Conceptual Metaphor Analysis of the Word Aram (Virtue) in Thirukkural

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Abstract
The term 'aram' is derived from the verb 'aru' and has subsequently evolved into 'aram'. This word has various meanings, such as cut-through, create a path, and differentiate. Nevertheless, it is difficult to precisely determine the exact definition of 'aram'. Hence, this study is undertaken for two main purposes. The primary goal is to categorise the metaphors associated with the term 'aram' in Thirukkural using the Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The second goal is to describe these metaphors by a comprehensive descriptive analysis. This study employs a qualitative research methodology. The data in this study was analysed using Lakoff & Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory. A total of 1,330 kurals from Thirukkural were utilised as data sources to categorise the metaphors associated with the term aram. The analysis determined that the term aram contains a total of 49 metaphors. Out of them, 30 metaphors (59%) are classified as structural metaphors, 16 metaphors (31%) are categorised as orientational metaphors, and 5 metaphors (10%) fall under the ontological category. To summarise, considering these three classifications of metaphors, it is evident that all of them are inherently interconnected with the notion of love.
Keywords: Aram, Semantics, Thirukkural, Metaphor, Conceptual Metaphor

Introduction

Among Patiṉeṉ kilkanakku anthologies, eleven are considered ethical literature. Thiruvalluvar's Thirukkural is particularly noteworthy as a highly significant piece in the history of Tamil literature (Balasubramanian). Tamil literature has a significant cultural legacy that can be traced back to the caṅkam period, which spanned from the 3rd century BC to the 3rd century AD. During this period, Tamil literature was classified into two main categories: akam, which focused on internal themes, and puṟam, which explored outward subjects. Akam literature delves into introspective and affective subjects, whereas puram literature tackles matters about society, such as bravery and moral principles. The caṅkam period yielded a wide range of literary compositions, encompassing epic poetry, romantic poetry, and moralistic literature, which mirrored the cultural, social, and political environments of that era. Within this cultural practice, ethical literature (Niti Ilakkiyam) emphasises imparting moral principles, with the Thirukkural being a prominent illustration. Nīti ilakkiyam denotes the corpus of ethical literature that arose after the caṅkam era in Tamil literary tradition. Nīti ilakkiyam is closely associated with the concept of aram, which encompasses a broad spectrum of ethical principles that serve as a moral compass, guiding individuals towards righteousness and moral behaviour. Aram is a fundamental principle in Tamil moral philosophy, exerting influence over both individual and collective conduct.

The Thirukkural extensively explores the concept of aram through a multitude of kurals, emphasising its crucial role in fostering a harmonious and just society. Although Thiruvalluvar's literature is voluminous, the metaphorical connotations of the term 'aram' in Thirukkural have not been extensively studied. Semantics refers to the significance that a word expresses, whether conveyed by a solitary letter or the combination of letters. Tolkappiyam is widely respected for its comprehensive analysis of the Tamil language and literary customs.

It offers significant perspectives on the ancient Tamil culture and continues to serve as a fundamental work for the study of Tamil linguistics and literature. The first Nurpa of Tolkappiyam Collatikaram states that words are defined by their meanings. Semantics, a linguistic subfield, specifically examines the meaning of words and sentences. Understanding semantics frequently entails examining how language expresses meaning in diverse settings. A powerful instrument for this investigation is the utilisation of metaphors. Metaphors provide us with nuanced insights into our daily encounters and assist in comprehending novel ideas (Imre). Metaphors facilitate our understanding of the meaning of a word by connecting abstract concepts with concrete experiences. The objective of this study is to perform a conceptual metaphor analysis of the term 'aram' in Thirukkural, to explore the influence of metaphors on our comprehension of ethics and morality in this classical literature. In general, the term 'aram' represents the concept of 'tarma', which refers to moral goodness. Nevertheless, according to Thiruchelvam, the notion of 'aram' cannot be limited to the exclusive concept of 'tarma'. The claim that 'aram' is synonymous with 'tarma' results in a conceptual ambiguity. Thus, the idea that it is impossible to define the term 'aram' exactly is seen as the study's difficulty, which this research aims to solve. As a result, this investigation has two distinct aims. The primary goal is to categorise the metaphors associated with the term 'aram' (meaning virtue) in the Thirukkural, using the Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The second purpose is to provide a descriptive analysis of the metaphors associated with the term 'aram'.

Literature Review

Prior to this study initiation, an extensive review was conducted into pertinent previous studies on semantics, 'aram' (virtue), the Thirukkural, metaphors, and conceptual metaphor theory. (Padmanabhan) emphasises that the notions of harmonious thoughts are discussed in Chapters 8 to 24 of the section on domestic virtues (Illarattuppal) and Chapters 25 to 33 of the section on renunciation (Turavaram) in Thirukkural. In his study, (Zubair) found a strong correlation between the ethical ideas presented in the works of Thiruvalluvar and Zuhair. Specifically, they share similar perspectives on subjects such as love, affection, morality, and life ethics. According to (Muthu), Thiruvalluvar's ethical beliefs, which are based on humanity, are essential for building a harmonious society and promoting positive human conduct.

Furthermore, metaphors have undergone thorough examination in Western literature. A study conducted by (Mabugu et al.) sought to determine the correlation between concealed metaphors in song lyrics and the cognitive capacities of society. In their analysis, (Potts and Semino) analysed Susan Sontag's influential 1978 publication, 'Illness as Metaphor,' and identified a total of 925 metaphors about cancer. They thoroughly investigated the use and consequences of these metaphors.

According to (Rubavathanan), numerous literary theories have been utilised in the analysis of the Thirukkural. Many studies have specifically focused on conceptual metaphor theory. The conceptual metaphor theory proposed by (Lakoff and Johnson) is well-suited for categorising and explaining the metaphors associated with the term 'aram' in the Thirukkural, considering the objective of the study. Although there is considerable uncertainty regarding the interpretation of 'aram' in the Thirukkural, only a limited number of works have provided clarification by employing metaphors. This discrepancy highlights the imperative nature of conducting this investigation. Consequently, to bridge this gap and provide clarification, a conceptual metaphor analysis of the Thirukkural term 'aram' is performed.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach that is based on library resources. Several commentaries of the Thirukkural, referred to as urainūlkaḷ, have been published, each presenting distinct viewpoints and analyses. This study chooses Ramakrishnan's book, Thirukkural Urainayam, as the main source of data from the several commentaries that are accessible. The particular work was selected due to its clear elucidations and precise depiction of kurals, rendering it an indispensable asset for understanding the Thirukkural in great depth.

To achieve the first goal, the terms 'aṟa', 'aram', and 'aṟan' were systematically identified in all 1,330 kurals of the Thirukkural by utilising a spreadsheet. Every kural was personally reviewed to verify the contextual application of the term 'aram', verifying that it is explicitly related to virtue. At first, a total of 52 verses featuring these specific terms were discovered. Nevertheless, kurals that conveyed meanings not associated with virtue, such as cutting off and digestion, were omitted. Furthermore, the kurals that did not contain metaphors for 'aram' were eliminated, resulting in a final collection of 49 kurals that are in line with the primary goal of the study.

To achieve the second objective, a descriptive analytic approach was employed to thoroughly describe all the analogies found in these 49 kurals. An extensive compilation of 49 synonyms

for metaphors was derived from an internet lexicon and examined in a tabular structure. This methodical technique enabled a thorough analysis of the metaphors linked to the term 'aram' in the Thirukkural. The analysis was guided by Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory to gain a more profound comprehension of how these metaphors communicate meaning. After collecting the data, a systematic analysis was carried out to ensure that it aligned with the objectives of the study. This analysis provided an in-depth exploration of the metaphors for 'aram' in the Thirukkural.

Results

The primary research objective is to categorise and examine the metaphors associated with the term 'aram' in Thirukkural. This analysis categorises 51 identified metaphors into three distinct categories which are structural, orientational, and ontological. Structural metaphors, which make up 59% of the total, represent a range of qualities and principles. 33% of the metaphors used in 'aram' are orientational, representing the direction and elevation of the subject. Ontological metaphors represent abstract virtues by attributing them to tangible substances, constituting 10% of the total. This categorisation provides a thorough comprehension of how the concept of 'aram' is depicted and understood in the Thirukkural.

Table 1 Classification of Metaphorical Types for the term 'aram' in Thirukkural

Structural Metaphor-30 (59%)	Orientational Metaphor-16 (31%)	Ontological Metaphor-5 (10%)
kural 8: God (கடவுள்)	kural 32: Beneficial (நன்மை தருவது)	kural 30: Righteous individual with love (அன்பு பொழியும் அந்தணர்)
kural 31 & 39: A joyful life (இன்பமான வாழ்வு)	kural 35: Avoiding jealousy (பொறாமை விலக்குதல்)	kural 543: The king's scepter (அரசனின் செங்கோல்)
kural 31: Fulfilling life (மனநிறைவு அளிக்கும் வாழ்வு)	kural 35: Avoiding desire, (ஆசை விலக்குதல்)	kural 635: Counselling companion (ஆலோசிக்க ஏற்புடையவன்)
kural 33: Doing everything ceaselessly possible (இயன்ற அனைத்தும் செய்தல்)	kural 35: Avoiding anger (சினம் விலக்குதல்)	kural 754 Ill-gotten wealth (தீதின்றி வந்த பொருள்)
kural 34: Pure Mind (மாசற்ற மனம்)	kural 35: Avoiding harsh words (கடுஞ்சொல் விலக்குதல்)	kural 1009: Love-earned wealth (அன்பின்வழி ஈட்டும் பொருள்)
kural 37: Equality (சமத்துவம்)	kural 36: Deathbed companion (இறக்கும் காலத்தில் துணை)	
kural 40: What ought to be carried out (செய்யத்தக்கது)	kural 48: Mightier than Penance (தவம் காட்டிலும் வலிமை தருவது)	

kural 45: Good Character (பண்புமிக்கது)	kural 77: Steadfast Love (அன்பு தவறாதல்)	
kural 45: Useful (பயன்மிக்கது)	kural 141, 142, 147 & 150: Not desiring other men's wife (பிறர் மனைவியை விரும்பாதல்)	
kural 49: Blamelessness (பழியற்றது)	kural 157: Kindness even to the wicked (தீயவருக்கும் தீங்கு செய்யாமல் நன்மையே செய்தல்)	
kural 76: Love (அன்பு)	kural 173: Aversion to sensuality (சிற்றின்பம் விரும்பாதல்)	
kural 93 & 96: Pleasant Word (இன்சொல்)	kural 179: Not coveting another's wealth (பிறர் பொருளுக்கு ஆசைப்படாதல்)	
kural 130: forbearance (சினமின்மை)	kural 181,182 & 185: No slander (புறம் பேசாதல்)	
kural 130: Education (கல்வி)	kural 366: Fearing deceit (வஞ்சிக்க அஞ்சுதல்)	
kural 130: Humility (அடக்கம்)	kural 909: Not enslaved by women's words (பெண் சொல்லுக்கு அடிமையாகாதல்)	
kural 148: Not coveting others' spouses (பிறர் மனை நோக்காதல்)	kural 1018: A Proud Act (பெருமை தரும் செயல்)	
kural 163: Without Envy (பொறாமையின்மை)		
kural 183: Not speaking lies (பொய் கூறாதல்)		
kural 183: Not deceiving (புறம் கூறாதல்)		
kural 189: Nature bears the slanderer burden (புறம்கூறும் உடலைப் பூமி சுமத்தல்)		
kural 204: Do not harm in any situation (மறந்தும் தீங்கு செய்யாமை)		
kural 249: Grace (அருள் கொண்டு செய்தல்)		
kural 288: Living Moderately (அளவறிந்து வாழ்வது)		
kural 296 & 297: Living without Deceit (பொய்யற்று வாழ்வது)		
kural 321: Abstinence from killing (கொல்லாமை)		
kural 384: Corruption-free government (குற்றமற்ற அரசு)		
kural 384: Government that rules with bravery (வீரத்தோடு ஆட்சி புரியும் அரசு)		

kural 441: Sage's Friendship (மூத்த அறிவுடையாரின் நட்பு)		
kural 644: Understanding the power of words (சொல்திறம் அறிதல்)		
kural 1047: Mother-child Love (தாய்-பிள்ளை அன்பு)		

As mentioned in the table above, the word 'aram' has a total of 51 metaphors. Among them, 30 metaphors (59%) are structural metaphors. These metaphors conceptually symbolize virtue, classifying 'aram' based on its nature and concept. For example, the word 'aram' can mean god or supreme being. Thus, among the 30 entries, the term 'aram' denotes a classification under a structured principle. The second category is orientational metaphor, with 16 entries (31%) falling under this classification. These entries are based on actions guided by principles, depicting whether an action is performed as righteous (elevating) or unrighteous (descending). In this category, 'aram' is depicted as a force that elevates the world and brings goodness. All the metaphors in this category suggest that 'aram' consistently promotes positive and uplifting actions. Finally, the third type of metaphor is the ontological metaphor, which features 5 metaphors (10%). This category equates the intangible concept of virtue with physical things. Virtue is personified as a righteous individual with love, the king's sceptre, counselling companion, ill-gotten wealth, and love-earned wealth.

In Thirukkural, Valluvar discusses the concept of 'aram', emphasizing its qualities and the thoughts expressed within it. The Thirukkural formulates these metaphors based on moral virtues. However, among the metaphors related to moral principles, only 5 ontological metaphors were found to be inadequate in the research. Furthermore, Thirukkural has explained ethics through virtue, patience, and adversity for each type. Nineteen (68%) of the 30 structural metaphors reflect virtue. For example, kural 34 refers to the pure mind as virtue. Similarly, kural 148 advises to not covet others' spouses.

In the context of action or tension, twenty metaphors have been explained with just words of courage to provide a sense of accountability. For example, kural 76 relates to love, and kural 93 & 96

to pleasant words. The remaining eight metaphors are examples such as kural 45, which addresses weaknesses.

In the orientational metaphor category, 11 out of 16 metaphors are characterized based on their actions and principles. For example, kural 179 discusses the virtue of not coveting another's wealth. In this category, negative expressions are more prevalent, with 11 metaphors (69%) describing the nature of 'aram' in negative terms. For instance, kural 35 advises abstaining from desire, anger, and harsh words, while kural 173 expresses an aversion to sensuality. Here, 'aram' is often depicted through negative actions or reactions. Conversely, only 5 metaphors in this category are expressed positively. For example, kural 1018 describes a proud act. Thirukkural uses a psychological approach where emphasizing the negative aspects can amplify their significance or importance, effectively utilizing this technique in its metaphors. From these findings, the researcher concludes that there is a deliberate use of both positive and negative characterizations in the choice of metaphors to emphasize their meanings.

Finally, among ontological metaphors, 2 metaphors describe a person, and 3 describe a profession or material. These metaphors identify characteristics based on the category but are not all characterized as positive or negative. However, one out of the five metaphors is explicitly negative (kural 754: ill-gotten wealth), while the remaining four are depicted positively. For example, kural 30 portrays the loving bond of a friend.

For the second objective, the metaphorical meanings of the word 'aram' were examined. Among the 30 structural metaphors, the first example is the metaphor of God (kural 8). God is birthless and deathless and is considered merciful. Thus, 'aram' is conceptually equated with God, being eternal without beginning or end, and embodying steadfastness and mercy. In kural 31 & 39, 'aram' is personified as a

joyful and fulfilling life. A third example is in kural 33, where 'aram' is expressed as doing everything ceaselessly possible. This metaphor suggests helping others to the best of our ability, embodying the idea of doing good in all circumstances.

Among the orientational metaphors, 'aram' appears in 16 metaphors. Aram is universally revered, generating respect and praise through noble actions. Additionally, 'aram' is described as beneficial (kural 32). In kural 36, 'aram' is depicted as a deathbed companion, emphasizing its role in fostering longevity and ethical living.

In the category of ontological metaphors, there are five examples. In kural 30, 'aram' is metaphorically associated with beloved and compassionate individuals who uphold justice, recite scriptures, and serve as great leaders, thereby contributing significantly to community values. Additionally, righteousness is considered a metaphor for 'aram'. In kural 43, the state's strong arm is portrayed as a metaphor for righteousness, illustrating the establishment of justice and integrity.

In conclusion, the three fundamental types of metaphors convey the concept of morality. Thiruvalluvar articulates the basis for categorizing these metaphorical meanings of 'aram', depicting it as embodying an affectionate association. Based on the findings, a framework has been developed to interpret the 'aram' metaphor and conclude its meaning. By analyzing these metaphors, the framework offers a comprehensive understanding of how 'aram' is depicted in the Thirukkural, emphasizing its moral and ethical dimensions as shown in Figure 1.
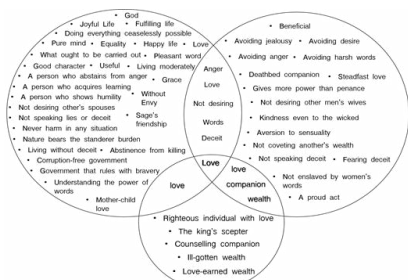

Figure 1 Classification of Metaphorical meanings for the term 'Aram' in Thirukkural

According to the table above, the word 'aram' is associated with a total of 51 metaphors. Out of the total, 30 metaphors, which accounts for 59%, are classified as structural metaphors. These metaphors conceptually represent virtue, categorising 'aram' according to its essence and notion. For example, the word 'aram' can mean god or supreme being. Thus, among the 30 entries, the term 'aram' denotes a classification under a structured principle. There are 16 entries (31%) that fall into the orientational metaphor category, which is the second category. These entries are derived from activities conducted per principles, indicating whether an activity is carried out as virtuous (uplifting) or unvirtuous (degrading). Within this category, 'aram' is portrayed as a powerful force that uplifts the world and fosters benevolence. All the metaphors in this category imply that 'aram' constantly advocates for positive and uplifting deeds. The ontological metaphor is the third category of metaphor, consisting of five metaphors, accounting for 10%. This category equates the intangible notion of virtue with actual objects. Virtue is personified as a righteous individual with love, the king's sceptre, counselling companion, ill-gotten wealth, and love-earned wealth.

Valluvar explores the concept of 'aram' in Thirukkural, emphasising its qualities and the thoughts it expresses. The Thirukkural employs various metaphors derived from moral values. However, the research reveals that just 5 ontological metaphors relating to moral principles are deemed inadequate. Moreover, Thirukkural elucidates ethical principles by addressing the virtues, patience, and adversity associated with each category. Out of the 30 structural metaphors, nineteen (68%) represent virtue. As an illustration, kural 34 denotes the pure mind as a virtue. Similarly, kural 148 recommends against harbouring a desire for someone else's spouse.

Within the realm of action or tension, a total of twenty metaphors have been explained using exclusively courageous language, aiming to instil a profound sense of responsibility. As an illustration, kural 76 relates to love, while kural 93 and 96 relate to agreeable language. The remaining eight metaphors are examples such as kural 45, which addresses weaknesses.

Within the orientational metaphor category, 11 out of 16 metaphors are distinguished by their acts

and principles. As an illustration, kural 179 delves into the virtue of abstaining from desiring someone else's wealth. Within this category, the majority of idioms (69%) depict the nature of 'aram' in a negative manner, with a total of 11 metaphors. As an example, kural 35 advises refraining from desire, anger, and using harsh words, whereas kural 173 expresses a strong dislike for sensuality. In this context, the term 'aram' is frequently portrayed by unfavourable behaviours or responses. In contrast, there are just 5 metaphors in this category that are articulated positively. As an illustration, kural 1018 delineates an act of pride. Thirukkural employs a psychological strategy by accentuating the negative features to enhance their relevance or value, effectively employing this technique in its metaphors. Based on these data, the researcher deduces that there is a purposeful utilisation of both favourable and unfavourable characterisations in the selection of metaphors to accentuate their significance.

Among ontological metaphors, 2 metaphors pertain to describing a person, while 3 metaphors pertain to describing a profession or substance. These metaphors attribute traits based on the category, but not all of them are explicitly classified as positive or negative. Nevertheless, only one of the five metaphors, specifically kural 754 which refers to ill-gotten wealth, is expressly negative. The other four metaphors, on the other hand, are portrayed in a positive light. As an illustration, kural 30 depicts the affectionate connection between friends.

The second objective involved an examination of the metaphorical connotations of the term 'aram'. Out of the 30 structural metaphors, the initial instance is the metaphor of God (kural 8). God is eternal, without a beginning or end, and is seen as kind. Therefore, the term 'aram' is theoretically synonymous with God, as it denotes a perpetual existence without a starting or ending point, and encompasses qualities of unwavering constancy and compassion. kural 31 and 39 personify 'aram' as a life that brings joy and fulfilment. Another instance can be found in kural 33, where 'aram' is defined as the continuous and unwavering effort to do everything within one's capacity.

This metaphor implies the act of assisting others to the fullest extent of our capabilities, encapsulating the concept of doing benevolent actions in any situation. The term 'aram' is present in a total of 16 orientational metaphors. aram is well esteemed, garnering admiration and accolades via virtuous deeds. Furthermore, the term 'aram' is characterised as advantageous according to kural 32. kaural 36 portrays 'aram' as a companion during one's final moments, highlighting its significance in promoting longevity and ethical conduct.

There are five examples in the field of ontological metaphors. Kural 30 figuratively associates 'aram' with revered and compassionate individuals who preserve justice, recite scriptures and serve as excellent leaders, thereby making major contributions to community ideals. In addition, righteousness is regarded as a metaphor for 'aram'. kural 43 presents the state's powerful authority as a metaphor for righteousness, symbolising the establishment of justice and honesty. To summarise, the three major categories of metaphors effectively communicate the idea of morality. Thiruvalluvar explains the rationale behind classifying the metaphorical interpretations of 'aram' by describing it as representing a loving connection. A framework has been created to analyse the 'aram' metaphor and determine its meaning based on the research findings. The framework provides a thorough comprehension of the portrayal of 'aram' in the Thirukkural by examining various metaphors.

Conclusion

According to the conceptual metaphor theory, it was concluded that the word 'aram' encompasses a total of 51 metaphors. Out of the total, 30 metaphors are structural, 16 are orientational, and the remaining 5 are ontological. This analysis demonstrates that Thiruvalluvar mostly employed structural metaphors to convey the concept of 'aram'. By using metaphors based on concepts, it is evident that Thiruvalluvar perceives 'aram' not as a tangible entity but as an expansive concept. Additionally, the study explains Thiruvalluvar's claim that the term 'aram' is inherently elusive, as it engenders a state of uncertainty. This research significantly aids in understanding the meaning of the word 'aram' and gaining clarity. The term 'aram' does not include inherent ambiguity; it may be precisely described by employing conceptual metaphors. This study aims

to elucidate the semantic nuances of the term 'aram' in Thirukkural by employing conceptual analogies. Specifically, it focuses on analysing the kurals that incorporate the phrases 'aram', 'aṟa', and 'aṟaṉ'. Future researchers have the opportunity to investigate supplementary vocabulary or other viewpoints.

Besides conceptual metaphor theories, other theories are recommended to be used to explain meaning within the context of this study. A similar analysis with other classical texts could lead to a better understanding of the 'aram'. Moreover the conceptual metaphors of 'aram' also can be mapped onto modern-day 'ethics' to bridge ancient and contemporary moral perspectives. Practically speaking, such conclusions could be implemented into the practice of education by offering students such materials on Thirukkural that would focus on one of its normative aspects, further concerning 'aram' and enhancing the comprehension of that concept in students. It can also follow that this specific study may assist in the formation of therapeutic practices formulated in consideration of the cultural context that incorporates the ethical teachings from Thirukkural based on 'aram' as a conceptual device.

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