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Select Poems From Paalai Thinai Of Kalithogai Sangam Literature– Analysis Of Meypāḍu-S

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Abstract

Meypāḍu is defined as the physical manifestation of emotions. The feelings and emotions of the experiencer are portrayed through bodily expressions. Uvagai or Love is the underlying Meypāḍu of akam genre poetry. Different shades of emotions converge, diverge and intersperse with Uvagai meypāḍu, namely Nagai, Azhugai, Iḷivaral, Maruṭkai, Accham and Perumidam. The varying roles of different meypāḍu-s in relation to the most important Uvagai meypāḍu, offers ample scope to be presented on stage as part of Bharatanatyam Mārgam.

Aim

To analyze select poems of Kalithogai and identify different meypāḍu-s portrayed by the primary characters, Thalaivan, Thalaivi and Thozhi, in relation to different situations.

To identify the scope for successful representation on stage as part of Bharatanatyam margam.

Keywords

Aintinai, Pālai, Mudal, Karu and Uri Poruḷ, Piridal, Meypāḍu, Kooṭru, Kēṭpōr and Munnam, Accham, Maruṭkai, Veguḷi, Azhugai, Perumidam, Uvagai and Iḷivaral

Introduction –

Kalithogai, An Anthology of Poems in Kali meter is categorized under Akam genre. The anthology presents 150 poems branched into five groups based on Tinai or landscape namely – Pālai Kali, Kurinji Kali, Marutam Kali, Mullai Kali and Neithal Kali. Every poem is an individual song (tanippāḍal) and yet share similarities within the particular tinai group, best elucidated by Kamil Veith Zvelebil – “the poems, highly formalized, and connected by a network of situational conventions, have each a later colophon appended, which explains the appropriate erotic theme dealt with in the stanzas. In spite of the connection mentioned above, which is often indicated by formal means, too, each single stanza is a typical Tanippāḍal which can be to a great extent, understood and appreciated on its own.” (35)

While Tinai explicates the appropriate settings and phases of love, poruḷ is the structured content of the poem. According to Agattinaiyal of Poruḷadikāram, the content of poem is categorized under Mudal of first element pertaining to space (Nilam) and time (Pozhudu), Karu or native element and Uri or human element. According to Zvelebil, “human activity takes part within the framework of different strata structured as mudal (time and space coordinates), karu (basic physical, material manifestation) and uri (psychosomatic behaviour patterns of people)” (35). As far as Pālai Tinai is concerned, Mudal poruḷ comprises of Summer (Mutivenil) and Late Dew (Pin Pani) as Season and Noon as Time Zone. Piridal relating to Separation and Elopement is the Uri Poruḷ.

Pālai Kali comprises of 36 poems (1-36) written by Prof.Perunkadungo. Analysis of select poems is based on Translation and Critical Notes by Prof. Annamalai in his book, Kalithogai – Sanga Ilakkiyam. The 1st poem is titled Kaḍavuḷ Vāzhtu, containing valedictory verses in praise of the presiding deity of Pālai Thinai, Goddess Kotṭravai. The 2nd, 3rd and 4th poems are analyzed in the following pages based on the parameters of Meypāḍu defined and illustrated in Meypāṭṭiyal chapter under Porulathikāram of Tolkāppiyam. Mode of communication is from Kooṭru of Narrator to Kēṭpōr or Receiver and the Topic of Communication is termed as Munnam. Prof Annamalai presents the

The 2nd poem under Kalithogai is narrated by Thozhi -

Introduction – Keṭpor and Munnam

Thalaivan announces that he will travel through difficult path in search of wealth (poruḷvayin piriven), thereby leading to temporary separation from Thalaivi. Thozhi describes the natural state of Thalaivi (thalaiviyyin iyalbu), persisting that it is most important to always stay united with her (piriyāmal iruppādē poruḷ), thereby stopping his travel venture. She then narrates the entire episode joyfully to Thalaivi.

Tharavu - Description of Pālai (Mudal Porul)

Thozhi cautions Thalaivan that the path he has proposed to traverse is a very dreadful path. It is characterized by huge mountains exploded and broken due to scorching heat of the sun (variappiḷāndu iyangunar ārukeḍā vilangiya ayal avir āriḍai). It is compared to the burning of three forts by the three eyed God Shiva (mukkannān).

In answer to prayers of Brahma and other Gods, Shiva roars like a lion (maṅgal pol sinai) and burns the three magical forts (avveyil ērupetru udirvanapōl) of the demons. At that moment, Shiva, the one who holds Damaru, is glowing red due to terrible anger (sīru aruṅ kanicciyōn sinavalin). Similarly, here, the Sun is glowing red (onkadir theṛudalin) and causes the huge mountains to smash down to pieces.

Tharavu – Meypāḍu Analysis

Brahma and other Gods surrender to God Shiva owing to **Anaṅku Accham** instigated by powerful terrible demons. When Shiva consoles and reassures them that it will be sorted out, they exhibit **Pudumai Marutkai**, looking forward to witnessing a spectacular event. Roaring like of lion, reddening of eyes and sudden glance by his third eye burns the three forts in seconds Shiva exhibits **Alai Veguḷi** due to hatred (veruppu) on the atrocities of the three demons. Similarly, Sun torments all inhabitants of Pālai thinai mercilessly, probably due to the wicked nature of bandits. In response to the Veguḷi of Shiva and Sun, demons, and inhabitants express **Anaṅku Accham**.

Thāzhisai - Content Analysis (Sanchari-s)

Establishing thus the fierce impact of Pālai Tinai on Thalaivan, Thozhi moves on to convincing him to re-think his decision, by explaining the pathetic state of Thalaivi. The highlight of the poem is the phrase:

Kaḍal kaḍandu seyal soozhnda poruḷ poruḷāgumō, which means, the staunch focus to traverse through difficult forest path to amass wealth, is that wealth the real purpose of disciplined righteous life? Thalaivi narrates three progressive thāzhisai-s (sancāri-s) foregrounding the sincere and true relationship that thalaivi nurtures as the lawful wife of thalaivan –

- “Thalaivi is your faithful wife, always abiding by your words (nilaiyaṭra karpināl); hence, she will not live without you (nī nīppin vāzhādāl). It is therefore wise for you not to separate from her loving embrace (mulai āgam piriyaṃmai). Instead, you keep insisting that it is wrong (iḷivu) to refuse giving money to those bereft of it (irandōrkku onḍru iyaṃmai). Please listen, your difficult travel across mountains to amass wealth (malai iṇandu seyal soozhnda poruḷ), is that the real purpose of righteous life? (poruḷ āgumō)”
- “Thalaivi is a faithful abider of ancient traditions of married life all through these years, and forever (tol iyal vazhā amai thunai ena puṇarndaval). She has come to you as your life companion! It is only righteous not to separate from her (pul āgam piriyaṃmai poruḷ). Instead, you insist that it is not right to refuse money to those in need (irandōrkku onḍru iyaṃmai iḷivu ena). Your stern determination to travel across mountains to earn wealth (kal iṇandu seyal soozhnda poruḷ), is it the real purpose of righteous life (poruḷ āgumō)

Finally, Thozhi places Thalaivi on the highest most coveted position of Arundati, the Legendary Queen of trust and faith as Lawful Wife:

- “Your Thalaivi is equal to Arundati in her chastity as dutiful wife, and worthy of worship (vaḍamīnpōl thožhodu ēṭṭha vayangiya karppināḷ). Hence, it is only correct if she is not left alone (thaḍamenḍṛōḷ piriyaṁmai poruḷ). Instead, you insist that it is wrong not to donate wealth among those who have no means or hopes (iḍan inḍri irandōrkkū), therefore, you are all set to travel across forests to earn wealth (kaḍan iṛandu seyal soozhnda poruḷ). Answer me, is this wealth the real purpose of righteous life (poruḷ āgumō)?”

Suridagam – Concluding Passage

The reader realizes here that the whole poem is narrated by Thozhi to Thalaivi. She proudly narrates her successful mission, “I explained that it is not right to leave you alone to pine in separation (punmkaṅkoṇḍu inaiyavum poruḷvayin aḡaral anbu aṅḍru). Fearing that you will lose your beauty if separated from him (nin tholkavin tholaidal anji), he cancelled his trip. Just as a mad elephant uncontrollable by angusa stick (kāzhvarai nillā kaḍuṅkaḷiṭṭru) is mesmerized and calmed down by melodious music of yāzh (orutthal yāzhvarai thangi), he listened to my words of true love between you two, and stayed back (en solvarai thanginar kādalōrē)”

Thāzhisai and Suridagam – Meypāḍu Analysis

All Thāzhisai-s emphasize the **Pugazhmai Perumidam** of Thalaivi as she is worthy of veneration owing to her disciplined way of life and sincere love towards Thalaivan. Her Pugazh (Honour) is sure to stay forever in the hearts of chaste women. When Thozhi forecasts Thalaivi’s death on Thalaivan’s separation, she expresses **Izhavu Azhugai**. As she sympathises with Thalaivi, it is **Pirarkann** and therefore **Izhavu Karuṅai**.

She also explains the **Tharukann Perumidam** of Thalaivan as he is prepared to face any consequences in order to gain wealth. This wealth is to be distributed among poor and needy, therefore showcasing **Koḍai Perumidam**, his generosity. This deserves special mention because it is probably simpler if wealth possessed by oneself is distributed. But here, to put life at stake and earn money for poor people requires a higher level of bravery and magnanimity.

Finally, when Thozhi joyfully announces that Thalaivan has decided to cancel his travel venture, she exhibits **Tharukann Perumidam** as she gracefully highlights the faithfulness and sincerity of Thalaivi while also portraying the bravery and generosity of Thalaivan. This is possible only because of her true bond of friendship with Thalaivi and deeper understanding of the latter’s love with Thalaivan, thus ending in **Tharukann Perumidam** of Thozhi!

The 3rd poem is narrated by Thozhi -

Introduction – Kēṭpor and Munnan

Thalaivan informs Thozhi of his decision to separate from Thalaivi due to amassment of wealth from faraway place. When Thozhi reports the same to Thalaivi, she is heartbroken. Understanding her state of mind, Thozhi pleads with Thalaivan not to separate. However, the latter persists that he proceeds on his voyage. To this, Thozhi affirms that he would realise his mistake through his arduous travel across the desert tract. As a result, Thalaivan decides to cancel his trip on hearing the pathetic state of Thalaivi.

Tharavu

“Unfair accusation by townsfolk upon Thalaivi causes her to feel ashamed (aṛaninḍri ayalthūṭṭrum ambalai nāniyum). She sadly contemplates on your proposed long-term voyage (nī sellum nīḷiḍai ninaippavum). Bangles slip and fall off, unable to stay fit on her wrists (iṛainillā vaḷai oḍa). Her lips are dry and tired (idazh sōrpu) and she sheds tears (panimalka). She is afflicted with the unbearable love disease (poṛainillā nōyoḍu), causing her forehead to lose its beauty (pulanenḍra nudal ival). Do you wish to see her losing beauty? (viṛalnalan izhappavum vinaivēṭṭāy). Then listen.” Thozhi thus sketches the anxiety of Thalaivi in an effective manner.

Tharavu – Meypāḍu Analysis

Thalaivi’s embarrassment on merciless insult heaped upon her by townsfolk implies the Meypāḍu, **iramil kuṭṭram eṭṭru alar nānal**. In progression, the pathetic state of Thalaivi aptly portrayed by Thozhi signifies the following:

- **Puransei sidhaidhal**: crying within due to a state of helplessness – physically represented by idazh sōrpu (tired dry lips), panimalka (moist eyes)
- Bangles slip off her wrists representing the Meypāḍu **Ūzhani Kaivaral**
- Unable to bear the thought of separation (**Pirivāṭṭrāmai**), she is afflicted with love disease (**Varuttham and Pini Iḷivaral**) and physically and mentally exhausted (**Menmai Iḷivaral**).

Thāzhisai –

Thozhi communicates how thalaivan is the sole purpose of thalaivi’s living by progressive examples, of dependency of flowers with water, flower creepers with mother trees and tender leaves with trees:

- “In spite of my earnest plead (pala iḍai konḍu yām irappavum) not to leave Thalaivi, as she will perish without you (nīnippin uyir vāzhāl), you are not listening (yemakollāy āyinai). Hence, listen,
The path that you propose to travel is drought stricken (nīnīṭtha varunsunai), filled with withered leaves and flowers (aḍaiyoḍu vāḍiya aṇimalar). Such a path will re kindle memories of her (kaḍai iya) signaling you to return to her, stopping your traverse (tagaippana)”

- The long path of your travel (sellum nīlāṭṭridai) will be characterized by withered trees (maramvādā), which once nourished and embraced flower creepers (pulluvittu irāṅjiya poonkoḍi). This sight will invoke memories of her, causing you to stop your voyage (tagaippana).
- After some days of happy togetherness (piṅipunī), if you separate (viḍāl sūzhin), she will die (piṛazhtarum ivaḷ ena). Despite my humble request (panibuvandu irappavum), you are centered only towards your work (pālasūzhvai). Hence, the path that you have braved to travel (tuṅipunī sellakaṇḍa āṭṭridāi) will contain trees that lost beauty (amaratthu aṅīsela) with withered leaves (vāḍiya andaḷir). These trees will stop you (tagaippana).

Inspite of my detailed explanation about her state of being (yām niṛ kūṛavum), you did not realise (emakoḷḷāy āyinai). Therefore, just as you would listen to your elders' advice (mēlninḍru meykūṛum keḷīrpōl), the forest that you propose to cross will stop your voyage (nī sellum kānam thagaippa selavu).

Suridagam - Conclusion

Thozhi loses hope of convincing Thalaivan as he is very determined in his voyage. So, now, she appeals to higher power to make him realize her pathetic state through symbols from nature. She is so sure that their relationship is so pure and true that even Gods and Nature cannot bear their separation and will make them unite.

Thāzhisai and Suridagam – Meypāḍu Analysis

Thozhi stresses on Thalaivi's probable death on his separation – here, **izhavu azhugai** is portrayed. Thalaivan however holds on to his conviction to travel and earn good money, as he believes that **Selvam** (wealth) is crucial for **Uvagai** (love life). In response, Thozhi enlists certain facts from nature, emphasizing **Punarcchi** and **Vilayāṭṭu Uvagai**-s as also indispensable segments of successful love life. Just as a flower gains nourishment and beauty by water, Thalaivi attains a fruitful life only if Thalaivan bestows his grace upon her (**Aruḷ Meypāḍū**). Just as a creeper embraces the tree from which it grows, her entwined closeness with Thalaivan only grows day by day.

Thozhi strongly believes in higher powers to unite them, as all her efforts seem to go in vain. The flowers, creepers, leaves along with the tree are symbols from nature employed by Thozhi to foreground the miraculous love relationship of Thalaivan and Thalaivi.

4th poem under Kalithogai is narrated by Thozhi -

Munnam

In response to Thalaivan's decision of separation from Thalaivi due to prospective job opportunities, thozhi informs that thalaivi is already aware of his intentions. She also explains Thalaivi's helplessness and prays to him to cancel this proposal owing to consequential impact upon Thalaivi.

Tharavu

Thozhi describes the ferocity of native hunters in the Pālai forest that Thalaivan proposes to travel – “the hunters roaming around with bow and arrow (sutṭru amai villar) are stone hearted (valimunpin) and strongly built (vallendra yātkai). They possess glance as sharp as tiger (puli nōkkin) and have curly hair (surivaḷar). They wait for an opportune moment to cheat (āṭṭrampārthu alkum kaḍunkann). Though the passersby are bereft of any valuables (koḷḷum poruḷilar āyinum vambalar) these hunters derive pleasure by causing pain to them, seeing them tremble and brutally killing them (tuḷḷunar kānmār toḍarndu uyir vuvvalin).

Even a bird dreads and fears to travel by that rare path (puḷḷum vazhangā pulambukoḷ āriḍai), but you desire to earn wealth (poruḷtharal vēṭkaiyin uḷḷinir), holding a single spear (veḷvēl valathir) – my friend (Thalaivi) is aware of your intentions (aṟindanaḷ en thōzhi)”.

Tharavu – Meypāḍū Analysis

Thozhi’s picturization of Hunters inhabiting Pālai thinai instils Viḷanku and Kaḷvar Accham – Viḷanku because they are so ferocious and resort to brutal killing like a lion kills its prey; Kaḷvar Accham because they rob the travelers of all valuables. Meanwhile, Thalaivan is not scared and on the contrary, he is infuriated displaying Urupparai, Alai and Kolai Veguḷi.

Thozhi then addresses him as one holding a single spear as defense in the fiery forest. She may exhibit Pēdamai Nagai owing to his ignorance.

Thāzhisai

Thozhi eventually recollects how anxious and confused Thalaivi felt when Thalaivan overpoured his love during various circumstances of togetherness:

- “I, adorned with pearl garland (kāzhviri vagai āram), embraced by him (mīvarum iḷamulai); he was not satisfied despite the closeness (muyangiyum amaiyār). Then he caressed my hair (tāzhkaduppu aṇiguvar) – I am unaware of what he contemplates (avar sūzhvadai evankol ariyēn)’ so says my friend”.
- ““He said to me that my kiss is like nectar (amizhdu ūrum thīnīrai), gives pleasure greater than wine (kaḷḷinum magizhseyum), saying thus, he, not satisfied (enauraitthum amaiyār), grooms my garments (oḷḷizhai thirutthuvar kādalar) – I am unaware of his intentions (maṭṭru avar uḷḷuvadu evankol ariyēn)’ – so says my friend”.
- ““He, after lovingly staring at me (āgam nōkkiyum amaiyār), strokes my forehead (oṇṇudal nīvuvar). I am unaware of his intentions (avar eṇṇ uvadu ariyēn)’ – says my friend”.

Suridagam

Doubtful that there is some larger thought process (onḍru udaitthu ena) behind this excessive love (kazhiperu nallkal), she is very worried (azhivoḍu kalangiya evvathaḷ), Thozhi discloses. She concludes, “If you separate even for a day (our nāl nēr pozhudu idai paḍa nīppin), will she survive (vāzhvāḷō)? O respected One (Peruma)! May your travel venture to earn wealth (porutpini selavu) cancel (ozhiga)”.

Thāzhisai and Suridagam – Meypāḍu Analysis

Thozhi discloses that Thalaivi is aware of his intentions. She proceeds to detailing intimate moments that the couple shared, portraying **Punarcchi Uvagai**. His overpouring love connotes **Aruḷ Meypāḍu**, while Thalaivi’s suspicion about this excessive love portrays aiyam seidhal meypāḍu. Then, Thalaivi goes through **kaiyara Uraitthal** (helplessness), **kalangi mozhidal** (blabbering out of anxiety and worry) and **Pirivāṭṭrāmai** (unable to bear separation). Thalaivan is shocked as he hasn’t revealed this to anyone yet. He also realizes how deeply Thalaivi would’ve observed him and grasped his intentions. Thozhi is desperate to cancel the voyage as she strongly feels that Thalaivi can never survive without Thalaivan, and that she will eventually die, denoting **Izhavu Azhugai**.

Conclusion

Every poem of Kalithogai under Akam genre is a platter of varied Meypāḍu-s in varied intensities of expression. This heterogeneity under a homogenous whole, can be positively represented on stage as part of traditional Bharatanatyam Margam.

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