

Grammar Talks, Sanskrit & Tamil

Dr. Jyothirmayi. PC., M.A., Ph.D.

Abstract

This paper titled “Grammar talks - Sanskrit and Tamil” is a humble attempt to learn and understand some of the basic features of Classical Tamil in the light of Paninian Grammar. It may appear that Classical Sanskrit and Classical Tamil are not related, but still we see that there are some common features such as Sandhi, Samasa (puNarchi in Tamil), karaka and vibhakti (Case theory) etc.

Keywords: Sanskrit & Tamil, Paninian Grammar, Tolkappiyam, Tolkappiyar, piRappiyal, puNaRiyal, sandhi, samasa, puNarchi, ezhuttatikaaram, Sollatikaaram, Porulatikaaram, vibhakti, veTTRumai etc.

1 Introduction

Sanskrit, Tamil, Hebrew, Greek and Latin – these are considered as the five most ancient classical languages. Among these, Sanskrit and Tamil flourished in India since very ancient time. Here an attempt is made to compare some of the features found both in Classical Sanskrit and Classical Tamil.

Sanskrit literature begins with the Vedas which are of Pre-Paninian era. There were many grammarians and various systems of grammar too even before Paniniⁱ. But once Panini's system of grammar was developed, all other systems lost their importance. Panini, in Paniniyam, Astadhyayi, could arrange all the peculiarities of classical Sanskrit in a very systematic and scientific way- in a comprehensive and compact way. He has composed it in sootras and has employed various techniques to make the work comprehensive and compact. It is also correct to say that Panini uses a ‘meta- language’ to discuss the target-language.

Tamil also has very rich classical literature. Tolkappiyam is the most ancient work available in Tamil and it describes the grammar of Tamil. There were many Tamil works even before Tolkappiyam but none of them are preserved for posterity. The author of Tolkappiyam is known as Tolkappiyar. Having observed the language carefully, Tolkappiyar must have composed the grammar work to record the grammatical features of the languageⁱⁱ. Here the attempt is to see Tolkappiyam in the light of Paninian grammar. The focus is on grammatical and linguistic aspects; and not on the history or chronology of these languages.

2 Structural Analysis of Tolkappiyam

Tolkappiyam is written in sootra style and it is divided into three major sections, namely; Ezhuttatikaaram, Sollatikaaram and Porulatikaaram. Each of these is further divided into nine chapters. As for Panini 'मात्रालाभः was पुत्रलाभः', Tolkappiyar stresses on "surunkassollalviLankavaittal" expressing ideas using minimum words.

There are 'vidhi'-s, and 'vidhi-vilakku' found in Tolkappiyam as we see विधिसूत्रम्, and अपवादसूत्रम् in Paniniyam which refer to General rule and exception (Particular) rules. Some scholars like Prof. Meenakshi Sundaram, Dr. M Varadarajan etc. opine that the diphthongs 'Ai' & 'Au' are borrowed from Sanskrit, to write words like avvai and pauvvam.

2.1 Ezhuttatikaaram

Ezhuttatikaaram deals with phonemes and morphemes. It is subdivided into nine sections, namely; NuulMarabu, Mozhimarabu, piRappiyal, puNaRiyal, Tokai Marabu, Urubiyal, uyirmayangiyal, PuLLimayangiyal and the KutriyalukarappuNaRiyal.

2.1.1 Nuulmarabu

Nuulmarabu explains the characters of the language, organizes them into vowels, consonants, and diacritic symbols etc. A sample sootra is – "ezhuttanapaTubaakarammutalnakarairuvaaymuppatueNpa", which means there are 30 letters altogether from letter 'அ' (அ) till ண (ண) (svanam). The vowels are called 'uyir', and they are-

அ, ஆ, இ, ஈ, உ, ஊ, எ, ஏ, ஐ, ஒ, ஓ, ஔ.

The vowels are sub classified into 'kuRil' which takes one matra to pronounce, and 'nedil' which takes two Matras to be uttered. This feature is similar to that of Hrasva ह्रस्व and Deergha दीर्घ of Paninian grammar. Tolkappiyam states there is no separate phoneme for three matra-vowel "moovaLavuv isaittal OrezhuttinRaiⁱⁱⁱ (Tolkappiyam- ezhuttatikaaram sootira5), which shows there is no 'plutam' specified in Tamil.

ஃ is the visarga equivalent of Tamil which is known as 'aahdam' or 'aaydam'. It is rarely seen in modern Tamil^{iv}.

The consonants of Tamil are க – ங, ச – ஞ, ட – ண, த-ந் (naadam), ப-ப, ய, ர, ல, வ, ழ, ள, ட் ண(svanam). The letter ற is pronounced differently in Sanskrit in these two words- ऱादम् and ऱ्वनम्। While in Sanskrit these two ற-s have no separate letters, Tamil identifies these two differently.

2.1.2 Mozhimarabu

Mozhimarabu defines rules which specify where in a word, can a letter not occur and which letter cannot come after a particular letter. A sample sootra is "e enavaRumuyiR, meyiiRaagaadu" It also describes elision, which is the reduction in the duration of sound of a

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phoneme when preceded or by or followed by certain other sounds. No words start with the letter ल or र - Raama is 'Iraaman' Lakshmana is Ilakhmana in Tamil.

The rules are well defined. They are classified into five groups depending on the phoneme which undergoes elision. For example, kutriyalukaram, kutriyalikaram, Aikaarakkurukkam, etc.

2.1.3 PiRappiyal

This section deals about production of speech sounds at level of diaphragm, larynx, Jaws, tongue position, teeth, lips and nose. A sample sootra is “अ आ इरण्ट् अङ्कान्त इयलुम्” – which means ‘these two letters a and aa are produced when the throat is fully opened.

2.1.4 PuNaRiyal

This section deals with structural combination of words, the changes occurring to the words when they join together with the following words. puNarchi is the word used in Tamil of which the Sanskrit equivalent is Sandhi.

2.1.5 Tokai marabu

This section gives rules for Combination of words based on meaning.

2.1.6 Urubiyal

This section discusses Combination of words with an initial vowel-phonetic upon vowel-ending. This seems to be स्वरसन्धि
मणि + अडित्तद् – मणियडित्तत् [इ+ अ = य]

2.1.7 puLLi

This section deals with combination of words with an initial consonant-phonetic upon consonant-ending.

2.2 Sollatikaaram

Sollatikaaram deals with words and parts of speech. It classifies Tamil words into four or five categories – **iyarssol** ‘iyalbaahavazhankumsoRkkaL’- words in casual usage, which may not change in course of time – e.g.: nilam, neeR, tee etc.), **tirissol**– ezhatt_ maaRutal / Sol_ maaRutal(words used differently), for e.g.: kiLi /kiLai (bird), mayil / ma~ngai (peacoke) **vadassol** (words absorbed from Sanskrit), **tisaichol** – ‘tamizhakattin_ piRappakutikaLilvazhankumvazhankumsorkkaL (words absorbed from the usages of other parts of tamilagam) and **marabu sol**- ‘puliuRumiyat_, naay_ kuraittat_ etc. There are specific rules for incorporating Sanskrit words into Tamil sentences.

The subsections of Sollatikaaram are the following –

- kiLaviyaakkam– deals with word formation, syntax correlation between subject and predicate in लिङ्ग, विभक्ति, वचन etc.

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- Vettrumaiyiyal – deals with case-endings and syntax
- Vettrumaimayangiyal deals with those case-suffix which denote other case-meanings
- ViLimarabu deals with vocative case or सम्बोधना
- Peyariyal deals with nouns
- Vinaiyiyal deals with Verbs
- Idaiyiyal – Partial words of prefix and suffix and their formation in syntax
- Uriyiyal deals with विशेषण-s, like नामविशेषण (adjectives) क्रियाविशेषण (adverbs) etc.
- Echchaviyal deals with the remaining points which are not covered in the above sections, regarding word-syntax formation.

2.3 Porulatikaaram

It deals with life on earth or the subject matter of literature. It includes description of landscapes, seasons, love, war etc. and prosody, figures of speech etc. are also dealt with. In other words, we can say that “in Tamil, grammar is treated as a comprehensive field encompassing all auxiliary studies related to the production and enjoyment of literature and spoken language”^{vi}.

3 Similar features observed both in Classical Tamil and Classical Sanskrit

At the level of Akshara-s, or letters:

- Other than ऀ, ँ, ए् स्वर-s are the same^{vii}.
- Vowels are identified as the life of language as they are named ‘uyir’ (prana). It reminds us of the word svaraH – स्वयं राजते इति स्वरः।
- क, ख, ग, घ all these 4 varieties of kavarga is surprisingly managed by just one letter क (क).
- न (नादम् andस्वनम्) are identified and represented differently like ण, ण

At the level of words:

- Words are also classified into two, uRissol and iDaissol
pErODumvinaiyODumsERnth_ varum
tanakken
- As the उत्तमपुरुष, मध्यमपुरुष and प्रथमपुरुष (1st person, 2nd person and 3rd person respectively), Tamil has Tanmai, munnilai and paTarkkai which are together known as “moovidam.”
- Tamil words consist of a lexical root to which one or more affixes are attached.
- Sandhi and Samasa – Combining of words are discussed under the topic “puNarchi” puNar means joining together. For example, maNi + aDittatu – maNiyaDittatu [i+ a = ya]. Here poorvapadam and uttarapadam together is called ‘nilaimozhi’ and the resultant word is known as “vaRumozhi”. Another example, paal + sORu – paaRschoRu; kal+ kOvil – kaRkkovil
- Samasa is broadly classified into two, namely VeTTrumai and alvazhi. veTTrumai deals with six vibhakti terminations of nouns where the appropriate suffix need

not be present explicitly. As in Sanskrit, the vibhaktipratyaya disappears and samastapadas are formed.

The six types are shown below –

- ✓ Reflecting a case relation – e.g. ‘meenpiDittaaan’ [meenaipiDittaaan]
- ✓ Uvamaithokai - Reflecting comparison/metaphor - e.g.: ‘Taamaraimukam’ – [taamaraipOnRamukam]
- ✓ Vinaithokai- Reflecting a verb – three tenses are indirectly mentioned / not explicitly said
 - E.g.: Sudukaadu - suTTakaaT, suTukinRakaaT_ and suTumkaaT_
 - Uurukaay - uuRiyakaay, uurukinRakaay, uuRumkaay
- ✓ paNputokai – Reflective of adjective – describes quality of the nouns in the compound, may be colour, measure etc. E.g.: veNmEgham
- ✓ uMMaitokai – Reflecting ‘um’ (and) – This is Copulative Compound, which is similar to Dvandvasamasa.
- ✓ Anmozhitokai – is similar to bahuvreehi - Reflective of something connected
E.g.: veLLaiaaDai = the person who is pure in heart – SuddhamanaskaH
- As we have कृदन्त/ क्रियाविशेषण and नामविशेषण in Sanskrit, Tamil has vinaiyechcham and pEreychcham.
E.g.: ‘vizhunthakozhanthai’ – vizhuntha is pEyrechcham. Vizhunth_ ezhunthaan – here vizhunth_ is vinaiyechcham.

At sentence level:

- Tamil is a SOV language. Generally, the subject precedes the object, and the verb must conclude the sentence. In a standard sentence, therefore, the order is usually subject–object–verb (SOV) though object–subject–verb is not uncommon.
- There can be sentences without verb, if the verb is understood even without being specified. इतु एन् वीड् (Tamil)– एतत् मम गृहम् ।क्रियायाः अनुक्तिसिद्धत्वे सति वाक्ये तस्याःप्रयोगः न स्यात् ।
- Suffixes are also used to perform the functions of विभक्ति-s. Traditional grammarians tried to group the various suffixes into 8 cases corresponding to the cases used in Sanskrit. These were the nominative, accusative, instrumental, dative, ablative, genitive, locative, and vocative. The vibhakti-s in Tamil are ‘ezhuvaayvETTRumai (प्रथमा), irandaaMvETTRumai (द्वितीया), moonnaaMvETTRumai (तृतीया), naalaaMvETTRumai (चतुर्थी), ainthaaMvETTRumai (पञ्चमी), aaRaaMvETTRumai(षष्ठी), EzhaaMvETTRumai (सप्तमी), and eTTaamVETTRumai or viLivETTRumai (सम्बोधना)
- Not all Tamil sentences have subjects, verbs and objects. It is possible to construct valid sentences that have only a verb - such as mutintuvittatu ("It is completed") - or only a subject and object, such as atuenvītu ("That is my

house"). This is a similar feature seen in Sanskrit also. For e.g.: रामः वनमगच्छत्। सीता अपि। The elements that are present, however, must follow the SOV order (कर्ता- कर्म- क्रिया) in Tamil and in Sanskrit word order is not that important.

- अहंगच्छामि – the word गच्छामि is uttamapurushaekavacanam and it is understood that 'I' (aham) is the subject. Even then usually we use the sentence like 'अहंगच्छामि' and not just गच्छामि। But in Tamil, वन्तेन् (Tamil), vantaan, vantaaletc can be considered as one-word sentences.

4 Conclusion

Language is the tool human beings use to express themselves and to communicate to others. Sanskrit, Tamil or Malayalam which ever it may be, can serve the purpose of expression and communication, only when some standardized pattern is followed by the speakers / listeners. There are some common features which all the languages share with, for e.g.: in every language has words and sentences, and properly connected words only constitute a sentence. Words are classified into names and verbs etc. Tamil and Sanskrit though seemingly not very close; there are quite a few features which are common to both the Classical languages.

- Svара-s are considered as the 'prana' of language – It is clear from the word 'uyir' for svaravarna-s in Tamil and the definition for svара as 'svayamraajate'
- We can in a way consider that the 'vargeeyavyanjanas' are similarly identified in both these languages based on the 'ucchaaranasthaanam'. One difference may be that Tamil treats the four varieties of 'ka' [i.e. Ka, kha, ga, gha] as 'ka' alone. Na of naadam and svanam are treated differently in Tamil, and in Sanskrit they are represented by one script.
- Language in use can undergo changes- this is a phenomenon which can be observed both in Sanskrit & Tamil. Hence words when uttered without time gap, or when words come very close, they tend to join together resulting in Sandhi or Samasa.
- Case endings correlates to the role of that word in performing the action mentioned by the verb. Karaka – vibhakti is found common in both Tamil and Sanskrit. Sambodhana also is treated in an elaborate way and separate vibhakti in Tolkappiyam.
- Now a days Tolkappiyam or Senavariyam or even Naannul (later developments in Grammar which are based on Tolkappiyam) is not strictly followed, not taught in Schools or colleges. It is possible in Tamil to learn and master Tamil even without knowing the grammar of it. But Sanskrit can be learned or appreciated only with a knowledge of grammar. This can be advantage of the language as well as a disadvantage.

- In the modern scenario of Global village or globalization, it is important to get along with everyone by protecting one's own identity and it is the need of the hour. In order to make it happen, it is highly recommended to teach the grammar also to the language users so that it can survive more or less the same way for longer time.

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Dr. Jyothirmayi. PC., M.A., Ph.D.

Asst Professor and Head

Department of Sanskrit

Mount Carmel College

Bangalore

India

vagjyothi@gmail.com

ⁱAindram, Saakataayanam, Kaatantram etc. are some of the systems of Sanskrit Grammar existed before Panini

ⁱⁱ "Panambaranar opines that Tolkappiyar observed the spoken language of the people and studied the literary language used by the poets before he composed his grammar" – Encyclopedia of Grammatical Literature Part II, Published by Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi. Pg. 1494

ⁱⁱⁱமூவளவு இசைத்தல் ஓரளவு இன்றே (எழுத்ததிகாரம் -௫)

^{iv}Saarnthvarinallatutamakkiyalvilaene

tErnthveLippeTuttaEnaimoonRum

tattamsaarbilpiRappOmpsivani (ezhuttatikaaram)

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^veeRupOtaleeDaiukarameeyaatal, aadineeDalaDiaharamaiyaatal which means 'Last one goes away, middle 'u' becomes 'I', First one elongates bottom 'a' becomes 'ai' – sample sootira

^{vi}Grammatical literature, Part 2 Hartmut Scharefe

^{vii} Some scholars like Prof. Meenakshi Sundaram, Dr. M Varadarajan etc. opine that the diphthongs 'Ai' & 'Au' are borrowed from Sanskrit, to write words like avvai and pauvvam.