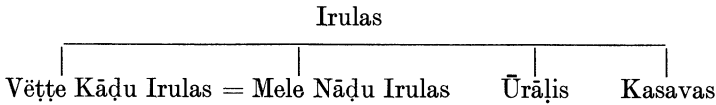


IRULA RIDDLES¹

By K. V. ZVELEBIL

1. INTRODUCTION

The Irulas² are a tribal complex of four tribes inhabiting the lower slopes of the northern, eastern and southern parts of the Nilgiri mountains of South India. They speak a tribal language of their own—the *ēr̥la nārya*—in four dialects; it belongs, historically, to the Tamil-Malayalam group of South Dravidian.³ Two of the tribes intermarry, so that the Irula complex forms a tribal group of three endogamous units. Linguistically and from the point of social organization, the Irula situation may be thus symbolized as



The creativity of Irula-speaking tribes finds expression mostly in music,⁴ dance, and above all, in verbal art.⁵ They have a wealth of oral traditions characteristic for most pre-literary cultures; though modernization—thus far mostly in the socio-economic sphere—has had its impact on the Irula-speaking tribes, the absolute majority of the Irulas are still illiterate. Hence story-telling, oral rendering of myths, legends and genealogies, and other forms of verbal art are still very much alive.

One of the very frequent forms of oral literature among the Irulas is the numerous riddles. During my recent field-trip to the Nilgiris⁶ I collected about four dozen riddles among the three Irula-speaking communities of Vēṭṭe Kāḍar, Mele Nāḍar and Ūrāḷis. A few characteristic features of the riddles should be pointed out. First, many of the riddles were common to the three communities mentioned above, and while this is not at all surprising as far as the Vēṭṭe Kāḍar and Mele Nāḍar are concerned—since these communities

¹ This paper is offered to Professor Thomas Burrow, one of the great discoverers of hitherto unknown or undescribed Dravidian languages.

² The Irulas call themselves *ēr̥la*, pl. *ēr̥laru*; in some dialects, *īr̥la/īr̥la*.

³ cf. K. V. Zvebil, 'Irula—a South Dravidian language', *New Orient Bimonthly*, III, Prague, 1968, 94–5; K. V. Zvebil, *The Irula language*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 1973. During my last field-trip to the Nilgiris, it was established beyond doubt that the Irula language has four main dialects: Vēṭṭe Kāḍu, Mele Nāḍu, Ūrāḷi and Kasava. The first of these (VK) is spoken by Vēṭṭe Kāḍaru, on the southern lower slopes of the Nilgiris, and in a few valleys of the Kerala part of the Nilgiri mountains, notably the Attapadi Valley. The second (MN), probably the most prestigious, dialect, is spoken by the Mele Nāḍaru, on the north-eastern, eastern and south-eastern slopes of the mountains. Ūrāḷi Irula is spoken by the tribe of the Ūrāḷis north of Satyamangalam in the Coimbatore district, towards the Karnataka border. Kasava is spoken by the Kasavas, a small tribe on the northern and north-western lower Nilgiri plateau, next to the Wynad area.

⁴ The Irulas use three wind instruments: the *koḷu / koalu / kogalu* (cf. Ta. *kulal*, *DED* 1511), a kind of oboe made of wood with sonorous higher tone; *bugari* (*DED* 3482), a thin bamboo flute with very deep sound, and a smaller bamboo flute with higher sound with five plus one holes. They also use a variety of drums, the main among them the *poṛe*, the *daviḷu*, the *taḷa* and the *calaṅge*; also *tamboṭte* and *mattalā* drums.

⁵ Different Nilgiri tribes manifest their creativity in different ways and through different channels. Thus e.g. whereas the creativity of the Todas is manifested mostly in the high skill of *ad hoc* composition of songs, in dance, and, above all, in the famous Toda embroidery (but not in any outstanding narrative skill or composition of stories), in contrast the Irulas do not have any outstanding material culture of their own or any great skills in manufacturing objects, but manifest high creativity in the narrative art, story telling, playing of flutes and oboes and drums, and dancing.

⁶ In February–April 1978.

intermarry and live in contiguous areas—it was somewhat striking in the case of the Ūrālīs who form a strictly endogamous tribe and live nowadays in discontinuous and somewhat remote areas. Obviously, verbal art like riddles goes rather with the linguistic division (Ūrālī is clearly a dialect of Irula) than with (probably more recent?) social and geographic divisions; in any case, the identity of the riddles underlines the deep linguistic and cultural unity of the Irula-speaking communities. Second, the riddles are favourites with all age-groups, from the oldest members of the community to small children. Third, as far as the formal structure of the riddles is concerned, they begin with the text of the riddle, followed invariably by the question *ad' enna/ adu-y-enna?* 'What's that, what is it?', followed by brief answer.⁷

The following thirty-nine riddles have been arranged according to certain topics like parts of the body, tools, plants, nature, etc. I make no distinction in the arrangement among Mele Nāḍu Irula, Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Irula, and Ūrālī riddles; however, this tribal-cum-dialect division is indicated in brackets by the following symbols: MN, VK and Ur. Each riddle is followed by brief linguistic notes, and, if necessary, by explanatory notes.

2. TEXT OF THE RIDDLES

1a. *nadu*⁽¹⁾ *vereli*⁽²⁾ *oru*⁽³⁾ *kuruvi*⁽⁴⁾ *ku:ḍu*⁽⁵⁾. *adu*⁽⁶⁾-*y-enna*⁽⁷⁾? A⁽³⁾ bird's⁽⁴⁾ nest⁽⁵⁾ in the middle⁽¹⁾ of the rock⁽²⁾. What⁽⁷⁾ [is] that⁽⁶⁾? *adu*⁽⁸⁾ *pokku*⁽⁹⁾. That⁽⁸⁾ [is] the navel⁽⁹⁾. (MN)

vere-li. *vere* 'rock, rocky slope' + loc. suff. *-li*.

1b. *nāḍu vereli oru kuruvi ku:ḍu*. *ad' enna? adu bokku* (VK)

2. *nāḍu*⁽¹⁾ *vereli*⁽²⁾ *mede*⁽³⁾ *nikkudu*⁽⁴⁾. *ad'*⁽⁵⁾ *enna*⁽⁶⁾? A hillock⁽³⁾ stands⁽⁴⁾ in the middle⁽¹⁾ of the rock⁽²⁾. What⁽⁶⁾ [is] that⁽⁵⁾? *adu*⁽⁷⁾ *mule*⁽⁸⁾. That's⁽⁷⁾ a breast⁽⁸⁾. (MN)

nikkudu 3p.nt.sg. non-past of *nillu* 'stand'.

In these two riddles, *nāḍu vere* 'the middle rock', is equivalent to our body (Ir. *mōyi*).

3. *nāḍu*⁽¹⁾ *vereli*⁽²⁾ *kōyi*⁽³⁾ *vinjuḡā*⁽⁴⁾. *ad'*⁽⁵⁾ *enna*⁽⁶⁾? In the middle⁽¹⁾ of the rock⁽²⁾ he calls by waving⁽⁴⁾ the hand⁽³⁾. What⁽⁶⁾ [is] that⁽⁵⁾? *adu*⁽⁷⁾ *kannu*⁽⁸⁾. That⁽⁷⁾ [is] the eye(lid)⁽⁸⁾. (MN)

vinjuḡā 3p.m.sg. non-past of *vinju* 'to call (by gesture)'; the gesture being the typically Indian moving of the hand as a signal of calling, with the palm down.

4. *namuku*⁽¹⁾ *vanda*⁽²⁾ *natta:ḷu*⁽³⁾ *na:ne*⁽⁴⁾ *ariye*⁽⁵⁾. *ad'*⁽⁶⁾ *enna*⁽⁷⁾? I myself⁽⁴⁾ do not know⁽⁵⁾ the guest⁽³⁾ who came⁽²⁾ to us⁽¹⁾. What⁽⁷⁾ [is] that⁽⁶⁾? *adu*⁽⁸⁾ *ka:ḍu*⁽⁹⁾. That's⁽⁸⁾ the ear⁽⁹⁾. (MN)

namuku dat. of pers. pron. *na:mu* 'we'.

vanda past rel. part. of *var-*, *varu-* 'to come'.

natta:ḷu s.cpd. 'guest' (cf. *ILI* 254).

na:n-e 1p.sg. + emph. *-e* 'I myself'.

ariye 1p.sg.neg. 'I do not know' (archaic form).

5. *anjū*⁽¹⁾ *ittiku*⁽²⁾ *oru*⁽³⁾ *ka:u*⁽⁴⁾. *ad'*⁽⁵⁾ *enna*⁽⁶⁾? One⁽³⁾ handle⁽⁴⁾ for five⁽¹⁾ spears⁽²⁾. What⁽⁶⁾ [is] that⁽⁵⁾? *adu*⁽⁷⁾ *kōyyi*⁽⁸⁾. That's⁽⁷⁾ a hand⁽⁸⁾. (MN)

itti-ku. *itti* 'spear, lance' + dat.suff. *-ku*.

⁷ A very interesting and linguistically important article on the riddles of another Nilgiri Hill tribe, the Pālu Kurumbas, was prepared by Dieter B. Kapp (*BSOAS*, xli, 3, 1978, 512–22). I herewith express my thanks to the author for enabling me to read his paper in the manuscript form.

6. *gēn' illatta*⁽¹⁾ *mu:ṅga*⁽²⁾ *podeli*⁽³⁾ *bodd' illatta*⁽⁴⁾ *kaḍame*⁽⁵⁾ *me:ḡina*⁽⁶⁾. *adu*⁽⁷⁾-*y-enna*⁽⁸⁾? In a thicket⁽³⁾ of ringless⁽¹⁾ bamboo⁽²⁾ boneless⁽⁴⁾ sambar-deers⁽⁵⁾ are grazing⁽⁶⁾. What⁽⁸⁾ [is] that⁽⁷⁾? *telemānde*⁽⁹⁾ *pernu*⁽¹⁰⁾. Hair⁽⁹⁾ [and] lice⁽¹⁰⁾. (Ur.)

gēnu 'ring (on bamboo)'; -*illatta* 'non-existent; without; -less'.

pode-li. *pode* 'thicket' + loc.suff. -*li*.

bodd' illatta 'bone-less, without bones'.

me:ḡina 3p.pl. non-past 'they graze': *me:* + non-past -*g-* + p.g.n.suff. -*ina*.

7. *muppadu*⁽¹⁾ *kīlikku*⁽²⁾ *ore:*⁽³⁾ *bogotte*⁽⁴⁾. *ad'*⁽⁵⁾ *enna*⁽⁶⁾? One single⁽³⁾ hole⁽⁴⁾ for thirty⁽¹⁾ parrots⁽²⁾. What⁽⁶⁾ [is] that⁽⁵⁾? *adu*⁽⁷⁾ *pallu*⁽⁸⁾. That's⁽⁷⁾ the teeth⁽⁸⁾. (MN)

kīli-kku. *kīli* 'parrot' + dat.suff. -*kku*.

or-e. *oru* + emph. *e:* 'one single, only one'.

8. *randu*⁽¹⁾ *kurreku*⁽²⁾ *ore:*⁽³⁾ *vitta*⁽⁴⁾. *ad'*⁽⁵⁾ *enna*⁽⁶⁾? One single⁽³⁾ central beam⁽⁴⁾ for two⁽¹⁾ houses⁽²⁾. What⁽⁶⁾ [is] that⁽⁵⁾? *adu*⁽⁷⁾ *mu:kku*⁽⁸⁾. That's⁽⁷⁾ the nose⁽⁸⁾. (MN)

9. *idi*⁽¹⁾ *viḍuga*⁽²⁾ *gundu*⁽³⁾ *paṭṭana*⁽⁴⁾ *vandu*⁽⁵⁾ *paṭṭana*⁽⁶⁾ *po:ḡudu*⁽⁷⁾. *ad'*⁽⁸⁾ *enna*⁽⁹⁾? A ball⁽³⁾ sent out⁽²⁾ from this place⁽¹⁾ goes⁽⁷⁾ to town⁽⁶⁾ [with the intention to] reach⁽⁵⁾ town⁽⁴⁾. What⁽⁹⁾ [is] it⁽⁸⁾? *adu*⁽¹⁰⁾ *kannu*⁽¹¹⁾. That's⁽¹⁰⁾ the eye⁽¹¹⁾. (MN)

po:ḡudu 3p.sg. neut. non-past 'it goes'.

10a. *tarakambarakkam*⁽¹⁾ *cante*⁽²⁾ *porge*⁽³⁾. *ad'*⁽⁴⁾ *enna*⁽⁵⁾? I go⁽³⁾ to the market⁽²⁾ [with the loud sound] *tarakambarakkam*⁽¹⁾. What's⁽⁵⁾ that⁽⁴⁾? *adu*⁽⁶⁾ *ceruppu*⁽⁷⁾. That's⁽⁶⁾ the sandals⁽⁷⁾. (MN)

por:ge 1p.sg. non-past 'go' (*por-g-e*).

10b. *tarkaporka*⁽¹⁾ *candeki*⁽²⁾ *por:gā*⁽³⁾, *ad'*⁽⁴⁾ *enna*⁽⁵⁾? He goes⁽³⁾ to the market⁽²⁾ [with the sound] *tarkaporka*⁽¹⁾. What's⁽⁵⁾ that⁽⁴⁾? *adu*⁽⁶⁾ *ceruppu*⁽⁷⁾. That's⁽⁶⁾ the sandals⁽⁷⁾. (Ur.)

por:gā 3p.m.sg. non-past 'he goes' (*por-g-ā*).

11. *ullaṅḡoyde:nnumu*⁽¹⁾ *ariyapada:*⁽²⁾, *poraṅḡoyde:nnumu*⁽³⁾ *ariyapada:*⁽⁴⁾, *ore*⁽⁵⁾-*y-ele*⁽⁶⁾. If you say 'the palm of the hand'⁽¹⁾, it will not be seen⁽²⁾, and if you say 'the back of the hand'⁽³⁾, it will not be seen [either]⁽⁴⁾, such a⁽⁵⁾ leaf⁽⁶⁾. *ad'*⁽⁷⁾ *enna*⁽⁸⁾. What⁽⁸⁾ [is] that⁽⁷⁾? *adu*⁽⁹⁾ *cīle*⁽¹⁰⁾. It's⁽⁹⁾ a garment⁽¹⁰⁾. (MN)

ullaṅḡoyde:nnumu. *ullaṅḡoy* cpd.s. 'the palm of the hand' + *de:* 'emph. particle' (cf. Ta. *tān*) + 'nnu' + -*mu*, ger. of *en* 'to say so-and-so' + -*mu* 'and; even; also' (cf. Ta. -*um*).

ariya-pada:. Inf. *ariya* 'to know, be visible, be seen' + *pada:* neg. of *padu*, auxiliary, 'not convenient, unfit, impossible' (productive in Old and Middle Tamil, not in Modern Tamil).

cīle is primarily the Ir. designation of the Hindu-style many-coloured female dress (sari), whereas the one-coloured (usually dark-red, purple, dark green, dark blue) tribal type of female dress, worn in the tribal fashion (both shoulders uncovered, dress tied in the back under the shoulder blades, in front just about covering the breasts) is called *vaṇṇa*. In this riddle, the *cīle* is compared to a (large) leaf which while walking, moves, flutters and flaps so that one cannot see well either the front or the back, the upper and the under part.

12. *ar:*⁽¹⁾ *ana*⁽²⁾ *de*⁽³⁾ *ancukallu*⁽⁴⁾, *murr*⁽⁵⁾ *ana*⁽⁶⁾ *de*⁽⁷⁾ *mi:nc*⁽⁸⁾ *ukallu*⁽⁹⁾, *ombad*⁽¹⁰⁾ *ana*⁽¹¹⁾ *da:raganda*⁽¹²⁾, *ad'*⁽¹³⁾ *enna*⁽¹⁴⁾? Six⁽¹⁾ annas⁽²⁾ [worth] bead⁽⁴⁾, only⁽⁷⁾ three⁽⁵⁾ annas⁽⁶⁾ [worth] glittering⁽⁸⁾ stone⁽⁹⁾, nine⁽¹⁰⁾ annas⁽¹¹⁾ [worth]

door-frame⁽¹²⁾, what's⁽¹⁴⁾ that⁽¹³⁾? *adu*⁽¹⁵⁾ *ta:li*⁽¹⁶⁾. That's⁽¹⁵⁾ a *tāli*⁽¹⁶⁾ (marriage-necklace). (VK)

Married Irula women, like South Indian Hindus, wear nowadays the typical *tāli* or marriage-badge, which is compared in this riddle to a door (*darra*, IA loanword!) frame (*ganda*) worth nine annas, filled with beads and glittering stones. For *mi:ncu*⁽⁶⁾ 'to glitter' cf. Ka. *miñcu* (Ta. *min*, *DED* 3994). The form *muru*⁽⁵⁾ 'three' (*DED* 4147 Ka. *muru*) is odd in Irula; but then the lexical material of this riddle is all strongly 'Kannadized'.

13. *aḷag'ulla*⁽¹⁾ *pombilleki*⁽²⁾ *alleyili*⁽³⁾ *ortte*⁽⁴⁾. *ad'*⁽⁵⁾ *enna*⁽⁶⁾? A beautiful⁽¹⁾ girl⁽²⁾ [has] a hole⁽⁴⁾ in the side of [her] body⁽³⁾. What⁽⁶⁾ [is] it⁽⁵⁾? *adu*⁽⁷⁾ *ta:li*⁽⁸⁾. It's⁽⁷⁾ a *tāli*. (Ur.)

aḷagu s. 'beauty' + *-ulla* post. 'possessing' → *aḷag'ulla* 'beautiful'; *pombille-ki* dat.possess.

alle-y-ili. *alle* 'side of the body; waist' + loc.suff. *-ili*. The beads of *tālis* or marriage-badges used to have a hole in the middle; these hollow *tālis* are considered traditional and old-fashioned.

14. *po:ga po:ga*⁽¹⁾ *bodakkulle*⁽²⁾ *kōyi*⁽³⁾ *viḍuga*⁽⁴⁾. *ad'*⁽⁵⁾ *enna*⁽⁶⁾? As [one] goes and goes⁽¹⁾, [one] lets⁽⁴⁾ [one's] hand⁽³⁾ inside the bush⁽²⁾. What's⁽⁶⁾ that⁽⁵⁾? *adu curukkupāyṅgi*⁽⁶⁾. That's⁽⁷⁾ a small string-bag⁽⁸⁾. (VK)

boda-kku-ulle. *boda* 'bush, low jungle' + dat.suff. + postp. *-ulle* 'inside'. *curukkupāyṅgi* ['surukkupāyṅgi], a cpd. subst. (lit. contract/furl/close + bag) designating a small cotton bag with a string to tie it close; worn (traditionally) in the knot of the *vēṣṭi*, or round the neck on a string.

15. *vēṭṭina*⁽¹⁾ *kōneli*⁽²⁾ *kōyi*⁽³⁾ *kuḷugudu*⁽⁴⁾. *adu-y-enna*⁽⁶⁾? A cock⁽³⁾ is cooing⁽⁴⁾ in a cut-off⁽¹⁾ branch⁽²⁾. What⁽⁶⁾ [is] that⁽⁵⁾? *adu*⁽⁷⁾ *koalu*⁽⁸⁾. That's⁽⁷⁾ an oboe⁽⁸⁾. (MN)

vēṭṭina past rel. partic. of *vēṭṭu* 'to cut, cut off, chop off'.

kōne-li. *kōne* 'branch of a tree' + loc.suff. *-li*.

kuḷugudu 3p.nt.sg. non-past of *kuḷu* 'to cry, coo, call (as a bird)'.

koalu, *korlu* (MN), *kogalu* (VK) is one of the two most frequently used musical instruments of the Irulas, a wooden oboe with sonorous tone; it has six holes; the bell is usually adorned with carvings; the mouthpiece is a rather complex and delicate piece of work.

16. *kattāle*⁽¹⁾ *ku:reli*⁽²⁾ *dumbi*⁽³⁾ *mīrugudu*⁽⁴⁾. *ad'*⁽⁵⁾ *enna*⁽⁶⁾? A bee⁽³⁾ is humming⁽⁴⁾ in a dark⁽¹⁾ house⁽²⁾. What's⁽⁶⁾ that⁽⁵⁾? *adu*⁽⁷⁾ *vi:cuṅkallu*⁽⁸⁾. It's⁽⁷⁾ a grinding stone⁽⁸⁾. (MN)

17. *karr*⁽¹⁾ *naryi*⁽²⁾ *va:lu*⁽³⁾ *vēḷli*⁽⁴⁾ *pīdi*⁽⁵⁾ *pīdipicikkaru*⁽⁶⁾. *ad'*⁽⁷⁾ *enna*⁽⁸⁾? They have fixed⁽⁶⁾ a silver⁽⁴⁾ anklet⁽⁵⁾ to the tail⁽³⁾ of a black⁽¹⁾ dog⁽²⁾. What⁽⁸⁾ [is] that⁽⁷⁾? *adu*⁽⁹⁾ *lakkā*⁽¹⁰⁾. That's⁽⁹⁾ a pestle⁽¹⁰⁾. (MN)

va:lu-ku. *va:lu* 'tail' + dat.suff. *-ku*.

pīdipicikkaru, a cpd. verb form, 3p.pl. personal perfect tense from the causative verb *pīdipi* 'to cause to hold, to fasten, to fix to'; + past-tense marker *-cci*; + finite verb form of *iru* (auxiliary of perfect); *irukkaru* → *-kkarru*.

18. *kanna:di*⁽¹⁾ *ku:rekkulle*⁽²⁾ *renda:lu*⁽³⁾ *aḷdugaru*⁽⁴⁾. *rendu*⁽⁵⁾ *annan*⁽⁶⁾ *tambi*⁽⁷⁾ *aḷdugaru*⁽⁸⁾. *adu*⁽⁹⁾ *-y-enna*⁽¹⁰⁾? Two people⁽³⁾—two⁽⁵⁾ [brothers], elder⁽⁶⁾ [and] younger brother⁽⁷⁾, dance^(4,8) in a glass⁽¹⁾-house⁽²⁾. What⁽¹⁰⁾ [is] that⁽⁹⁾? *adu*⁽¹¹⁾ *voccu*⁽¹²⁾. That's⁽¹¹⁾ a watch⁽¹²⁾. (MN)

arḍugaru 3p.pl. personal non-past, *arḍu* 'to dance' + non-past tense -g- + p.g.n.suff. -aru.

voccu [wɔtʃu] < Engl. *watch*.

19. *arḍivaci*⁽¹⁾ *pōndruku*⁽²⁾ *kunḍacari*⁽³⁾ *mole*⁽⁴⁾. *ad*⁽⁵⁾ *enna*⁽⁶⁾? *Ādivāsī*⁽¹⁾ women⁽²⁾ [have] back-side⁽³⁾ breasts⁽⁴⁾. What's⁽⁶⁾ that⁽⁵⁾? *adu*⁽⁷⁾ *mura*⁽⁸⁾ That's⁽⁷⁾ a winnowing fan⁽⁸⁾. (MN)

arḍivaci was pronounced [a·divætʃi]; the use of this term is of course an innovation in imitation of the 'official' designation of the tribals as *ādivāsīs* 'the original (*ādi*) inhabitants (*vāsī*)' (of India). It is deemed to carry respect and prestige.

pōndruku. *pōndru* < *pōndiru* pl. 'women' (with the old suffix -iru < *-ir) + dat.suff. -ku.

kunḍacari (often also *kunḍacāri*), a cpd. subst. meaning 'back-side' (usually of the body). The Irulas seem to be obsessed with the notion of 'back-side breasts'; they have even stories about women having breasts on the reverse side of the body (see forthcoming *Irula texts*). The winnowing fan is compared to a 'dark' *Ādivāsī* woman with back-side breasts because there are two protrusions on the back part of the winnowing fan.

20. *cīringa*⁽¹⁾ *cittēku*⁽²⁾ *oru*⁽³⁾ *mula*⁽⁴⁾ *varlu*⁽⁵⁾. *ad*⁽⁶⁾ *enna*⁽⁷⁾? The *cīringa* *cittē*⁽¹⁻²⁾ bird [has] a tail⁽⁵⁾ one⁽³⁾ cubit⁽⁴⁾ long. What⁽⁷⁾ [is] that⁽⁶⁾? *adu*⁽⁸⁾ *cīmaru*⁽³⁾. It's⁽⁸⁾ a broom⁽⁹⁾. (VK)

cīringa *cittē* was glossed as a pretty little bird, a kind of swallow; *cittē* (*DED* 2073 Ta. *cittu*, Tu. *cittē*) means 'a small bird'; in Ta., 'anything small'. *mula*, Ta. *mulam* (*DED* 4093) 'cubit'.

21. *dēne*⁽¹⁾ *pakka*⁽²⁾ *ḍittu*⁽³⁾ *ērṛa*⁽⁴⁾ *maṭṭarṅga*⁽⁵⁾. *ad*⁽⁶⁾ *enna*⁽⁷⁾? They won't⁽⁸⁾ go up⁽⁴⁾ the edge⁽³⁾ at the side of⁽²⁾ the veranda⁽¹⁾. What's⁽⁷⁾ that⁽⁶⁾? *adu*⁽⁸⁾ *rallu*⁽⁹⁾.⁸ It's⁽⁸⁾ a mortar⁽⁹⁾. (VK)

dēne; in other Ir. dialects, *dīne*, *dīne*, *dūne*, an important part of the Irula house: the veranda in front of the house, or around the house, several feet above the ground level; a mud platform under the eaves of the roof on which people relax and sit talking, smoking, joking, etc. The social life takes part to a great extent on the *dīne*.

maṭṭarṅga 3p.pl.pers.negative auxiliary 'they won't'.

rallu (*DED* 560 Ta. *ural*). Husking is done with the wooden mortar (*rallu*) and pestle *lakke*, *lakkā* (*DED* 580 Ta. *ulakkai*); *rallu* is a high cylindrical block of wood with a central depression at the top; the grain which is to be husked or pounded is put into this depression; *lakke* is a long, heavy, cylindrical piece usually of *nurra* or *narva* (*jambū*-tree) wood (while the trunk of the jackfruit tree is used for making the *rallu*).

22. *adappa*⁽¹⁾ *kombili*⁽²⁾ *doddappa*⁽³⁾ *duṛṅguṅga*⁽⁴⁾.⁹ *ade*⁽⁵⁾-*y-enna*⁽⁶⁾? On a large side-branch⁽¹⁻²⁾ swings⁽⁴⁾ grandfather⁽³⁾. What⁽⁶⁾ [is] that⁽⁵⁾? *adu*⁽⁷⁾ *cakke-kayi*⁽⁸⁾.¹⁰ That⁽⁷⁾ [is] the jack-fruit⁽⁸⁾. (MN)

adappa was glossed as a 'large side-bough' (of any wide-branched tree) *kombili*. *kombu* 'branch, bough' + loc.suff. -ili.

duṛṅguṅga 3p.sg.m. non-past *duṛṅgu* 'to hang; sleep'.

23. *erunuru*⁽¹⁾ *korāṅgu*⁽²⁾ *ore*⁽³⁾ *va:l*⁽⁴⁾*ta*⁽⁵⁾. *ad*⁽⁶⁾ *enna*⁽⁷⁾? Two hundred⁽¹⁾

⁸ An alternative answer was *rallu kuyi* 'the mortar-pit' (i.e. the central depression in the mortar).

⁹ An alternative form quoted by a different informant: *neluga*.

¹⁰ An alternative answer was *temu* 'honey-comb'.

monkeys⁽²⁾ [have] only⁽⁵⁾ one single⁽³⁾ tail⁽⁴⁾. What's⁽⁷⁾ that⁽⁶⁾? *adu*⁽⁸⁾ *vārekolle*⁽⁹⁾. That's⁽⁸⁾ a banana-bunch⁽⁹⁾. (MN)¹¹

korāngu (also *korarṅku*) is the big black monkey (Nilgiri langur); the smaller brownish monkey is called *koḍā*.

24. *a:le*⁽¹⁾-*y-illa:da*⁽²⁾ *pille*⁽³⁾ *pēruḡa oru pēndu*⁽⁵⁾, *ad*⁽⁶⁾ *enna*⁽⁷⁾?¹² A woman⁽⁵⁾ without⁽²⁾ husband⁽¹⁾ gets⁽⁴⁾ children⁽³⁾, what's⁽⁷⁾ that⁽⁶⁾? *adu*⁽⁸⁾ *vā:kolle*⁽⁹⁾. That's⁽⁸⁾ a banana-bunch⁽⁹⁾. (VK)

25. *manca*⁽¹⁾ *kūrivī*⁽²⁾ *nenca*⁽³⁾ *pīlandu*⁽⁴⁾ *bagava:nuku*⁽⁵⁾ *pu:je*⁽⁶⁾. *ad*⁽⁷⁾ *enna*⁽⁸⁾? The heart⁽³⁾ of a yellow⁽¹⁾ bird⁽²⁾ split⁽⁴⁾ open—in worship⁽⁶⁾ of the Lord⁽⁵⁾. What's⁽⁸⁾ that⁽⁷⁾? *adu*⁽⁹⁾ *vā:repammu*⁽¹⁰⁾. That's⁽⁹⁾ a banana⁽¹⁰⁾. (MN)

pīlandu ger. from *pīla-* 'to split, crack, etc.'

bagava:nuku dat. *bagava:n* < lw. Ta. or Ma. < Skt. *bhagavān*.

pu:je 'worship' < lw. Ta. or Ma. < Skt. *pūjā*.

vā:repammu cpd.s. *vā:e* 'banana, plantain' (*DED* 4403 Ta. *vālai*) + *pammu* 'ripe fruit' (*DED* 3299 Ta. *paḷam*).

An example of profound Sanskritization-Hinduization.

26. *karnanjo:leli*⁽¹⁾ *kambuḷi*⁽²⁾ *ku:kuttukka:*⁽³⁾, *adu*⁽⁴⁾ *arū*⁽⁵⁾? He squats⁽³⁾ in the deep forest⁽¹⁾ [covering his head with] a rug⁽²⁾. Who⁽⁵⁾ [is] that⁽⁴⁾? *adu*⁽⁶⁾ *nurapammu*⁽⁷⁾. It's⁽⁶⁾ a *jambū*-fruit⁽⁷⁾. (MN)

karnanjo:leli cpd.s. *karnan* + *jo:le* + loc.suff. *-li*; the cpd.s. is made up of *karna* + morphophon. *-n-* (*DED* 1194) 'forest tract, woodland' + *co:le* (*DED* 2357) 'jungle'.

kambuḷi, lw. from Ta., Ma. or Ka. < lw. IA, cf. *DBIA* 76 (Skt. *kambala-*, Pa, Pkt. *kambala-*, etc.).

ku:kuttukka: 3p.m.sg. of a cpd. verb-form *ku:ku-* 'to squat' + *-ṭṭu* (< *vīḍu*) + *-kka:* (< *iru*).

nurapammu cpd.s. *nura* 'jambū' + *pammu* (*DED* 3299) 'fruit'. *Jambū*-fruits grow in small black bunches on the boughs of the *jambū*-trees ('rose-apple').

27. *to:luritta*⁽¹⁾ *munne*⁽²⁾ *cante*⁽³⁾ *cutṭuḡudu*⁽⁴⁾.¹³ *ad*⁽⁵⁾ *enna*⁽⁶⁾? A skinned⁽¹⁾ hare⁽²⁾ roams⁽⁴⁾ in the market⁽³⁾. What's⁽⁶⁾ that⁽⁵⁾? *adu*⁽⁷⁾ *puḷi*⁽⁸⁾. That's⁽⁷⁾ a tamarind⁽⁸⁾. (MN)

uritta past rel.part. *uri* 'to peel off, etc.'; *to:l* 'skin' + *uritta*.

munne; other forms *munna* (Kas.), *monnā* (*DED*, *DEDS* 4071). Cf. *ILI* item 407; *cutṭuḡudu* 3p.nt.sg. *cutṭu* 'to roam, go about, etc.'

Before it is sold, the outer skin of tamarind fruit is removed; hence the possibility of the riddle.

28. *curuṅga*⁽¹⁾ *moṭṭiya*⁽²⁾ *cante*⁽³⁾ *aḍuḡa*⁽⁴⁾. *ade*⁽⁵⁾-*y-enna*⁽⁶⁾? A wrinkled⁽¹⁾ scrotum⁽²⁾ dancing⁽⁴⁾ in the market-place⁽³⁾. What⁽⁶⁾ [is] that⁽⁵⁾? *adu*⁽⁷⁾ *kurumaḷaḡu*⁽⁸⁾. That's⁽⁷⁾ pepper⁽⁸⁾. (VK)

curuṅga inf. in attrib. function, cf. *DED* 2213, Ta. *curuṅku* 'to shrink, wrinkle, be creased, etc.'

moṭṭiya s. 'scrotum, scrotum with testicles, testicles'; other dialects *moṭṭe*, cf. *DED* 4048 Ta. *muṭṭai*, Ka. *moṭṭe* 'egg, ovum, testis'.

¹¹ Another version of the same riddle: *a:yira korāṅgeku ore: va:lu* (MN) 'a thousand monkeys [have] one single tail'.

¹² The very unusual word-order of this utterance (the 'regular', statistically absolutely prevalent WO would be 12534) is most probably due to the fact that it is a riddle, with specific emphatic relationships.

¹³ Another reading: *cutṭivaruḡudu* 'comes roaming'; yet another version: *a:ḡuḡudu* 'moves about, dances'.

29. *to:huritta*⁽¹⁾ *monnä*⁽²⁾ *cante*⁽³⁾ *aṛḍuḍu*⁽⁴⁾. *ad*⁽⁵⁾ *enna*⁽⁶⁾? A skinned⁽¹⁾ hare⁽²⁾ roams⁽⁴⁾ in the market⁽³⁾. What's⁽⁶⁾ that⁽⁵⁾? *adu*⁽⁷⁾ *bōṅgiya*⁽⁸⁾. That's⁽⁷⁾ onion⁽⁸⁾. (VK.) Cf. No. 27.

bōṅgiya, MN *vēṅgiya*; other dialects also *vēṅgaya*, cf. Ta. *venkāyam*, *venkāyam* 'onion'.

30. *aryira*⁽¹⁾ *taccar*⁽²⁾ *kattina*⁽³⁾ *korṭte*⁽⁴⁾ *ore*⁽⁵⁾ *kannili*⁽⁶⁾ *pa:ttar*⁽⁷⁾ *ḍi:ḡuḍu*⁽⁸⁾. *ad*⁽⁹⁾ *enna*⁽¹⁰⁾? You aim (lit. when one looks⁽⁷⁾ with a single⁽⁵⁾ eye⁽⁶⁾) at the fortress⁽⁴⁾ made by⁽³⁾ a thousand⁽¹⁾ artisans⁽²⁾, it will break up⁽⁸⁾. What's⁽¹⁰⁾ that⁽⁹⁾? *adu*⁽¹¹⁾ *ternu*⁽¹²⁾. It's⁽¹¹⁾ a honey-comb⁽¹²⁾. (MN)

kattina past rel. part. *kattu*- 'to build, construct, make, etc.'

kannili. *kannu* 'eye' + loc.suff. *-ili*.

pa:ttar: condit. *pa:rru*- 'to look see'; *ore: kannili pa:rru*- 'to aim (with one eye)'

ḍi:ḡuḍu 3p.nt.sg. non-past *ḍi:*- 'to vanish, be scattered; fall off; break up; come down, drop down, be reduced, diminish'. Cf. *DED* 426 Ta. *ili*.¹⁴

31. *tande*⁽¹⁾ *coriyā*⁽²⁾, *taryi*⁽³⁾ *jāḍa:tti*⁽⁴⁾, *maga*⁽⁵⁾ *muttukutti*⁽⁶⁾, *ad*⁽⁷⁾ *enna:ḍu*⁽⁸⁾? The father⁽¹⁾—a man full of scabies⁽²⁾, the mother⁽³⁾—a woman with matted bushy hair⁽⁴⁾, the daughter⁽⁵⁾—a little pearl⁽⁶⁾, what thing⁽⁸⁾ [is] that⁽⁷⁾? *adu*⁽⁹⁾ *cakkepammu*⁽¹⁰⁾. That's⁽⁹⁾ a jack-fruit⁽¹⁰⁾. (VK)

muttukutti cpd. subst., lit. 'the young (*kutti*) of a pearl'.

32. *cikku cikku*⁽¹⁾ *bindige*⁽²⁾, *ciṅgarra*⁽³⁾ *bindige*⁽⁴⁾, *aruwattu*⁽⁵⁾ *bindige*⁽⁶⁾ — *na:rne*⁽⁷⁾ *tumba*⁽⁸⁾. *ad*⁽⁹⁾ *enna*⁽¹⁰⁾? Very very small⁽¹⁾ vessel⁽²⁾, beautiful⁽³⁾ vessel⁽⁴⁾, sixty⁽⁵⁾ vessels⁽⁶⁾—and I⁽⁷⁾ [am] full⁽⁸⁾. What's⁽¹⁰⁾ that⁽⁹⁾? *adu*⁽¹¹⁾ *cunḍekayi*⁽¹²⁾. It's⁽¹¹⁾ a *cunḍe*-fruit⁽¹²⁾. (MN)

ciṅgarra, lw. < Ta. *cin̄kāram* < Skt. *śṛṅgāra*-. In Ir. as in Tamil, the adjective means 'beautiful, embellished'.

tumba 'full'; adv. used in the context of 'eating fully'.

cunḍe (*DED* 2194) *Solanum torvum*, *S. verbascifolium*, *S. pubescens*; Indian tree-potato; a shrub with small edible fruits.

33. *vēlle*⁽¹⁾ *cakkarakayku*⁽²⁾ *komb*⁽³⁾ *ille*⁽⁴⁾, *ad*⁽⁵⁾ *enna*⁽⁶⁾? White⁽¹⁾ sweet potato⁽²⁾ without⁽⁴⁾ branch⁽³⁾, what's⁽⁶⁾ that⁽⁵⁾? *adu*⁽⁷⁾ *koryimutte*⁽⁸⁾. That's⁽⁷⁾ a hen's egg⁽⁸⁾. (MN)

34. *dakkene*⁽¹⁾-*y-enna*⁽²⁾ *pa:ḍa:*⁽³⁾, *pa:ye*⁽⁴⁾ *curuttā*⁽⁵⁾ *pa:ḍa:*⁽⁶⁾, *ad*⁽⁷⁾ *enna*⁽⁸⁾? It is impossible⁽³⁾ to count⁽²⁾ the areca-nuts⁽¹⁾, it is impossible⁽⁶⁾ to roll⁽⁵⁾ the mat⁽⁴⁾. What's⁽⁸⁾ that⁽⁷⁾? *adu*⁽⁹⁾ *varnatti*⁽¹⁰⁾ *m̄:ne*⁽¹¹⁾. It's⁽⁹⁾ the stars⁽¹¹⁾ in the sky⁽¹⁰⁾. (MN)

¹⁴ I suspect that the loss of initial vowel accompanied by the appearance in the initial position of the cacuminal-retroflex plosive must point to some rules of accentuation different from those of Tamil-Malayalam, and probably connected with the Nilgiri areal linguistic features (in some Kurumba languages one may observe accentuation definitely different from the regular 'primary stress on the first syllable'). It is striking that Irula should go in some items as far as Telugu, and some Central Dravidian languages even further: e.g. *DED* 78 Ta. *aṭaikkāy* 'areca-nut' Ir. *dakke*; *DED* 799 Ta. *utai* 'to break': Ir. *depisu* 'to cause to break'; *DED* 426 Ta. *ili*, Te. *ḍigu*, Kui *ḍiva*, etc.: Ir. *ḍi:* 'to drop down, etc.'

Cf. further cases such as Ir. *raṅgu*: Ta. *iraṅku* (*DED* 439) 'to descend', Ir. *roṅga*: Ta. *uraṅku* (*DED* 606) 'to sleep', Ir. *re:*: Ta. *arai* (*DED* 191) 'to grind', Ir. *laru*: Ta. *alaru* (*DED* 211) 'to shout', Ir. *le:*: Ta. *alai* (*DED* 203) 'to roam, wander'. These cases prove that the Irula development of the loss of the initial vowel and the subsequent changes (occurrence in initial position of consonants which do not regularly occur initially in Dravidian, i.e. *ḍ*-, *r*-, *l*-; lengthening of the vowel, like Ta. *ili*: Ir. *ḍi:*, Ta. *alaru*: Ir. *laru*; change in vowel-quality, like in Ta. *uraṅku*: Ir. *roṅgu*) are of general and far-reaching nature, and can only be explained by strong accentuation of the second syllable. We may probably symbolize the process by the following tentative ordered rules (e.g.): (1) Pre-Ta. **alay*- → pre-Irula **ale*-. (2) **ale*- → **a'le*- (change of accent). (3) Proto-Irula **a'le*- → Ir. *le:*- 'to roam' (*DED* 203).

dakkene. dakke ‘areca-nut’ (*DED* 78 Ta. *ataikkāy*) + acc.suff. *-ne*.

ēṇṇa, curuṭṭa infinitives; for *paḍar*⁽³⁾, cf. No. 11.

va:natti. varna ‘sky’ + loc.suff. *-tti*.

35. *ammantu*⁽¹⁾ *panatte*⁽²⁾ *pudikka*⁽³⁾ *mudiyadu*⁽⁴⁾, *agueṭu*⁽⁵⁾ *panatte*⁽⁶⁾ *madikka*⁽⁷⁾ *mudiyadu*⁽⁸⁾. *ad*⁽⁹⁾ *enna*⁽¹⁰⁾? It is impossible⁽⁴⁾ to grasp⁽³⁾ the money (= coins)⁽²⁾ of the father⁽¹⁾, it is impossible⁽⁸⁾ to fold⁽⁷⁾ the money (= banknotes)⁽⁶⁾ of the mother⁽⁵⁾. What’s⁽¹⁰⁾ that⁽⁹⁾? *adu*⁽¹¹⁾ *mi:nva:na*⁽¹²⁾. That’s⁽¹¹⁾ the starry sky⁽¹²⁾. (MN)

ammantu. amma ‘father’ + morphophon. *-n-* + gen.suff. *-ṭu*.

panatte. paṇa ‘money’ + acc.suff. *-tte*.

*pudikka, madikka*⁷ infinitives.

mudiyadu neg. verb ‘is not possible, cannot’.

agueṭu. ague ‘mother’ + gen.suff. *-ṭu*.

Basic kinship terms of Irula and Ūrāli:

	FATHER	MOTHER	GRANDFATHER	GRANDMOTHER	SON	DAUGHTER
MN	<i>amma</i>	<i>ague</i>	<i>ettappa</i>	<i>ette</i>	<i>muṇa</i>	<i>maga</i>
VK	<i>amma</i>	<i>agve</i>	<i>aiya/appa</i>	<i>appe</i>	<i>magā</i>	<i>maga</i>
Ur.	<i>appa</i>	<i>arve</i>	<i>ēdda</i>	<i>ēdde</i>	<i>magā</i>	<i>maga</i>

36. *iryatti*⁽¹⁾ *cakkara*⁽²⁾ *naṭṭu*⁽³⁾, *ayatti*⁽⁴⁾ *kodi*⁽⁵⁾-*y-appi*⁽⁶⁾, *arci*⁽⁷⁾ *appara*⁽⁸⁾ *pu:*⁽⁹⁾ *puṭṭu*⁽¹⁰⁾, *a:ne*⁽¹¹⁾ *appara*⁽¹²⁾ *kay:*⁽¹³⁾, *ad*⁽¹⁴⁾ *enna*⁽¹⁵⁾? Sugar⁽²⁾ planted⁽³⁾ in lead⁽¹⁾, creepers⁽⁵⁾ stuck⁽⁶⁾ on to iron⁽⁴⁾, the paddy⁽⁷⁾ has flowered⁽⁹⁻¹⁰⁾ so much⁽⁸⁾, and the elephant⁽¹¹⁾ has extended [its] trunk⁽¹³⁾ so far⁽¹²⁾—what’s⁽¹⁵⁾ that⁽¹⁴⁾? *adu*⁽¹⁶⁾ *curriyan*⁽¹⁷⁾. That’s⁽¹⁶⁾ the sun⁽¹⁷⁾. (MN)

This highly poetic (and almost surrealist) riddle was explained to me as referring to different qualities, colours, and the heat of the sun (ultimately compared to the *a:ne* elephant stretching its trunk—the rays—‘so far’) and its rays (= creepers, flowers of paddy, the elephant’s trunk); the striking thing is the mythico-poetic vision of the sun as a huge hot leaden-iron elephant, giving warmth and nourishment.

iryatti. irya ‘lead’ + loc.suff. *-tti*; *cakkara*⁽²⁾ refers to ‘sugar-cane’.

naṭṭu ger. of *naḍu* ‘to plant’.

ayatti. aya ‘iron’ + loc.suff. *-tti*; the *kodi*⁽⁵⁾ ‘creeper’ refers to one of the creepers giving edible roots.

appi ger. of *appu* ‘to apply, stick to, clap on’.

arci, Ta. *arici* (MN Ir. pron. [arʃi]) ‘paddy’.

appara adv. ‘thus much, to that extent; thus far’.

puṭṭu ger. of *pu:* ‘to flower’; lit. ‘the paddy has flowered with so many [and] so far-reaching flowers’.

37. *varadi*⁽¹⁾ *varada*⁽²⁾ *aṭṭa*⁽³⁾ *oleli*⁽⁴⁾ *bud*⁽⁵⁾ *ille*⁽⁶⁾. *ad*⁽⁷⁾ *enna*⁽⁸⁾? There’s no⁽⁶⁾ ash⁽⁵⁾ in the oven⁽⁴⁾ wherein a barren woman⁽¹⁾ and a childless man⁽²⁾ cook⁽³⁾. What’s⁽⁸⁾ that⁽⁷⁾? *adu*⁽⁹⁾ *vēḍi*⁽¹⁰⁾. That’s⁽⁹⁾ a [double-barrelled] gun⁽¹⁰⁾. (MN)

aṭṭa⁽³⁾ past rel.part. *adu* (*DED* 66) ‘to cook, roast, etc.’.

oleli⁽⁴⁾. *ole* ‘fire-place, oven, hearth’ + loc.suff. *-li*.

vēḍi⁽¹⁰⁾ (*DED* 4502) ‘gun’; a double-barrelled gun is meant here.

Just as e.g. Nos. 34 and 36 manifest a very high poetic vision of the riddle-makers, No. 37 shows a nice sense of humour; indeed, almost all the riddles show great skill in metaphoric substitution and metonymic transformation. In this sense, many of the riddles may justifiably be viewed as parts of creative verbal art.