



## **The many ways of returning to the refrain in Telugu song**

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## The many ways of returning to the refrain in Telugu song

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A *refrain* (abbreviated *R*) is a line in a song repeated after each verse, and often used as the song's name. Returns to *R* are usually high points both melodically and lyrically. E.g., a verse ending *I feel upon my lips again* makes a smooth *lead-in* (abbreviated *L*) to the refrain *R* = *A taste of honey* (Scott/Marlow, 1962). We notate this (*I feel upon my lips again*) *A taste of honey*, and call such patterns (lead-in)refrains or (*L*)*R*'s. The song goes *R ... LR ... LR*, where *L* could change verse to verse. In our examples, *R* and (*L*)*R* are often both full sentences. More interesting *L*'s are often phrases, clauses or rather than interjections. A word-prefix *L* can transform *R*.

Our **main contribution** is to point out that (*L*)*R* patterns are *a striking feature of Telugu (TEL) song*, remarkably various and profuse in both old and new songs, yet little remarked in the literature as far as we are aware. We give examples from the 15<sup>th</sup> c. to the 21<sup>st</sup>. In transcription, a colon marks long vowels, and *M*, nasalized ones. Retroflexion is shown by capitalization, and aspiration by *h*, also a consonant by itself. Glosses are given, some also /morpheme-wise/.

Kannada (KAN) and Tamil (TAM) share features with TEL that help make *L(R)*'s: fairly free word order, agglutinative particles, and adjectives and relative clauses preceding the noun. We give only lone KAN and TAM examples, but expect to find more when we search. Hindi (HIN) shares fewer features with TEL; perhaps therefore, we have so far looked but found few (*L*)*R* s in HIN.

1. From the TEL film *Bangaru Pichuka*, 1968 (song by Arudra). Nested *L*'s to set the stage:  
 ((*nuni*) *vecca-ga: kala-gaN-Tu:)* *nidura-po:*  
 /gentle-ADV warm-ADV dream-see-PRS.DUR sleep(noun)-go.IMP.SG/  
 We hear *nidurapo:*, *veccaga: kalaganTu: nidurapo:*, *nuniveccaga: kalaganTu: nidurapo:*  
 “go to sleep, warmly dreaming go to sleep, gentle-warmly dreaming go to sleep”
2. Tyagaraja (18<sup>th</sup> c.), three TEL examples. Note: 2b splits *R*, and *L* in 2c is a word prefix.  
 2a. (*ni:vaDincinaTlu a:Dina na:to:)* *palukave:mi na: daivama:*  
 /1SG.COM speak-NEG.2SG-why 1SG.GEN god.SG-VOC/  
 (you-made-dance-like danced-who me-with) speak-not-you my god  
 “Why don't you speak (to me) my god, (who danced as you made me dance)”  
 2b. (*mam*)*me:luko:* *R*=“wake up” but (*L*)*R*=“rule over us”! (*mamm*=“us”, *e:luko:*=“rule over”).  
 2c. (*ra:muni san*)*nidhi* Here *R*=“treasure” but (*L*)*R*=“Rama's presence”!

3. From the TEL film *Bahubali 2*, 2017 (song by Keeravani).  
 (*na:*) *kanna: nidurincara:* “(my) son, go to sleep” and  
 (*ciTikina veluna koNDanu mo:sina*) *kanna: nidurincara:* /little finger-on hill-ACC carried-REL-PTCP/  
 giving “son, (who carried the hill on his little finger,) go to sleep”. One simple (L)R, one rich.
4. In HIN *Bahubali 2*, dubbed from the TEL, the corresponding lines are  
 (*o:*) *ka:nha: so: ja: zara:* “(O) Kanha, go to sleep” which is a very simple (L)R, and  
*luk-chup ke: tak yu:M na: mo:he: | ka:nha: so: ja: zara:*, which is two independent lines:  
 “Don't look at me stealthily | Kanha, go to sleep”. The TEL original is an (L)R.
5. But HIN can show true (L)R's. Film *Raziya Sultan*, 1983 (song by Kaifi Azmi).  
 (... *sar e: sha:m se:*) *jalta: hai badan* “... from early evening, the body burns”.
6. An (L)R in KAN film *Srinivasa Kalyana*, 1974 (song by Udayashankar).  
 (*Go:vinda ninninda a:nanda hondiruva*) *na:ne: bha:gyavati*  
 /joy.SG.ACC get-be.INF-PFV.PTCP 1SG.NOM-EXCL fortunate(noun).SG.FEM/  
 (Govinda you-from joy got-being) I-only fortunate-woman  
 “I, (who received joy from you, Govinda,) am indeed fortunate.” Similar to 3, second (L)R.
7. TAM/TEL. From the TEL film *Pelli Kanuka*, 1960 (song by Acharya Atreya).  
 (*ga:nam*) *manasun-e: marap-incu*  
 /song.SG.NOM mind.SG.ACC-EXCL forgetfulness-CAUS.SG.PRS/  
 “makes me forget myself, (song) makes me forget myself”. The TAM original (film *Kalyana Parisu*, 1959, song: Kalyanasundaram) has the same L (*isai*, song.SG.NOM) and similar R.

8-14. TEL examples, showing in tabular form some of the many roles L can play.

8	Annamacharya (15 <sup>th</sup> c.)	( <i>naraka ku:pamula veDalinca</i> ) <i>ca:lada:</i> (of hell pitfalls to drive away) suffices-not?	Purposive clause
9	Annamacharya	( <i>sumukha:na</i> ) <i>avadha:ru raghupati</i> (face-to-face) listen, Raghupati	adverb
10	Annamacharya	( <i>aNDanunDe:</i> ) <i>sva:mini kaNTi</i> (who stays as protector) the lord I saw	adjectival clause
11	Kshetrayya (17 <sup>th</sup> c.)	( <i>mi:</i> ) <i>aluka di:rena:</i> (your) sulk is-it-pacified?	genitive
12	Ramadasu (17 <sup>th</sup> c.)	( <i>ba:pina sva:mi</i> ) <i>e:Dunna:Do:</i> (the saviour) wonder where he is	nominative
13	Devulapalli, in film Malliswari (1951)	( <i>mabbulu musire:lo:ga: mu:ge:lo:ga:</i> ) <i>u:ru ce:ra:li</i> (before clouds swarm and gather) must reach town	adverbial clause
14	Arudra, in film Muddu Bidda (1956)	( <i>amma:</i> ) <i>cu:Da:lani undi</i> (Oh Mother) want-to-see ( <i>ninnu:</i> ) <i>cu:Da:lani undi</i> (you) want-to-see	vocative accusative

The agglutinative nature of TEL enables these (L)R patterns since function is captured concisely, often by one syllable. E.g., in Ex 8, *veDalu*=go, *veDalincu*=make go, *veDalinca*=to make go. In Ex 10, ...*unDu* =stay, *unDe:*=one who stays. In Ex 13, *lo:ga:* = before. Adnominals and relative clauses precede the noun.

*Summary:* We have described (lead-in)refrain patterns or  $(L)R$ 's. The return to  $R$  from  $L$  is like the return to the theme after a variation in Indian classical music: smooth, pleasing and yet surprising. We have shown the rich use TEL has made of  $(L)R$ 's. *Conjecture:* We expect search to find that similar  $(L)R$ 's are fairly usual in KAN and TAM. We are unsure what to expect in HIN.

*Acknowledgements:*

1.  $(L)R$  patterns extend the refrain. Friends have pointed out that they resemble *Srotovaha Yati* [1], an expanding syllabic pattern, but the two are quite different phenomena.
2. We thank our friend Swati Parashar for finding Ex. 5.

#### Reference

- [1] Indira V. Peterson, *Sanskrit in Carnatic Music: the songs of Muttusvami Dikshita*, Indo-Iranian Journal 29, pp.183-199, 1986.