



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

A Study On Six Select Tamil Film Songs Of The Mid-20th Century With Reference To Nagai Meypāḍu

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Abstract

Nagai or Humour is one of the eight meypāḍu-s enlisted by Tolkappiyar, namely Nagai (Laughter), Azhugai (Grief), Iḷivaral (Disgust), Maruṭkai (Wonder), Accham (Fear), Perumidam (Pride), Veguli (Anger) and Uvagai (Joy). The four sources of Nagai are Eḷḷal (Ridicule), Iḷamai (Childishness), Pēdamai (Stupidity) and Maḍan (Credulity) (Murugan 516). Nagai in Tamil Film Industry has evolved over the ages according to socio cultural developments from time to time.

Aim

To analyze select Tamil film songs released in the fifth and sixth decades of the 20th century. To identify dominant and subservient meypāḍu-s portrayed by the characters.

Keywords

Nagai, Azhugai, Iḷivaral, Maruṭkai, Accham, Perumidam, Veguli, Uvagai, Eḷḷal, Iḷamai, Pēdamai, Maḍan, Asaivu, Varumai azhugai, Izhaigal and Anangu accham.

Introduction

The select Tamil film songs are popular for their humorous portrayal of people's day to day life. Songs of the mid-20th century are chosen for the study as they offer entertainment along with social and environmental awareness. Reinforcement of social causes in a lighter vein not only leads to self-realization but also results in dynamic action of rectification.

Analysis of the Select Songs

Song 1 – *sirippu, idhan sirappai sīrthūkki pārppade namadu poruppu...*

Movie: Raja Rani (1956)

Lyrics Composer: A.Maruthakasi

Music composers: T. R. Pappa, N. S. Krishnan and T. A. Madhuram

This song elucidates the positive outcomes of laughter. It also emphasizes that humans are the only living creatures gifted with the ability to think and analyze, and therefore, it is the responsibility of every individual to comprehend the special features of laughter. All the four subcategories of Nagai namely Eḷḷal, Ilamai, Pēdamai and Maḍan are present at various junctures –

Manam karuppā veḷuppā enbadai eḍutthu kāṭṭum kaṇṇāḍi sirippu

Laughter reveals the true nature of a person, whether his mind is dark or pure.

Idhu kalaiyai nīkki kavalaiyai pōkki mūḷaikku tharum surusuṟuppu

This (laughter) will discard weeds, remove sorrow, and activate the brain.

Furthermore, it is stated that it is wise to see happiness even amidst sorrow, and those who practice this will be prosperous. Here, **asaivu and varumai azhugai are employed as izhaigal to reinforce nagai meypāḍu**. On a lighter vein, it is continued that another type of smile towards women who pass by, end up in receiving a prompt gift, which is a thrown old slipper! **Here, eḷḷal nagai is portrayed**. Finally, the actor enacts four different types of laughter: the proud laughter of leaders, immature laughter of subdued people, victorious laughter of wicked people and laughter specific to music concert. To summarize, lofty philosophical thoughts are conveyed in a simple and lucid manner, coupled with laughter.

Song 2 – māḍi mēlē māḍi kaṭṭi**Movie: Kādhallikka nēram illai (1964)****Director: Sridhar****Music composer: M. S. Viswanathan**

According to the storyline, Viswanathan character removes Ravichandran from work due to his daughters' insistence. Ravi brings his group and sings this song, desperate to get his job back. Few phrases are chosen for meypāḍu analysis:

“Poṇṇunga pēchukku buddhiyai māṭṭhikka mūlai illādhavarē

Vēṭṭiyai māṭṭhikka sēlaiyai kaṭṭikka veṭkam illādhavarē...”

“O Sir, who changes his mind based on women's words,

You who do not possess shyness, and is ready to change your dhoti and wear saree...”

Ravi clearly declares here that Viswanathan is easily swayed by his daughters' persistence, therefore not exhibiting manly qualities of determination and steadfastness. **Eḷḷal Nagai is portrayed as he rebukes with sarcasm, Iḷamai, Pēdamai and Maḍan Nagai are incorporated when it is said that the young women's words are very immature and needs re questioning.**

The subsequent phrase is explained:

“rāthiri nēratthil thūkkatthil nān oru rāṭchasan pōl varuvēn

Nāḷaikku vēlaiikku vā vendru nī sollum nāḷ varai pōr iduvēn”

“I will arrive at your place in the mid of night like a demon,

I will fight till you command me to join work tomorrow.”

Ravi strives to instill fear in Viswanathan and his daughters with these words in a scary voice. Though the characters feel afraid, it invokes laughter in viewer's mind. **Therefore, Anangu accham is employed as izhai to re enforce Eḷḷal Nagai.** Throughout the song, Ravi strongly registers that he will not withdraw from the strike until he is permitted to resume his job. **Though his intentions are serious, the presentation of the song and the responses of characters bring smile to the audience, thereby highlighting Eḷḷal, Iḷamai and Pēdamai Nagai.**

Song 3 – sirippu varuthu sirippu varuthu sirikka sirikka sirippu varuthu*Sinna manithan periya manithan seyalai pārtthu sirippu varuthu***Movie: āṇḍavan kaṭṭalai (1964)****Director: Sridhar****Music composer: Viswanathan Ramamurthy****Hero: Chandra Babu Naidu**

Here, the hero plays the role of a politician. He speaks humorously about the ever-changing words of politicians, and how people blindly believe in their promises. The following phrases establish eḷḷal nagai:

*“Mēḍai yēri pēsum bodhu, āṟu pōla pēchu**Kīzha irangi pōgum bōdhu, sonnadhellām pōchu”*

“Speech is flowing like a river, when mounted upon stage,

On descending from the stage and leaving the place, all that has been promised is gone!”

This line very certainly invokes eḷḷal nagai.

*“kāsu eḍutthu nīṭṭu, kazhuda pāḍum pāṭṭu**Āsa vārtthai kāṭṭu, unakkum kooḍa vōtu”*

Here, the hero expresses his anguish on the ignorance of people. He is unhappy with the people who fail to analyze and think independently, without bias. **Azhugai is expressed effectively employing eḷḷal, iḷamai and pēdamai nagai as izhaigal. Thus, the deeper meanings and truths revealed in the song holds good even for the current scenario of politics and educates the audience in an entertaining manner.**

Song 4 – varavu eṭṭanā selavu patthanā,*Athikam reṇḍannā, kaḍasiyil thunḍanā thunḍanā***Movie: Bhāma Vijayam (1967)****Director: K. Balachander****Music composer: M. S. Viswanathan****Lyrics Composer: Kannadāsan****Singers: T. M. Soundarajan and L. R. Eshwari***“thiramaikku mēlē ninaippu vanhāl nimmadhi irukkādhu, aiyya nimmadhi irukkādhu**Aḷavukku mēlē āsai vandhāḷ uḷḷādum nilaikkādu, ammā ulladhu nilaikkādu”*

“if one fancies more than his capacity, there is no peace, oh beloved Sir

If one desires more than his limit, even one’s possession will not last.”

The principles of saving as well as thoughtful spending of money are highlighted. The grandfather teaches his grandchildren how it is important for a person to understand his capabilities and limitations and act accordingly. His children are quite opposite in their beliefs as they insist that this age is for enjoyment and one must explore the world completely, though it demands expense.

“aḍangā manaivi aḍimai purushan, kudumbathuku āgādhū”

“a rebellious wife and a subdued husband, is not good for the family, oh beloved Sir!”

Here, grandfather preaches that the wife is required to pay heed to the words of husband for smooth functioning of family life. To sum up, the song throws light on generation gap, sincerity, hard work, simple lifestyle, saving money and planning for future, in an entertaining manner. The highlights of the song are bright visuals, energetic steps, chirpy tune and love between grandfather and grandchildren. **Nagai meypāḍu is the underlying emotion throughout the song, emphasizing on the art of living a life according to one’s status and money saving.**

Song 5 – *madrās nalla madras*

Movie: Anubhavi Raja Anubhavi (1967)

Actors: Nagesh and Muthuraman

Producer: V. R. Annamalai Ayya Films

This song describes the bustling city of Madras back in 1960s. Though the starting line of the song praises Madras as a good city, the following lines elucidate the negatives of residing in the city. **Elḷal Nagai is the main chord running throughout the song:**

“Methuvā poravanga yārumille, inge seriyā tamizh pēsa yārumilla”

No one enjoys leisure and none knows to speak proper Tamil diction!

“āmbalaikkum pombalaikkum vithyāsam thōnale”

One cannot find difference between man and woman!

The western culture followed in city life is reflected in attire too, and both men and women dress the same way.

“seetukattu kannakāga inge veeṭa kaṭṭi irukkāge”

All have built homes like pack of cards,

The raising population in city and small apartments are described here.

“veeṭa kaṭṭi irundālum silar roadtumēla paḍukkāge”

Despite building many homes, many people live on roads.

Poverty and economic disparities are highlighted here. Both extremes of rich and poor living can be observed in city. It is surprising that these incidents occur even today in current times. The singer points out how a calf made of hay is brought before cow so that it can be milked. This reveals the wicked and selfish attitude of city people. **Therefore, asaivu and varumai azhugai, veguli, accham are all touched upon and presented in a lighter vein, eḷḷal nagai.**

Song 6 – pārkka pārkka sirippu varuthu, aḍakka mudiyale

Movie: Neethikku Thalai Vanangu

Actor: M. G. Ramachandran

Singers: T. M. Soundarrajan and Susheela

The heroine mocks the way hero cooks and prepares food for her. She finds fault with all the dishes that he has cooked, **evoking eḷḷal nagai in a humorous way.** However, the serious issue that is handled behind this humor is adulteration in agriculture. The hero frankly states that he cannot be blamed for bad food as all the vegetables are being grown with adulterated low-quality manure -

“varutthu veccha vāzhakkāi vāyil vekka mudiyale

Nī poriyal senja poḍalangāyil karuga nātham sagikkalaiyē”

“I cannot eat the roasted raw banana curry, the burnt smell in your snake gourd curry is intolerable.”

“kaṇḍa kaṇḍa uratthai pōḷḷu kāygarīya vaḷakkurān

Anda uratthil kooḍa ūzhal panni enga pēra keḍukkurān”

“They grow vegetables using some cheap low-quality manure, they adulterate even that manure and degrade our standard.”

“kalappaḍamā sarakku irukku edhuvum ippo suttham illē

Athu pulappaḍum nāḷ varum varaikkum ennai solli kuttham ille”

“Everything is adulterated, nothing is pure now.

It is no use blaming me until the day comes when everything is restored to normalcy.”

Therefore, light is thrown upon everyday societal problems, portraying accham, veguli and azhugai as minor emotions and eḷḷal nagai as the constant meypāḍu.

Conclusion

Thus, this research paper offers revisit and review of select six Tamil film songs of the mid-20th century. It can be observed that loftier perspectives, politics, social and environmental awareness as well as economic disparities are addressed in an entertaining manner employing Nagai Meypāḍu.

