietor)(p:12), “appakkaaran”(baker)(p:37), ezuttaccan(school master)(p:164) etc.

These words testify to the fact that paid work was a field solely related to men. These entry words, usages and citations prove that profound roots of gender discrimination during the nineteenth century. Vocabulary depends on how a given society perceives the relationship of

men and women. The words thus formed reflect the human consciousness of a period. Another factor in the dictionary making, as we analyze gender is that it is marked by caste.

## 1.6 Caste Consciousness and Dictionary

Generally each society has its own system of stratification. It may be class or caste. Caste system is a form of social stratification, in which individual status or position is determined by birth and is for life. In the past, Kerala society, had been stratified on the basis of caste hierarchy. There is a natural relationship between the cast-based system of power stratification and language.

**1.6.1** The following session observes the relation between language and caste based stratified society. Here are some examples that carry the caste identity.

Aṭittiri - a class Brahman preserves of the holy fire (p: 14)

Aṭiyooṭimaar- a class of Naayers, especially in the Catattuvanatu (katattuvanattāṭioṭi, aṭioṭi muuttangu oru tamburaanaayi) (po) <sup>(15)</sup> (p: 16)

Antarjanam – A Brahmin woman (= akathamma) (p: 32) (ref 1.5.1)

Arunnuurran – Nayers of Poṭṭatiri's bodyguard (KU) (p: 54)

Avaroodhananambi – title of some Half Brahmans, whose ancestors are reputed to have been Rakṣapurushas (p: 61)

Aaḍhyan – title of class of Brahmans, the leaders in the old aristocracy of Malabar. (p:77)

Itappalli Nambiyaatiri - The chief of 36,000 armed Brahmans, residing near Parur, endowed with Parasu Ramas sword (KM) <sup>(16)</sup> (p: 102)

Eḷunnalliyeetattanmaar - Brahman class at Taliparambu (p: 164)

Eṛaattumenoon – Samuri's secretary with 5000 Naayers (KU) (p: 168)

Oottanmaar – Veda Brahmans, the instructors of their caste (p: 184)

These words specially refers upper caste social identity

**1.6.2** The following words are represents the lower caste.

Ariyuka - teñṇāriyuka (to tap a palm tree) .(ariuna tiiyan) (TP) (p: 49)

Alakkə - washing, veṭṭeṭṭan alakkumaarri kaasikku poovan (proverb) (p: 55)

Uppukorran- living upon the salt manufacture, (veṭṭuvan) (so) <sup>(17)</sup> (salt merchant); a famous low caste sage.

Uuatan – a caste of rice-measures in Calicut (p: 146)

Ooṭṭa– Ooṭṭaurukkiya muusariye poole (proverb), Ooṭṭupanikkaaran= musari (p:183)

The *Dictionary*, mostly, consists of address terms and reference terms as illustrative of caste hierarchy. Some address and reference terms, which represents lower castes in the dictionary refer to their caste prescribed roles, whereas those from the upper castes are described in terms of their glorified caste identity. The terms in the dictionary, also expresses the ideology of upper caste.

1.6.3 There are words in the dictionary, which uphold the elevated dignity of the upper caste. The word ‘apamanam’(p:35) as in the example sentence, “deva bramanarkku apamanakkeṭuvarutti”(insulted). This example sentence is not to designate the importance of the word ‘apamanam’ but it give the magnitude on the connotation ‘who is insulted?’. Another example ‘abhijaatyam’ means ‘noble birth ’and also give the pannyuurkuurrile bramanarkku citation “abhijaatya kuṛavu vannu”(lack of nobility)(Anach) (18).

The word ‘abhijaatyam’ should also be considered as an ideological representation of the upper castes especially Brahmin. Another word ‘ayudam’ (p: 85) and its citation “bramanare kandaal ayudam vazanganam” (KU) (on seeing a Brahmin even the weapon should bend) is also included here. These words and sense descriptions express the notion of superiority of the upper caste and their nobility.

**1.6.4** *Dictionary* gives other reference terms such as “aṭiyeen”, “aṭiyaatti, aṭiaan’, ‘aṭieen’, ‘aṭiathi’, ‘aṭiatti’(p:16)etc which means ‘I am your servant’. These words represent the politeness of lower caste for expressing courtesy according to their social position. This represents the vocabulary of castelect.

Castlect is one of the dynamic forms through which caste-oriented social relationship manifest. It is a process or speech variety that carries caste identity features, in specific communication contexts. These features directly or indirectly, often without any deliberate intent, reveal or communicate the caste identity of the users of that variety. These also reveal the placement of the individuals, who participate in the communication process, in the social hierarchy. Castlect became an overt expression of the upper caste (Girish, 2003). Another word ‘aḍhyan’ (p: 77) (balaḍyan) gives the semantic description like ‘powerful’, ‘opulent’, ‘rich’etc and also give an example sentence “aḍhyan nambootirikku meelsaanti”.

This reference term and the example sentence, as expressed in the dictionary, become a tool for the perpetration of power hierarchy in the society. The selection of these entries in dictionary is determined to confirm the dominant perception of the upper caste society.

**1.6.5** Western education and consequent modernization are the basic factors of social change in Kerala society. The facts that the dictionary evidence has for the social stratification and it is also carries indication of social change. For example, the word ‘appsar’ (officer) (p: 83) and the

corresponding citation “appasarum sippaayimaarum” (TR) represent such a change in the social structure. ‘aparaadam’(p:35) and ‘atañnuka’(p:12) also give the citations , “kumbanjiyoodu eeriya aparaadam ceytu” and (TR) (against the company) and “kumbanjiyleekku atañnanda cungan” ( tax to the company)etc. These citations also explain the colonial supremacy over socio-political ‘power’ in nineteenth century.

### 1.7 Conclusion

1. Each word has a conceptual meaning/ first meaning in the Dictionary of Gundert. Apart from that, it also carries the socio-political nature of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Kerala.
2. The gender discrimination in the dictionary is an expression of the attitude of the upper cast male chauvinism.
3. Dictionary connotes the value consciousness of upper caste ideology, through linguistic terms like address and reference. These terms show the social discrimination among the people in Kerala based on caste hierarchy.

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## Abbreviations

1. TR – Tellicherry Records (Chiefly A.D.1796-1799)
2. V1 - the part, Malabar (country) & Portuguese (tongue)
3. MR – Collect Ch., Malayalam Reader
4. Nal – Nalacharitam
5. TP – Tacholi Pattu
6. Ku – Keraia Utpatti
7. Rc – Rama charitam
8. AR – Adhyatma Ramayanam
9. KR – Kerala Varma Ramayanam
10. M – masculine gender
11. F – feminine gender
12. po- poetic usage
13. Mud – Mudraraxasam (Chanakya Sutram)
14. CG – Crsna Gatha
15. Bhg- Bhagavatam
16. Bhr – Mahabharatam
17. KM – Kerala Mahatmyam
18. so – South
19. Anach – Anacharam

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