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## Recreating Daṇḍin’s Styles in Tamil\*

SUMMARY: In Sanskrit poetics, the defining characteristics of poetry, its very life breath, are the *guṇas*, ‘qualities’. They make up the phonetic and syntactic fabric of poetic language without which there would be nothing to further to ornament. Many of these intimate features are by necessity specific to the Sanskrit language and defined in terms of its peculiar grammar including phonology and morphology. In the present article, I will describe what happens to four of these *guṇas* when they are transferred to the Tamil language in the *Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram*, a close adaptation of Daṇḍin’s *Kāvyaḍarśa*. I wish to demonstrate that the Tamil Taṇṭi did not thoughtlessly accept the Sanskrit model but sought, in some cases, to redefine the qualities so that they are meaningful in the context of Tamil grammar and its poetological tradition. A partial translation of the Tamil text is included.

KEYWORDS: *alaṅkāraśāstra*, Daṇḍin, *Kāvyaḍarśa*, poetics, Sanskrit, Tamil, *Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram*.

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## Introduction

The present essay constitutes the second part of an exploration of the Tamil translation of Daṇḍin's *Kāvyaḍarśa*, the *Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram*. In the current segment, I focus on the concept of *guṇa*, in this context, a quality of literary language that defines style (*rīti*, *mārga*). My interest lies in understanding how *guṇas* or 'poetic qualities', some of which are specific to Sanskrit grammar (phonology, composition, etc.), are transferred to Tamil, a language with a very different sound inventory and patterns of morphology. After a brief summary of the topic in Sanskrit sources, I provide an annotated translation<sup>1</sup> of the Tamil text along with parallels from the *Kāvyaḍarśa* and an earlier Tamil work that attempts a similar translation on a smaller scale, the *Vīracōḷiyam* by Puttamittiraṅ. I focus in particular on those *guṇas* that pertain to sound (*śabda*, Tamil *col*).

From early times, literary Sanskrit was described using a rather fluid set of qualities (*guṇas*). Complimentary though somewhat vague descriptions such as *madhura/mādhurya* 'sweet', 'sweetness', (*vi*)*citra*, 'amazing' and *ślakṣṇa/ślakṣṇatva* 'tender'/'tenderness', etc. already occur in the epics to reflexively describe or praise their own language.<sup>2</sup> More concretely, Kauṭilya, in his *Arthaśāstra*, lists six qualities, *arthakrama*, *sambandha*, *paripūrṇatā*, *mādhurya*, *audārya*, *spāṣṭatva*, required for writing a successful letter (*lekha-sampad*). The overlap here—conceptually or in the specific terminology—is intriguing with respect to the proposed role played by the art of diplomatic correspondence in the formation of the *mahākāvya* genre (Tieken 2015). As we approach the appearance of our first extant works on poetics and dramaturgy, it seems that certain qualities, in particular *prasāda*, 'clarity of expression', *mādhurya*, 'sweetness' and *ojas*, 'vigour', have gained a fixed place in the discourse, a fact for which there is some corroborating evidence

<sup>1</sup> All translations are my own.

<sup>2</sup> See Raghavan (1963: 249-351) for a fairly complete survey of *guṇas* in Sanskrit literature. Raghavan draws not only on works of poetics and dramaturgy but also poetry itself, *arthaśāstra*, Jain canonical works, etc.

from the early *mahākāvya*s themselves (Raghavan 1963: 256-263). It is these three qualities in particular that Bhāmaha, very likely our earliest extant *ālankārika* ('writer on poetics'), gives the place of preference at the opening of the second chapter of his work (BhKA 2.1f.), although additional qualities are discussed later on in the text. Alongside this shorter list of core *guṇas*, we find another, consisting of ten in *Nāṭyaśāstra* (NŚ) 17.95, where some of the *guṇas*, it should be noted, pertain to performance (*prayoga*) rather than speech, e.g., *artha-vyakti*.<sup>3</sup> Daṇḍin takes up this list of terms from the *Nāṭyaśāstra*<sup>4</sup> but retunes the definitions so that they apply more specifically to poetry and become for him the very life breath (*prāṇa*) of good poetry (KĀ 1.42) and the definitive markers of specific poetic styles (KĀ 2.3).<sup>5</sup>

The role that these qualities play in the composition and analysis of poetry varies over time and from author to author. For both Daṇḍin and Vāmana, they are the factors of beauty, another sort of *alankāra*, but with the difference that the *guṇas* are essential to poetry, whereas the ornaments serve to produce a heightened beauty.<sup>6</sup> But at least by the time of Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin they serve to distinguish two different styles (*rīti*, *mārga*) of poetry, namely the Vaidarbhī and the Gauḍī,<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Raghavan 1963: 263-274. *Arthavyakti* is discussed on p. 266.

<sup>4</sup> Tieken (2006: 97-104) provides translations of some of the qualities in the NŚ and how their definitions differ in the two works.

<sup>5</sup> The other *alankāras* (*guṇas* are *alankāras* too) listed and defined in the second and third *paricchēdas* are common to all types of poetry (KĀ 2.3cd: *sādhāraṇam alankārajātam anyat padarśyate*).

<sup>6</sup> See KAS 3.1.1f., where the *guṇas* are defined as *kāvyaśobhāyāḥ kartāro dharmāḥ*, "qualities that make for poetic beauty", and *alankāras* as *tadatiśayahetu* "the cause of heightening it (i.e., the initial beauty)".

<sup>7</sup> The Vaidarbhī *rīti* is named after the region Vidarbha (Berar) in central India and associated with southerners (*dākṣiṇāṭya*, as in KĀ 1.60d). The Gauḍī *rīti* is named after a region in modern Bengal and associated with easterners (cf. *paurastyā kāvyapaddhatiḥ* in KĀ 1.50d). Yet these two would, in the course of time, both become detached from their geographical affiliations. Daṇḍin admits more styles, but these two are most distinctive (*prasphuṭāntarau* KĀ 1.40) and so singled out. Later *ālankārikas* enlarge this list: Vāmana adds the Pāñcālī style; Rudraṭa, the Lāṭiyā, and so forth. See

the former markedly preferred by Daṇḍin. Bhāmaha, however, does not buy into such preferences based on style and asserts that those who adhere to this nomenclature are merely blindly following tradition (BhKA 1.32c *gatānugatikanyāyāt*).<sup>8</sup> Daṇḍin, surely aware of such criticism, nevertheless champions the Vaidarbhī style and defines it as poetry that possess the ten qualities he lists in KĀ 1.41 (although some of these are common to both), whereas poetry that possesses the opposite qualities should be considered to belong to the inferior Gauḍī style.<sup>9</sup> Slightly more than half of the first section of the KĀ is then taken up with defining and exemplifying these *guṇas*.

### Daṇḍin's *guṇas*

Daṇḍin does not attempt, as the later *ālankārikas*,<sup>10</sup> to unambiguously divide his *guṇas* into those of sound (*śabda*) and those of sense (*artha*); in his scheme some even have sub-varieties for each category such as *madhura*.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, several of the *guṇas* are defined very specifically by sonic features, and these will form the main body of the following discussion and translation. Those that I wish to take up here in particular are *śleṣa*, 'cohesion' (KĀ 1.43–44), *samatā*, 'evenness' (KĀ 1.47–50), *mādhurya*, 'sweetness' (KĀ 1.51–68), and *ojas*, 'vigour' (KĀ 1.80–89), although this last quality, which is primarily defined by nominal compounding, does not easily fit into one category or the other. My choice is motivated by the fact these *guṇas* are more likely to force

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Raghavan 1942: 131–181 for the longer history of *rīti*. I will use 'Vaidarbhī' and 'Gauḍī' throughout to refer to the two styles.

<sup>8</sup> For Bhāmaha's view on the matter see BhKA 1.31–35 and Raghavan 1964: 275–278.

<sup>9</sup> KĀ 1.42cd: *eṣāṃ viparyayaḥ prāyo drśyate gauḍavartmani*. The use of *prāyahaḥ* reduces the absoluteness of the statement.

<sup>10</sup> Vāmana is the first to do so systematically in KAS 3.1 and 3.2.

<sup>11</sup> Raghavan (1964: 273) gives a division of (Daṇḍin's?) *guṇas* into those of sound and those of sense, but *prasāda* seems to be misplaced in the *śabda-guṇa* column. It is unclear to me on which text(s) exactly the chart is based.

adaptation when they are transferred to the Tamil language as opposed to the more semantic qualities. We can, therefore, observe how the author of the TA sought to recreate within the domain of Tamil phonology and syntax certain features that belonged to the Sanskrit system of grammar.

It will be helpful to first give a basic overview of the *guṇas* as they occur in the KĀ.

1. *Śleṣa* (KĀ 1.43–44). The quality is negatively defined as when a verse does not have *śaithilya*, a preponderance of non-aspirates (*alpaprāṇākṣarottaram*) as in the snippet: *mālatīmālā lolālikalilā* (KĀ 1.43 cd), “a garland of jasmine filled with lusty bees”.<sup>12</sup> Such liquidity is known in Sanskrit as *śaithilya*, ‘slackness’, and it is the absence of slackness, i.e., the non-prominence of non-aspirated sounds, that characterizes the good Vaidarbhī style as in KĀ 1.44cd: *mālatīdāmalaṅghitaṃ bhramaraiḥ*, “a garland of jasmine jumping with bees”. One notices here the introduction of two aspirate sounds as well as the reduction of *l*-s and, therefore, of alliteration.

The Gauḍas, it is said, accept such examples as *mālatīmālā* etc. because they focus more on *anuprāsa*, ‘alliteration’ (*anuprāsadhiyā*, KĀ 1.44c), and do not care that there should be such slackness. Daṇḍin, who does not pay much attention to *anuprāsa* (it is only discussed among the *guṇas*<sup>13</sup>) thus sets *śleṣa* the task of lending a certain cohesion to poetry by way of the aspirates sprinkled throughout as well the avoidance of excessive *anuprāsa*.

2. *Samatā* (KĀ 1.47–50). Daṇḍin continues with an eye to aspirates. Evenness (*samatā*) is defined by the even distribution of aspirate

<sup>12</sup> Bhoja in the commentary ad *Sarasvatīkaṅṭhābharaṇa* 1.31 completes the verse:

*ālīyaṃ mālatīmālā lolālikalilā manaḥ |*  
*nirmūlayati me mūlāt tamālamaline vane || 1.41 ||*

O friend! This garland filled with lusty bees in the forest  
spotted with Tamāla trees uproots my mind from its foundation.

<sup>13</sup> Hence the commentator Vāḍijāṅghālaḍeva quotes the definition of *anuprāsa* from BhKA 2.5ab ad KĀ 1.44 (p. 36).

(*mṛdu*, 'soft') and unaspirated (*sphuṭa*) consonants. Within a verse, either one or the other may be evenly distributed, i.e., neither group may be clumped in one place, or they may be evenly distributed in a mixture (like salt and pepper evenly sprinkled over a sandwich). For example, each of the following half verses taken on its own displays *samatā* (*mṛdu*, *sphuṭa* and *unmiśra*, respectively):<sup>14</sup>

*kokilālāpavācālo mām eti malayānilaḥ |*  
*ucchalacchīkarācchācchanirjharāmbhaḥkanokṣitaḥ ||*  
*candanapraṇayodgandhir mando malayamārutaḥ | KĀ 1.48-49ab*

The wind from Mt. Malaya comes to me, filled with the cooing of the koels,  
 moistened by the drops of water from the clear waterfall from which spray is springing forth.  
 The Malaya wind, slow, redolent from its affection<sup>15</sup> for the Sandalwood trees...

The final half verse is taken to be an example from the Gauḍas who have clumped the aspirates in the first quarter and the unaspirates in the second quarter:

*spardhate ruddhamaddhairyo vararāmāmukhānilaiḥ || 1.49cd*

has blocked my fortitude and now contends with the breath of the loveliest of ladies.

<sup>14</sup> So according to Vādijaṅghādeva ad *loc. Ratnaśrījñāna*, however, believes that each verse should contain *samatā* at the verse level, i.e., throughout all four quarters (*catuṛṇām api padānām sajātīyabandhatvāt*). He completes each half verse with another of the same mode of composition. If the half verses are taken together, they create unevenness (*viśamatā*).

<sup>15</sup> The implication being that the wind has tarried long enough among the sandalwood trees to absorb their scent.

3. *mādhurya* (KĀ 1.51-68): 'sweetness', is a complex quality insofar that it is divided into sonic (*śabda*) and semantic (*artha*) varieties. The former can be defined as a type of gentle consonance as opposed to a forceful, jarring alliteration.<sup>16</sup> The Gauḍas are willing to accept very harsh alliteration as with the *khas* and *kas* in KĀ 1.59ab: *smaraḥ kharaḥ khalaḥ kāntaḥ kāyaḥ kopaś ca naḥ kṛśaḥ*. The semantic part of sweetness, which I will not focus on in the TA, is more concerned with avoiding a sequence of sounds that could lead to the unintentional pronunciation of indecorous words such as derivatives from the (in)famous root *yabh* ('to fuck').<sup>17</sup>

4. *ojas* (KĀ 1.80-89): One of the most prominent features of the Gauḍī style is a penchant for long compounds, known as *ojas* in Sanskrit poetics. Although Daṇḍin freely admits that this is the very life of prose *kāvya* (KĀ 1.80b: *etad gadyasya jīvitam*), he rejects excessive compounding in verse, which is, however, the main concern (*ekaprayāna*) of the non-southerners, i.e. the Gauḍas (KĀ 1.80cd). Once again, it is not that any bit of compounding will automatically relegate verse to the Gauḍī style, but it is its predominance along with a lack of semantic pellucidity, for in the compounds of the Vaidarbhas there is no confusion and even charm (KĀ 1.83cd: *anākulaṃ hr̥dyam...ojas*).

The first three of these qualities represent Daṇḍin's attempt to check excessive alliteration with, or the complete avoidance of, aspirated sounds so as to create a tender (*sukumāra*) yet stable (*śleṣa/samatā*) phonetic texture. Though these terms are all taken from the NŚ, their definitions are entirely reworked, and one wonders whether Daṇḍin's interest in aspiration might not stem from his familiarity with Tamil, a language

<sup>16</sup> Daṇḍin defines *madhura* as what contains *rasa*, 'sentiment'. What bears *rasa* is then said to be the proximity of words with alliteration that is characterized by a particular similarity to what one hears throughout the chain of words (KĀ 1.52: *yayā kayā cic chrutyā yat samānam anubhūyate | tadrūpā hi padāsattiḥ sāmuprāsā rasāvahā ||*).

<sup>17</sup> I touch upon the same flaw in BhKA 1.52 elsewhere. See D'Avella 2018: 73, n. 54.

he must have known and spoken if he were indeed from the south,<sup>18</sup> but one that lacks the aspirates.<sup>19</sup> Was Daṇḍin more sensitive to these sounds precisely because they differed most from the phonology of his mother tongue?<sup>20</sup> Bhāmaha, it should be noted, does not develop any theory in which aspirates play a defining role. The fourth *guṇa* I discuss, *ojas*, though already defined in this sense in the NŚ<sup>21</sup> and one of Bhāmaha's primary *guṇas* (KĀ 2.2), is analysed in more detail in the KĀ and its explicit connection with prose poetry (*gadya-kāvya*) could well reflect Daṇḍin's personal interest in *gadyakāvya*, which he composed with great skill. It is questionable whether Tamil, though certainly filled with compounds,<sup>22</sup> can really possess something like the long compounds of Sanskrit for the simple reason that the lack of case endings or the use of an oblique stem was too pervasive in the poetic language

<sup>18</sup> Possibly Kāñcīpuram under the Pallavas in the 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> century. See Bronner 2011 for more details on Daṇḍin's life.

<sup>19</sup> Tamil is the only classical Dravidian language not to represent all the sounds of Sanskrit in its standard written form. Although the Tamil script does not have separate letters (*eluttus*) for voiced sounds, they are pronounced so when between vowels or combined with a nasal.

<sup>20</sup> Another bit of linguistic evidence that Daṇḍin could have been familiar with Tamil is the example of good *anuprāsa* given in KĀ 1.57 where the second syllable of each *pāda* begins with the sequence *nd(r)*:

*candre śaranniśottamse kundastabakavibhrame |*  
*indranīlanibhaṃ lakṣma saṃdadhāty alinaḥ śrīyam ||*

This type of alliteration is more or less identical to *etukai*, an essential feature of many Tamil meters. See Niklas 1988: 178.

<sup>21</sup> See Raghavan 1964: 261f. *Ojas*, like a few of the other *guṇas* in the NŚ, have very different definitions depending on the recension. I suspect that *ojas* as a quality defined by compounds is a later theory supported perhaps by Hemacandra. See the passage quoted *loc. cit.*

<sup>22</sup> See D'Avella 2020 for some theories of Tamil compounds. Chevillard (2007) provides a more text-based discussion of Old Tamil syntax by dividing structures into those that are morphologically marked and unmarked. The latter, which can be rather long, resemble in a way compounds but are generally not classified as such by Tamil grammarians, ancient or modern. Nevertheless, the extensive unmarked syntax found in Caṅkam literature may have helped to encourage Daṇḍin's usage of *anākula* and *hṛdaya* compounds in his prose, long though they may be.

and could not be clearly distinguished from the more semantically tight process of compounding. The simple absence of a case ending could not, as it usually does in Sanskrit, indicate a compound. As we turn now to the Tamil translation of KĀ, these incongruities between the two languages must be kept in mind to understand the difficulties the translator was up against and how he resolved them.

### The *Taṅṭiyalaṅkāram*

As I have discussed the TA at some length in a separate publication (D'Avella, forthcoming), I give here only the basic facts, which are unfortunately rather few. The TA was likely written in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, possibly under King Kulōttuṅka Cōlaṅ II, alias Aṅṅapāyaṅ, who is mentioned in several of the example verses for the *cūttirams* (*sūtras*). The date and authorship of the old commentary that accompanies the text in most manuscripts and which contains the examples is of even more uncertain provenance, although it seems that some sort of explanation and exemplification must have accompanied the text from an early time. More broadly, the TA reflects a larger movement among South Asian languages to incorporate Sanskrit poetic theory into their literary culture. Tamil, as is well known, did not need Sanskrit to establish itself as a literary or theorized language, but many Tamil poets and scholars nevertheless chose to engage with the Sanskrit tradition in various ways, ranging from linguistic theory to poetic genres. The early 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium was a particularly fruitful period for such exploration but by no means its beginning, and the TA is the second attempt to render the KĀ into Tamil, the first being the VC by Puttamittiraṅ. There are many likely reasons that the KĀ was the preferred text on poetics in the south (there is also a version in Kannada, the *Kavirājamārga*, and in Sinhala, the *Siyabaslakara*),<sup>23</sup> including the text's utility and charm for poets (as opposed to the more theoretical works from Kashmir);

<sup>23</sup> Though a Pāli version is often mentioned, the *Subhodhālaṅkāra* is not based on the KĀ. See Wright 2002.

Daṇḍin's own southern residence; and even perhaps the fact that the KĀ championed the Vaidarbhī style, which, as we have seen, is associated in the KĀ with southerners (*dākṣiṇātyāḥ*).<sup>24</sup> How the Tamil scholastic and literary traditions absorbed or rejected the influences from Sanskrit cannot be answered here, but in the case of the TA, the Tamil translation had an important impact and served as the basic textbook for *aṇi* or *alankāram*, 'poetic ornament', in Tamil down to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It also inspired other texts in the same mould such as the *Māraṇalankāram* (16<sup>th</sup> century). Nevertheless, perhaps because of its origins in Sanskrit, the TA has not received much attention in the last century, either in Tamil or English secondary literature.<sup>25</sup> Through this and other publications, I hope to give a better understanding of the work to a larger audience.

### The *guṇas* in the TA

After presenting the definition of *kāppiyam* (Skt. *kāvya*) and *peruṅkāppiyam* (Skt. *mahākāvya*),<sup>26</sup> Taṇṭi (so I will refer to the otherwise

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<sup>24</sup> Monius (2000: 13f.) discusses the retention of the two styles in the TA and the VC, but the discussion is somewhat muddled by the fact that she does not specify which texts contain explicit geographical associations with the two styles and perhaps misunderstands Gerow's point in the passage cited. As noted above, whether he means it in earnest or not, Daṇḍin explicitly uses (*a*)*dākṣiṇātya* (KĀ 1.60 and 80) and *paurastya* (KĀ 1.50 and 83) in association with the two paths. Vaidarbhī and Gauḍī are linked with a cardinal direction, even if the defining qualities be stereotypes thereof (cf. KAS 1.2.10). Geographical deemphasis occurs rather in the Tamil versions of the KĀ along with their respective commentaries, where we do not find any reference to regional directions associated with the two styles. We may, of course, want to read the geographical associations back into the Tamil text, but it seems unwarranted especially since the terms *vaitaruppam* and *kauṭam* were potentially meaningless to many Tamil speakers and any four of our authors could have added some reference to the compass had he thought this important. Without further evidence, it is best to leave the two words in the VC and TA as technical terms for types of poetry.

<sup>25</sup> Monius 2000 is one of the few published articles that deals, even if briefly, with the TA.

<sup>26</sup> It will be noted how much shorter the TA is than the KĀ. What is left out of the TA is much of the humor and charm of the KĀ, which was perhaps felt to be inappropriate to the Tamil *cūttiram* format.

anonymous author of the TA) presents the same ten *guṇas* of the KĀ, some translated, others simply borrowed, in TA 1.14.<sup>27</sup> They are likewise the life (*uyir*) for the Vaitaruppam style (Vaidarbhī) and what is not connected with these ten qualities (*pattoṭum kūṭātu*) is the Kauṭam style (Gauḍī).<sup>28</sup> Each quality is then defined according to the established order in a following *cūttiram* and exemplified in the commentary along with its *kauṭam* counterpart, when possible. Below is my translation of the four qualities listed above. In addition to the *cūttiram* itself, I have added the example verse and explanatory notes partly based on the commentary. Parallels from the VC are also provided.

### Translation:

TA 1.16: *ceriv' enappaṭuvatu nekiḷ-icai-iṇmai*.

What is called *cerivu* ('denseness') is the absence of slack sound.

### Notes:

After the first example verse, the commentator spells out what exactly is meant by 'slack sounds' (*nekiḷ-icai*): *iṇi nekiḷicai enpatu vallinam virātu or inatt' eluttāṇ-ē nekiḷat toṭuppatu* (TE 1.19): "Now, what is called slack sound is composing loosely with a single class of letters without mixing in hard sounds (*k, c, ṭ, t, p*)". Slackness of sound is

<sup>27</sup> Seven are translated into Tamil: *śleṣa* = *cerivu*, *prasāda* = *teḷivu*, *samatā* = *samanilai*, *mādhurya* = *iṇṇam*, *sukumāratā* = *oḷukicai*, *arthavyakti* = *uyttalil poruṇmai*, *oḷah* = *vali*; three are simply borrowed with the necessary phonetic alterations for Tamil: *udāra(tva)m* = *utāram*, *kānti* = *kāntam*, *samādhi* = *samāti*. Note that in VC 148 only two terms are translated into Tamil: *prasāda* = *pulaṇ* and *arthavyakti* = *poruṭṭeḷivu*. The rest are borrowed with phonological adaptations.

<sup>28</sup> TA 1.15. Note that the commentator extracts the meaning of *prāyaḥ*, 'for the most part', in KĀ 1.42c from the use of the coordinating particle *-um* in Tamil *cūttiram*: *pattoṭuṇ kūṭātu enṇum muṇṇumaiyai eccappaṭuttu cilavarṇōṭu kūṭiyum varum eṇak koḷka*: "Understand that [the Kauṭam style] is connected with some (of the qualities) by necessitating the use of the coordinating particle *-um* in the phrase *pattoṭuṇ* [*pattoṭu-um*] *kūṭātu*".

the absence of stops with a preponderance of a single other variety such as semivowels (*iṭai eḷuttu*, TE 1.21), as in the counterexample, or the nasals (*mel eḷuttu*, TE 1.20). In this way Taṅṭi has recreated the Sanskrit notion of *śaithilya*, characterized by the absence of aspirates, by defining it in terms of stops in general (*val eḷuttu*). As we will hear in the counterexample, it is the combination of both the absence of stops as well as the exclusive use of one type of letter that creates slackness in Tamil poetry.

### Example:

*cilai vilāṅku nīḷ puruvañ ceṅṅ'ociya nōkki*  
*mulai vilāṅkir' enṅru muṇivāñ malaiv' ilāṅku*  
*tār-mālai māṛpa taṅṅimai porukkum-ō*  
*kār-mālai kaṅ kūṭum pōḷtu*

Looking so that her long eyebrows, curved like a bow, knit,  
 the angry girl sulks saying “my breasts are hindering [me]!”  
 Will she, o man with flowers and a chain<sup>29</sup> on your chest,  
 because of whom affliction appears,<sup>30</sup>  
 survive the loneliness when dark evening reaches here.

### Notes:

The commentary sets the scene by explaining that when the two lovers embrace, the woman curses her breasts because they prevent her from being able to tightly embrace the man's chest.<sup>31</sup> The conceit is that if

<sup>29</sup> The commentator takes *tār* and *mālai* as members of a *ummaittokai* (*dvandva* compound). The modern commentary understands *mālai* as a chain made of gold beads (*poṅṅmaṅkaḷāl ākiya āram*).

<sup>30</sup> The commentator construes *ilāṅku* as a past *peyar-eccam* (relative participle) through the gloss *viḷāṅkiya*, which modifies “the man”.

<sup>31</sup> *puṅarccikaṅṅ-ē ninṅṅuṭaiya mārpakañ ceṅṅiya muyāṅkūtalai mulai vilakkāniṅṅrat' enṅru*.

she is unable to endure the separation from her lover caused by her breasts, she will never be able to survive once he has set out for work and evening arrives again.

### Counterexample:

*viravalar āy vālvārai velvāy oḷivāy*  
*irav'ulavā vēlaiy oliy-ē – varav' oḷivā*  
*yāyar vāy-ēy arivaiy ār-uyiraiy īrāv-ōy*  
*āyar vāy vēy-ōv aḷal.*

O roar of the seashore! never ceasing at night,  
 You conquer those happy people when they are disjoined;  
 Stop! As the [reproachful]<sup>32</sup> speech of mothers cuts  
 (doesn't it?) the precious life of the young girls.<sup>33</sup>  
 Alas,<sup>34</sup> the bamboo [flutes] in the mouth of the cowherds becomes  
 a [further] flame.

### Notes:

The counterexample contains but one class of *eḷuttu*, the *itaiyeḷuttus*, which correspond to semivowels or 'liquids' and is, therefore, in

<sup>32</sup> There is probably more than one way to understand the syntax of the verse. The commentator adds *vacai*, 'blame', 'reproach', 'slander', as the subject, and it is in the mouth of the mothers. One could either understand the subject as being suppressed or take *vāy* to mean speech, i.e., slanderous rumors, as the subject.

<sup>33</sup> For the verb form *īrā*, the commentator gives the gloss: *vacaiy-ē arukkun taṇmaitt' āy irukka*, "as the slander has come to possess a nature that cuts". The gloss with the infinitive strikes me as odd unless he understood *īrā*, an ambiguous form, as a positive *viṇaiyeccam*. The modern commentator to the edition, who glosses *īrā* with *arukka māṭṭāv-ō*, does not really clarify the matter, although it is perhaps odd to have *-ō* attached to a *viṇaiyeccam*. He classifies *-ō* as *etirmaṇai*, 'negation'. The examples of this usage ad *Naṇṇūl* 422m (*vān-ō koṇṭēṇ*) and elsewhere use *-ō* with a positive verb and not on the verbal form itself.

<sup>34</sup> Both the old and modern commentators agree that *-ō* here is indicative of pity (*irakkukkurippu*).

accordance with the definition given above that 'slack sound' (*nekilicia*) occurs when a poem is composed with just one type of letter (*ōr inatt'eḷuttān-ē*) and without stops (*val eḷuttu*). This is a much greater restriction than what we find in the KĀ.

### ***Vīracōliyam:***

As with the other *guṇas*,<sup>35</sup> *siliṭṭam* is only vaguely defined in the VC and we must turn to the commentator along with the examples to understand what might have been intended by Puttamittiraṇ. From VC 150 all we learn is that *siliṭṭam* is *ceriv'ār*, "filled with denseness", similar to the TA. Peruntēvaṇar, the commentator, hardly fleshes this out but from his slim explanation and subsequent example we can still learn a great deal. The 'breath' called *siliṭṭam* arises *cor'ceriv' uṭaimaiyāl*, "because [the poem] possesses a denseness of words", and gives *Tirukuraḷ* 350 as an example, which contains several repetitions of the verb *parrutal*, 'to grasp', 'to apprehend'. Is it the repetition of words that is meant by denseness? Whatever this might mean, it is clear that the definition does not stem from the KĀ. Another definition of *śleṣa* by Vāmana can be found in KAS 3.1.20 and its commentary. There *śleṣa* is defined *via masṛṇatva*, 'tenderness', as many words having the appearance as one (*yasmin santi bahūny api padāny ekavad bhāsante*).<sup>36</sup> Could Peruntēvaṇar had this other definition in mind?<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Referred to as *kuṇam* (= Skt. *guṇa*), *uyir* and *āvi*, 'breath' (cf. Skt. *prāṇa*), in the VC and its commentary.

<sup>36</sup> This definition is more or less followed by Bhoja in his commentary ad SKĀ 1.31: *atra bhinnānām api padānām ekapadatāpratibhāsahetur anatikomalo bandhaviśeṣaḥ śleṣaḥ*, "Here *śleṣaḥ* is a particular kind of composition that is not excessively soft and is caused by the appearance of several words, though being separate, as being one." Based on the examples in the KAS and SKĀ, I must admit that I do not have a firm grasp on what makes for *ekapadatā*.

<sup>37</sup> The difference between the two definitions is noted by the modern commentator ad TA 1.16, p. 26, but no reference is made to Sanskrit sources.

TA 1.18 : *viravat toṭuppatu camanilai yākuṁ.*

*Camanilai*, 'evenness', is composing in a uniform manner.<sup>38</sup>

### Notes:

As might be expected, the commentator specifies that the three qualities of Tamil consonants, *vaṇṁmai*, *meṇṁmai* and *iṭṭaimai*, should be evenly mixed in the verse. Comparing this with the definition in the KĀ, which allowed for three varieties (all unaspirates, all aspirates or mixed), 'evenness' in Tamil has been reduced to only the mixed variety. As will be seen from the counterexample and unlike in the KĀ, a verse that is 'even' with respect to only one of the varieties of consonant is considered to be excellent by the Gauḍas (*varkeṇat toṭuppaṇav-ē viḷamiyav eṇa vēṇṭuvar kauṭar*). It is also pointed out that this *guṇa* serves as a check on the preceding quality, *ceṛivu*. Since *ceṛivu* requires stops (*val eḷuttu*), one could think that poems like the counterexample are acceptable, but the present *cūttiram* blocks this.<sup>39</sup>

### Example:

*cōkam evaṇ kol itaḷi poṇ rūkkiṇa cōr-kuḷalāy  
mēka muḷaṅka virai cūḷ taḷavaṅ koṭiy eṭuppa  
māka neruṅka vaṇ ṭāṇaṅ kaḷi vaṇṭu pāṭav eṅkun  
tōkai naṭaṅ ceyum aṅpar tan tēr iṇit tōṇṇiyat'-ē*

Where is our grief? O girl with locks dishevelled!  
The *laburnum* trees have donned their gold.  
When the clouds roar,  
When the jasmine vines gain their fragrant flowers,  
When the sky becomes dense [with clouds],  
When the bees become drunk and buzz in beautiful places,  
everywhere the peacocks dance.  
The chariot of our lover has arrived!

<sup>38</sup> Somewhat closer to the Tamil would be "composed so that it is mixed", the idea being a thorough mixture that has uniformity.

<sup>39</sup> After the counterexample the commentator makes the point clear: *ic cūttiraṅ kūṛākkāl, mēl ceṛivu eṇru kūṛiyavataṅāṅ-ē nekiḷat toṭāmai-ēy eṇri varkeṇat toṭuppiṇuṁ ceṛiv eṇru vaitarpparkkuṁ koḷḷak kiṭakkum.*

### Counterexample:

*iṭart-tiṛattait tuṛa poṛ-roṭi nīy iṭittut taṭittuc-  
cuṭark-koṭit tikk' aṇaittir raṭumārat tuḷikku maikkār  
maṭak-kuyir-kott' oḷikkak kaḷikkap pukka tōkai verrik  
kaṭar paṭaik korraṇ poṇ-koṭit-tēr inik kaṇṇ urrat'-ē*

Leave off your sorrowful state, you girl with golden bracelets!  
The black clouds roar and pour  
as the rows of lightening-flashes flicker in all directions;  
the peacocks have begun to go wild  
as the simple cuckoos hide themselves.  
The chariot with golden banners of the hero  
with a victorious army like the ocean  
has now arrived!

### Notes:

One familiar with the KĀ will recognize here the pattern of composing two verses on the same theme: one in the Vaidarbhī style and one in the Gauḍī style. From time to time, the Tamil example poems even echo the Sanskrit examples in meaning, although this is not the case here.

### *Vīracōliyam*:

VC 150 gives an unambiguous definition of *camatai*: *cīrc camatai aṛivār aṭiy oppat' ākum*, “Excellent evenness, they know, is equal lines”. What is meant here is that each metrical line should contain the same number of letters (*eḷuttus*). In the context of Tamil metrics this means, roughly, letters that do not have a *puḷḷi* (‘dot’).<sup>40</sup> According to this mode of enumeration, the example verse in the commentary (*vērik kamaḷtā*, p. 204) contains 14 *eḷuttus* per line (*aṭi*). The letter-count is an integral part for several meters such as the *kaṭṭalaik kalittuṛai*. This is a big jump from

<sup>40</sup> See Niklas 1988: 170 § 1.2 for a more precise definition.

anything found in the KĀ or other works on poetics in Sanskrit, where such a feature would be virtually trivial, for *samavṛtta* meters at least.

TA 1.19: *collīṇum poruḷiṇum cuvaiṇam inṇam.*

Sweetness is being flavourful in word and meaning.

### Notes:

In the commentary to this verse, we learn that the sonic aspect (*col*) of sweetness concerns *mōṇai* or the repetition of a sound (not always identical) at the beginning of a metrical unit (a *cīr*) within the line. Yet not all types of *mōṇai* are acceptable, only *vaḷimōṇai* and the like. What this excludes, as the counterexample will show, is *mōṇai* at the beginning of every *cīr*. What the Vaitaruppar accept is a judiciously distributed repetition of sounds at the beginning of, for example, every other *cīr*.<sup>41</sup> This is a very organic incorporation of Daṇḍin's discussion in the framework of Tamil metrics, where such ornaments (*toṭai*) are discussed.<sup>42</sup>

*muṇṇait tañ cīr' in muḷanku kaṭal oṭa mūḷkip pōkav*  
*aṇṇaiikk' uraiṇṇar arivāy kaṭal-ēy eṇṇ' alarip pērun*  
*taṇmai maṭavār taḷarnt' ukutta veṇ muttan tayanku kāṇṇar*  
*puṇṇaiy arump' ēyppap pōvāraip pēturuḷkum pukār-ē yemmūr*

Our city is Pukār; it bewilders those who go [there]  
 like the *puṇṇai*-buds on the seashore grove strewn  
 with white pearls cast off by silly young girls grown  
 weary and prone to go about and weep,  
 when in front [of the grove] their small houses sink  
 into the roaring ocean's flood, saying:  
 "I will speak to mother". Know [this], o ocean!

<sup>41</sup> *vaḷimōṇai*, '*mōṇai* in a row (?)', does not seem to be a well-known metrical term. The two definitions I have been able to locate, one in the modern commentary *ad loc.* and one in Gopal Iyer 2005: 178f. are derived from this passage.

<sup>42</sup> See Niklas 1988: 177 for an overview of the metrical ornaments.

**Notes:**

The buds of the *punṅai*-tree (*Calophyllum inophyllum*) are white and hence resemble pearls. When the girls, angry at the absence of their lover, break their necklaces and scatter the pearls, visitors to the city will confuse these with the flowers of the *punṅai*-tree, one typical of the *neytal* landscape (*tiṅṅai*) in Tamil poetics where longing and separation are at their height. The small houses are ‘sand castles’.

**Counterexample:**

*tuṅṅai* varum nīr *tuṅṅai*ppavar āyt *tu*vāḷkiṅṅēṅ *ruṅṅai*-vīḷi cēr *tu*yilai nīkkiy  
*iṅṅa*-vaḷai pōḷ *iṅṅ* nalañ cōrnt' *iṅṅ*ar uḷappav *iṅṅ*antavar nāṅṅ' *iḷḷai* pōḷun  
*taṅṅi*yavārka *ṅaḷ*arv' eytat *ṅaṅṅ*-kamalan *ṅaḷ*ai aviḷikkun *ṅaṅṅ*avēṅṅ  
*paṅṅi*-matuviṅ *pa*cun-tātu *pa*im-poḷilīr *pa*rappi varum *pa*ruvat-*teṅṅ*al

Abandoning the sleep lingering in my two eyes as I tremble,  
 while [the wind] wipes away the rapidly falling tears,  
 after [my] sweet beauty has slipped away like a stack of bangles,  
 it seems as though there is no springtime in the land of those  
 who have left [us] behind so that we suffer,  
 [the springtime] which loosens the bonds of the lotuses so that  
 the lonely take on misery;  
 No southern wind comes, spreading in the verdant garden fresh  
 pollen mixed with cool honey.

**Notes:**

In the counterexample there is *mōṅṅai* in every *cīr*.

***Vīracōḷiyam*:**

The exact deflection of *iṅṅam* in the VC and its commentary is somewhat allusive since the terms with which it is defined are not entirely

understood, at least in their technical sense.<sup>43</sup> I might note, however, that the first feature of *iṅpam* is *etukai* or the repetition of the second consonant(s) at the beginning of each line.

TA 1.24: *vali eṅap paṭuvatu tokai mika varutal.*

The exceptional occurrence of compounds is termed *vali*.

### Notes:

For an overview of compound in Tamil see D'Avella 2020 with further references. What exactly counts as a compound in Tamil is not as clear-cut as in Sanskrit, where the absence of a case ending marks a word in composition. Tamil nouns need not terminate in a visible case ending in the nominative. Since the same 'caseless' form can also be used as an accusative or an oblique, it is, in some ways, arbitrary to distinguish between a word in compound and a word without a case ending. There are, however, instances where it is clear that a word is part of a compound because it loses its final consonant (often *m*) and causes doubling of the following consonant. The example below exhibits a convincing example of a long Tamil compound where hardly a case ending is used.

### Example:

*kā ṅimirttār kaṅ pariva vallyi-ō pullātār-  
māṅ-aṅaiyār-maṅkala-nāṅ allav-ō – tāṅa-  
maṅait-taṅak-kai-vār-kaṅ-kaṅ-kāṅ-māṅa-vēr-kiṅṅi-  
puṅait-taṅak-kai-nāl-vāyp-poruppu*

<sup>43</sup> The full definition in the commentary is: *nāṅkaṅiyum etukaiyum, vaṅimōṅiyum poruṅpolivum peṅru nayaṅ oppa muṅintamaiyāl iṅpam eṅnum uyiralankāram āy niṅratu* (ad VC 151, p. 206).

When he stretches his leg,  
 Will it be the links of his fetters<sup>44</sup> that break or  
 Won't it be the wedding necklaces of  
 those doe-like<sup>45</sup> women of the enemies—  
 he, the elephant with a long trunk with holes, a fine mouth,  
 belonging to Kiḷḷi [the Cōḷa king] who has large, generous hands  
 like clouds,  
 feet with long anklets, and a mighty spear.

### Notes:

It is impossible to bring across the compounds in English, but I have attempted to make the length of the compounds visible by using hyphens between the members in the Tamil. What I have hyphenated are all those words that are syntactically connected with another word but do not have a case ending or are in a form indicative of compounding (e.g., *taṭa-* from *taṭam* with doubling of the following consonant). The subject of the temporal clause (*kā nimirttāl*), *poruppu*, 'mountain', 'elephant',<sup>46</sup> is modified by a chain of words extending back to the end of the second line. He is modified by three attributes, two of which are compounds themselves. In Tamil two adjacent nouns can be understood to be in a possession-possessor relationship without further marking, somewhat akin to a *bahuvrīhi*,<sup>47</sup> hence [[*puḷait-[taṭak-kai]*]-[*nāl-vāyp*]]-*poruppu*, "[[holes-[big-hand/trunk]]-[good-mouth]-elephant", naturally expands into a *dvandva*<sup>48</sup> compound that relates to the head noun as its possession. The members of the *dvandva* are each complex. The first one itself, [[*puḷait-[taṭak-kai]*], contains two members and the latter is

<sup>44</sup> The commentator understands the syntax to be twisted, the prose order being: *nikaḷattin kaṇ*. I take *kaṇ* to refer to the links of a chain, which are eye-shaped.

<sup>45</sup> Implied is that their eyes (*viḷi* in the commentary) are like the eyes of a doe. More generally, their wedding necklaces will break because their husbands will die.

<sup>46</sup> Most commonly 'mountain' but here used metaphorically to refer to a kingly elephant. The commentator gives the gloss *vāraṇam*.

<sup>47</sup> In Tamil, an *aṇmolittokai*.

<sup>48</sup> In Tamil, an *ummaittokai*.

then again divided into an adjective-noun compound,<sup>49</sup> which on its part possesses the *puḷai*, 'wholes'. The elephant, thus described, belongs to the king Killi, who is in turn modified by another long compound. In total, the final compound contains sixteen members.

As expected from the Sanskrit parallel, the commentator points out that this type of composition belongs to the Kauṭar who think that composing in a restrained manner is insufferable.<sup>50</sup> What is missing, however, is any reference to prose, a category of Tamil poetry that did not develop to the extent that it did in Sanskrit and other Dravidian languages.<sup>51</sup> Thus we do not find any exception made for long compounding in prose-poetry.

### Counterexample:

*ceṅ kalacak koṅkaic ceṅi kuṅkaṅkiṅ cīṅ aṅip pērp*  
*poṅk' aravav alkuṅ poru kayaṅ kaṅ – ceṅ kaṅi vāyk*  
*kār uruvak kūṅtaṅ katir vaḷaik kaik kārikaitt' ām*  
*ōṅ uruv eṅṅ uḷḷatt' -ē uṅṅu*

What single form exists in my heart that has red pot-like breasts, close thighs, small feet, loins like the large, expanding [hood of a] snake (i.e., cobra), fighting-fish eyes, a red, full mouth, a black coloured braid, shining bangled hands, and beauty?

<sup>49</sup> In Tamil *taṅam*, 'greatness', is a noun as is clear from its ending. Thus, a more appropriate analysis would be one of possession-possessor, "the trunk that possesses greatness".

<sup>50</sup> *it tuṅai curuṅkat toṅuttal iṅṅāt' eṅru kauṅar collum āru*, "[The preceding verse] is how the Kauṅar speak, thinking that composing with a restriction to such a quantity (of words in a compound) is not pleasing."

<sup>51</sup> The mixture of prose passages and verse is recognized as far back as the *Tolkāppiyam* (TP 8.229), where it is termed *tonmai*, and is included in TA 1.11, which approximately translates KĀ 1.11. The term for prose, *urai*, stems from the TP 8.229.

### Notes:

The verse, though containing compounds, is far more restrained than the preceding one.

### *Vīracōliyam:*

Here the *Puttamittiraṅ* follows the KĀ in defining *ocam* (= Skt. *ojas*) as an abundance of compounds (*tokai mikai*) in VC 150. *Peruntēvaṅar* has surprisingly little to say on the matter and does not even mention that over indulgence in compounds is typical of the *kauṭam* style. The example, *Tirukkuraḷ* 27, contains almost no compounds and should probably been taken as an example of the more tempered *vaitaruppam* style.

### Conclusions

Though the popularity of the KĀ in South Asia has been recognized now for some time, a close study of its Tamil versions has been lacking, especially in scholarship produced in English. I am trying to fill this *lacuna* by presenting smaller studies, dedicated to particular concepts, that could shed light on how the KĀ was adapted into the already old and thriving tradition of Tamil poetics. A study of the *guṇas* is a good starting point as they can be considered to be the very features that are most intimately linked to poetry, being, as we have seen, its very life breath (*prāṇa*, *āvi*, *uyir*) and hence highlighting specific traits that are necessary to turn language into poetry. We would expect, then, that there be some modification of Daṇḍin's original qualities when they are applied to Tamil. In the case of the four *guṇas* that I have looked at in this paper, this has certainly been the case, whether this be specific phonetic features as in *śleṣa/ceṛivu* or general patterns of sounds such as in *mādhurya/iṅpam* and *samatā/camanilai*. But the modifications to Daṇḍin's original concepts are introduced not only out of necessity (we cannot speak of aspirates in Tamil), but also in an attempt to naturally integrate Sanskritic concepts into the pre-existing systems

of linguistic analysis in Tamil, such as describing *anuprāsa* in terms of *mōṇai* when we speak of *iṅṅam*. I have also called attention to the fact that VC and TA differ from each other with respect to how the ten qualities are defined. Though others have drawn attention to the different ways the names of the qualities have been adopted into Tamil, a more precise analysis of their definitions has been lacking (again, in the English-language writing). Peruntēvaṅar, it seems, did not follow the KĀ on every point, and we must see his project as being somewhat different from that of the TA, which is a closer translation of the KĀ although far from 'literal'. Owing to the terseness of the VC itself, we cannot judge with certainty how faithfully Peruntēvaṅar followed Puttamittiraṅ, but his explanations are nonetheless valuable as another take on what terms such as sweetness from the KĀ could mean to a Tamil scholar. The history of Sanskrit poetics, vast as it already is in Sanskrit itself, continued to acquire new lives in other languages and influence their literatures. This essay gives a peek into one of those lives.

## Abbreviations

BhKA	<i>Kāvyaḷaṅkāra</i> of Bhāmaha
KĀ	<i>Kāvyaḍarśa</i>
KAS	<i>Kāvyaḷaṅkārasūtra</i>
NŚ	<i>Nāṭyaśāstra</i>
SKĀ	<i>Sarasvatīkaṅṭhābhāraṇa</i>
TA	<i>Taṅṭiyalaṅkāram</i>
TE	<i>Tolkāppiyam Eḷuttatikāram</i>
VC	<i>Vīracōḷiyam</i>

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