

# A Dravidian decipherment Indus script

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We only sketch some brief outlines here. Details will be presented in a separate independent development by M.V.Bhaskar (MVB). This publication is for feedback and further elucidation on the basic decipherment for larger community of enthusiast out there in the world.

Important documents for understanding Indus script is the corpus created by Asko Parbola and [Iravadham Mahadevan's concordance](#) work. We also need the [Dravidian Etymological Dictionary](#) by Burrow and Emeneau. Please download the two PDFs from Internet Archive and you should be ready. There are two excellent software versions of these PDFs: [Iravadham Mahadevan's concordance](#) maintained by Roja Muthiah Research Library and [Dravidian Etymological Dictionary](#) maintained by Digital South Asia Library of the Chicago University. If you want to write documents with Indus signs then you need Asko Parbola's NFM Indus Script font. This document was written in that font, a lovely gift from MVB to me. Now on to the beautiful discovery of the decipherment.

This decipherment became possible with the arrival of the splendid work by MVB in Sasanam:

M.V. பாஸ்கர் (Bhaskar), அன்றைய தலைப்பு செய்திகள் (Yesterday's headlines), சிந்துவெளி நாகரீக சிறப்பு வெளியீடு (Indus Valley Civilization Special Issue), கிருஷ்ணகிரி மாவட்ட வரலாற்று ஆய்வு மையம் (Krishnagiri District History Research Center), சாசனம் (Sasanam), 2025.

This laid down the map that lead to all the linkage between graphics and the text, building this beautiful journey of discovery enabled by M.V. Bhaskar, with whom I have been working for the past several years. My learning in art, Brahmi and Indus Script derived from his interactions.

## Numbers

Numbers are treated separately, but they are just like other glyphs, easily welded and affixed to other glyphs, producing a plethora of possibilities.

M77 Sign	Glyph	Syllable	DED	Description	Tamil
86		onn-, mu-,muthal-		one, primary	முதல், ஒண்ணு
87		ra-,ir-,iru-	474	two	ர-,இர்-,இரு-
89		mu-,mun-	5052	three	மு-,முன்-
95		nal-,naal,nalla-		four	நல்-,நால்-,நல்ல-
96		ai-	2826	five	-ஐ
108		-ar	2485	six	-ஆறு
110		elu-,elu	910	seven	ஏழு,எழு

Application of above phonemes

112	'''	nalam,munnal	-	Healthy, before	நிலம்,முன்னால்
116	''''	nellai	-	rice	நெல்லை
121	'''	nallonal	-	good person	நல்லோனால்
120	'''	mumunnonum	-	Three generations back	மும்முன்னோனும், மும்முன்னமும்
119	'''	mum-munnor	-	Two generations back	மும்முன்னோர்

## Clitics

Clitics provide sentence structure (the subject and the object). The reading order is right to left only after the clitics; before that the reading is left to right.

M77 No.	Glyph	DED	Description	Tamil
97	.....	-	-il,-da,-ta,-in	-ட,-டு,-த,-து-இல்,-இன்
99	.....	-	-ra,-ru	-ர,-ரு,-ற,-று
123	.....	-	-yar,-yin	-யர், -யார்

## Learn through pun

Following are an indication of the pun that abounds in Indus script, which is termed as the “rebus principle”. Of course, it only makes sense if your language is close to ancient Dravidian. For deeper understanding you may have to refer to some of the sign values below this in the section on “Syllabic development”. We only sketch a few, but the Indus script syllabary abounds in such pun. They are also termed as rebus principle.

M77 Sign	Glyph	Syllable	DED	Description	Tamil
298	))))	valai = vala+ai	-	) = vala+5	வல+ஐ=வலை
Right-parenthesis is “vala” (curved as well as right) in Tamil and “vala” + “ai” = “valai”. This is further explained by a pun statement shown in the next row.					
62	(ஃ)	valai-kanni	-	vaalai fish	வாளை மீன்
The fish “vaalai” is known as the shark fish that has sharp teeth. A nice tooth is drawn at the top to elucidate the learning. This explains that the parenthesis sign (299,287) carry the phonetic value “valai”.valai-kanni					
63	(ஃ)	kanni-pori-valai	-	Trapping of	கண்ணி-பொறி-

birds வலை

This learning tablet defines the phonetic value of fish as “kanni” and the bird as “puri” by defining it through a polysyllabic pun as “kanni-pori” with a parenthetic “valai” . The “kanni-pori” in Tamil is “trapping”.

64      𑌕𑌔𑌕      valai-kanni      -      The clitic      கன்னி-பொறி-  
reverses reading      வலை  
order

The clitic sign 64 reverses the reading order to the right of it. This learning script defines that.

376      𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕      pal      -      teeth      பல்லு

A teeth is indicated by the protruding teeth effect, just like in the fish teeth.

## Syllabic development

We outline from top to bottom how the syllabary is developed. We outline entries that are learning signs that give us clue on understanding the development (like “a” for “apple”, but in a funny/punny way). Happy journey!

M77 Sign	Glyph	Syllable	DED	Description	Tamil
1	𑌕	an	131, 132	person	அன்
	𑌕𑌕	an(n)-an	131, 132	brother	அண்ணன்
2	𑌕𑌔	aran,muthalvan	311	gentleman, primary man	அரண், முதல்வன்
3	𑌕𑌔𑌕	ath-an	142	husband	அத்தான்
4	𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔	natt-an	3638	country man	நாட்டான்
5	𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕	natt-ar-an	3638	country rules	நாட்டரன்
6	𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔	val(i)-an	5276	skilled man	வலியன்
7	𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕	vel-an	5368	lance fighter	வேலன்
8	𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔	valai-velan,valaiyan	5288	animal trapper	வலையன்
12	𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔	vuravan	688	farmer	உழவன்
13	𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕	vuraval	688	farming	உழவல்
14	𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔	per-uravan	688	big farmer	பேர் உழவன்
15	𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕	uravur	688	farming town	உழவூர்
54	𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔	pu	4345	flower,Insect	பூ (பூச்சி)
55	𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕	pol	4550	flowering	பொலி, பொலிவு
374	𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔	-n	1159b, 3621, 3621a	night, bug	நீர் (துளி), (ப)னி,நள்,நல்லு
410	𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕	naan	3639	me	நான்
415	𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔	nanan	3639	shame	நாணம், நண்ணன்
299	𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕	idai	449	hip,left	இடை
301	𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔	idayan	450	herder, herdsman	இடையன்
287	𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕𑌔𑌕	valai	5313, 5314	bent, trap, right	வல, வளை

293	ᳵ	valaiyan	5288	animal trapper (short form)	வலை வேலன், வலையன்
328	ᳵ	vu	651,761	ooze, mortar	வ, உ, ஊ
?	ᳶ	vala,valla	5304	strong,fertile	வல-, வள-
336	ᳶ	valan	5276	by	-வலன்
32	ᳶᳵ	vuvan		person between two	உவன்
342	ᳶᳵ	vur	752	town	ஊர்
347	ᳶᳵ	vellore	-	hunter's town	வேலூர்
358	ᳶᳶ	chevur	-	bronze worker's town	செவ்வூர்
344	ᳶᳶ	ur-ar	-	important sign with clitics	ஊரார்
343	ᳶᳶ	ur-il	-	important sign with clitics	ஊரில்
373	ᳶᳶ	pa	3805,4016	sun,Pot	பகல், பாணை
375	ᳶᳶ	pal, pala	3986a	teeth,many	பல், பல
391	ᳶᳶ	palla	3986a	elephant	பல்லா (யானை)
216	ᳶᳶ	tha	2946	earthen pot	த (தண்டி)
222	ᳶᳶ	thalu	3105	beat,crush	தள்ளு
223	ᳶᳶ	mumutha		grand-parent	மும்முத
?	ᳶᳶ	than	3045	cold	தண் (தண்ணீர்)
36	ᳶᳶ	than	3045	cold,water	தண் (தண்ணீர்)
?	ᳶᳶ	paan	4068	song,melody	பாண்
31	ᳶᳶ	paanan	4068	tamil bard	பாணன், பாடுபவன்
59	ᳶᳶ	kan,kanni	1159a,1166,1167,1417	boat, bamboo raft	கண்,கன்னி
60	ᳶᳶ	nalla-kan	-	good boat	நல்ல கன்னி
67	ᳶᳶ	konda,konde	2216	bull, horn	கொண்ட,கண்ட
70	ᳶᳶ	kaal,kala,kal	1479,1480	leg,canal	கல், கல, கால் (கால்வாய்)
78	ᳶᳶ	-pur,-puri	4374	bird	-புர், -புரி, புரா
81	ᳶᳶ	valai-puri	-	trapped bird	வலைபுரி, புரிவலை
319	ᳶᳶ	-mura	4977	snail, Curl	முறை, முறுக்கு
134	ᳶᳶ	-peru, -ma	4411	big, Large	பெரு-, -மா
261	ᳶᳶ	-ko	2207,2203	fort, gentry (west wind, western practice of having kings in Sumeria)	-கோ, கோட்டை
30	ᳶᳶ	kovan		herder, herdsman,gentry (cattle class becoming the ruling gentry)	கோவன்
197	ᳶᳶ	-mel,-madi	5058	top, terrace	மேல், மாடம்
402	ᳶᳶ	naadu	3638	country (as a contrast to village)	நாடு
162	ᳶᳶ	vel	5536	spear, valor	வேல்
245	ᳶᳶ	thatti	3036	cloth, wooden	தட்டி

149	𑌵	naalvali	3610,5297	frame	
249	𑌶	carakku,acu	47,2353	cross-road	நால்வழி
153	𑌷	perupavan	4422	load, sack	சரக்கு, அச்சு
155*	𑌸	anupu,anbu	330	receiver	பெருபவன்
211*	𑌹	anupu	5536	send	அனுப்பு, அன்பு
83	𑌺	irappan,iraapu	501	send	அனுப்பு, அன்பு
49	𑌻	kula	1829	death	இறப்பு
				Generation, gene	குலம்
50	𑌼	athu,adu	5153	ology	
124	𑌽	aer	2815	goat	ஆத்து ஆடு
125*	𑌾	vilagu	5423	plough	கலப்பை
323	𑌿	Ila,illam	497	diverge	விலகு
326	𑍀	nal-ilantha	497	Leaf,home	இலை, இல்லம்
327	𑍁	iru-vali-nal-ilanthai	497	Good home	நல்-இலந்த
47	𑍂	aran	204	home	இரு-வழி-நல்-இலந்த
43	𑍃	nal-aran	-	squink	அரண், அரணை
?	(𑍄)	munal-valai	-	Good behavior	நல் அறன்
				3 by 4 (yards)	முன்னால் வலை
415	𑍅	mu-pala	-	net	
171	𑍆	nil-(v)anji,nilai	-	Many many	முப்பல
?	𑍇	nal-inai	-		நில்வஞ்சி,நிலை
403	𑍈	patru,pattu,parai		Joining four	நல்லிணை,நாலிணை
404	𑍉	nal-parai		Announcement	பற்று,பட்டு, பறை
				with a drum beat	
				Good	நல்ல பறை
51	𑍊	kudike,pute,vavu,vey	1851,3606 4259,5291,55 33,5534	annoucement	
130	𑍋	kol	2151	Trader,barter,spy	குடிக்கே, நரி, வேய்
304	𑍌	vil	5422,5421	Exchange,	கொள், கொள்முதல்
305	𑍍	vilai	5421	buy/sell	
127	𑍎	alaku/alagu	239,246,255	Bow,sell	வில்
306	𑍇	alaku-vilam	-	price	விலை
397	𑍈	thiral	?	Beak, beauty,	அலகு, அழகு
377	𑍉	nal-thiral-pala	-	grains of paddy	
233	𑍊	mumalai	-	Good	அலகு-விலை
235	𑍋	mumalai-vel	-	Pearl necklace	திரள், முத்து மாலை
				Many good pearl	நல்திரள் பல
				necklaces	
				Three mountain	மும்மலை
				range	
				Three mountain	மும்மலை வேல்
				range worker	