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Nāyikās Love and its Stages in Cēramāṇ Perumāl Nāyaṇār's Kayilāya Gṇāna Ulā in the Perspective of Saiva Tirumurai

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Abstract

Kayilāya Nāna Ulā, authored by Cēramāṇ Perumāl Nāyaṇār in the 8th century CE, stands as a significant text in Tamil literature. This literary work is placed as a part of the eleventh volume of Saiva Tirumuraigal in praise of Lord Shiva. The text revolves around the royal procession of Lord Shiva, captivating the Heroines, Nāyikās—representing women classified into seven stages based on age as Pētai, Petumpai, Maṅkai, Maṭantai, Arivai, Terivai and Pēriḷampē. This paper delves into the classification of Nāyikās based on the emotions and love attractions they experience while witnessing the grand procession. It also explores the importance of studying Nāyikās in the aforementioned Ūla literature to understand a nuanced portrayal of Rasa aesthetics for dance. Furthermore, Kayilāya Gṇāna Ulā serves as the foundational concept for the Royal procession of Nāyakāin later texts of Ulā format.

Keywords: *Ulā, Nāyikā, Nāyakā, Cēramāṇ Perumāl, Saiva Tirumuraigal*

Introduction

Kayilāya Nāna Ulā, a literary masterpiece, reveres Lord Shiva in the unique Ulā literary format, marking a pioneering achievement in Tamil literature. It is authored by Cēramāṇ Perumāl Nāyaṇār, the esteemed King of Koṭuṅkaḷūr, this work, along with his other devotional texts, is included in the eleventh volume of *Saiva Tirumuraigal*, a significant collection of hymns in Shaivite literature. Ulā, signifying the grand procession of a sovereign or divine figure, takes centre stage in *Kayilāya Nāna Ulā*. In this literary work, Cēramāṇ Perumāl Nāyaṇār narrates the divine procession of Lord Shiva witnessed by women at different ages. This study delves into the emotions and love attractions experienced by these women and classified them into seven stages according to age as defined in Tamil literature. *Kayilāya Nāna Ulā* is authored by Cēramāṇ Perumāl Nāyaṇār in the 8th century CE and is in the eleventh volume of Saiva Tirumuraigal. It holds a key place in Tamil literature as a spiritual Ulā. This work portrays the grand royal procession of Lord Shiva as Nāyakā by captivating the Nāyikās. The commentary on *Kayilāya Gṇāna Ulā* by Murugesha Nayagar provides critical insights on this Ulā. This research article aims to explore the emotional and aesthetic dimensions delineated within *Kayilāya Gṇāna Ulā* with a specific focus on the experiences of the Nāyikās during Lord Shiva's majestic procession.

Theoretical Framework

Kayilāya Gṇāna Ulā holds a significant place in Tamil literature and serves as a foundational concept for the portrayal of royal processions in later-period *Kuravañji* Dance-

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dramas. It is also important to note that there remains a notable gap in the study and analysis of emotional and aesthetic dimensions experienced by the *Nāyikās* during the grand procession of the *Nāyakā*, the Hero. Although the classification of women in the seven stages of life is based on age, there is limited exploration into the specific emotions and attraction of love on Lord Shiva. As well, there is a lack of comprehensive studies investigating the importance of studying *Nāyikās* in dance for a portrayal of *Ulā* aesthetics in Tamil literature with *Nāṭya Śāstra*'s definition of *Nāyikās*. Hence, this research paper aims to address these gaps by providing an analysis of the emotional experiences of the *Nāyikās* and their significance to convey the basics of *Ulā* aesthetics for dance in the context of Tamil literary tradition.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

- To systematically classify and analyze the stages of *Nāyikās* based on emotional and behavioural attributes portrayed in *Kayilāya Gñāna Ulā*.
- To interpret the emotional states and responses of *Nāyikās* towards their *Nāyakā* (hero) throughout different stages depicted in the text.
- To explore how these classifications contribute to the aesthetic representation of emotions and cultural norms in classical Tamil literature.
- To evaluate the influence and significance of *Kayilāya Gñāna Ulā* in Tamil literature.

Methodology

This study employs a descriptive approach focused on *Kayilāya Gñāna Ulā* written by Cēramāṇ Perumāḷ Nāyaṇār. The methodology involves detailed interpretation of the classification of *Nāyikās* (heroines) across various stages of age according to *Ulā*.

Nāyikā

Nāyikā is a term used in Indian classical music and dance to denote the heroine in a story, song, or dance performance. It also encompasses women dancers. In Bharata's *Nāṭya Śāstra*, the concept of *Ashta-Nāyikā* delineates eight types of heroines, each of them are defined by their distinct emotional states and circumstances (Ghosh). The archetypes of the *Ashta-Nāyikā* are integral to Indian artistic traditions. They frequently appear in painting, literature, sculpture, classical dance, and music. In *Ulā*, *Nāyikās* are organized by age group and corresponding activities. The study of *Nāyikās* is important to portray dance to experience as per the aesthetics of *Ulā* tradition.

Ashta-Nāyikās in Nāṭya Śāstra

The *Nāṭya Śāstra*, attributed to Bharata Muni, outlines a comprehensive classification of heroines (*Nāyikās*) known as *Ashta-Nāyikās*. (Hultzsich) These classifications are pivotal in classical Indian performing arts, particularly dance and literature, for portraying various emotional states and character traits associated with love and relationships.

1. Vāsakasajjā (One dressed up for union): This *Nāyikā* is depicted as eagerly preparing herself for union with her lover. She is adorned in anticipation with her appearance and demeanour reflecting eagerness and readiness towards the *Nāyakā*.
2. Virahotkanṭhitā (One distressed by separation): This *Nāyikā* experiences intense distress and longing due to separation from her beloved. Her emotions are marked by sorrow, yearning and a deep sense of emotional stress.



3. Svādhīnabhartrukā (One having her husband in subjugation): In this portrayal, the *Nāyikā* exerts control over her husband, who is submissive and obedient to her desires and wishes. This reflects a dynamic where the *Nāyikā* holds dominance within the relationship.
4. Kalahāntarītā (One separated by quarrel): This *Nāyikā* is depicted as being separated from her lover due to a quarrel or disagreement. Her emotions oscillate between anger, hurt and a longing for reconciliation.
5. Khaṇḍitā (One angry with her lover): In this portrayal, the *Nāyikā* displays anger and displeasure towards her lover. She may exhibit insolence and independence by expressing her dissatisfaction and asserting her own emotions.
6. Vipralabdā (One deceived by her lover): This *Nāyikā* experiences betrayal and deception from her lover, leading to feelings of disappointment, sadness and a sense of being misled in her relationship.
7. Proṣṭabhartrukā (One with a sojourning husband): Here, the *Nāyikā*'s husband is away on a journey or expedition. She experiences longing and yearning for his return coupled with feelings of loneliness and separation.
8. Abhisārikā (One who moves out to meet her lover): The *Nāyikā* takes initiative and actively moves out of her home to meet her lover clandestinely. Her actions depict courage, determination and a passionate desire to be reunited with her beloved.

Ulā in Tamil Literature

Ulā is a literary genre in the Tamil language and is classified as one of the ninety-six *Prabandham*, a minor literary genre. (Vellaivaaranar) *Tolkāppiyam* is recognized as the oldest Tamil grammar text. It explains the concept of *Akattinaiyiyal* in the *Poruḷatikāram* section by specifically addressing *Akam* poetry. *Akam* poetry is a prominent genre in Tamil literature that centres on themes of love and relationships by emphasizing the intimate and emotional dimensions of romantic love. In *Akam* poetry, themes such as longing, desire, passion, separation, and reunion are explored, revealing the profound complexities inherent in human emotions and relationships. Mainly, *Ulā* is dedicated to praising the grand royal procession of the *Nāyakā*, who can be either the King or the Deity of a temple. The essence of this text revolves around portraying the love experiences of women at different life stages as they observe the *Nāyakā* during the procession. The narrative explores the emotional sentiments and activities influenced by their one-sided love and all in praise of the Hero admiring his greatness, special qualities and character. The work consists of two parts: the first part extols the greatness of the *Nāyakā*, detailing the preparations for the procession and the grandeur of the procession itself, whether on a chariot, horse, or elephant, accompanied by subjects and subordinates with the sounds of musical instruments known as *Munnilai*. The second part, *Piṇṇēlu Nilai*, focuses on the admiration, love and emotional expressions of the seven stages of women. (Balasubramaniam)

Saiva Tirumuraigal

Saiva Tirumuraigal is a twelve-volume compendium of sacred texts in the Tamil language devoted to the worship of Lord Shiva. Composed between the 6th and 11th centuries CE by various saints and poets, these hymns serve as *Stotras* in Tamil Saiva devotional practices. The volumes are organized based on the works of different poets. The first three volumes, *Tiruñāṇacampantar Tēvāram*, feature the hymns of Tiruñāṇacampantar. Volumes four to six, *Tirunāvukkaracar Dēvāram* displays the compositions of Tirunāvukkarasar. The



seventh volume *Dēvāram* is attributed to *Sundarar*. *Māṇikkavācakar*'s *Tiruvāṣaṁ* constitutes the eighth volume. The ninth volume, *Tiruvāṣaipā* encompasses hymns sung by nine poets. The tenth volume is *Tirumandiram* is a collection of three thousand verses by *Tirumular Siddar*. The eleventh volume, *Paṭiṇṇṟām Tirumurai*, features the collective works of twelve poets that includes of *Cēramāṇ Perumāḷ Nāyaṇār*'s *Kayilāya Gṇāna Ulā*. *Cēkkiḷār*, which is known as *Periya Purāṇam* or *Tiruttoṇṭar Purāṇam* that narrate the stories of *Nāyanmārs* wrote the twelfth volume. It includes the description of *Cēramāṇ Perumāḷ Nāyaṇār*. (*Shanmugasundharan*) In simple, the *Saiva Tirumurais* depict the love of the saints towards Lord Shiva. *Kayilāya Gṇāna Ulā* is also a work that portrays the deep love for Lord Shiva among the women of various stages.

Kayilāya Gṇāna Ulā in Saiva Tirumuraigal

In the twelve-volume collection of *Saiva Tirumuraigal*, the literary contributions of *Cēramāṇ Perumāḷ Nāyaṇār* find their place in the eleventh volume, known as *Paṭiṇṇṟām Tirumurai*. *Cēramāṇ Perumāḷ Nāyaṇār*'s works is the fourth collection. It is titled *Paṭiṇṇṟām Tirumurai*. This collection includes three notable works: *Ponvaṇṇattantāti*, *Tiruvārūr Mummaṇik Kōvai*, and *Kayilāya Gṇāna Ulā*. The focus of this article is on *Kayilāya Gṇāna Ulā* and studies the various classifications of *Nāyikās* based on the *Ulā* from Tamil literature. *Kayilāya Gṇāna Ulā* is the foremost of the *Ulā* literary tradition in the Tamil language and has been dedicated to praise Lord Shiva. The impact of *Kayilāya Gṇāna Ulā* reverberates through later compositions. In the 12th Century CE, *Oṭṭakkūttar*, a Tamil poet, produced three notable *Ulā* works: *Vikrama Cōḷaṇ Ulā*, *Kulōttuṅka Chōḷaṇ Ulā* on the son of *Vikrama Chola*, and *Rāja Rājaṇ Ulā* dedicated to *Rāja Rājaṇ II*, son of *Kulōttuṅka Chola*. Over fifty additional *Ulās* dedicated to various Temple Deities, Kings and leaders exemplify the stable influence of *Kayilāya Gṇāna Ulā* on the evolution of *Ulā* Literature.

Classification of Seven Stages of Women in *Ulā*

In the *Ulā* literary tradition, the classification of women into seven stages is intricately woven around age factors, activities and the emotions stirred when they witness the *Nāyakā*, the hero during his royal procession. It is the profound admiration inspired by the *Nāyakā*'s majestic movement. The stages include *Pēthai*, *Petumbai*, *Maṅkai*, *Maṭantai*, *Arivai*, *Terivai*, and *Pēriḷampeṇ* are each delineated by its unique characteristics by offering an exploration of the evolving emotions tied to this regal spectacle. (*Govindarajan*)

Pēthai

Pētai, the initial stage according to *Pāṭṭiyal*, a Tamil grammar text, encompasses the ages of five to seven years. During this phase, the heroine remains unaware of love, expressing mere admiration for the king. The activities include playing with dolls and parrots, building small homes with sand and engaging in pretend cooking with toy kitchens in front of the house. She is oblivious to *Kāmā*'s bow of love by highlighting her innocence and simplicity.

Petumbai

Petumpai is categorized as the second stage in the *Ulā*, spanning from the age of eight to eleven. Despite being physically mature, the heroine at this stage struggles to comprehend the complexities of love. By engaging in the *kalangu*, a game involving seven coins, which is customary for women in this age group and she adds a playful dimension to her character. By adorning various ornaments and fragrant flowers in her tied braid, *Petumpai* is



metaphorically compared to the beauty of a peacock and highlights her youthful charm. Her speech is likened to that of a parrot with innocence and characteristic of this stage.

Maṅkai

Maṅkai is classified as the third stage of women in the *Ulā* from the age of twelve to thirteen. During this stage, the heroine develops an understanding of love emotions and experiences affection by observing the Hero in the procession. In addition, in this phase, *Maṅkai* engages in playing *ammānai*, a sport tailored for women within this age group. This combination of budding emotional awareness and participation in age-appropriate activities adds layers to the character's portrayal.

Maṭantai

Maṭantai represents the fourth stage of women in the *Ulā* from the age of thirteen to nineteen years. As a grown woman with an inclination to play musical instruments, she becomes increasingly captivated by the theme of love. During this stage, *Maṭantai* honestly falls in love with the Hero and openly shares her affection with friends about her longing for union with the Hero.

Arivai

Arivai is classified as the fifth stage of women in the *Ulā* from the age of twenty to twenty-five. She possesses a good physique and beauty, *Arivai* is skilled in playing musical instruments. Her experience of love emotions intensifies her desire for union with the Hero. However, these emotions also give rise to doubting herself, prompting her to question whether she would be a suitable match for the Hero. The complex interplay of emotions adds depth to *Arivai*'s character in *Ulā*.

Terivai

Terivai represents the sixth stage of women in the *Ulā* from the age of twenty-six to thirty-one. During this stage, the heroine is inclined to articulate her love emotions and express her longing for the Hero through words. However, due to intense emotions, her tongue becomes twisted, making her unable to verbally communicate her affection. She is prepared to convey her love through messengers and find alternative means to express the depth of her emotions and connection to the Hero.

Pēriḷampeṇ

Pēriḷampeṇ represents the seventh and final stage of women in the *Ulā* at the age range of thirty-two to forty. In this stage, she possesses the ability to articulate boldly and express her love to the Hero. She is characterized by adorning herself with beautiful dresses and ornaments, *Pēriḷampeṇ* seeks to captivate the Hero's attention. She fosters the desire for union. This stage encapsulates a mature and confident expression of love in *Ulā*.

Hence, this study portrays how the *Ulā* classifies the different stages of women in depicting *Nāyikās* in the state of love. By reflecting on a woman's emotional journey from innocence to mature love, it provides an ordered approach to know about *Ulā* aesthetics. This portrayal is essential for clarity and authenticity in understanding Tamil *Ulā* literature, classical dance and drama.

Conclusion

In the *Ulā* literature, women undergo a classification of seven distinct stages in reflection of their age and emotions when seeing the beloved *Nāyakā* during his regal procession. Cēramāṇ Perumāḷ Nāyaṇār, the devout Cēra king as a staunch devotee of Lord



Shiva, wrote this *Kayilāya Gñāna Ulā* and portrays the seven types of *Nāyikās* that each characterizes the unique attributes. *Kayilāya Gñāna Ulā* classifies the *Nāyikās* through different stages and emotions of love. This study introduces the classification of women and serves as a model for successive studies on *Ulā* studies. It is also true that *Ulā* enhances emotional depth and realism in character portrayal within religious arts, narrative structure and innovative direction that show the classical Saivite tradition.

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