

# BADAGA CALENDAR

## - A Further Probe

It was W.H.R. Rivers, the pioneer of Toda anthropological studies, who first documented (1906) the Badaga names of twelve calendar months (albeit in Toda form). He also indicated that the Todas probably borrowed them from the Badagas. Rivers did not know that the Kotas too, followed the same calendar. What is of great interest is that this calendar, according to Rivers, signalled the beginning of the new year with the new moon in October. Rivers, further stated that the full moon is counted as being on the fifteenth day after the new moon, and the new moon as being the sixteenth day after the full moon. F.J. Richards, I.C.S., tried to pursue this subject (1920), but did not make any headway in this regard.

K.H. Madha Gowder of Achanakal (1979) who prepared a Badaga calendar also suggested that the tenth day of the present day English month should be treated as the beginning of every new month, but without any conceptualisation. He posited that *kuuDalu* is the name of the first Badaga month. Prof. M. Basavalingam of Kil-Kotagiri, a Lingayat Wodeya antiquarian (a former Professor of English as well as a monitor of astrology) and a noted Tamil Sangam Period historian sought (1982) to make a correspondence of *kuuDalu* with Tamil *maargazhi* and stated that the Badaga new year commenced during December-January. Prof. Paul Hockings, the doyen of Badaga anthropology, first in 1989 and subsequently in 2013, tried to investigate the subject, though not with any satisfactory result.

In the light of the above observations, I consider the recent attempts of Dr. R.K. Haldorai, to make a fresh presentation of the subject, quite a tenable one. However, I have my misgivings about *kuuDalu* or *kuuTlu* being the first month. The meaning of the name - “culmination or conjunction of the cycle”, obviously makes it the twelfth month rather than the first month. *kuuTlu* is also the name of the lunar house of the constellation of *haalamiinu* in Badaga tradition. If and when this astral position is duly synchronized, it may yet throw more light on Badaga new year. The ritual chronometry followed in the commemoration of BeragaNi Hethe during this month further reinforces this position. The Badaga new year most likely then, begins with the appearance of the crescent moon (*kattihere*) on the third day after the new moon in January. *Haalaani*, therefore is the first month and *kuuDalu*, the last one. Moreover, the Badaga month *tay* when considered as the cognate of *das* (ten or tenth in pan-Indian vocabulary) actually happens to be the tenth month in Badaga reckoning. *Tay* in Badaga lexicon is also coupled with *kiru* (*tay kiru*) or north eastern monsoon. This month then is incontrovertibly followed by *hemmaaTTi* and *kuuDalu* or the eleventh and twelfth months respectively and the cycle is completed. Let us not, in this context try to confuse the Tamil names of months with the Badaga names. The Badaga rhythm of the Nilgiri-year, it needs to be pointed out is certainly anterior to and unknown in Tamil calendar in vogue. It may also be mentioned that the names of the Tamil months seem to have historically undergone a process of distortion (Hart III, 1975) and hence of no use to the Badaga system.

The Badaga system contains some ancient features is also of considerable interest. Dr. Haldorai's suggestion of Salivahana association (A.D. 78) in the evolution of Badaga lunar calendar is significant. But to promote the mediation of Kannada/Telugu *ugaadi* in the determination of Badaga intercalary month or *saribarasa* is not at all necessary. It is not difficult to insert a homologous month every two years and restore to Badaga calendar, the long-forgotten *sitre* for this purpose. There is an old saying in Badaga - "saribarasado sitre tinguva" (or sitre occurs during an intercalary year). A tender blessing is besought of BeragaNi Hethe to provide golden shade in the month of *sitre* ("sitreya tinguvado sinnada koDeya naalu"). In the same hymn, summer season is deemed to precede this equalising month. In times of yore, no marriages were held during the intercalary period. But since the time when intercalation was lost track of, a custom of new complexion has come to emerge. Marriages when the spouses are of even-number of years of age, came to be discouraged in the pretext of *saribarasa!* An authentic intercalary (re) structuring in the Badaga calendar also needs to be less influenced by the almanacs available in the market.

A detailed examination of the etymology of Badaga names of months may not be possible in this account. But the following note on *aadhire* is of some antiquarian and astronomical importance. This month corresponding to April-May, crucially coincides with the asterism of the same name. Being one of the 27 segments or 'nakshatras' it is puzzling to note that this congruent as such does not appear to find a mention in any of the known almanacs. So it may well be that, some original and systematic base can be discerned in the Badaga almanac.

The *uujena* (waxing moon) and the *aujena* (waning moon) recalled in Badaga tradition (cf. Emeneau, 1939) can very well be traced back to Sangam times. Sangam texts like Puram 65 and Akam 201 refer to *uvaa* or *uvaanaaL*, which linguistically indicate how the cognisance of the movement of moon in earliest times might have been adopted from a common source. Last but not the least, is the Badaga word *muTTu* (new moon) itself means "to touch". Astoundingly, the definition of new moon itself, is the phase of the moon occurring when it passes between the earth and the sun and providing the celestial body a touch on its path or an ingress entry into the orbit.

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