

The Issue of 'ai' (ஐ/அய்) & 'au' (ஔ/அவ்) in Tamil Language and Periyar's Proactiveness



Prof. Dr. Kannabiran Ravishankar (KRS)
(Professeur adjoint - Litteratures compare (tamoul),
University de Paris, France)

Abstract:

Tamil Script has 12 vowels & 18 consonants, out of which the two vowels ai (ஐ, அய்) & au (ஔ, அவ்) have evoked considerable interest throughout the lengthy history of Tamil language, its People and Heritage. Technically considered as Diphthongs, these two vowels – their phonetics and forms, have been analyzed and discussed at length, both in ancient grammar (tolkaappiyam) and medieval grammar (nannool). Writing in Tamil language has also evolved continuously over a period of minimum 32 centuries (earliest available written account) across Tamil Nadu, Sri Lanka (ilankai) and many other lands throughout the world where the ethnic Tamil People have lived and are living today.

Dravidian Movement – a social justice and cultural renaissance movement which started in the early twentieth century in Tamil Nadu, was spearheaded by an iconic leader, Periyar E.V. Ramasamy. He was also a great publisher of rational literature. In those days of type setting and type blocks for the printing press, Periyar experimented a lot on Tamil language's orthography and came out with bold proposals of script reform, that included the type faces for the diphthongs ai (ஐ, அய்) & au (ஔ, அவ்). This sparked a huge debate in linguistic circles with many proponents & opponents for the

idea. Most of his reforms were later accepted and evolved into modern Unicode standard for Tamil writing in IT systems.

This paper enquires into that evolution and establishes that Periyar did not break any grammatical rules of the Tamil language, his proposals were in fact adhering to the standards of tolkaappiyam, and his usage of அய் & அவ் is consistent with the works of the three Master Poets of Tamil – Valluvar, Ilango & Kamban. Periyar's reforms were so proactive, that we are now able to adapt our ancient system of writing to modern-day Information Technology standard – Unicode, for consistent encoding and representation.

Keywords:

Tamil, Dravidian, Grammar, Tamil Script, Diphthong, Elision, Linguistics, Phonology, Orthography, Script Reform, Unicode, Encoding, Writing System, Periyar, Dravidian Movement, Rationality.

Introduction:

Tamil (Thamizh) language is one of the very few ancient and classical languages of the world, and still surviving into modernity. Tamil can be classified into Classical, Modern and Colloquial - all three forms are still being used. Any language

starts from its people; so too Tamil. Unlike other ancient languages that have become defunct at some point of time in history, Tamil is being continuously spoken and written by its people, thanks to the People-Oriented Philosophy of its language systems and grammar.

Structures of Grammar & Linguistics evolve a bit later, after 'people-forms' of the language slowly mature. In fact, there exists a Tamil poem which sings, "There is no Grammar without Literature, as there is no oil without growing the mustard crop first" (இலக்கியம் இன்றி இலக்கணம் இன்றே; எள் இன்றியாகில் எண்ணெயும் இன்றே).^[1] The best starting point to know about Tamil language, is from its earliest people-form: Sanga Tamil. It is a Corpus of Poetry & Prose, weaved on the fabric of Music & Drama, with silken threads of creativity running all over the fabric, some 3200+ years back.

Prof. A.L. Basham in his book 'Wonder that was India' comments thus on Tamil literature: "Very early, Tamils developed the passion for classification. A unique feature of Tamil poetry is the initial rhyme or Assonance (etukai/monai). The first syllable of each couplet must rhyme. This initial assonance, in some poems continued through four or more lines, is never to be found in the poetry of Sanskrit languages, or as far as we know, in that of any other language. Its effect, a little strange at first, rapidly becomes pleasant to the reader, and to the Tamils it is as enjoyable as the end rhyme of the Western Poetry."^[2]

The First Grammar - Tholkaappiyam:

The aforementioned Assonance is one of the many facets of the Tamil Grammar. It is a steady evolution from Literature to Linguistics. Grammar of the language evolves after People-Forms of the language evolve. Before the Tholkaappiyam evolved, there were many forms of People's Literature, which were lost as the ages passed by, but their names (Mudhu Kurugu, Mudhu Naarai, Kalariyaavirai etc.) were quoted in latter-day commentaries.^[3]

Tholkaappiyam (tolkaappiyam) is the earliest available Tamil Text on Grammar for Letters, Words, Subject, Orthography, Phonology and Poetics. It is a Magnum Opus of the Tamil language dated back to approx. ~500BCE. The author Tholkaappiyar (tolkappiyar), barely hard codes the Rules for Tamil language, but enshrines flexibility for the future of the language. All Words of the World do have a Meaning!^[4] (எல்லாச் சொல்லும் பொருள் குறித்தனவே) That was the revolutionary outlook enshrined in Tholkaappiyam. Even a baby's blabber has some meaning, because the baby expresses its own thought via that word, irrespective of the immaturity of the word that it babbles.

Tholkaappiyar goes on to document and assemble the Grammar for Tamil Language, almost like the modern-day software developers coding their logic models via Object Oriented Programming (OOPs).

- Prototyping an Interface Template
- Building a Class
- Adding Functions to enhance value
- Polymorphism to accommodate cross-sections
- Encapsulation & Inheritance for reusability
- Even providing an Exception Path (alankatai/அலங்கடை)

Distinctions are noted between literary and colloquial usage (cheyyuL & vazhakku), implying that both the literary conventions and demographic conventions are mutually respected. He even charts out, how the language will customize itself geographically (mozhi peyar thEyam), as it grows far away from the regions of literary assemblies. The Author builds upon the best practices of his predecessors and quotes them (enmanaar pulavar). In those prehistoric non-internet & non-YouTube days, the Grammarian even provides a textual audio-visual byte on how to utter the Tamil Alphabet.

The Tholkaappiyam is a 3-part treatise of the Tamil Language!

1. Letter (*ezhuththu*) – Articulatory Phonetics, Representing Sound as Letter, Aggregating the Letters, Vowels, Consonants, Diphthongs (sound combination), Elision (sound reduction), Context Sensitivities of sound, Euphony Particles & Modifiers (*urubu*).
2. Word (*chol*) – Word Formation and Syntax Correlation, Parts of Speech (Verbs & Nouns), Subject, Predicate, Object, Gender, Person, Number, Case, Nature, New Word Formation, and Word Dynamics.
3. Subject (*porul*) – Conveying Thoughts & Literary Subjects using the above Words, Land Types, Seasons, Time, Animal & Human Evolution, Life & Living on Earth (Personal & Social lives), Love, Feelings, Poetry, Aesthetics, Tribes and Traditions.

Over the ages, many sequels have been written to Tamil Grammar, but many of them have stopped short of just the Letter & Word. Nobody dared to touch the third part (Subject), as it is too complex to define a Grammar for Life. Tholkaappiyar achieved this effortlessly, with sublime beauty. Verily, Tholkaappiyam is the Operating System for Tamil language, much like UNIX & Windows OS in IT.

Vowels & Consonants - Tamil Script:

People often say that the Tamil Alphabet has a whopping 247 Letters and hence it is a very enormous and difficult language. Not at all. Many falsely believe that Tamil has 247 letters in its Alphabet. But the fact is: Tamil has just 4 more letters than English. 30 Letters constitute the Basic Tamil Alphabet.^[5] (எழுத்து எனப் படுப, அகர முதல், எனக் இறுவாய், முப்பஃது என்ப; Tholkaappiyam Book 1, Chapter 1)

1. Vowels (*uyir or life*) = 12
2. Consonants (*mei or body*) = 18
3. Special Character (-ah softening sound represented by a special letter ஃ called *aaydham*)
4. Shortened half-units of -u&-e sounds (*kutRiyalugaram & kutRiyaligaram*, with no letter)

Vowels & Consonants are the core base letters. All others are derived Letters from the combo of the vowels and consonants (Alpha Syllabic- Compound letters) and few other special characters.

Many languages of the world employ the same counting approach. French has derived letters like Diacritics (à, è, ù & ë, ï, ü, ÿ) and Ligatures (œ & æ), but no one counts them as a part of the Alphabet because they are just derived letters. French has only 26 Letters.

Even Sanskrit doesn't count its whopping list of derived letters and define its alphabet to only 48 letters (or 52 as of today). Same is the case, with most languages of India including Dravidian languages. Hence, Tamil has only 30 Letters. Young Children and New Readers need not needlessly fear that Tamil is an extremely difficult language with a whopping 247 letters in its core.

The name is Sweetness. Tamil means Sweet^[6] (இனிமையும் நீர்மையும் தமிழ் எனல் ஆகும் – பிங்கல நிகண்டு). Like how our bodies are built of matter, and life sits on it, infusing the body with life, the Tamil language calls its consonants as body-letters (*mei*) and vowels as life-letters (*uyir*). This constant engagement of life over body, develops and engulfs the language and gives it a vibrant living.

In fact, Tamil is so primordial and ancient that it lacks a few matured letters for sounds which we use today (like *ja* & *ha*). Tamil does have those sounds, but it does not assign an exclusive letter for that sound, thereby providing flexibility for context-based sounds. The *Ja* sound can be reproduced with letters ஞ & ச, *Ha* sound with letter ஃ and the same

- அகர உகரம் ஓளகாரம் ஆகும் (Book 1 Verse 55)

Meaning: அ+உ = ஓள; a+u = au

Hence it is clear that the short vowels a & i compound to form the long vowel ai, and the short vowels a & u compound to form the long vowel au. But Tholkaappiyar also adds an extra clause on this formation. He says that not only the two short vowels can compound, but also one short vowel & one consonant can also compound to form the same diphthongs.

- அகரத்து இம்பர் யகரப் புள்ளியும்

ஐ என் நெடுஞ்சினை மெய்பெறத்
தோன்றும் (Book 1 Verse 56)

Meaning: அ+ய் = அய்; a+y = ay (ai)

Same is the case with the other diphthong au (ஓள). But Tholkaappiyar does not explicitly mention this pattern. However, commentators to Tholkaappiyar's work explicitly mention this second case^{[29], [30]}

- Meaning: அ+வ் = அவ்; a+v = av (au)
- (Book 1 Verse 56)

மெய் பெற என்றதனான்
அகரத்தின் பின்னர் உகரமேயன்றி
வகரப் புள்ளியும்
ஓளகாரம் போலவருமென்று கொள்க.
ஓளவை அவ்வை என வரும் 4 (23) –
நச்சினார்க்கினியர்^[29]

- Meaning: அ+வ் = அவ்; a+v = av (au)
- (Book 1 Verse 56)

மெய் பெறத் தோன்றும் என்றதனான்
அகரத்தின் பின்னர் உகரமேயன்றி
வகரப் புள்ளியும்
ஓளகாரம் போலவருமெனக் கொள்க
என்றவாறு. இச் சூத்திரம், அகரத்து இம்பர்
யவகரப் புள்ளியும் ஐ ஓள நெடுஞ்சினை
மெய்பெறத் தோன்றும் - என்றிருத்தல்
வேண்டும்.

உ-ம்: ஐயவி-அய்யவி, ஓளவை-அவ்வை
மெய் பெறத் தோன்றும் என்றனால் அவற்றைக்
கொள்க என்றவாறு (23) – இளம்பூரணர்^[30]

Hence it is amply clear that the diphthong vowels ai (ஐ)& au (ஓள), can be sounded, represented and written in both forms (Polymorphism) as:

- 1) ஐ (ai) & அய் (ay) and
- 2) ஓள (au) & அவ் (av).



(Fig. 11: Tholkaappiyam, Nachchinaarkiniyar Commentary: ai(ஐ)- ay(அய்) & au(ஓள) – av(அவ்))



(Fig. 12: Tholkaappiyam, iLampooraNar Commentary: ai (ஐ)- ay (அய்) & au (ஓள) – av (அவ்))

Diphthongs (கூட்டொலி) in Nannool:

Not only the ancient grammar of Tholkaappiyam, but also the medieval grammar of Nannool (nannool) handles this Polymorphism in Tamil Phonology. The author of Nannool,

PavaNanthi Munivarstates that the diphthongs -ai (ஐ) & au (ஔ), can exist in both forms as போலி (alike) in line with his predecessor Tholkaappiyar and also in line with the ancient usage in Sanga Tamil.^[31]

அம்முன் இ-கரம் ய-கரம் என்று இவை

எய்தின் 'ஐ' ஒத்து இசைக்கும்; அவ்வோடு உ-வ்வும் வ-வ்வும் 'ஔ' ஓரன்ன (நன்னூல், Nannool - Book 1 Verse 125)

Getting the above Nannool rules in the form of an equation, we have as follows:

- அ+இ = ஐ; a+i = ai
- அ+உ = ஔ; a+u = au
- அ+ய் = அய்; a+y = ay (ai)
- அ+வ் = அவ்; a+v = av (au)

Commentators to Nannool too have elucidated on this concept. Mayilainathar and Arumuga Navalar have written detailed commentaries to Nannool and let's take a look at their explanation.

* அகர முன் இகரமும் யகரமும் வரின், ஐகார ஓசை போல இசைக்கும்;

அகரத்தின் முன் உகரமும் வகரமும் வரின், ஔகார ஓசை போல இசைக்கும்;

எ -று. போல விசைக்குமெனவே அவை ஆகா; போலியாமெனக் கொள்க.

வ - று. அஇவனம், அய்வனம் - ஐவனம்; மஉவல், மவ்வல் - மெளவல் எனவரும் - மயிலைநாதர்.^[32]

*அம் முன் இகரம் யகரம் என்ற இவை ஒத்து எய்தின் 'ஐ' இசைக்கும்

அகரத்தின் முன் இகரமும் யகரமும் என்று சொல்லப்பட்ட இவை

தம்முள் ஒத்துப் பொருந்தினால் 'ஐ' என்னும் நெட்டெழுத்து ஒலிக்கும்.

அவ்வோடு உவ்வும் வவ்வும் (ஒத்து) ஓரன்ன (எய்தின்) ஔ (இசைக்கும்).

அகரத்தோடு உகரமும் வகர மெய்யும் தம்முள் ஒத்து

ஒரு தன்மையனவாகப் பொருந்தினால்

ஔ என்னும் நெட்டெழுத்து ஒலிக்கும்.

யகர வகர மெய்கள் நடுவிலே கலக்கும் எனக் கொள்க.

* சந்தி+அகரம்=கூட்டு எழுத்து

(ஐ=அ+இ அல்லது அ+ய்; ஔ=அ+உ அல்லது அ+வ்) - ஆறுமுக நாவலர் காண்டிகை உரை^[33]

★ சந்தியக்கரம்

125. அம்மு னிகரம் யகர மெளறிலை
எய்தி னையொத் திசைக்கு மவ்வோ
டுவ்வும் வவ்வு மெளவோ ரன்ன.

*சந்தி+அகரம்=கூட்டு எழுத்து (ஐ=அ+இ அல்லது
அ+ய்; ஔ=அ+உ அல்லது அ+வ்)

எழுத்தியல் 73

(இ-ள்) அம் முன் இகரம் யகரம் என்ற இவை ஒத்து எய்தின் ஐஇசைக்கும் - அகரத்தின்முன் இகரமும் யகரமும் என்று சொல்லப்பட்ட இவை தம்முளொத்துப் பொருந்தினால் ஐ என்னும் நெட்டெழுத்து ஒலிக்கும்; அவ்வோடு உவ்வும் வவ்வும் (ஒத்து) ஓரன்ன (எய்தின்) ஔ (இசைக்கும்)-அகரத்தோடு உகரமும் வகர மெய்யுத் தம்முளொத்து ஒரு தன்மையனவாகப் பொருந்தினால் ஔ என்னும் நெட்டெழுத்து ஒலிக்கும்.

யகர வகர மெய்கள் நடுவிலே கலக்கு மெனக் கொள்க.

மொழிந்த பொருளோடொன்ற வவ்வயின் மொழி யாத தணையு முட்டின்று முடித்தல் என்னும் உத்தியால் - அகரக் கூறும் இகரக் கூறத் தம்முளொத்து எகர மொலிக்கும்; அகரக் கூறும் உகரக் கூறும் தம்முளொத்து ஒரு மொலிக்கும் எனக் கொள்க. 70

(Fig. 13: Nannool, Arumuga Navalar Commentary: ai (ஐ)- ay (அய்) & au (ஔ) - av (அவ்))

Hence it is again clear, not only from the ancient Tholkaappiyam, but also from the medieval Nannool, that the diphthong vowels ai (ஐ) & au (ஔ), can be sounded, represented and written in both forms (Polymorphism) as follows:

- 1) ஐ (ai) & அய் (ay) and
- 2) ஔ (au) & அவ் (av).

The Catch behind the Polymorphism of ai (ஐ) & au (ஔ):

Now arises a basic but an important question: So why there exists a separate letter in the alphabet for ஐ (ai) & ஔ (au), when we can very well write them as diphthongs அய் (ay) & அவ் (av)? Won't it make sense, to get rid of the redundant

alphabets and thereby optimizing the alphabet burden? 95)

Well, Tamil Phonology has a logical answer to this question. Tamil language is not just a set of syntax rules defined by a handful of scholars. It has evolved as a People's language throughout the ages and hence reflected the needs of its People, in its core linguistics. That's the only reason - that the classical language aged more than 30+ centuries - is still surviving and widely spoken by 80+ million people in the modern day - whereas many ancient & classical languages have gone extinct. Tamil has always included the People Factor in its core - be it literature or grammar. Flexibility is the key of Tamil Linguistics.

So, coming to the question of polymorphism, if we can write ஐயா as அய்யா, and ஓளவை as அவ்வை, why not we write உண்மை as உண்மய், விடுதலை as விடுதலய், and சென்னை as சென்னய்?

That's where Elision (குற்றியல்/ KutRiyal & குறுக்கம்/ KuRukkam) helps us to put things in the proper perspective. We already discussed in the previous section of this paper, the unique feature in Tamil phonology, wherein a reduction in the sound duration of a phoneme occurs, in certain letters, in certain context of some words. They are sounded on a reduced timing, naturistically as they are spoken.

- When Elision/ KuRukkam occurs on ஐ, it is called ஐகாரக்குறுக்கம். (Shortened Ai)
- When Elision/ KuRukkam occurs on ஓள, it is called ஓளகாரக்குறுக்கம் (Shortened Au)

Both Tholkaappiyam & Nannool talk on this phenomenon in Tamil Linguistics.[34], [35]

ஐ, ஓள என்னும் ஆய் ஈர் எழுத்திற்கு இகர உகரம் இசை நிறைவாகும் (தொல்காப்பியம் 42)

தற்சுட்டு அளபு ஒழி ஐம் மூவழியும் நறையும் ஓளவும் முதல் அற்று ஆகும் (நன்னூல்

The Grammatical text Yaapparungkalam (யாப்பருங்கலம்) is a text on Poetic Grammar that arose between the times of ancient Tholkaappiyam and medieval Nannool. It also talks on the natural reduction of sounds of the diphthongs: ஐ (ai) & ஓள (au), from 2.0 to 1.5 mora called Elision/KuRukkam. [36]

ஐகார ஓளகாரக் குறுக்கம் ஆமாறு;
அளபெடுத்தற் கண்ணும் தனியே
சொல்லுதற் கண்ணும் என
இரண்டிடத்தும் அல்லாத வழி வந்த
ஐகார, ஓளகாரம் என்பன
தம் அளவில் சுருங்கி ஒன்றரை
மாத்திரையாம்.

ஐகாரம் தனியே நின்று ஒரோவிடத்து
ஒருபொருளைச் சொல்லுதற்கண்
ஒன்றரை மாத்திரையாம். என்னை?
அளபெடை தனிஇரண்டு அவ்வழி ஐ, ஓள
உளதாம் ஒன்றரை தனியும் ஐ ஆகும்
என்றார் அவிநயனார். (யாப்பருங்கலம்,
உறுப்பியல் 2)

Ai (ஐ) & Au (ஓள) when uttered standalone, they sound to their full mora (maaththirai) of 2.0. But when not during a standalone utterance i.e., when they are uttered as a part of the word, their mora (maaththirai) gets reduced to 1.5 and 1.0.

Ai (ஐ) can occur in the first, middle or last part of a word.

- When it occurs in the first part of the word, its mora gets reduced from 2.0 to 1.5.
- When it occurs in the middle or last part of the word, its mora gets reduced from 2 to 1.

Au (ஓள) can occur only in the first part of a word.

- When it occurs in the first part of the word, its mora gets reduced from 2.0 to 1.5.

For example: when we utter the word ஓளவை, we do not converge our lips so tight, to

utter the first letter ஓ to its full mora (maaththirai) of 2. Rather we give it a gentle pass, and pronounce to 1.5 mora, as if we see the letters அவ், as in அவ்வை (அ kuRil = 1.0 & வ் mei = 0.5). This occurs naturally to a native speaker.

Same is the case with ஐயன் too. We pronounce it to 1.5 mora, as if we see the letters அய், as in அய்யன் (அ kuRil = 1.0 & ய் mei = 0.5).

But, when we utter the words like சென்னை or விடுதலை or உண்மை, the ஐ (ai) at the last section is pronounced only to 1.0mora. Whereas, the diphthong அய், is of 1.5 mora (அ kuRil = 1.0 & ய் mei = 0.5). We cannot suddenly inflate the mora from 1.0 to 1.5 because we are in a reduction mode (kuRukkam). Hence, we do NOT generally write சென்னை as சென்னய், விடுதலை as விடுதலய், and உண்மை as உண்மய். This also occurs naturally to the native speaker.

Typically, as we begin to speak, we generally start on a higher scale and in the course of the speech the intensity drops to a lower scale. This is a natural phenomenon of human phonology. That's what we see in the above examples of the Tamil Elision (kuRukkam).

In such cases of Elision, we are free to write, the way we speak; i.e., ஐ as அய் & ஓ as அவ். Again, it is not a compulsion that we write, only the way we speak. It is just a natural option one can utilize.

In other speech contexts, where the full sound of ஐ & ஓ are uttered without any reduction, such Elision will not occur. Tamil Grammar talks on an amplification technique called அளபெடை / aLapedai, where instead of reduction, the sound is amplified. Elision will not occur in such cases.

Also, in the context of exclamation, no sound reduction occurs and we exclaim in our excitement with full glee. Here too, Elision will not occur.

Additionally, there are a few words in Tamil with just a single letter (ஒரெழுத்து ஒருமொழி). For example, just the letter ஐ can also denote a full

word ஐ, meaning: leader/husband. Elision does not occur in such cases too, where we fully pronounce the letter in that context.

To summarize: Elision does not occur in

- Amplification/ அளபெடை – (Example: ஓளஉவெகுளல்)
- Exclamation/ வியப்பு - (Example: ஓளஓளஓருவந்தவம்)
- Single letter single word/ ஒரெழுத்து ஒருமொழி (Example: ஐ as in Leader)

This Elision phenomenon is well documented and explained both in Tholkaappiyam & Nannool. Such sound-alike characters are classified under the section: போலி (Poli) meaning: போல (alike). As long as the meaning of the word does not change, such போலி (alikes) are generally encouraged.

Elision is a natural human phenomenon in many languages, wherein the defined sound for an isolated alphabet, gets diluted naturistically as we speak in a continuous flow of letters & words. Tamil Linguistics included an option for this natural human behavior, in its core syntax so many centuries ago. Receptive to People's needs and their lives - is what makes Tamil young, vibrant, lean and agile.

Concordance of the ai (ஐ/அய்) & au (ஓ/அவ்) in Literature:

If the great grammarians and their commentators have dwelt on this intricacy of ai (ஐ) & au (ஓ), then it must have been prevalent in Tamil society in those ancient & medieval times. We already saw in the previous section of this paper that People's Literature arise first, and Grammar Standardization follows suit. If that's the case, then we would be able to find a plethora of occurrences of this ஐ/அய் & ஓ/அவ் usage in ancient Tamil texts. Let's explore some of that concordance in Tamil Literature.

The word பெளவம் (sea) written as பவ்வம் in Sanga Tamil:

- நிறை இரும் பெளவம் குறைபட முகந்து கொண்டு (குறிஞ்சிப்பாட்டு 47)

- பவ்வம் மீமிசைப்பாற் கதிர் பரப்பி
(பொருநராற்றுப்படை 135)

**The word கௌவை (rumor/disrepute)
written as கவ்வை in Sanga Tamil:**

- ஊரனொடு எழுந்த கௌவையோ
பெரிது (அகநானூறு 186)
- பகல்வரின் கவ்வை அஞ்சுதும்
(அகநானூறு 118)

**The word வெளவுதல் (Capture) written as
வவ்வுதல் in Sanga Tamil & Sangam Maruviya
Tamil:**

- யானை வவ்வின தினை என
நோனாது (அகநானூறு 348)
- அரிது புணர் இன் உயிர் வவ்விய நீ
என (நற்றிணை 245)
- எருத்து வவ்விய புலி போன்றன
(புறநானூறு 4)
- வவ்வு வல்லார் புணை ஆகிய
மார்பினை (பரிபாடல் 6)
- தாம் கண்டது காமுற்று, வவ்வார்
விடுதல் இனிது (இனியவை நாற்பது
36)

**The word ஓளவியம் (Deceit/Jealousy)
written as அவ்வியம் in ThirukkuRaL:**

- அவ்விய நெஞ்சத்தான் ஆக்கமும் -
செவ்வியான்
கேடும் நினைக்கப் படும்

(அறத்துப் பால், இல்லறவியல்,
அதிகாரம்: அழக்காறாமை, குறள் 169)

**The word ஓளவை(Prime Woman) written
as அவ்வை in Chilapathikaaram & Manimekalai:**

- அவ்வை உயிர் வீவும் கேட்டாயோ
தோழீ (சிலப்பதிகாரம், வஞ்சிக்
காண்டம் 29/85)
- அவ்வையர் ஆயினீர் நும் அடி
தொழுதேன் (மணிமேகலை,
பாத்திரம் பெற்ற காதை 11/137)

**The word மௌவல் (Jasmine Flower)
written as மவ்வல் in Cheevaka Chintamani:**

- மவ்வல் அம் குழலினார் மணி கலம்
பெய் மாடமும் (சீவக சிந்தாமணி,
நாமகள் இலம்பகம்:153)

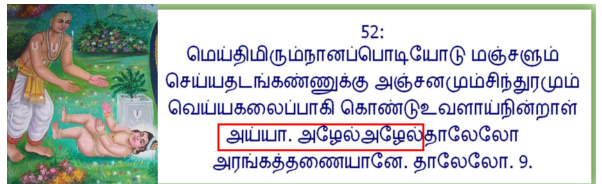
**The word ஐயம்(Doubt) written as அய்யம்
in Veeramaamunivar's ThembaavaNi:**

- அய்யம் உற்று இவள் வினாவ அரிய
மாது (தேம்பாவணி, ஐயம் தோற்றுப்
படலம் 7/12)

**The word ஐயா(Address of Respect/
Leader) written as அய்யா in Veeramaamunivar's
ThembaavaNi:**

- வாய்ந்த ஆண்மையை மறுத்தனை
எவன்வெலான் அய்யா (தேம்பாவணி,
வளன் சனித்த படலம் 3/22)
- அய்யனை இறைஞ்சிய அமையத்து
ஒண் தவன் (தேம்பாவணி, மகவருள்
படலம் 10/91)
- விண்ணவர் அமரர் உம்பர் மேலினர்
அமுதர் அய்யர் (தேம்பாவணி,
வாமன் ஆட்சிப் படலம் 28/64)

Veeramaamunivar was a person of the reformistschool who introduced the script reformandso, maybe he would have chosen to write ஐயா as அய்யா following the Tholkaappiyam/ Nannool Elision Convention. But even long before Veeramaamunivar, the divine Bhakthi poets like Azhwars, and the Master Poet Kamban of the Tamil Magnum Opus Kamba Ramayanam, also chose to write ஐயா as அய்யா.



(Fig. 14: The usage of ஐ as அய்யம், ஐயா as அய்யா, by the Divine Periyazhwar)

The word ஜயா (Address of Respect) written as அய்யா in Azhwar AruLicheyal (Divya Prabandham):

- அய்யா அழேல் அழேல் தாலேலோ அரங்கத்து அணையானே

(ஆழ்வார் அருளிச்செயல்/ நாலாயிரத் திவ்யப் பிரபந்தம் / பெரியாழ்வார் திருமொழி 52)

The word ஜயா (Address of Respect/Leader) written as அய்யா in Kamba Ramayanam:

- அய்யன் வில் தொழிற்கு ஆயிரம் இராவணர் அமைவிலர்

(கம்ப ராமாயணம், யுத்த காண்டம்: கும்பகருணன் வதைப் படலம்³⁴⁷)

So, when we don't chastise Kamban for using the word அய்யா, why do we condemn Periyar alone?

It's because of 'something else' (ideologies on Anti-Brahminism, Atheism and Caste Eradication) that some people don't like in Periyar, they use this garb of ஜயா/அய்யா to condemn Periyar, not knowing that the ஜயா/அய்யா reform dates back to Tholkaappiyar and ஓளவை/அவ்வை reform was used by Valluvar & Ilango Adigal themselves. Would they have the guts to condemn the Trio - Valluvar, Ilango & Kamban – The Three Master Poets of Tamil Literature?

யாமறிந்த புலவரிலே கம்பனைப் போல், வள்ளுவர் போல் இளங்கோவைப் போல், பூமிதனில் யாங்கணுமே பிறந்ததில்லை! உண்மை, வெறும் புகழ்ச்சியில்லை!

(Subramania Bharathiyar, Thesiya Geethangal 22)

To indulge in nitpicking the Reformers in Linguistics- like Veeramaamunivar and Leaders of the Dravidian Movement like Periyar -for using the word அய்யா instead of ஜயா, or using the word அவ்வை instead of ஓளவை, is nothing but sheer ignorance, or inner contempt. We have to outgrow this attitude and look at the process than the person, when it comes to Literary Critique & Linguistics.

Irrespective of these kinds of politics disguised as linguistics, both usages of the diphthongs ஐ (ai) & ஓள (au) and அய் (ay) & அவ் (av) stand good in Tamil Literature & Tamil Grammar.



(Fig. 15: The usage of ஜய் as அய்யம், ஜய்யன் as அய்யன், in the celebrated epic Kamba Ramayanam)

[37]

Contribution of the Dravidian Movement to Tamil Language:

Though we have clearly established the scope of this paper in the prior two sections, with adequate referential techniques elucidated in Tamil Grammatical Texts: Tholkaappiyam and Nannool, and also with many references from Tamil Literature, it would be worthwhile to quickly glance through the other contributions of Periyar & Dravidian Movement to the Tamil language.

1. Instilling Tamil Pride in Tamil People – Language, Land, Ethnogrroup, Society, Politics, Art & Culture.
2. Restoring the self-respect of Tamil language (மானத்தமிழ்) against the Sanskrit Parasitic influx.
3. Democratizing and extending ownership of the language not only to Scholars, but also to People.
4. Rationalizing Tamil language by breaking myths and applying logic & scientific temper.
5. De-linking Linguistics from Religion & Dogma.
6. Advocating Equality in Tamil Society via Tamil language.
7. Establishing & nurturing the fraternity of Tamil in the Dravidian Language Family.

8. *Honoring & Assisting Tamil Scholars like V.O. Chidambaranar, PaavaaNar, Somasundara Bharathiyaar, Bharathidasan, Pulavar Kuzhanthai, Sami Chidambaranar, Eezhathu Adigal, Perunchithiranaar & other Tamil Scholars.*
9. *Introducing a new form of Tamil Publishing - Oratorical Literature (80+ books of Speech to Text).*
10. *Redefining the Emphasis in Tamil Oratory from Hyperboles to Logic.*
11. *Gradual & Continuous Retirement of Parasitic Sanskrit words in Tamil Publishing & Tamil Oratory.*
(*Namaskaram to Vanakkam, Sriman to Thozhar, Akrasanar to Thalaivar, Prasangam to Urai etc.*)
12. *Focus on Tamizh Isai (Music), Restoring Dignity to common class Musical Instruments like the Nadaswaram & Parai, and Cementing the self-respect of common class musicians like K.B. Sundarambal, Nadaswaram Artiste Ponnusamy, Dhandapani Desikar and more.*
13. *Inspiring to Change the outlines of Tamil Drama from Mythological Stories to Social Themes.*
14. *Changing the ritual services rendered in Tamilian weddings from Sanskrit to Tamil.*
15. *Tamil based Worship & All-caste Archakas (even though Periyar himself was a nonbeliever, he fought for the rights of the believers to conduct their own worship, in their own local language).*
16. *Reinforcing the Pongal Festival as a True Tamizh secular festival in Tamil communities.*
17. *Working with great Tamil Scholars to restore the Tamil Calendar from the clutches of Sanskrit Hegemony and establishing the Thiruvalluvar Year.*
18. *Tamil Script Reform - Standardization & Scalability of Script much before the Unicode encoding.*
19. *Popularizing Thirukkural – the Magnum Opus of Tamil Language, amongst all sections of the society. Extending the Kural Reach from Literary circles to Social Circles. Conducting Thirukkural Conferences in unison with Tamil Academia & Scholars. Critical Evaluation of Commentaries to the Kural from a Social Justice standpoint and demystifying them, Low-cost publishing of the Thirukkural as a Pocket Book to increase its outreach amongst the common public. (1953 pocket edition, Dravidian Publishing House, 6 annas, and later still reducing the price to just 5 annas).*
20. *Popularizing Translation in the Tamil Publishing field. Knowledge Sharing from other Languages and Societies of the World, into Tamil. (Communist Manifesto, Ingersoll, Bernard Shaw, Bertrand Russell, Bhagat Singh, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and more).*
21. *Anti-Hindi Imposition Agitations to safeguard Tamil language in Educational, Governmental, Political & Social Spheres. Instead of mere lip service, involving in direct field work and courting Imprisonments for the sake of Tamil.*
22. *Agitating for Restoring the name of the Tamil State to 'Tamil Nadu'.*
23. *Continuously advocating Tamil (mother tongue based) Education and Reorienting Tamil in the path of Science & Rationality.*
(*The above is only a partial list and macroscopic bullet-point view of the immense contributions rendered by Periyar and the Dravidian Movement to the cause of Tamil Language. Please*

do refer to the Book: *Thamizhukku enna cheiythaar Periyar?* authored by Dr. K. Veeramani[38] and published by the Dravidar Kazhagam (DK) in 2018, for a full spectrum analysis with detailed footnotes and references on the above salient points).

Inference & Conclusion:

In this paper, we widely travelled through the topics of Phonology, Orthography, Vowels and Consonants of the Tamil language, Diphthongs, Polymorphism exhibited by the Diphthongs, their Definition and Scope in the ancient Tamil Grammatical work – *Tholkaappiyam*, their supplementary affirmations in the medieval Tamil Grammatical work – *Nannool*, Concordance of these two diphthongs in Tamil Literature ranging from Classical Sanga Tamil to Medieval Bhakti Literature, the epic *Kamba Ramayanam*, and the latter-day epics.

We also visited the historical backdrop of the Dravidian Movement, its contributions to Tamil language, Early Printing Press in the Tamil Publishing field and the Experimentation that Periyar did in Script Standardization, in line with many of his predecessors like *Veeramaamunivar*.

However, the core scope of this paper was exclusively on the issue of the two diphthongs - 'ai' (ஐ/அய்) & 'au' (ஔ/அவ்) in Tamil Language and Periyar's approach in handling and usage of those two vowels. With direct and explicit references from the two great Grammatical works - *Tholkaappiyam* & *Nannool* and also their commentaries certifying both usages of ஐ/அய் & ஔ/அவ், we confidently conclude that the Polymorphism of these two diphthongs are very valid and well attested.

Also, the Elision feature in Tamil Linguistics (குற்றியல்/ *KutRiyal* & குறுக்கம்/ *KuRukkam*) validates the usage of ஐ/அய் & ஔ/அவ், based on the naturalistic phenomenon of Human Phonology and the Linguistic Context, where these two sounds undergo a natural reduction in their mora (*maaththirai*). Again, this is well attested in *Yaapparungkalam*, in addition to *Tholkaappiyam* & *Nannool*.

We also saw nearly 20 instances of literary concordance, where ஐ is written as அய் & ஔ is written as அவ். This occurs right from the Classical Age Sanga Tamil to the Devotional Age Bhakti Literature. Master Poets like *Valluvar*, *Ilango* and *Kamban* – all three certify the usage of அய் & அவ்!

Hence, there is absolutely no reason, to find fault with Periyar - on the usage of the two Tamil diphthongs அய் & அவ்.

Elision is a natural human phenomenon not only in Tamil, but in many languages, where the defined sound of an isolated alphabet, undergoes a natural reduction, as we speak in a continuous flow of letters & words. Tamil language included an option for this natural human behavior in its core syntax, even centuries back during the times of *Tholkaappiyar*. Periyar & the Dravidian Movement have intrinsically followed the *Tholkaappiyar Model in Linguistic Reform*. Receptive to Natural Phonology and People's need in Linguistics, is what makes the Tamil language young, vibrant, lean and agile.

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About the Author:

- Dr. Kannabiran Ravishankar (KRS) is a Researcher and Adjunct Professor at the Paris University. Prior to moving to Europe, he was an adjunct scholar at Columbia University, New York. He received his doctorate in Comparative Literature at UC Berkeley. He focuses primarily in Comparative Linguistics and his specializations are Classical Tamil Literature, Literary & Grammatical History, History of Humanism & Social Justice, and Science in the Language Corpus. KRS is also a full time Investment Banker by profession.
- His publications include: Comparative techniques of Drama in Shakespeare & Ilango, Painting Patterns in ThirukkuRaL Concordance and 15 other research papers, with his main thesis being: 'Comparative Studies of Master Poets: Ilango & Kambar' from a Social Justice standpoint. In addition to Tamil, he is well versed in Sanskrit & Indo-European languages and adept in handling both Devotional & Rational Literature. He has also majored in the Saama Veda/Chaandagya Upanishad.
- KRS has translated into Tamil, NASA's Learning Card Project of the James Webb Space Telescope. He has authored the books: 'aRiyapadaatha ThamizhMozhi' (The Unknown Tamil Language), 'What is Tamil?', 'Humanism & Dravidian Movement - A Success Story' and 'Thamizhaa? Samskrithamaa?' He also serves as the Chief Editor of the Journal of Dravidian Studies - Dravida Pozhil.