

BOOK REVIEWS

A Dictionary of the Sinhala Language—Part 18

Edited by

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The vol. 18 of the Dictionary of the Sinhala language comprises the Sinhala lexemes beginning from අ (a) to අහ (aha) as the last lexeme. The tradition followed in lexicography, in giving etymology of the Key term first and entering its variations under the key term is maintained here also.

This Dictionary is immensely useful to learners of Sinhala, specially through English as this comprises literary, colloquial and technical terms and their etymology. As in any language lexemes in Sinhala derive their meanings mostly from usage. Some times the etymological meaning may undergo complete changes and would acquire a meaning contrary to its etymology. The term අති වෙනවා (ativenava) for instance etymologically means to “become”, “to arise”, but in a different context also means “to be bored” or “disgusted” as in the colloquial use “එයාට අතිවෙලා” (eyata ativela) He is bored or he is in disgust. This is a general principle in language use and the way how lexemes derive their meaning. This Dictionary has taken such instances into consideration and has given a number of terms to show how words (lexemes) derive their meaning from the context.

The term අන (ana) for instance, literally means “to pierce” but a variety of meanings come into use depending on the context.

අන ඉන්නවා	ana innava	squatting
අන ඔබාගෙන ඉන්නවා	ana obagena innava	squatting
අන නියාගන්නවා	ana tiyagannava	squatting
අන බානවා	ana banava	squatting
අන කොටාගන්නවා	ana kotagannava	to quarrel sometimes
අන බැණ ගන්නවා	ana banagannava	exchange abuses or insults to quarrel
අන හිටිනවා	ana hitinava	come to a halt

etc. would illustrate this point.

The compilers of this volume have made a useful attempt in giving not only the etymological and referential meanings but also in quoting such references in contexts from literary as well as colloquial sources.

The terms such as ඇන්ටි anti ඇන්ටෙනා antenna ඇමරික් amatin ඇනමල් anamal ඇමරි amari etc. which have come to currency in present day Sinhala due to influences from other languages especially English, are also treated here as Sinhala terms and has tried to give their meanings as they are used in learned circles as well as in common parlance.

The technical terms ඇක්ටිනියම් aktiniyam ඇක්සියස් aksias ඇටලස් ශේරුකාව atlas serukava ඇනෝඩය anodaya etc. are also included in this volume and have treated them as present day Sinhala terms.

As the co-editor in chief mentions in his preface to this volume the structure of the dictionary has undergone certain changes from its original plan to have a comprehensive lexicon based on comparative and historical linguistics. The attempt made here is to give the meanings of Sinhala lexemes etymologically and also contextually.

It is not an easy task to compile a comprehensive dictionary of a living and ever growing language as the lexicon is an open ended structure which absorbs a large number of new words either as direct loans or as loan shifts.

However the compilers of this Dictionary have tried their best to include literary, colloquial loan and technical terms so that the learner may find the meaning of any term in this dictionary without having to consult other sources.

A Dictionary of this nature is a long felt need not only for scholars but also for those who study Sinhala as a second language.

It is clear that this Dictionary is the result of long term research on how the Sinhala words (lexemes) are formed and used. The compilers deserve the gratitude for performing a formidable task.

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