The many ways of returning to the refrain in Telugu song

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

Our main contribution is to point out that \textit{(L)R} patterns are a striking feature of Telugu (\textit{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\textsuperscript{th} c. to the 21\textsuperscript{st}. In transcription, a colon marks long vowels, and \textit{M}, nasalized ones. Retroflection is shown by capitalization, and aspiration by \textit{h}, also a consonant by itself. Glosses are given, some also morpheme-wise/.

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

1. From the \textit{TEL} film \textit{Bangaru Pichuka}, 1968 (song by Arudra). Nested \textit{L}’s to set the stage:
   \textit{((nuni) vecca-ga: kala-gaNTu:) nidura-po:}
   /\text{gentle-ADV warm-ADV dream-see-	extit{PRS.DUR} sleep(noun)-go.	extit{IMP.SG}/}
   We hear \textit{nidurapo:; veccaga: kalagaNTu: nidurapo:; nuniveccaga: kalagaNTu: nidurapo:}  
   “go to sleep, warmly dreaming go to sleep, gentle-warmly dreaming go to sleep”

2. Tyagaraja (18\textsuperscript{th} c.), three \textit{TEL} examples. Note: 2b splits \textit{R}, and \textit{L} in 2c is a word prefix.
   \textbf{2a.} \textit{(ni:vaDincinaTu a:Dina na:to:) palukave:mi na: daivama:}
   /\text{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)”.  
   \textbf{2b.} \textit{(mam)me:luko:} \textit{R}="wake up” but \textit{(L)R}="rule over us”! \textit{(mamm)=“us”, e:luko:="rule over”).}
   \textbf{2c.} \textit{(ra:muni san) nidhi}  Here \textit{R}="treasure” but \textit{(L)R}="Rama’s presence”!

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3. From the TEL film <i>Bahubali 2</i>, 2017 (song by Keeravani).
   <i>(na:) kanna: nidurincara:</i> “(my) son, go to sleep” and
   <i>(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 <i>Bahubali 2</i>, dubbed from the TEL, the corresponding lines are
   (o:) ka:nh: so: ja: zara:; “(O) Kanha, go to sleep” which is a very simple (L)R, and
   <i>luk-chup ke: tak yu:ma mo:he: ka:nh: 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 <i>Raziya Sultan</i>, 1983 (song by Kaifi Azmi).
   (... sar e: sha:m se:) jalta: hai badan “… from early evening, the body burns”.

   (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/
   “I, (who received joy from you, Govinda,) am indeed fortunate.” Similar to 3, second (L)R.

7. TAM/TEL. From the TEL film <i>Pelli Kanuka</i>, 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 <i>Kalyana Parisu</i>, 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Sanskrit Phrase</th>
<th>Telugu Phrase</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>(naraka kun) pamula veDALinca</td>
<td>ca:lada:</td>
<td>Purposive clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>(sumukha:na) avadha:ru raghupati</td>
<td></td>
<td>adverb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>(aNDanundE:) sva:min kiNti</td>
<td></td>
<td>adjectival clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>(mi:) aluka di:rena:</td>
<td></td>
<td>genitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>(ba:pina sva:mi) e:DuNNa:Do:</td>
<td></td>
<td>nominative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>(amma:) cu:Da:lani undi</td>
<td></td>
<td>vocative accusative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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