DE-ALIGNED MALAYALAM OR VARIATIONS IN LANGUAGE—AN INTRODUCTION TO THE CYBER DISCOURSES IN MALAYALAM

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Abstract

Cyber writing is supposed to be the second revolution in the field of writing after the introduction of movable type printing press way back in 1400s. The study enquires how cyber Malayalam subverts print traits through a detailed analysis of various attributions from strikethrough writings to 'touch and write' methods today.

Key words: Internet Language, Chat, Cyber Discourse, CMC, Malayalam, Social Media

Language embodies a form of technology in itself. The advancement in technology and the transformations it gives to language too accounts for the history of development in language.

The developments in writing styles initiated from Brahmi script which progressed to Kolezhuthu script that eventually turned to Malayanma and Grandha script later, which was widely accepted in print form of Malayalam with the advancements made by Benchamin Bailey. Malayalam print developed from this traditionally-rooted script. This method of Malayalam script that was printed using the arrangement of blocks went deeply rooted to our ideals of perfect Malayalam, which attained a serious transformation only after the arrival of typewriters. This marks the start of keyboarding stage in language.

Keyboarding Stage (From 1970s)

The last 50 years of keyboarding history in Malayalam can be briefly traced right from keyboarding script, which gave way to computer-based typing, that eventually turned to 'Manglish' in Web 2.0 era and later developments in Unicode and emergence of Cyber-Malayalam. It was at the end of this phase that scriptures were overturned by vernacular usages accompanied by oral and verbal techniques came into prominence in the form of 'chat Malayalam'. This also marks the end of reliance to conventional print styles from the age of Gutenberg.

Cyber writing is supposed to be the second revolution in the field of writing after the introduction of movable type printing press way back in 1400s. The study enquires how cyber Malayalam subverts

print traits through a detailed analysis of various attributions from strikethrough writings to 'touch and write' methods today.

Language, space and culture cannot be termed as spaces outside an individual, rather they are within oneself. The formation of cyber places and culture subverted the binaries of inner and outer spaces and a world of varied realities too was created.

According to Clifford Glitz (1973), culture itself is considered as a 'shared way of life' created by the web of meanings and language acts as itsrepository and receiving medium. It also works as a symbol of culture. This is an age where cultural studies and linguistics come under the public sphere of knowledge called digital humanities. In addition, this is an era where we become a part of big data as well.

As Toni Morrison says:

"We die, that may be the meaning of life. But we do language. That may be the   measure of our lives"

"We speak, we write, we do language. This is how civilisations heal"

Cyber Space

It can be briefly described as a spatial representation created by computers, which can be experienced only through the latter as they exist only in them, with varied resolutions that have a global network, which is at once artificial and impact reality in character. A machine-manmade spatial point where the concepts of a man-machine world and its possibility of achievement, is the merchandise of cyber space. It is a public sphere of private interests where man and machine densely co-exists in a new social order. In other words, it is at once a social sphere which is simultaneously based on personal interests and experiences. According to Michael Benedict, every computer acts as a window in the world of virtual reality. Every object in this material world becomes a data or pieces of information rather than mere representations of objects or their mirror images. Cyber thinkers opine that cyber space is an uncontrolled, fragmented and eternal world of imperialist fantasies with minimal presence of national boundaries like URLs and IP addresses, which is neither materialistic nor geographical, and shows mobility in character rather than being stationary. However SlavojŽižek argues that this is just a fantasy created by realism than reality. It is the place of duality of a realist human being. It can also be termed as a life in the impersonal world. The self-migration of modern human beings are criticised for their increased detachment from social and public spaces.

Cyber Society

According to early cyber philosophers, a 'netizen' who lives in a global village in the age of globalisation, defined to be relieved from national, geographic and scientific identities and social systems was termed as a cyber-citizen.

But the theory that Internet was the child that Big Daddy raised and then ran away from, and that it was a post-gendered place, not a woman, was soon abandoned. Today, cyberspace is considered to be a continuum or secondary entity of the existing society. A variety of communities are prevalent there.

The Problems of Cyber culture

Like any social system, cyber society produces and operates within culture. Cyber culture is the meaning of meaningful discourse in the cyber world. It is a polynomial concept. Like other cultures, cyber culture perpetuates subcultures such as chat rooms, email groups, fan pages, groups, discussion boards, social networks, and favourite sites. There are mainstream societies, alternative cultures and underworld cultures, as seen in material socio-culture.

Issues of Cyber Authorship

It is at once important to get acquainted with present-day techniques that came from Cyber Culture. This is due to the reason that the cyber-negotiator is facing this authorship.Those who are familiar with this medium know that the identity of "I text, therefore I am" exists in cyberspace. 'Are you there?', 'Are we together?', 'Are you real?','Are you the same?' are the kinds of ambiguity, uncertainty and ignorance that one has to constantly ask the partner, which is a concern of presence with respect to the author.

"In cyberspace, I can change my self as easily as I change clothes. Identity becomes infinitely plastic in a play of images that knows no end. Consistency is no longer a virtue but becomes a vice; integration is limitation. With everything always shifting, everyone is no one" (Taylor, *Shifting Subjects*, 1994)

There is an identity that we build according to our desires and authorship that produces a discourse machine based on our behaviour.Along with the multiplicity of identities, the fragmentation and liquefaction of material identities too takes place there. One could call it a Hypertextuality of the Self. Through these decentralized beings, each person is often able to realize their subconscious desires. Defining oneself a scatterbrain turns out to be a sight in itself. We believe that liberation from the realm of the real world is achievedthrough this marketplace of cyber bullying, fake IDs, human interactions, sneak peeks and cyber bullying.This authoritarianism succeeded increasing the

illusion that free exchange of ideas are more intended to happen in cyber space rather than in public.It is in this liberation from austerity, in this liberation of privacy that the waves of morality work alongside the fences. This is how the adulterous desire of an average Malayali man is easily revealed in mediums like chats.

Some argue that through this performance, the child who enters the symbolic system from the loneliness stage of the linguistic stage, is freed from the bondage of the Big Other, the public-private contradictions and the legal system that form with mastery, and migration to the world of fantasy.It is argued that the user is liberating his identity into a virtual cyber culture in order to transcend the public symbolic system.

But Zizek argues otherwise. He opines that there is a presence of the Big Other ruling over us in the imaginary world as well as in the real world. He argues that it is not entirely correct to say that the world of cyberspace fantasy is open and that it is free, but that there is an inclination and influence of public-symbolic legal value systems in the virtual world as well.The liberation of mastery is a mere fantasy.

　　　"The relationship between man and cyberspace is determined by several social　　spheres　of power. It is not entirely engulfed into fantasy. It only reduces the　　distance　from　the　world　of fantasy. Moreover, freedom of choice is limited.　　BecauseChoice is programmed" (Zizek)

From the personal space of the personal computer, our digital life is moving towards websites and web communities, which progressed to social media and within itself to the distinction between private social media as public social media as well.

From the algorithm of a Desktop upon a table top (apparently the 'desktop' in old usage), to My Computer, Home and Windows have been transformed into web pages and now into 'Wall' space. Facebook replaces printed books. The binaries of private-public dilemma either disappears or finds itself blended.Thus, instead of paper writing, the cyber world was quickly thrown into web logs and then into this virtual graffiti of 'writing on the wall.' The constant evolution of Facebook, which started as a micro-blogging site, can be seen as a metaphor for social discourse. The method of 'publishing'has now changed to 'posting'.Beyond the static self-determining profile, the ever-evolving, arbitrary and fleeting timeline dominates such social networks.Beyond the static self-determining profile, the ever-evolving, arbitrary and customised working timeline dominates such social networks.You become multiple posts, such as wall, page, story, and status. An indoor activity that works as per the inner deeds of a person, thus become a talk of the town beyond our compound walls.

Cyber Discourse

Unlike traditional media, cyber media has the advantage of being able to directly connect the consumer and the developer and to create an environment for real-time communication.Here, the text is structured in such a way that the reader needs more effort and physical intervention, butwithout any limitations of a specific media.The role of the reader here is not just about moving the eyes from left to right, or to turn the pages automatically from time to time.It is a kind of 'make-way' style of reading between the lines. Hence, the text becomes a physical construct with a participatory nature.

It can be said that this sphere of discourse, which is networked, unstable, variable and horizontal, has no precedents. Therefore, what is happening in the so-called new media space of cyber media is not a complete linear expansion or continuation of the existing media discourse. It is a kindof disconnection.

Cyber discourse is an attempt to assimilate the symbolic and non-linguistic worlds of language.Attempts to command transcendental elements in face-to-face interactions, including gestures and body language, and to bring the superhuman machine language into the discourse structure have given cyber language a unique vocabulary and discourse order.

Non-linear spreads due to hyper textuality and non-concentrated discourse flexibility often creates a discourse network. That, in turn, is woven into the surface of non-graded horizontal exchanges. All this complicates the cyber language so much that it cannot be translated to another level.It is a linguistic space that is more open to expressions of emotion. It can even experience physical contacts within theconfinements of a language discourse. Even idea formation takes place through the method of interactivity. To be precise, even the fabrication of false consents is possible here in a way that is different from other media.

Cyber language has a varied discourse appearance in the form of writing styles, oral and even sign language, ethnographic crypto languages, non-linguistic expressions, images, sounds, images, motion pictures, posters, stickers, emojis, etc..It is a place where the power of writing is shattered by the erratic combination of various forms of discourse in human history. It could be stated as searching life in a scattered language.

The Internet language community is made up of linguists living in more than one language communities. It has more cultural characteristics than geographical differences. It goes on changing in accordance with the changes in cyber communities.Even in cyberspace, they behave according to the linguistic and cultural principles that they have acquired from material and social life, even if

they are foreign. The fact that this exchange exists between hidden and masked personalities indeed complicates the discourse.

An ID profiled by a religious personality mocking that religion or other religions is a constant confusion on social media. That may be a fake profile of a person outside the religion. At the same time, the trans-cultural nature of the media has a decisive influence on the strategy of transcending our cultural symbols into discourse.

Peculiarities of Cyber Language:

1. The wavy style of cyber language—called *thiramozhi*makes this language iconic. There exists nothing like a comprehensive lesson.
2. Voids in the print standard authority language
3. The horizontalness of the discourse breaks the linearity. The surrounding public community changes its resources.
4. The standard of writing is shattered
5. Multimedia language: It becomes a translatable form that cannot be confined to a single resolutionofanother media
6. Arrival of oral communication: The second-coming of Orality
7. Contemporary discourses are more verbal. Language is more informal with playfulness and pleasure

    "Digital writing often takes on characteristics of artful, playful, stylized performance, thereby partially resembling traditional oral genres"   (Bauman, 1992)
8. Body language is mixed with signs and gestures
9. Infusion of non-linguistic emotions. Even silence is a language - emojiscould serve the duty of syntax.
10. Global Language - Glocalization - becomes an extension of the existing world - minimizes the physical and social elements.
11. Mixing of machine language with respect to the geography of language
12. Trans-national, trans-cultural and trans-lingual: A random mix of many languages - the Borderland language. The variations in the language
13. Visibility to the marginal positions of the language
14. The power that operates within the language is questioned. Newer power strategies and identities become evident.
15. Scattered identity authorship,authoritarian ambiguity andtemporality

Romani Occupation Created by ASCII

The ASCII computer script, based on the Roman alphabet and English sounds, was developed in 1960 and consisted of 128 codes of seven bits each. Among these, 95 of them show graphical characters. ASCII can be still considered the root cause of the English occupation of the Internet. The prominence of English in webpage language, domain names and URLs created a myth that computers can only be used by those who are well-versed in English language. With the development of much proprietary software that was solelybased on English, it took time for the computer languages, including the operating systems, to become localized.It was in 2004 that Windows, an operating system widely used by Malayali population, introduced Malayalam in its interface. Even though some independent software developed repositories for this much before, it was not widely accepted among Malayali community who had ardent obsessions to popular software haematology.

This dominance of English writing created a variety of problems in the field of Internet communication in many languages. Non-European written languages, including non-Roman-based Asian languages, were the ones who particularly faced trouble. This even led to a typographical imperialism.A huge amount of confusions were created when Indian languages were used in internet chats with this limited number of Roman scripts. Native tongues such as Chinesehad to use numbers over Roman scripts, which resulted in the expression of differences in meaning caused by tones. Spelling became erratic in languages where transliteration rules were not formed.This is how the Greek-Romanside Greek was formed by mixing graphic forms and voices.Following this, various language communities of the world began writing their language in the English slate to create a new form of discourse. Eventually, Malayalam became 'Manglish'. In the chat rooms of Dubai, script switching happened by mixing left-to-right Roman system of writing with right-to-left mode of Arabic, along with certain native languages who were never seriously engaged in textual writing until then.

There werecritics who feared that this Greekish-Greek will bury the native Greek language. This was just similar to the fear that Chat Malayalam will destroy the purity of Malayalam. However, there were linguists who saw this as a transitional crisis, and were optimistic that this mixture would help the Greek language in its further developments. France, which established the world's first Language Academy, even hoisted a movement of linguists against the SMS language, where severe linguistic orthodoxy persisted.Their strict stance was underlined in their notice boards as: "A FORUM/ NOT A MOBILE: Here we speak a language human beings can understand…. If you want your question to be answered, try to make yourself understandable too."

It has been accompanied by political interpretations that it was a menace created by globalization. There were many who thoughtof a global village with a global language.While the Internet language is different for each language, it also retains some of the common forms of the Romanise period.

- **Emoticon or 'smiley face':** Emoticons still remain in the public domain

- **Abbreviations:**Short forms like LOL ('Laughing Out Loud') are in English

- **Rebus Writing:** Speculations and drawing scripts are still in English (Example: Using 'c u'to imply 'see you')

- **A tendency towards speech-like informality:** Marking the oral style

- The graphic representation of colloquial standard pronunciation or non-standard accents

- Typical syntactic patterns of spoken language

- Discourse markers, colloquial and slang vocabulary. multiple punctuation, eccentric spelling, all caps, written-out laughter, verbal descriptions of actions

- The flouting of orthographic and typographic norms, and linguistic and typographic playfulness (symbols getting the nature of characters)

- Dropping the vowels and turn the words into the skeleton of the consonants (Example: Using 'ppl' for people and 'pls' for please)

Looking back today, the cause of such a riot with this dog-eyed pictorial language was not only the limitation of the ASCII system or the diversity of scripts in foreign language communities, but also the problem of inadequacies in our writing system, standards, concentrations, and forms of authority.It should not be seen as a murder of language, but as a revolution to overthrow that imperfect language with all the communication schemes invented by man and to transform the Internet language into a holistic medium of expression.However, it should not be forgotten that in the age of globalization, the Internet has helped to make the English language more global. The linguistic authority is just dismantled through such an intermixing process. English language hence continues as the lingua franca of modern era.

From Clear Malayalam (High Culture) to Popular Culture Malayalam

Features of Malayalam forms in cyber chat:

1. Lack of norms in short and long phrases, conjunction forms and doublings

2. Decrease in number of vowels and syllabized consonants

   (Example:*ngum – um – mm – m* ; *Illaa – ila – lla*)

3. **Response gestures, Salutations**

   (*ngeh, ngah, ngum*)

   Words of Greetings/ Salutations

   * *Enthalle*(Exclamations)

   * *Hai rathi*

   * *Enthu rasam*(How beautiful!)

   * *Guys… Gooys*(Trendy usage of 'guys')

   * *Hi* (Shortened 'hai')

   * *Oy* (Calling out, normally to start a chat)

   * *Chunk Bro'* (refers to the best friend)

   * *Machu* (trendy usage for 'dear')

4. **Words and phrases in newer usage**

   Cyber Malayalam has contributed a handsome number of new words, usages and styles. Some examples include:

   * ***EnthoruDravidaanu***(refers to 'what a pity'— inspired and popularised from a famous statutory warning advertisement by cricketer Rahul Dravid)

   * ***DaridyamThanne***(literally means poverty—metaphorically talks about anarchic attitudes of a person, lack of idea and so on)

   * ***le njan***('le' usage are French equivalents for 'the' and can even be used in place of reflexive pronouns like 'I', 'me' and 'they'; used in same sense among netizens)

   * ***Kummanadi***(refers to a person intrudes into a place without anyone's notice. Popularised when a politician of similar name entered a metro train in its inaugural ceremony against protocol)

   * ***Chali, KattaChali, Chaliyan***(refers to farce and people who tell them)

   * ***Theppu***(refers to cheating or betrayal)

   * ***Cherthottichu***(when someone seamlessly counters an argument to the dot)

   * ***Kandamvazhiodikkuka***(literally- to run out of bounds; metaphorically used to refer someone who flees to save hisface from an argument)

   * ***Kurupottuka***(to get agitated)

   * ***Ponkalayiduka***(refers to a rigorous attack on a person; commonly used to refer certain

cyber bullying cases)

* *Minnichekkanam*(to feel blessed)

* *Cycle odikkal move*(rhyming reference to 'psychological move')

* *Meanaviyal*(literally a fish dessert; netizen rhyme to 'meanwhile')

* *Adipoli… Baa Poovam*(exclaims when we are done with something and feels better to leave the place at the earliest)

* *Sivane* (exclaims 'Oh My God!')

* *Academic Purpose*(sarcastically informative things)

* *Feeling [pucham]*(refers to something that feel so contemptuous)

* *Thalluka*(refers to boasting)

* *Nyayeekaranathozhilali*(refers to someone who gives terrible excuses and explanations to every odd things he or his group does)

5. Elements of cinema dialogues are widely used in cyber language, especially in trolls. It is at once the art of making cyber discourse a part of popular culture. Here are some of the popular cinema dialogues that are used extensively in cyber Malayalam affairs.

- "We are doing a car"
- "Kuttimindunnilla"
- "Kalangiyo… Kalangiyilla"
- Pandithanaanennuthonnunnu"
- "Josephe… Kuttiyku Malayalam ariyam"
- "Polandineppattioraksharammindaruth"
- "Meenaviyalenthayoentho"
- "Aaroduparayan… aarukelkkaan"
- "Ithenteyalla… enteinganeyalla"
- "Ethiyilleshakunthale"

Frolic Language - Instead of standard matured Malayalam, another feature is to make the language playful with the frolic hints of childish language. The word 'nannayi' (sarcastically saying 'best idea') when uttered as 'njanjayi' grabs curiosity and attention.

6. Abbreviated writing andother similar forms of neography are features of cyber writing, particularly in chat language.

- *Pwolichu Bro* (says 'you did great')
- *Myayavi*
- *Q Palikuka*(Shortening of 'Please stand in queue')
- *K tto*(saying 'OK dear')
- *Lla*(Shortened form of *illa*meaning 'No')
- *Nd*(Shortened form of *und*meaning 'Yes')
- *IC* (Shortened form 'I see')
- *Bt*(Shortened form of 'but')
- *Tnx*(Shortened form of 'thanks')
- *ILU* (Shortened form of 'I Love You')
- Avoiding accent specificationsespecially retroflexed accents and using soft usages instead of stops, can also be seen.

7. The two major Malayali interventions in cyber language are '*OMKV*' and '*Malaru*' which are euphemistic forms of obscene words in Malayalam.

Glocalisation Forms

1. **Do 'Like':** The use of verb related terms such as 'like', 'share' and 'forward' as names, hence making it adverb in tone

2. **The Creation of New Verbs:** Adding Malayalam suffixes directly to foreign language verbs is a method in cyber language

   - *Chattuka*(meaning 'to chat' or 'chatting')
   - *Forwarduka*(meaning 'to forward' or 'forwarding')
   - *Sendi*(meaning 'to send' or 'sent')

3. **Derived Nouns are made as it is**

   - *Plinguka*(to become a subject of embarrassment)
   - *Sarcasikuka*(To say something sarcastic)

4. **New Gender Binaries too are formed**

   - **Trollan × Trollathi**(Male and Female troll makers respectievely)

5. **Few examples to denote the Enrichment of Vocabulary of a Language with new translations and adverbs**

- **Fans:** A group of well-wishers
- *Chaya-kachal*: Close-Enough
- *Cyber Pananmar*: Those who constantly spread news in social media without fact-checking

6. **Another joke is the hybrid layout of 'Ma-nglish'**

- **DRAമാ:** English and Malayalam letters combined to write 'Drama'
- **wmo- ധനം:** The Malayalam word 'dhanam'(meaning wealth) is written with similar-looking   English   letters

7. **It should be noted that inter-linguistic techniques are active and bring new meanings, ambiguities and aesthetics to the discourse.**

- The synonyms of the 'Likes' that we give in social media should be studied with special prominence
- Use of pictorial languages memes and trolls.
- Communication using different kinds of selfies
- The method of attaching feelings along with posts

Culture, Authority: The Continuum to Cyber Spaces

In cyber space, the lack of a physical body along with gender confusion accompanied by caste identity confuses the jurisdictions associated with it.The kind of social and physical authority that exists in the society is absent in this new space, for which there is an attempt to reclaim it through expression of language, leading to various performances of power that even extend to cyber violence. Various manifestations of caste, expressions of masculinity-femininity, *anna-amma* chants and suffixes, all can be considered as various forms of its expression. The culture of street politics dominates the cyberspace with political identities and subsequent jargons. (Examples: *commi, congi, sanghi, vanarasena* and so on).

Malayali community who were once confined to secret chats, were thrown into the walls of social media began wiping out the traits of Victorian morality subsequently turned into secret servants, keyboard political thinkers, troll makers, moral polices, and even the proponents of various cyber jargons. To conclude, it may be laborious for the 'pure' and 'high culture' Malayalam to survive independently without accepting such popular trends and transformations in language, in themulti-faceted era of cyber malayali media.

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