Viiracoozhiyam—as a Grammar of Inscriptional Tamil

It is said that there were two schools of grammatical thought in Tamil, one represented by *tholkaappiyam* and the other by *viiracoozhiyam*.[1] The fact that *viiracoozhiyam* was written many centuries after tholkaappiyam cannot be accounted the reason for the different approach of *viiracoozhiyam* because Neeminaatham, written after *viiracoozhiyam*, only summarises *tholkaappiyam*. According to the paayiram of *tholkaappiyam*, tholkaappiyam was a grammar of both literary and colloquial Tamil. As Caldwell says, literary dialect in the Indian languages tends to be conventionalised and standardised, liable only to very small change while colloquial dialect is not inhibited that way.[2] Therefore the difference between the literary dialect of Tamil and the colloquial dialect of Tamil should have been increasing with the passage of time. Therefore, how much importance each dialect should be given in a grammar, becomes a problem for the grammarian.

By the beginning of the Age of the Imperial Coozhas, the necessity for a new Tamil grammar seems to have been felt. Some scholars probably felt that commentaries to *tholkaappiyam* were enough while others started writing new grammars. Among the new Tamil grammars, *viiracoozhiyam* was the oldest. *Viiracoozhiyam* was not well received by the Tamil scholars as a whole, partly because of excessive Sanskrit influence in it and partly because of its slant to colloquial Tamil. Inscriptional Tamil differs from literary Tamil in having a large admixture of colloquial expressions. Though Inscriptional Tamil is in many respects inadequate as a source for colloquial Tamil, yet only that source is available for study of medieval spoken Tamil. The spoken Tamil occupies a more important position in modern linguistics than literary Tamil. The spoken Tamil is considered the real living language of the people. Puththamiththiranaar, the author of *viiracoozhiyam*, seems to have realised the importance of spoken Tamil when he framed his grammar.

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1. Dr. P. S. Subrahmanya Sastri. *History of Grammatical Theories in Tamil* (Preface), University of Madras, Madras, 1934.
2. Robert Caldwell—*A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages*, University of Madras, 78, Madras, 1956.

Studies in Inscriptional Tamil show that the classification of sandhi into case relation sandhi and non case relation sandhi is not very useful. *Tholkaapiyam* has that classification and *nhannuul* and some other grammatical works follow it.[3] *Viiracoozhiyam* seems to have struck a new path when it dispensed with this classification in its treatment of sandhi.[4] Commentaries of grammatical works give so many examples of exceptions that it is difficult to establish the need for rules, based on this classification. This classification is probably more useful in studying literary Tamil more than colloquial Tamil. The author's studies of the language of the Tamil inscriptions before and after the time of *viiracoozhiyam*, have convinced him that this classification is not very useful in the study of Inscriptional Tamil.[5] Where *tholkaappiyam* mentions doubling of the consonant in case relation sandhi, many examples of doubling of the same consonant in non case relation sandhi are also seen in the inscriptions. Further exceptions to the doubling of consonants are also found to be as numerous as forms with double consonants. When change of consonant is mentioned by *nhannuul* for case relation sandhi,[6] it is found that the change of consonant occurs only in a small percentage of the situations referred to and the change of consonant does not occur generally in both case relation sandhi and non case relation sandhi. When change of consonant is mentioned for non case relation sandhi,[7] a number of examples with no change of consonant in non case relation sandhi are also found. Such change of consonant is found in a number of cases in case relation sandhi too. As Inscriptional Tamil was close to the spoken Tamil, it is quite possible that this classification was not important in spoken Tamil.

A glance at examples where case relation sandhi should occur shows that in examples where particular cases are involved, the sandhi is optional. Forms where these particular cases are involved, seem to behave like non case relation sandhi forms. Change of consonant-m, according to the particular plosive which follows, is mentioned in *tholkaappiyam* for non

3. Kanesaiyar, S.—*tholkaappiyam ezhuthzhathikaara muulamum nhaccinaarkkiniyar uraiyum*, Tirumakal Press, Chunnakam, 120, Ceylon, 1952.

4. Kurumurthy Aiyar, K.—*viiracoozhiyam*, Jaffna, 1—14, Ceylon, 1943.

5. The author's studies are two unpublished theses, *A Study of the Language of the Tamil Inscriptions of the period 800 to 920 A.D.*—submitted to and accepted by the University of Oxford for D. Phil. degree in 1964.

A Study of the Language of the Tamil Inscriptions of CaTaavarman Cunhera PaaNTiya and Maatavarman Kulaceekara—submitted to the University of Ceylon for Ph.D. degree in 1962.

6. Kanesaiyar, S.—tholkaappiyam ezhuththathikaaramum nhaccinaarkkiniyar uraiyum —Tirumakal Press, Chunnakam, 123, 287, 288, 300, Ceylon, 1952.

7. Aatumuka nhaavalar—*Nhannuul KaaNTikaiyurai*— Mudlr. G. Subramanyam, 172, Madras, 1953.

case relation sandhi. But this change is also found to be quite common in the language of the inscriptions when the accusative and locative cases are involved. Thus the study of the language of the Tamil inscriptions throws scholars on the side of the author of *viiracoozhiyam* who challenged the efficacy of this classification in his time. Probably, the attempt at systematisation gave this classification undue importance in literary Tamil.

Viiracoozhiyam is the only Tamil grammar that provides for the change of the consonant zh before the other consonants. Paththamiththiranaar says that if zh is followed by a plosive, it is changed to T or N and if it is followed by nh, zh changes nh into N and then disappears.[?] There must have been examples for these changes before the author of *viiracoozhiyam* formulated these rules. But the examples quoted below, are from inscriptions[10] later than *viiracoozhiyam*.

zh becomes T before plosive p : —
    puka T pa Tara: KaTu T perum piNakkuntam
zh changes the following nh into N and then disappears : —

    kii Nookkiya.

Viiracoozhiyam again mentions a number of new case signs and postpositions, not mentioned in *tholkaappiyam*. It also omits a few of them mentioned in *tholkaappiyam*.[11] While *tholkaappiyam* mentions -aan, *viiracoozhiyam* mentions only -aal. In the language of Inscriptional Tamil before *viiracoozhiyam*, there were two examples with -aan while there were twelve examples with aal.

examples with -aan:

    utaihivaan (S.I.I. Vol. XII. p. 20. line 10).
    meetpaTivaan (S.I.I. Vol. III. p.230, line 26).

8. Kanesaiyar, S. *tholkaappiyam ezhuthathikaaraum saarichuvakkhuyir leoosam*, Tirumakal Press, Chunnakam, 257, Ceylon, 1952.

9. Kurunmathi, Aivar, K. *viiracoo iiyam* Jaffna, 9, Ceylon, 1943.

10. South Indian Inscriptions, Volume X, page 179. Inscription from Tiruppunaturuth Puspavanesvara temple, lines 2- 8.

South Indian Inscriptions, Volume VIII, page 82. Inscription from Kadhivaat temple, line 22.

11. Kanaaniyar and Oesanesappavanar, N. *tholkaappiyam cillathikaaram Ceenavaraiyar anai*, The South Indian Saiva Siddhaantha Works Publishing Society, Ltd., 51 72, Madras, 1952.

Kurunmari, Aivar, K. *viiracoozhiyam*, Jaffna, Coilaththaram 1 40, Ceylon, 1943.

examples with -aal :—

    puuththotumpaTTiyaal (S.I.I. Vol.XII, p. 43, line 15).
    kaalaal (S.I.I. Vol.XII, p. 46, line 27).
    pitaraal (S.I.I. Vol.XII, p. 48, line 44).
    nitaiyaal (S.I.I. Vol.III, p. 222 line 7).
    ponnaal (S.I.I. Vol.III, p.227, line 8).
    naalhaal (S.I.I. Vol. XII, p.45, line 15).
    neyyaal (S.I.I. Vol.XIII, p.128, line 1).
    kaacaal (Epigraphia Indica, Vol XXI, p.109, line 10).
    cuulavuzhakkaal (S.I.I. Vol.III, p.230, line 16).
    nilaththaal (S.I.I. Vol.XIII, p.46, line 13).
    muzhaiyaal (S.I.I. Vol XII, p.34, line 3).
    kuuTaiyaal (S.I.I. Vol.III, p.222, line 8).

The language of the Tamil inscriptions after *viiracoozhiyam* was more positive in that there were twelve examples with -aal while there was no example with -aan.

    examples with -aal:—

    peeraal (S.I.I. Vol.VIII, p.82, line 23, also p.300, line 13, S.I.I.Vol.
        VII, p. 9, line 3).
    eerikalhaal (S.I.I. Vol.VII, p. 10, line 3).
    anavarathaananaal (S.I.I. Vol.V, p. 151, line 15).
    maaththaal (S.I.I. Vol.V, p.179, line 21).
    naalhaal (S.I.I. Vol.V, p.118, line 10, Vol. IV, p. 133, line 14)
    arulhaal (S.I.I. Vol.IV, p.133, line 8).
    paNiyaal (S.I.I. Vol.VII, p.255, line 15).
    kulhaththaal (S.I.I. Vol.VII, p.9, line 4).
    kaiyyaal (S.I.I. Vol.V, p. 138, line 24).

While *tholkaappiyam* mentions - in as the fifth case suffix, *viiracoozhiyam* mentions - il as that case suffix. In the inscriptions before *viiracoozhiyam* there were seven examples with - in and nine examples with -il.

    examples with -in :—

    thalaiyin (S.I.I. Vol.III, p.454, line 101).
    ponnin (S.I.I. Vol.III, p.2, line 5).
    akavaayin (S.I.I. Vol.XIII, p.154, line 5).
    pirampin (S.I.I.Vol.XII, p.48, line 4).
    kaalin (S.I.I. Vol.XII, p.48, line 8).
    palhlhiyin (S.I.I. Vol.III, p.223, line 12).
    thamizhin (S.I.I. Vol.III, p.454, line 90).

examples with -il :—

nellil (S.I.I. Vol.XII, p. 47 line 24).
naalhil (S.I.I. Vol.VII, p. 456 line 10).
nettiyil (S.I.I. Vol.III, p. 454, line 98).
maavil kizhaththimayakkalil (S.I.I. Vol. XII, p. 172, line 4).
ccyyil (S.I.I. Vol.XIII p. 153, line 2).
ellaiyil (S.I.I. Vol. V, p. 288, line 14).
teruvil (S.I.I. Vol.III, p. 222, line 4).
puutuuril (S.I.I. Vol.XII, p. 45, line 11).

In the inscriptions after *viiracoozhiyam*, there were five examples with -in and eleven examples with -il.

examples with -in :—

varaiyin (S.I.I. Vol. V, p. 179, line 3).
pitappin   (ibid,   line 4).
muththiiyin   (ibid.)
veempin   (ibid.   line 12).
veelaiyin   (ibid.   13).

examples with -il :—

nilangkalhil (S.I.I. Vol.VIII, p. 82, line 20).
varampukalhil (ibid.   )
eTuththapaathanhalluuril (S.I.I. Vol.V, p. 27, line 4).
muthalikalhil (ibid.   line 2).

tiruvoththuuril mantaaTikalhil (S.I.I. Vol.VII, p.36, line 5).
ulakil (S.I.I. Vol.V, p.179, line 16).
marumakkalhil (S.I.I. Vol.VIII, p.300, line 7)
naalhil (ibid.   line 18).
aattil (S.I.I. Vol. V, p.248, line 7).
teevaraTiyaaril (S.I.I. Vol. VII, p.289, line 4).

Thus the case signs mentioned by *viiracoozhiyam*, are the ones frequently met with in the inscriptions. It is quite possible that -aal and -il have replaced -aan and -in in spoken Tamil and that might have been the reason why *viiracoozhiyam* gives them so much prominence. Pakkal was a postposition signifying place in the locative case and it was used frequently in the inscriptions. *Viiracoozhiyam* mentions it while *tholkaappiyam* and *nhannnul* do not do so. The postposition nhintu was mentioned in con-

nection with the fifth case by *viiracoozhiyam* alone among the early and medieval Tamil grammars and it too was found to be used in the language of the inscriptions. uTaiya is a postposition of the possessive case in the spoken language today. It was mentioned neither by *tholkaappiyam* nor by *nhannul*. This postposition was in common usage in the inscriptions and *viiracoozhiyam* mentioned it. *Viiracoozhiyam* mentions appellative forms like uTaiyaan, uTaiyaalh, uTaiyaar etc. as postpositions of the sixth case but Dr. P. S. Subrahmanya Sastri criticises it on the ground that they have to be treated as appellative forms and not as postpositions. But in certain contexts in which forms like uTaiyaan and uTaiyaar are found in the inscriptions, it seems that they have the force of the possessive case. For example, Kaanjcivaayilu Taiyaar Uthaiyathivaakaran Thillaiyaalhiyaar (S.I.I. Vol.II, p. 93, line 4) means Uthaiyathivaakaran Thillaiyaalhiyaar of Kaanjcivaayil. Puththamiththiranaar probably realised that in grammatical study, syntactical function was more important than mere form.

Tamil verbs are generally classified into simple and causal verbs, i.e. thanvinai and pitavinai. *tholkaappiyam* does not mention this calssification. *viiracoozhiyam* mentions them by Sanskrit terms keevala thaathu and kaaritha thaathu.[12] Kaaritha thaathu or causal verbs are further sub-divided into kaaritham, kaarithakkaaritham (double causals) and kaarithakkaarithakkaaritham (treble causals). Inscriptional Tamil before the time of Puththamiththiranaar provide examples for some of these sub-divisions.

    examples :—
        Causal :—
            aakki (S.I.I. Vol.III, p. 93, line 16).
            kuuTTi (Epigraphia Indica, Vol.XXI, p. 109. line 198).
            eetti (Epigraphia Indica, Vol. IX, p. 88, line 74).
            itakkina (S.I.I. Vol.VI, p. 167, line 5).
            tiruththi (S.I.I. Vol.III, p. 454, line 99).
            eurukki (Epigraphia Indica, Vol. XXVIII, p. 91, line 13).

        Double Causal :—
            ATTuviKKa (S.I.I. Vol.III, p. 8, line 3),
            uuTTuvippathu (S.I.I. Vol.XII, p. 48, line 5).
            puthukkuviththaar (S.I.I. Vol.XII, p. 27, line 7).

nhannulaar, even though he came after *viiracoozhiyam*, was not very clear about this classification. He uses the term eevalvinai for the causal verb at one place and for the imperative mood of the verb at another

12. Kurumurti Aiyar, K.—*viiracoozhiyam*, Jaffna, 35, Ceylon, 1943.

place.[13] Therefore on this point too, *viiracoozhiyam*, as a descriptive grammar appears to have an edge over the early and medieval Tamil grammars.

Forms like aana, poona, aaya and pooya which are found in spoken Tamil, were used in the inscriptions. *viiracoozhiyam* mentions past adjectival participles ending in na and ya and Perunteevanaar, the commentator, gives these forms as examples.[14] Other early and medieval Tamil grammarians do not mention them.

Passive forms are rarely used in Tamil. But passive forms in paTu were in existence even in *tholkaappiyam* and there were examples for it in Inscriptional Tamil. Neither *tholkaappiyam* nor *nhannuul* mention these forms. *viiracoozhiyam* mentions it by a Sanskrit term karmakaaraka where the root paTu or some other one is added to the original root followed by -a and then the personal terminations are added.[15]

Thus it seems that *viiracoozhiyam* can lay claim that it is a better descriptive grammar than the other early and medieval traditional grammars, for the language of the Tamil inscriptions.

13. aarumuka nhaavalar—*nhannuul kaNTikaiyurai*--Mudh. G. Subrahmanyam, 93, 95, Madras 53.

14. Kurumurti Aiyar, K.-- *viiracoozhiyam*, Jaffna, 36, Ceylon 1913.
15. Kurumurti Aiyar, K.-- *viiracoozhiyam*, Jaffna, 44, Ceylon, 1913.