



8.2.2 Tamil Design Guide

Introduction

In this section a brief introduction to Tamil culture and history is given.

Introduction to Tamil culture

It is said that

“கல்தோன்றி மண்தோன்றாக் காலத்தே
வாளோடு முன்தோன்றிய மூத்தகுடி”
“Before the birth of stones and sand,
Brave Tamil man was born”

The above poem portrays the heritage of Tamil language. The treasured literature and grammar, outline of sangam literature, devotional literature, other literary categories, the grammar treatise of Tholkaapiyar, structure of the language and the five divisions of grammar are some of the topics covered in this handbook. Moreover, the huge number of Tamil speaking people cutting across countries, the birth and growth of the language, the letters, the rules, the sound variations and the origin of special characters, symbols for Tamil calendar, Tamil numbers, time, land and cultural divisions, and coinage of words have also been dealt with.

India

India is one of the biggest democratic peninsulas of the world. It is surrounded in the east by the Bay of Bengal, in the west by Arabian Sea and in the south by Indian Ocean while in the north is the mighty Himalayan Ranges. New Delhi stands as the capital of this country. The countries that surround it are Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, China, Tibet and Bhutan. The country spreads across 32,87,263 square kilometers with a population of around one hundred crores.

India consists of twenty-nine states and union territories such as Andaman and Nicobar islands, Lakswadeep islands, Daman and Diu, Dadra Nagar

Haveli and Pondicherry. India has eighteen official languages but however around 1652 languages are spoken all over the country. The eighteen official language are :

<i>Tamil</i>	<i>Oriya</i>
<i>Telugu</i>	<i>Sanskrit</i>
<i>Kannada</i>	<i>Nepali</i>
<i>Malayalam</i>	<i>Bengali</i>
<i>Hindi</i>	<i>Kashmiri</i>
<i>Manipuri</i>	<i>Sindhi</i>
<i>Marathi</i>	<i>Assamese</i>
<i>Urdu</i>	<i>Punjabi</i>
<i>Gujarathi</i>	<i>Kondani</i>

History of Tamil

All the south Indian languages belong to a single group known as the family of Tamil language. Dr.Caldwel called this group of south Indian languages as Dravidian languages. The Dravidian family of languages are further subdivided into southern, central and northern Dravidian languages. Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, Kudagu, Thulu, Thoada and Koatha belong to southern Dravidian languages. Telugu, Koandi, Kooy, Koalami, Paarji, Kadhaha. Koanda, Naayakki and Bengo belong to central Dravidian languages. Kuruk, Maalthoa and Parakuy belong to Northern Dravidian language. Southern Dravidian languages including Tamil and Malayalam are being spoken in Tamilnadu, Kerala and Karnataka. Central Dravidian languages like Telugu are being spoken in Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Maharastra. Maalthoa is being spoken in Rajmahal hills of West Bengal.

The Tamil Speaking People

Tamil Nadu is the main land of Tamil speaking people. More than 8 crore Tamils live in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry. About one crore Tamils live in the other states of India. Outside India, Srilanka, Burma, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, South Africa, Fiji, Mauritius islands are some of the



countries having a large number of Tamil speaking people.

Tamil Grammar

Tamil grammar can be divided into five parts namely ezuthu (Letter), sol (Word), porul (Meaning), Yaappu (poetic structure) and aNi (Poetic decoration). The first book on Tamil grammar was Agathiyam but the scripts of Agathiyam were never available. So Tholkaappiyam was accepted as the first book on Tamil grammar. Tholkaappiyam is classified into three adhigaarams basically as ezuthadhigaaram, solladhigaaram and poruladhigaaram and each adhigaaram has 9 chapters allocated to it.

The birth and categorisation of Tamil characters along with the listing of Tamil characters and the maathraas of Tamil are some of the aspects described in ezuthadhigaaram. Single letter words, multi letter words, sandhi rules, classification of words according to origin, and syntactic categorization of words are some of the features detailed in solladhigaaram. In poruladhigaaram some of the topics discussed are the meaning of words, conventional usage of words, metaphors, classification of nouns based on human and non-human aspects, words expressing emotions and classification of living things based on number of senses.

Characters in Tamil

There are 12 vowels, 18 consonants, 216 consonant vowels and one aaydham in the Tamil language and hence there is a total of 247 characters in Tamil.

Vowels

There are twelve vowels in Tamil. They are,

அ, ஆ, இ, ஈ, உ, ஊ, எ, ஏ, ஐ, ஒ, ஓ, ஔ

Kinds of vowels :

Depending on the duration of utterance the vowels are classified into two, namely

குறில் (kuril) and நெடில் (nedil)

The classification is as follows.

Short Vowels (kuril) : அ, இ, உ, எ, ஒ

Long Vowels (nedil) : ஆ, ஈ, ஊ, ஏ, ஐ, ஓ, ஔ

Consonants

There are eighteen consonants in Tamil. They are :

க் ங் ச் ஞ் ட் ண் த் ந் ப் ம் ய் ர் ல் வ் ழ் ள் ற் ன்

vallinam (வல்லினம்) க், ச், ட், த், ப், ற்

mellinam (மெல்வினம்) ங், ஞ், ண், ந், ம், ன்

idayinam (இடையினம்) ய், ர், ல், வ், ழ், ள்

aaydham

There is one aaydham type of character in Tamil namely ஃ

Special Characteristics of some Tamil characters

Some Tamil characters display semantic functions in addition to functioning in their normal way.

Demonstrative Letters (suttu)

The three short vowels அ, இ & உ are used to indicate proximity in other words point to objects and hence are called pointing characters of suttezthukkaL.

ammaaNavan (அம்மாணவன்) - the student

immaram (இம்மரம்) - this tree

upputhakam (உப்புத்தகம்)

Interrogative Characters (vinaa)

When ஆ, எ, ஏ, ஓ, யா convey a question semantically then they are called interrogative characters.

Prolongation (aLabedai)

In poetry, to adjust the maathras to make the poem fit the structure, certain long vowels and long consonant vowels raise their vowels to an extra



maathraa(ala). This property of Tamil is called aLabedai.

Position of Characters in a Word

The twelve vowels and the ten consonant vowels such as க ச த ந ப ம வ ய ஞ ங are all allowed to occur at the beginning of words.

The twelve vowels, eleven consonants ஞ ண் ந் ம் ண் ய் ர் ல் வ் ழ் ள் and shortened கு சு டு து பு று are all allowed to occur at the end of words.

Other Symbols and words in Tamil

Tamil has special symbols and words to represent days of the week, months of the years, division of period into years depending on historical significance, numbers and punctuations.

Days of week

The seven days of the week are :

- Nyaayiru - Sunday
- Thingal - Monday
- Sevvaay - Tuesday
- Budhan (aRivan) - Wednesday
- Viyaazhan - Thursday
- VeLLi - Friday
- Sani (kaari) - Saturday

Months of the year (maatham / thingal)

The names of the months now in use are not Tamil names; They are later year changes. The Tamil names are given in brackets.

- chiththirai (mezham) - April-May
- vaigaasi (Vidai) - May-June
- aani (aadavai) - June-July
- aadi (kadagam) - July-August
- aavaNi (madangal) - August-September
- purattaasi (kanni) - September-October

- aippasi(thulai) - October-November
- kaarththigai(naLi) - November-December
- maargazhi (silai) - December-January
- thai (suRavam) - January-February
- maasi (kumbam) - February-March
- panguni (meenam) - March-April

Number

There are special symbols in Tamil for denoting numbers. They are

1	க
2	உ
3	ந
4	ச
5	ஊ
6	கூ
7	௭
8	அ
9	கூ
10	ஊ
100	ஈ
1000	கூ

Punctuation

There are special words in Tamil to indicate the different punctuation marks.

They are

- Comma (kal puLLi) - ,
- Semicolon (arai puLLi) - ;
- Colon (mukkal puLLi) - :
- Full stop (mutru puLLi) - .
- Question Mark (vina kuri) - ?



Exclamation Mark (uNarchi kuri)	-	!
Double Quotation (irattai mErkoL)	-	“ ”
Single Quotation (otrai mErkoL)	-	‘ ’
Brackets (adaipu kuri)	-	()
History Mark (varalatra kuri)	-	:-
Hyphen (otrai samakkuri)	-	-
Plus Sign (siluvai kuri)	-	+
Star Mark (natchathira kuri)	-	*
Braces (irattai iNaippu kuri)	-	{ }

Phonetic Rules

There are rules that specify certain phonetic considerations like sound variations for similar sounding characters, duration for the sounding of maathraas, etc.,

Sound Variations

ல (la), ள (La), ழ (zha) - variations

la

This sound 'la' is produced when tip of tongue gently runs over the upper jaw's front teeth.

example : palaa, pal

La

This sound 'La' is produced when tongue-tip bends to touch the upper jaw's central portion.

example : paLLam, koL

Zha

This special sound 'zha' produced when tongue-tip proceeds further bending as if to reach the inner tongue.

example : vaazhai

Ra, ra variations

ra

This is called idayinam ra which is produced by the tongue tip touching the frontal edge of the upper jaw.

example : maram, karam

Ra

This is called vallinum Ra. It is produced in the same way as ra but with more pressure.

example : aRam, muRam

n'a, na, nna variations

n'a

Dental sound 'n'a' is produced when upper teeth is pressed by tongue tip.

example : n'anRu

Na

Tongue twist sound 'Na' is produced with the rear side of tongue-tip touches the upper jaw.

example : kaN, aNai

na

Proximity teeth sound 'na' is produced when tongue-tip goes near the teeth but doesn't touch the teeth.

example : manam

vallina letters sound variations

Unlike other indian languages, Tamil has single glyphs for ka, cha, ta, tha, pa, Ra. But their sounds vary depending on the context where they occur. They have normal sound while occurring in the beginning of a word, strong sound when preceded by their consonants, soft sound while occurring in the middle of a word and a special sound when preceded by their ina ezhuthukkaL ங், ஞ், ண், ட், டி and ண்.

kappal - ka (when comes at the beginning of a word)

akkaaL - (when preceded by its consonant க்)

thangam - ga (when comes in words preceded by ங்)

pahal - ha (when occurs in the middle of a word without prefixing ங் or க்)

Something happens with ச ட த ப ற letters also



Variation in duration for maathraas

Maathraas can be pronounced with short or long duration

short vowels - single maathraa

long vowels - two maathraa

Consonants - half a maathraa

aaydham - half a maathraa

Word

If a single letter or a group of letters together has a meaning then it is termed as a word.

There are two types of classifications - literary & grammar.

Literary types

iyar chol : Natural Tamil words in common usage

thiri chol : Deformed words used in literature

vata chol : words with Sanskrit origin

thisai : words from other languages

Grammar types

Noun (peyar chol)

Verb (vinai chol)

Participle (idai chol)

Attribute (uri chol)

Noun Types

Noun of things (porul peyar)

Noun of place (idappeyar)

Noun of date year etc (kaalappeyar)

Noun of parts (chinai peyar)

Abstract noun or noun of qualities (kuNappeyar)

Verbal noun or noun of action (thozhilpeyar)

Types of verb

Direct verb (therinillai vinai mutru)

Indirect verb (kuRippu vinai mutru)

Participle (idaichchol)

The words that come in between noun and verbs but on separation which may or may not have meaning by itself are called participle words.

Gender Markers

There are markers to indicate gender which are added to words to form appropriate gender forms.

Male - an, aan

Female - aL, aaL, i

Plural Human - ar, aar, pa, maar

Singular Non human - thu

Plural Non human - a, kaL

Attribute (Urichchol)

This is neither a noun nor a verb but it adds on to the meaning and have one or more than one properties associated with it.

Word Doubler (Irattaik kiLavi)

If a meaningless word doubles itself in a sentence it is called a word doubler.

Example : vazha vazha, sala sala

Word chains (adukkuth thodar)

Two meaningful words which doubles due to fear or rapidity are termed as word chains.

Example theethee, OduOdu

Word Coining (PuNarchi)

When two words join together it is called coining. The first word is called static word and the next word is called joining word. Static word's ending and the joining word's beginning merge together to form such coinages.

There are three types of coinages. They are :

- Addition (thOntral)
- Alteration (thirithal)
- Deletion (keduthal)



Addition

A new letter adds on when the coinage occurs.

Eg. poo + chedi = poochchedi

Alteration

A letter gets altered when the coinage occurs.

Eg. pon + kudam = poRkudam

Deletion

During the coinage one letter gets deleted.

Eg. maram + vEr = maravEr

Sentence (Vakkiyam - Thodar)

When words stand together to give some meaning on the whole they form a sentence.

Parts of Sentence

The various parts of the sentence are classified according to the roles they perform as follows :

- Subject (ezhuvaai)
- Predicate (payanilai)
- Object (seyappatuporuL)
- Titles (adaimozhi)
- Punctuations (kurikaL)

Semantic Classification

In Tamil nouns are classified as human and non-human. Life in general is classified as internal and external. In Tamil literature land and its culture are also classified. In addition there are classification for time and emotions. There is another classification on living things based on senses.

Classification of nouns

Nouns in Tamil are generally classified under human and non-human as given :

Human (uyarthiNai)

- Thevar (God)

- MakkaL (Man)

- Naragar (Devil)

Non-Human and Object (ahRiNai)

- Living non-humans like animals, birds and plants
- Non-living non-human like stones, rocks etc. are the two categories here.

Literary Life (poruL)

The life found in Literature is termed as Literary life. It is divided into two

► Internal - life (aham) - Internal-life (aham) talks more about the love and passion between the hero and heroine of the literature which are felt and known only to the couple and not elsewhere. Internal-life comprises of five ThiNais.

- kurinchi - togetherness of hero and heroine
- mullai - Heroine awaits arrival of the Hero
- marudham - Short temporary mis understanding between the pair
- neydhal - heroine depressed since the hero has not returned.
- paalai - departure of the hero from the heroine for the purpose of earning money.

Apart from these there are two other classes :

- kaikiLai (One sided Love)
- perun'dhiNai (mismatched Love)

► External-life (puRam) - The portion of life that is declared publicly, the events that happen with the knowledge of public are all termed to be under External - life. There are ten parts of External life where the first eight songs are about the war and the next two are about the external characteristics of the Hero.



- vetchi - Kidnapping the cows from the enemy country
- karandhai - fighting and getting back the kid-napped cows.
- Vanji - march towards the enemy country to capture it.
- kaanji - fight against the opposing marching troops to prevent them capturing the country
- uzhinjai - Surrounding the fort walls of the enemy country.
- nochchi - Saving the fort from the inside of the fort.
- thumbai - head to head fight in an open ground
- vaahai - the winner wearing a garland of the vaagai flower
- paadaaN - singing in praise of the king who won the war
- podhuvial - all the other aspects that were not sung in the above nine thinais.

Land and culture divisions

In Tamil Literature many songs are based on cultural differences and land is classified based on its geographic characteristics and culture. The divisions are :

- kurinchi - mountain area
- mullai - forest area
- marudham - agricultural area
- neydhal - sea surrounded area
- paalai - merge of kurinchi and mullai

Time (pozhuthu or kaalam)

Time is first divided as long time and short time. Long time is the year divided based on seasons and short time is a day divided based on hours.

► Long time (perum pozhuthu)

the year is divided into periods of two months each based on seasons

- iLavEnil - April May
- mudhuvEnil - June July
- kaar - August September
- kuLir - October November
- munpani - December January
- pinpani - February March

► Short Time (chiru pozhuthu)

- kaalai - 06-10 Hrs.
- n'aNpahal - 10-14 Hrs.
- Erpaadu - 14-18 Hrs.
- maalai - 18 -22 Hrs.
- yaamam - 22-02 Hrs.
- vaiharai - 02 - 06 Hrs.

Feelings (meypaadu)

Tholkappiyar divides feelings and emotions into eight categories

- Laugh (nahai)
- Cry (azhuhai)
- Embarrassed (iLivalar)
- Wonder (marutkai)
- Fear (acham)
- Proud (perumidham)
- Anger (Chinam)
- Happiness (uvakai)

Classification of Life

Based on the sense Tholkaappiyar classifies life into six.

- uni-sensed - grass, tree
- di-sensed - shell, snail



- tri-sensed - ants, termite
- tetra-sensed - crabs, drangnfly
- penta sensed - birds, animals
- hexa sensed - humans

Poetic Grammar (yaappu)

The protocols and exceptions for creating poetry is termed as poetic grammar. In this there are two types; asai and aNi.

- **asai**

Letters join together to form asai.

There are two types of asai - nEr asai and nirayasai

- **Poetic Decorations (aNi)**

aNi means beauty, these decorations are not only to just beautify the lines of the poetry but also for comparisons and adding extra meaning to the lines.

Tamil Literature

On the basis of time, Tamil Literature can be classified into three categories. They are :

- Sangam Literature
- Medieval Literature
- Modern Literature

Sangam literature emphasizes on love and bravery. Medieval Literature includes kaappiyams, devotional literature and short literature. In Modern Literature (19th century.) liberty, social status, poverty and love are the main topics of discusison.

Sangam Literature

Sangam Literature normally written in the form of poetry can be classified into two categories. They are mElkaNakku and KeezhkaNakku

- mElkaNakku NoolkaL

mElkaNakku noolkaL consists of eight books of small verses (ettuththogai) and ten books of long verses (paththupattu)

ettuththogai

1. n'atriNai
2. kurunthokai
3. pathitruppaththu
4. paripaadal
5. aingurunooRu
6. kalithogai
7. aganaanooRu
8. puranaanooRu

paththupattu

1. thirumurukaatrupatai - nakkeerar
2. porunaaraatrupatai - mutathama kaNNiyaar
3. chirupaaNaatrupatai - nalloor natthanaar
4. perumpaaNaatrupati - katialoor
uruthirankaNNanaar
5. malaipatukadaam - perungausikanaar
6. kurinchipaattu - kapilar
7. mullaippaattu - napputhanaar
8. madhuraikaanchi - maankudi maruthanaar
9. n'edunelvaadai - nakkeerar
10. pattinappaalai - katialoor
uruthirankaNNanaar

keezhkaNakku noolkaL

This comprises of eighteen books on human morals.

1. n'aalatiyaar - SamaNa munivarkaL
2. n'aanmaNikatikai - Vilampi naakanaar
3. thirukkuraL - thiruvaLLuvar
4. pazhamozhi n'aanuru - munrurai araiyanaar
5. innan' aaRpathu - kapilar



6. iniyavai n'aaRpathu - poothensenthanaar
7. kaar n'aaRpathu - kannan kuthanaar
8. kaLavazhi n'aaRpathu - poikaiyaar
9. inthiNai aimpathu - maranporaiyanaar
10. thiNaimozhi aimpathu - kannansenthanaar
11. thiNaimaalai nootraimpathu - kanimethaviyaar
12. kainnilai - pullangatanaar
13. thirikatukam - nallathanaar
14. chirupanchamoolam - kariyaasan
15. Elaathi - kanimethaviyaar
16. muthumozhi kaanchi - kudulurkilaar
17. aasaarakkovai - peruvain mullaiyaar
18. inthiNai ezhupathu - moovathiyaar

Medieval Literature

kaappiyam

Kaappiyam describes the story of a uncomparable hero and also consists of many substories. Kappiyam usually embodies the good qualities that a man should have, the necessary dos and donots of the citizens of a country, love and about the means to obtain salvation.

Tamil kaappiyam can be divided into aimperum kaappiyam (big) and ainchiru kaappiyam (small)

aimperum kappiyam

The five aimperum kappiyams are :

- silappathigaaram - ilankOvadikaL
- manimEgalai - seeththalai chathanaar
- seevaga chintaamaNi - thiruthakkathEvar
- vaLayaapadhi - _____
- kundalakEsi - nAkuthanaar

ainchiru kappiyam

The five ainchiru kappiyams are :

- uthayaNakumaara kaaviyam - _____

- n'aagakumaara kaaviyam - _____
- yasOdara kaaviyam - _____
- n'eelakEsi - _____
- suuLamani - thoolamozhithevar

Devotional Literature

Devotional literatures were created in large numbers during the period of the Cholas and the Pallavas. There were two types of devotional literature namely Saiva literature known as **panniru thirumuraikal** and VaiNava literature known as Nalayirathiviyaprabantham.

Short Literatures (chitrilakkiyam)

Short literatures were written mainly during the period of the Naayakkars. Later, there were ninety six short literatures created in Tamil which concentrated on aspects of farming, the art of warfare and about the processions taken by temple deities and ruling kings, etc.,

Modern Literature

All literatures written after 19th century from the period of Mahaakavi Bhaarathi are known as modern literatures. Some examples are :

- Bhaarathiyaar kavidhaigal
- Bhaaradhidhaasan kavidhaigal
- Kalki's Novels

(Courtesy : Dr. T.V. Geetha)

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