Landscapes of Linguistics and Literature
A Festschrift for Dr. L. Ramamoorthy

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Dr. S. Thennarasu
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Thamizhaga Institute of Educational Research & Advancements
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Rendering a parallel version of human life from nature and subsequently making an analogy between them has been a very notable trait of the Sangam poems. Characteristics of nature, on the one hand, and behaviors of human, on the other hand, are the two coexisting poetic entities that require careful attention. Tamil poets observed nature and human's life in close proximities and attempted to relate them in their poems with a number of indirect and subtle nuances involving sarcasm, inferences, mocking and other related intents. Would the fallen leaves have anything to relate to human life? (cf. āțēmaiilai utirrtā erivēyē kōṭai 'harsh summer with fallen lives' Aham: 353) What does the blast of the midday grass imply in the context of the main point that the poet makes? (cf. naḻḷēn kāńkul puḷ oḷi keṭṭoṟum ‘when noise of the midday grass is heard’ nāṟṟṟāḷ: 287). One might wonder how the hero's laid back skill to destroy his enemies can be expressed in a plain language with suitable analogy! The poets would not find it any challenging as they can always establish a right imagery from nature and depict it in their poems unambiguously.

...taṭē tamiḷ potu ēṟṟā pōḻañ pōr etirntu
koṇī vēṟṟuvañ āyin koḻka eṇak
koḻutta maṇṟar natuṅkār raṅṟē
aiyārō aiyar āvaṇ aiḷḷan tōrē
tuṟṟuḷ ciṟṟalai aritumurēṟṟu eḻutta
cempṟṟu iyal pōla
orupakal vēṟṟakkaikkul ulamuṟ vēṟē. (Puram 51)

...Intolerable of giving up the pleasant Tamil country,
If he were to go to battle to challenge the enemies,
the fearful enemies can never stand against him
he would never give up until they all get destroyed
like the red ants with freshly grown wings
die in group within a day soon they emerge from their anthill.

The analogy here between ‘the unskilled enemies being destroyed in abundance’ to ‘the red ant flies (iyal) dying in abundance without tolerating the warmth of the sun’ can by no means be considered arbitrary, and it needs to be read as appropriate in all sense. Red ants with freshly grown wings come out from anthills in abundance at the start of winter season, but sadly though, they can not tolerate the parching sun and all of them die instantly without having to live too long. The poet captures this moment of nature elegantly and counterparts to that of those inexperienced soldiers who can not stand the powerful army of the king. cempṟṟu iyal ‘the red winged ants of the red anthill’, has thus become an object of
comparison for short-lived soldiers who can not bear the powerful army of the enemy, the
same way as the red ant can not bear the scorching rays of the sun. Thus, a careful reading of
Sangam poems would unquestionably make one to appreciate that they do indeed carry
within them an array of inferences which can be correlated to human's lives in many nuanced
ways. Imagery of the poems in no way can be dispensed with as simple analogies, nor can
they be assumed as typical poetic devices.

Employment of similes, metaphors, metonymies and other finest literary devices
deserve to be understood within a large paradigm of how the poets envision the world from
their own imaginative ability. These literary devices as they are presented in literature can
no way to be assumed as random in nature, and they should carry a wealth of underlying
implications and intents, which can be comprehended only when a careful deconstruction of
the texts of the Sangam poems is made with all of the circumstantial evidences, and perhaps
with a native intuition. Attempting to relate to all of the genuine and indigenous thoughts of
the Tamil poets to similar sounding paradigms from another language or another culture and
attempt to describe as an instance of borrowing can in no way be a relevant appreciation of
literary ingenuity.

Either to express the virtuous characters of the heroes and heroines or to condemn
their uncharacteristic behaviors, poets always depended heavily on their exquisite imageries
construed within many analogies from nature, either explicitly or implicitly defined.
Particularly, the idiosyncracies of similes in comparison to other literary devices, such as
metaphors, personification, idioms and a number of related others, is that in similes the
objects that are compared can be part of a very large domain of the popularly known and
universally employed entities, such as ḍēyiru ‘sun’ (ḍēyiru anaiya nina pakaivarikk ‘for your
enemies, you resemble the sun...’), ṛiṅkal ‘moon’(ṛiṅkal anaiya emmanṭirkk ‘for us all, you
replicate the moon...’) (Puram:59) and the like. Similes can also be part of a very selectively
construed uncommon objects specific to their own time and space, as is evident from
examples like piṅṭa nellin allūr anna ‘like the abundant rice as grown in Allur’ (Aham:46-14),
vēnīl veliṟṟup panai pūl ‘like the pale palmyra trees of the summer’ (Aham:333-11),
palinkattamna palking niṭṭi ‘goosberries, like a pile of beads’ (Aham:5-9), and similar others in
innumerable numbers (See Renganathan 2017: 36-37 for an account other similar similes).
Specifically, these uses of uncommon objects such as piṅṭa nel, vēnīl veliṟṟup panai,
palinkattamna palking niṭṭi etc., as similes in poems deserve special mention in so far as they
unambiguously represent some hidden facts of the past that the poets want to draw on. These
objects of references may or may not be relevant to the present context, but require careful
attention as to what they signify in their context of occurrences. The expression *vēnil selvārup panai* obviously implies a period when there was a famine and excessive hot season due to lack of rain. Palmyra trees don't normally dry out and become pale even during the summer period, and they remain green in all occasions. What is, thus, significant to note from this particular expression is that there was indeed an occasion when the sun was disgracefully hot to the extent that even the palmyra trees became pale and dry. Historiography, thus, is to be understood as a careful reading of the Sangam poems to learn about the past.

Thus, these imageries of the past, as depicted by the poets of the Sangam period, become the important and unavoidable sources of references designating to the forgotten past. Attempting to investigate the past when this famine occurred and the other consequences that the ancient Tamils went through due to this event can be a far-fetched idea, but one can at least get the glimpse of the Tamil's past from these lines in the verse. In this sense, ancient Tamil poems can be considered to be the historiographical resources carrying within them a wealth of information of the past. Similarly, the other objects of similes of particular interest in the Indian society in general and Tamil society in particular can be of the kind *māʾūr 'elders*, *neruppu 'fire*, *amīṭam 'nectar*, *maṭamayil 'female peacock*, *īcaḷ 'winged white ant* and a host of others. These similes, in particular, tend to express a sense of philosophical symbolism of the objects compared.

Notably, these uncommon objects of references can not be considered, in any manner, as sporadic and occasional. But they are found to be attested contemporaneously in numerous circumstances in many poems of different authors, thus, entailing a study as to how they can be read as a viable source to learn the history and how one can imagine the lives of the Sangam Tamils through their depiction. As a note of reference, employment of these objects in poems can be seen in two principal circumstances, one with explicit markers denoting their status as explicit similes and the other without any overt marker, commonly called an implicit comparison. Ramanujan (1985, p 246) quoting Tolkappiam, the ancient grammar of Tamil, points out that explicit comparison belongs to worldly usage (*ulaka vaḷakkatu*), whereas implicit metaphor belongs to poetic usage (*ceyvuḷ vaḷakkatu*). The latter type of analogies are also treated as the implied, hidden or intended meaning (*vaḷcar chivaṭam*) of the poets, who intentionally opt out themselves from making any direct and explicit mention about the similarities, thus leaving the relevant interpretations to the understanding of the readers.

Along these lines of inferences, what we explore in this section are the two types of imageries, which include in them a reference to explicit comparisons of two objects, one in relevance to the flower called *nāḷar pū 'Cinnamon, Cinnamonum'* and another with a
specific reference to a ferocious mythical animal called $\tilde{A}li$; "a legendary animal known for its hybrid forms and exceptional power." Both of the instances have mentions in many Indian literatures including Tamil and Sanskrit. In Sanskrit the Tamil term $\tilde{A}li$ is referred to invariably as $\tilde{y}â\tilde{d}li$ or $vyâ\tilde{d}li$, where the initial 'y' and 'v' can be taken to represent a glide, rather than to be part of the word itself. What is particularly of interest here is that when studying how these objects are employed in Sangam and medieval poems, the imageries that are drawn in them seem to differ from each other quite contrastingly, implying two different forms imageries drawn from the same object. While their references in Sangam poems offer an in-depth and absolute form of representation, the religious poems of the medieval period, on the other hand, appear to demonstrate a clear case of adaptation, with a relatively less intensity in their depiction. What is striking though is that these objects of comparison survived through generations, from one genre of literature to the other, but by exhibiting a clear disconnect between them on the way how they are employed variously.

Two diverse traditions of Tamil and their continuum in making imageries with identical objects:

Tamil's customs and traditions are differentiated primarily by two distinct phases of the past namely the ancient which is deeply secular and the medieval/modern which is flatteringly religious. Both of these traditions are particularly known for their resilient and refined literary productions with abundantly exquisite and appealing qualities of realistic and indigenous talents of many poets. While the objects of representations in the former type of poems relied heavily on kings (araiian), heroes (talaiivan), heroines (talaivii), concubines (parattai), love life (kataal vakkai), bardic personals (viratiyarkaal), the five landscapes (ainiitai), and a host of others, whereas the latter consumes within it the depiction and praise of gods, ways of worship, conducting rituals and ritual life and related many others, most of them with an ultimate intention of obtaining god's grace. Invariably in both of these genres, one can appreciate the eminence of the poems as enfolded on how they extend their world views, especially of the animals, plants and other natural objects such as mountains, fountains, rivers and so on to the life of the humans. In the context of a discussion on the geniuses of the Sangam poets, Hart assumes that the Tamil poets of the Sangam period had an in-depth knowledge and experience over writing their literary pieces. "Tamil poetry was composed by sophisticated poets who had written poems for much of their lives and who used a group of conventions that had been refined and made more sophisticated for many years." (Hart 1975, p. 180).
The imagery of ṇāḷar pū in Sangam poems

Engaging the nature to designate the love life can be perceived in many instances of the Sangam poems. One of them may be cited from how the use of ṇāḷar flower is found in both Sangam as well as medieval poems. A set of ten songs under the title ṇāḷar pāṭu 'Ten songs of ṇāḷal flower' in Aiṅkūṟṟu, composed by Ammuvaṉar, in particular, employs ṇāḷar pū and ṇāḷar tree as an object of comparison to the hero and heroine's love life in an exquisite metaphorical denotation in that the stages of this flower from budding, blossoming with fragrance and subsequently reaching to the stage of withering are symbolically linked to the multiple moods of the lovers from their union, experiencing happiness, separation, and subsequently attaining the mood of desperation. These ten songs put forth a scenario where the sequence form an imagery with a careful integration of this plant's qualities to that of the love life of the hero and heroine. What is of particular significance in this imagery is that the poet not only observes the stages of the ṇāḷal flowers in terms of their emitting fragrance, the breeze that permeates the fragrance, but also interprets them as the primary cause for which each of the moods of the hero and heroine happen to occur in subsequence. Thus, this type of intertwined depiction between nature and the human life, thus, deserves special mention as to how the imagery can be very engaging and appealing.

Thus, to begin with, the fragrance of the ṇāḷal flower and the breeze from it causes the love-sickness of the heroine.

ekkar ṇāḷar ceruntiyōtu kamāḷa

tuvalait tanṭuli vicīp

payalai ceytana panī paṭu turaiye (Aing. 141)
'There exists

the fragrance of ṇāḷar flower with its blossoms

a cold breeze with misty sprays

instigates within me a feeling of love-sickness'

ṇāḷal tree that is grown in neyyal nilam is associated here with heroine's desperate state of mind due to hero's separation. The terms payalai cey 'instigating love sickness', paalai nōy 'the syndrome of love sickness' etc., are very common throughout the Sangam poems referring to the mood of longing of the heroines for the heroes. What is uncommon though, here, is attributing to the circumstances ṇāḷar flower as the principal cause of love sickness of the heroine.

Subsequently, while the ṇāḷar tree continues to emit its cold and fragrant breeze, the bees are swarming around especially attracted by the fragrance. Their explicit intention is to

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draw honey from the flower, but implicitly to acquire the pollen (paṭucinai) for cross pollination. A dense symbolic connection is made deliberately to the hero’s return for the primary purposes of engaging in a physical union with the heroine. However, with a sense of pleasant repulsion (commonly called ʻiṭal in Tamil), the heroine pretends that she is unaware of his presence, and hence orders her eyes to be closed in order to deliberately ignore him.

ekkar nāḷal inākinarp paṭucinai
puḷḷiṟai kūrum tuṟaivaṇai
uḷḷēn toḷi paṭi iyar en kaṟṇē (Aing. 142).
“The nāḷal tree emits the fine breeze, the bees enjoy the breeze, there happens the arrival of the hero.

However, my eyes are shut unaware of his presence!”

Bees reaching out to the nāḷar flowers enticed by the fragrant breeze on the one hand and the hero returning to unite with the heroine on the other hand are, thus, the parallels that the poet intentionally make.

Eventually, though, in the same ekkar region with nāḷar tree abundant with tiny leaves and big branches that spread out like waves of ocean, the hero consummates his union with the heroine, thus getting rid of the love sickness from her permanently. They are together now happily ever after - pacalai nikkinan iniyē. “he removed the spots of love sickness from her body in a very satisfying manner”

ekkar nāḷar ciriyilaip perući
āṭam vaṅkuṟum tuṟaivaṇ
maṇyō pacalai nikkinan iniyē! (Aing. 145).

“In the midst of the nāḷal with tiny leaves spread out like the vast ocean, the hero removes the spots of love sickness!”

Thus, the beauty of nāḷal flower, nāḷal tree, their exquisite and appealing qualities are thoroughly integrated symbolically to the appeal of the heroine, her love sickness and subsequently to her union with hero. Thus, the nāḷar flower becomes the point of reference for the poet to both describing and comparing the two concurrent events between nature and human, a general characteristic feature that one can observe throughout the poems on love in Sangam Tamil.

The spots of love sickness (pacalai ‘love sickness’) that the heroines develop on their body and subsequently their cure due to hero’s union have been a common trait that one can
attest in many Tamil poems of love. Fascinatingly, here though, the tree with abundant tiny leaves spread like an ocean (ciṟiyilai p erućiṇai ‘dense tree with plentiful tiny leaves’) is used to symbolize the gorgeous and appealing body of the heroine without any spots of love sickness. While the hero rejoicing the association of the heroine is to be mapped to the bees that swarm around the nāḷal flower (patucinaip puḷḷai kūrum ‘bees enjoying the fragrance of the flowers’) to drink honey. The flowers without the bees and subsequently without a possibility of pollination, on the other hand, is a symbolic reference to the heroine without her hero around, being fallen sick with the spots of love sickness (tuvalait taṇṭuḷi vīciṟ payalai ceṟṭana ‘emitting the pollen on the air caused the love sickness’). Symbolization of flowers emitting fragrant pollen on the air to women flirting their heroes is not an uncommon technique as employed in Sangam poems. (cf. Aham 234, 250, 360, Kali 33, 35, 40, Nar. 299, 311).

nāḷal flower in the context of divinity and the continuum from secular to religious life:

A major twist in the way how the nāḷal flower is referenced in medieval religious poems can be observed in a number of different distinct contexts. While the secular poems exploited the charm of this flower symbolizing the charm of love life among the lovers, the religious poems, on the other hand, make use of the same charm in the context of obtaining the grace of god. The aesthetic quality of the nāḷal flowers and the popularity that it instituted among the readers through Sangam poems is now reverted to the divinity of god, an object of utmost importance in medieval poems.

nāḷal kamaḍkāḷi yuḷḷāga campantān
vēḷam poruteṇṭir atikaiviraṅ tāṅaṅṭuc
uruṇ kalalāṅga conna tamilmālaī
vēḷun tunaiyāka niṟaiyār vipaiyarē. (Tevārām 1.46.11)
‘In the grove with nāḷal flowers and fragrance
the poet Sampantan adored Lord Śiva
with his beautiful Tamil verses,
adoring these poems of Śiva, one attains eternity’

Bees consuming honey from nāḷal flowers signifies the heroes enjoying the presence of their heroines, and in the same fervor, poet Sampantan rejoicing the nāḷal grove was able to adore the Lord with his delightful verses in Tamil. Thus, the circumstances of the imagery and the objects of comparison are quite unchanged in these two genres, but the objects referred to are vastly different. In other words, the metaphors are the same but themetaphorized objects are different in a totally contrastive manner.

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In a similar circumstance, a verse from Periyapurāṇam attempts further to illustrate it to the extent that when the devotees worship the Lord Śiva from a grove of ṇāḷal flowers, their minds would be preoccupied as a temple, where God himself would be dwelling in.

maṇaḷip paṭappiḷ kaṭal
koḷuntu vaḷai coriyum kalip pāḷai maḷuṇku niṇki
nāṇieceiṇai men kuḷiṅṅal
poḷil ātu vaḷi koṅṭu naṇṇum pōṭil
nipaippavar tam maṅgam kōyil
koṅṭu aruḷum ampalaṭṭu niruttiṅṅaṙuṅ
ṭiṇṭiṅnaiyaiṃ poḷuntu maṅantu
uyveṅgō eṇaṃ pāṭi tillai cāṁtār (Periyapurāṇam 5.1.174)

‘In contrast to the bushes of the ocean,
from the grove of the cool and radiant ṇāḷal flowers
surrendering the Lord,
heart transforms to a temple with God in it,
the poet reached the Lord’s place Thillai’

Identical references of ṇāḷal flowers and their unique potentials of obtaining god’s grace can be understood from a number of other medieval poems as well (Cf. Tēvārām 7.71.2, 6.71.5 etc.).

Even though the similarities are striking as to how both genres employ the same simile in their poems, what is of relevance here is that the purpose of these imageries are quite different. Later seems, in many respects, to be an adaptation of what was very common and popular among the poets of Sangam period. The symbolism as one can observe between the bees swarming the ṇāḷal flowers and the heroes rejoicing the company of the heroines seems quite natural and spontaneous, whereas the latter analogy between the comfort of the ṇāḷal flowers and obtaining the divine grace of gods seems very unnatural and artificial. Especially, the implicit comparison of ṇāḷal flowers surrounded by bees to heroes rejoicing the comfort of the heroines seems to make an authentic poetic imagery of pollination and sexual union, whereas enjoying the divine grace amidst the fragrant and beautiful ṇāḷal grove seems to be an idea that is far-fetched without any inherent relevance between the two. In the former, the youth and the beauty of the heroines are very much appealed to the heroes, as much as how the bees are appealed to the sweet honey and fragrant pollen emitted from the flowers. In this respect, the reason why the medieval poems employ the identical similes as originally prevalent in Sangam poems, but in a relatively unrelated tone of expression...
deserves further explanation. What is pertinent to mention in this context though is that there
had been a continuity from Sangam toward medieval period in terms of how the poets of
medieval period were fully aware of the similes and metaphors as used in Sangam poems, so
they indeed adapted them in their poems subsequently.

The Imagery of Āṭi and its relevance in the two genres of Tamil literature:

In a similar note, we present here yet another explicit comparison of simile both in
Sangam and in medieval poems, with the same inquiry as to how they are found to be very
relevant in one context but not so quite appealing in the other. A close examination of the
uses of the term Āṭi in many Sangam poems indicates that it is represented as a symbol of
braveness, something with utmost power, and something with a sense of aggravated and
restless state of mind. Āṭi is considered, imaginatively, to be a very powerful animal, more
powerful than any other animal of the ancient period, and it is, thus, believed to have
possessed with a hybrid form of many other animals, such as with the faces of lion, elephant
and tigers with harsh teeth and horn. Artifact images of this animal are prevalent in the South
Indian temples on the niches.

References to Āṭi can be found invariably both in Aham as well as in Puram poems
despite its unique understanding as an object of braveness and valor. In the context of Aham
poems, as in the following example, the heroine compares Āṭi to her hero, who possesses an
exceptional strength.

valampaṭu veṭṭatī
vāḷvārī naṭunkap pukalvantu āṭi
uyarmatal yānaip pukarmukattu orri
venkōṭu puykkum taṇkamal colai
peruvairi atukkattu oruvēl ēntit
taṅjyaṅ varutal avaṅgum aṅcāṅ (Akam. 252)

‘In the battle field
emanating a sense of fear among all the animals,
Āṭi enters and attacks on the face of the long tusked elephant.
In such dreadful field abundant with fragrant neem flowers
my hero will never fear to enter alone with just one sward.’

In this rather exaggerated context, what seems to be implied is that the animal Āṭi is
portrayed as the powerful animal which possesses the capacity even to attack on the face of
the supposedly very powerful male elephant that has a long and sharp white tusk. Besides
portraying Āṭi for its extraordinary power and strength, it is also understood as an aggravated,
restless and disturbed animal that always attempts to appease its desire by destroying everything that it encounters. This is quite obvious from the following Puṟan poem, which implies the behavior of those who always tend to align themselves with unscrupulous people.

ṃṟi muṟpiḻ Āḻi pōla
ullam uḷavintu aṭaṅkātu veḷēga
nōvā tōṉvayiṅ tirāṅki
vēyā vanṟaṅkkku ulamaru vōrē. (Puṟam. 207)

‘Like Āṅi that moves back and forth restlessly, without having satisfied within,
affiliating oneself with those without any virtue,
is like being terribly fond of unripe fruit.’

Those with unsatisfied and uncontained intent (ullam uḷ avințu aṭaṅkātu) attempting to align themselves with the unscrupulous (nōvātōy vayiṅ tirāṅki) is nothing other than someone being very fond of unripe sour fruits (vēyā vanṟaṅki), instead of the sweet ones. Sangam poems of both Aham and Puṟam are known for their powerful imageries of this kind, especially for bringing life of the past to the reader. Either in the case of developing a sense of fear, love, desperation, or expressing the hatred of the heroines over the abandoned heroes, the ancient poets always have a clear strategy to follow on with an appropriate simile from the nature. From these two poems and in a number of other similar poems with the simile Āṅi (see Aham. 252, 381 and Narrain 207), what becomes obvious is that the purpose of this mythical figure, as conceptualized by the Sangam poets, is nothing other than to frequently develop a sense of fear by presenting an animal with extraordinary and unimaginable strength.

References of Āṅi in medieval Tamil poems and its purpose:

While Sangam poems depict a hybrid mythical animal with an extraordinary power, the medieval poems, on the other hand, attributes this character to the God Śiva himself. This is apparent from the following Tirumantiram poem, where Tirumular metaphorizes the Lord Śiva as Āṅi, who possesses a magnificent army, enters into his heart.

uruvili ūṇili ūṇamoru ili
tiruvili tūṭi tēvarkkuṭum ēvaṅ
poruvili pūṭa paṭaiyutai yēḷi
maruvili vantuṇ magampukku tēṅē. (Tiru. 2941).

‘Formless, one without human body, without being handicapped
without any sacrality and impairment, being the Lord of the Lords

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without any enmity. Yaśi with magnificent army,
the faultless came and entered into my heart.'

One finds a similar analogy of attributing Ḡi to Śiva in Periyapurāṇam (cf. 229, 717 and 952), which makes a simile to the Lord (ḡi ṣhul ṭula ṣḥum appalār), instead of metaphor, in its depiction.

ḡi ṣhul ṭula ṣḥum appalār ṭuṣ ṣmīrār
milī vēḷar nīṭu kūṭṭam miṅkku mēḷ eljuntatē 3.3.68 (Peri. 717).

‘In front of Lord Śiva (appalār), who is appalling, like Ḡi,
gathered uncountable number of hunters in a long row.’

Manikkavasakar’s Tēvāram also illustrates a similar environment of simile as Ḡi attacking an elephant as kalikun kaligu vēṭhari yāḥi ‘Ḡi that quenched its anger attacking the elephant that has a submerged eye’. The fact that the notion of ‘unconquerable with overwhelming strength and power’ is attributed to a mythical animal in Sangam poems, but to the supreme and Primordial Lord in medieval poems is to be taken as a case of transition from secular to religious mode of perception, where only the Lord can be the ultimate and extraordinary and Ḡi is, thus, to be taken as the symbolization of God himself.

Historiographical information in Tamil Sangam Poems:

It is far from evident that objects compared in Tamil Sangam poems are as relevant as the referenced objects themselves, especially in the context of their similar sounding qualities and attributes. The poets’ vision of the world, thus, encompasses within it an abundant knowledge of not only their experience with nature, and also their sophistication in the way they depicted their experience to the readers of the successive generations. In this respect, what the poems of the ancient Tamil offer us is nothing other than an historiographical account of the lives of the ancient Tamils themselves. What is important though is to identify the right tool to decipher the pattern that contains within them. It is obvious from the evidences that are drawn here in the context of the same set of similes that were employed in both the Sangam poems as well as the medieval religious poems is that there existed an universal appeal and appreciation of imageries among the poets of the different genres. In essence, the objects of imageries such as cempuṟṟu ṭīṟal ‘red ants of the red anthill’, kaṅkaḻ pul oḷi ‘blast of the midday grass’, nāḷar pū ‘Cinnamon, Cinnamomum’, tuvalaṭt t[u]ṇṭuḷi ‘fragrant pollen’, Ḡi ‘ferocious animal’ and an innumerable others that the Tamil poets of the ancient past drew on in their poems can not be taken as simple analogies, but they contain within them a wealth of historiographical information as relevant to the modern period.
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