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## INTRODUCTION

Both Sanskrit of the Indo-Aryan and Croatian\* of the Slavic group of languages emanate from a common source called the Proto Indo-European. Besides Sanskrit and Slavic, the other well-known members of the same family are Iranian, Germanic, Latin and Greek ramifying into a host of sub-families such as Persian, English, German, Dutch, Italian, French, Spanish, etc.

With the passage of time Sanskrit, the old Indo-Aryan developed into Mid Indo-Aryan namely the Pali and the different Prakrits which, in their turn, gave birth to various New Indo-Aryan languages such as Sindhi, Punjabi, Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi, Bengali, Assamese, etc. Unlike the three levels of development in the case of the Indo-Aryan languages, viz. the ancient, medieval and modern, the Slavic family does not follow such a chronological pattern. However, this family falls into three sub-divisions, consisting of Croatian (the language of Croatia, formerly a member of the Republic of Yugoslavia), Serbian and Bulgarian; East Slavic, comprising Russian and its different varieties; and West Slavic, that is Czech, Polish and Slovic.

Although, Sanskrit has since long ceased to be a popular language, yet it still remains a classical language of India. Distinguished by a great wealth of literature, it is considered to be the eldest member of the Indo-European family. The Rig-Veda, composed around two thousand B.C., is the oldest record of this language. Sir Monier-Williams, in the Introduction to his Sanskrit-English Dictionary, avers that “Sanskrit is not only the eldest sister of Greek but also the best guide to the structure of Greek, as well as of every other member of the Aryan or Indo-European family — a language, in short, which is the very keystone of the science of comparative philology.”

\* same as Serbo-Croatian–Serbian in Cyrillic and Croatian in Roman script



(xii) Croatian and Sanskrit : A Common Heritage of Words

Philology as referred to above, originated from the study of cognate words of the different Indo-European languages, especially involving the classical languages. It plays a significant role in the field of etymology, of which semantics is the vital part. Thus, Ullmann rightly remarks that “...semantics relies heavily on the comparative study of the cognate words regarding the different languages.”

A survey of the Croatian vocabulary undertaken, over the years, by the author on the basis of the Croatian-English Dictionary (by F.A. Bogadek) reveals that this language maintains its archaic character to a great extent and as such, bears remarkable similarities with Sanskrit.

The high figurative developments of meanings which accrue to a language are symptomatic of the level of its growth and measure of its antiquity. From this point of view the Sanskrit language holds a place of pride among the pantheon of the Indo-European languages. But none the less, the Croatian language generally held to be a junior or lesser-known member of the family also evinces a great semantic wealth so much so that it appears to be, in no way, less than a highly developed or classical language.\*

To be able to appreciate the common heritage of the Croatian and Sanskrit, the reader is not required to be proficient in the Sanskrit language. But what is important is just an acquaintance with the classical language, which an observant reader of the New Indo-Aryan languages does usually have.

Since the main thrust of the present study is on the exposition of the Croatian vocabulary, Sanskrit plays only a supportive role in the scheme of things.

In the absence of choice of a Croatian-English Dictionary, this author was constrained to depend only on the afore-said Dictionary, although it is not a comprehensive one as the

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\* Croatian *spjeti* (cognate with Sanskrit *sphāyate*; increases) basically meaning 'to increase or be prosperous' derivatively gives rise to such notions as : (a) to ripen, mature; (b) to speed, hasten; (c) to reach, arrive; and (d) to climb, ascend (see p. 59)

Sanskrit-English Dictionary, by Sir Monier-Williams, used for the purpose. The main short-coming of the said Croatian-English Dictionary, namely the absence of labels to indicate archaic or rare words, is reflected in the present work.\*

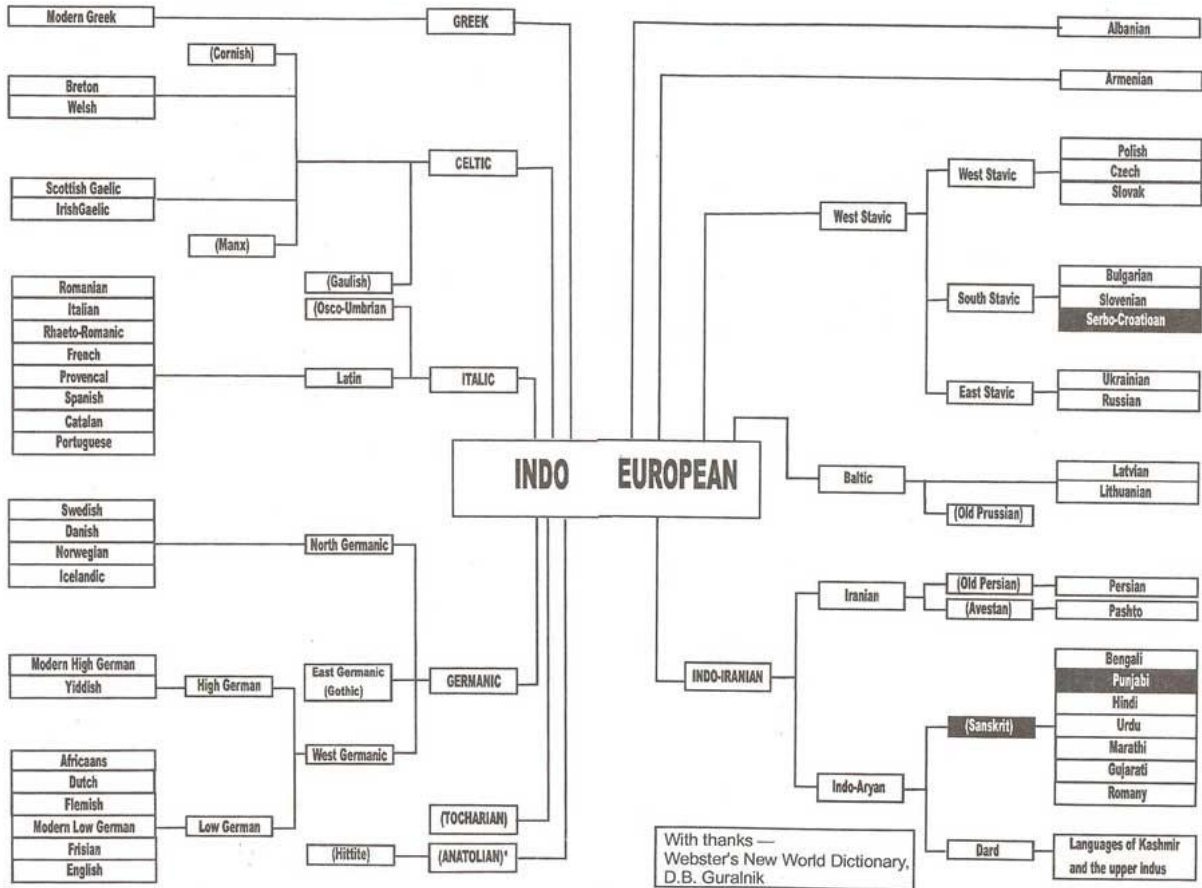
The proposed work is divided into four parts. The first part, 'Rationale of Cognate Relations' deals at length with the criteria for the determination of cognate words. The second part 'Exposition of Cognate Relations' provides a list of some five hundred cognate words of the concerned languages. The third part, 'Unique Developments' takes into consideration some unique semantic developments of the Croatian words as against their Sanskrit counterparts, while the last part, 'Parallel Developments' highlights some cases of parallel semantic developments occurring in Croatian and Sanskrit.

It is hoped that the striking linguistic affinities evidenced in such widely-distant languages would kindle the feelings of friendship and fraternity among the readers of these languages. Further, the study would also serve the cause of etymology in general, and the semantics in particular.

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\* Instead of Croatian *goveče*, a cow (cognate with the Sanskrit *gavi*), the popularly used word for the cow is *krava*



**TABLE-1**  
**STRIKING SIMILARITIES**

We may give below some cases of cognate words of Croatian and Sanskrit which are marked by striking similarities. These have been culled from some five hundred examples presented hereafter under the heading Exposition of Cognate Words.

CROATIAN	SANSKRIT
1. bivati (to be, exist)	bhavati (exists, is)
2. bogovan (godly, divine)	bhagavan (holy, divine)
3. četiri (four)	catur (four)
4. desno (right, as side)	dakṣhiṇa (right, as side)
5. drvo (tree)	dru (tree)
6. goveče (cow)	gavi (cow)
7. jesam (I am)	asmi (I am)
8. ini (other)	anya (other)
9. kad (when)	kada (when)
10. krpa (patch, rag)	karpāṭa (patched garment)
11. lagan (light)	laghu (light)
12. medved ('honey-eater', bear)	madhvaḍ (eating sweetness)
13. mrtac (dead body)	mṛtaka (dead body)
14. nana (mother)	nanā (mother)
15. nov (new)	nava (new)
16. oba (both)	ubhaya (both)
17. oko (eye)	akshi (eye)
18. ovca (sheep)	avikā (ewe)
19. plovati (to sail, swim)	plavate (swims, floats)
20. prijati (to please)	priyate (pleases)



21. <b>priminuti</b> (to die, perish)	<b>pramināti</b> (changes, perishes)
22. <b>prostor</b> (expanse, space)	<b>prastāra</b> (expanse)
23. <b>prvo</b> (before, first)	<b>pūrva</b> (fore, before)
24. <b>slava</b> (fame, glory)	<b>śrava</b> (fame, glory)
25. <b>sraka</b> (magpie)	<b>sārikā</b> (a songbird)
26. <b>tad</b> (then)	<b>tada</b> (then)
27. <b>tama</b> (darkness)	<b>tamas</b> (darkness)
28. <b>tanak</b> (thin, slender)	<b>tanuka</b> (thin, slender)
29. <b>udova</b> (widow)	<b>vidhavā</b> (widow)
30. <b>voda</b> (water)	<b>uda</b> (water)
31. <b>vrteno</b> (spindle)	<b>vartana</b> (spindle)
32. <b>živ</b> (living, alive)	<b>jīva</b> (a living being)

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**TABLE-2**  
**UNIQUE DEVELOPMENTS**

The following table includes some of the Croatian words which have witnessed certain semantic developments peculiar to the language concerned as against their Sanskrit counterparts. For more examples please refer to the Part-III.

1. Cro. √gor, to burn, shine  
Skt. √ghṛ, to burn, shine; ghr̥ṇa, heat, sunshine  
Cro. gorušića, mustard (so named from its hot or bitter taste; gorak, hot or bitter in taste)
2. Cro. √lijep, to paste, stick, plaster  
Skt. √lip, to paste, stick, smear  
Cro. lepota, beauty, embellishment (i.e. rubbing the body with an oily substance so as to make it smooth and shining)
3. Cro. mlad, young, youthful, fresh, new  
Skt. mṛdu, tender, delicate, gentle  
Cro. mlada, a young wife, bride; mladovati, to be a bride, to be engaged
4. Cro. put, way, path  
Skt. patha, way, path  
Cro. naputnica, instruction, advice, i.e. showing the way, directing
5. Cro. √svijet, to shine, be bright  
Skt. √svit, to be bright or white  
Cro. svet, holy, sacred, i.e. free from adulteration, guilt or moral taint : clean, pure; svetac, a saint
6. Cro. proti, towards, against  
Skt. prati, towards, against  
Cro. protiviti, to oppose, resist, counteract; protivnik, adversary, opponent

**TABLE-3**  
**CROATIAN VS PUNJABI**

In the matter of cognate words, Croatian is closer to Sanskrit than those of the New Indo-Aryan languages comprising Punjabi inter alia. This fact is illustrated by means of the following examples:-

CROATIAN	SANSKRIT	PUNJABI
1. oko (eye)	akshi	akkhī
2. dvjesta (two hundred)	dviśata	dosau
3. obrva (eye-brow)	bhrū	bhavā
4. pjena (foam)	phena	phen
5. brat (brother)	bhrātṛ	bharā
6. četeri (four)	catur	chār
7. snaša (daughter-in-law)	sunshā	nōh
8. trnjak (thorn-bush)	tṛṇakā	tiṅkā
9. pad (to fall)	√pad	paiṇā
10. nebo (heaven, sky)	nabha	—
11. krv (blood)	kravis	—
12. ovce (sheep)	avikā	—

## REFERENCES

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- A Comparative Dictionary of the Indo-Aryan Languages — Sir R.L. Turner