



## Translation Of Theonyms From Tamil Into English And Contextual Stance With Reference To Kalki's சிவகாமியின்சபதம் *Civakāmiyīṇ Capatam*.

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### Abstract

Theonyms are the proper names of gods. They are difficult to translate from one language into another especially when the SL and TL are completely different from each other in every aspect. The theonyms which act as the token of religious culture are the mythic images of a culture, society and its beliefs. This paper aims at the translation of Hindu theonyms from Tamil into English. Especially the different approaches used in translation of theonyms from Tamil to English are analysed under the context they are used in the SL text. In the SL text, the theonyms create a special connection between the readers and the actual context. Hence, it becomes the responsibility of the translator to preserve the divinity of the Theonyms and its contextual meaning in his translation. Many theonyms are mythologemes and are affixed with the honorific appellatives. This paper is a comparative analysis of the SL theonyms mentioned in Kalki's Tamil novel, *சிவகாமியின்சபதம் Civakāmiyīṇ Capatam* and its English translation by P. S. Sri Sivakami's *Vow*. Further, the study analyses the explicit theonyms, polyonymous names of gods and the implicit theonyms. It also analyses the impact of theonyms depending on the context.

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**Key Terms:** Theonyms, mythologemes, polyonymous names of god, honorific appellatives

### Theonyms

Theonyms, represent the religious culture, beliefs, customs and traditions of a society. As Frog says, "A society or group will link its social position in the universe to that of its venerated gods" (RMN 1), Theonyms of Hindu gods are popular in Tamil society and culture. They are the divine proper names of great gods, fairies, deities, demigods, semigods, guardian angels and tutelaries. The SL text consists of many theonyms, especially the names of Hindu gods. In Tamil Hindu religious culture many gods have multiple names hence those names are polyonymous in nature. For example, the Hindu god, **Lord Siva** has more than thousand names. ஈசன் (Eesan), ஐய்யன் (Iyyan), அருணாசலம் (Arunachalam), அண்ணாமலை (Annamalai), பைரவன் (Bhairavan), ஈஸ்வரன் (Eswaran), நெல்லையப்பன் (Nellaiyappan) and ஹரன் (Haran) are the polyonymous names of Lord Siva. These names are derived from various facts related to Lord Siva such as his characteristic traits, physical traits, places of worship, mounts and weapons used by him.

## Translation of Explicit Theonyms

The theonyms are segregated into two types depending on their usage in the SL text. They are Explicit theonyms and Implicit theonyms. Explicit theonyms and their polyonymous terms are direct names of gods. Implicit theonyms are indirect theonyms. As Implicit theonyms are derived from the special attributes of gods, they are indirect and highly allusive.

Table 1.1 deals with the translation of explicit theonyms சிவா Civā (Siva), முருகன் Murukan (Murugan) and விநாயகா Vinayaka (Vinayaga) taken from the SL text for analysis.

**Table 1.1 Translations of Direct Theonyms**

DIRECT THEONYMS		
SL TERM	TRANSLITERATED TERM	TL TERM
சிவா (102)	Civā	Lord Siva (81)
முருகன் (626)	Murukan	Lord Muruga (480)
விநாயகா (1046)	Vināyakā	Lord Vinayaka (794)

In the target text, the direct theonyms சிவா Civā(Siva), முருகன் Murukan (Murugan) and விநாயகா Vinayaka (Vinayaga) are translated with the attributive **Lord**. Here the term **Lord** is the honorific appellative. It allows the TL readers to understand the theonyms easily. Whereas, translation of polyonymous names of gods would be difficult.

## Translation of Polyonymous names of gods

Polyonymous names of gods are derived from their various attributes. Names, epithets, descriptions, titles, physical traits, characteristic traits and mythical background of gods play a role in the derivation of their polyonymous names. These attributes are more familiar especially amidst the SL readers and it is easy for them to identify their gods. In the SL text the author has used many polyonymous names of Lord Siva. Translation of these polyonymous terms are analysed in Table 1.2.

**Table 1.2 Translations of Polyonymous names of Lord Siva**

SL TERM	TRANSLITERATED TERM	TL TERM
நடராஜ மூர்த்தி (59)	Naṭarāja Mūrtti	Lord Nataraja (Foot notes: King of Dance... a name applied to the dancing form of <b>Siva</b> (50)
காலசம்ஹாரமூர்த்தி (369)	Kāla Camhāramūrtti	<b>Siva</b> the destroyer (283)
ஏகாம்பரேசுவரர் (31)	Ekāmparēcuvarar	Foot Notes: A name applied to Lord <b>Siva</b> (25)
பிணாகபாணி (62)	Pinākapaṇi	Lord <b>Siva</b> (52)
ருத்திர மூர்த்தி (369)	Ruttira Mūrtti	<b>Siva</b> in his terrible aspect of Rudra (283)
தூலபாணி (477)	Cūlapāṇi	<b>Siva</b> , the lord of Trident (365)

All of the polyonymous names in the above table represent **Lord Siva**. In his translation, the translator P. S. Sri has translated all these polyonymous terms with its explicit theonym '**Lord Siva**'. He uses it either in running sentence, description or in footnotes. As the translator uses this direct theonym often in his translation, it becomes familiar among the TL readers and reduces ambiguity amidst them.

There is a vast gap in the religious culture mentioned in the Source Language Text and Target Language. In addition, the usage of polyonymous theonyms is abundant in the SL culture. Hence, it is good on the part of the translator to translate the polyonymous terms with explicit theonyms.

Explicit theonyms are familiar even out of the religious group, due to their recurrent usage in the society. Polyonymous terms of the theonyms are familiar amidst the people of the same religion. Whereas, implicit theonyms are less familiar even amidst the people of the same religion due to their allusive nature. Thus translation of such implicit theonyms is a highly complicated one.

Table 1.3 consists of select implicit theonyms taken from SL text and their translations in the Target Text.

**Table 1.3 Translation of the Implicit theonyms of Lord Siva**

<b>IMPLICIT THEONYMS</b>		
<b>SL TERM</b>	<b>TRANSLITERATED TERM</b>	<b>TL TERM</b>
அம்பிகை பாகன் (921)	Ampikaipākaṇ	<b>Lord Siva</b> (704)
நஞ்சுண்டகர் (488)	Nañcuṇṭakar	<b>Lord Siva</b> , who swallowed poison to save others (375)
பிறைதும் பெருமான் (475)	Piraiṇṭumperumāṇ	God who wears the moon (ft-refers to <b>lord Siva</b> ) (363)
வெள்ளநீர்ச்சடையனார் (456)	Vellānīrccatāiyanār	<b>Lord Siva</b> (349)
திருமேற்றளி இறைவன் (208)	Tirumērrali Iraivaṇ	Lord at Thirumetrāli (162)
தில்லைப் பொன்னம்பலத்தில் திருநடனம்புரியும் இறைவன் (218)	Tillaip ponnampalattil tirunaṭaṇam puriyum iraivaṇ	Lord Himself who dances ecstatically at the golden temple at Thillai (169)

The implicit theonyms in the Table 1.3 represents Lord Siva but they are highly allusive. The SL author has used these theonyms either to emphasize the context or to create a sort of stylistic effect. Hence translating the theonyms with contextual significance is more important than translating the theonyms that are used for stylistic effect. In the SL text, the theonyms **அம்பிகை பாகன்** *Ampikaipākaṇ* (Ambigai Paagan), **பிறைதும் பெருமான்**, *Piraiṇṭum perumāṇ* (Pirai Soodum Perumaan) and **வெள்ளநீர்ச்சடையனார்** *Vellānīrccatāiyanār* (Vella neer Chadayanaar) create some rhythmic effect. In the target text these terms are translated as ‘Lord Siva’ with or without additional information. Thus translation of these polyonymous names with their direct theonym ‘**Lord Siva**’ does not affect the contextual meaning except reducing the rhythmic effect provided by them in the SL. But translation of implicit theonyms especially those with contextual significance become more challenging.

Theonyms **நஞ்சுண்டகண்டர்** *Nañcuṇṭakaṇṭar*, **திருமேற்றளி இறைவன்** *Tirumērrali Iraivaṇ* and **தில்லைப் பொன்னம்பலத்தில் திருநடனம் புரியும் இறைவன்** *Tillaip ponnampalattil tirunaṭaṇam puriyum Iraivaṇ* have contextual significance. For example, Gundotharan hails the grace of *Nañcuṇṭakaṇṭar* (Nanjunda Kandar) for saving prince Maamallar from Bhikshu’s poisonous dagger in the lines,

The SL Texts: **நஞ்சுண்டகண்டரின் அருளினால் பல்லவகுமாரருக்கு ஒன்றும் நேராமல் போயிற்றே”**.

Here the term, **நஞ்சுண்டகண்டர்** *Nañcuṇṭakaṇṭar* (Nanjunda Kandar) is an implicit theonym that refers to Lord Siva. This term is derived under a mythical background. Lord Siva once drank poison to save other gods and he received the name **நஞ்சுண்டகண்டர்**. Therefore, this theonym is used in the sentence in the sense, **Maamallar** was able to escape from the poisonous dagger by the grace of *Nañcuṇṭakaṇṭar*, who saved other gods from poison. There is a strong relation between the term *Nañcuṇṭakaṇṭar* and the context.

The translator has translated it as ‘**Lord Siva**, who swallowed poison to save others’ (375). In this translation, the term *Nañcuṇṭakaṇṭar* (Nanjunda Kandar) is replaced with its direct theonym **Lord Siva**, and in addition, it has a descriptive clause that retains the meaning of the implicit theonym. This allows the TL readers to correlate the relationship between the theonym and the context.

In the SL text, once *Aaayanr* questions *Vaakeesar* that “ is there any new hymns sung on Thirumetrāli Iraivaṇ?” Here the term **திருமேற்றளி இறைவன்** *Tirumērrali Iraivaṇ*

(Thirumetrāli Iraivaṇ) is an implicit theonym that literally means the **god at Tirumetrāli**. Connotatively it refers to ‘**Lord Siva**’, he who resides in the temple at Tirumetrāli village in Tamil Nadu. It is easy for the SL readers to grasp the hidden meaning as they are familiar with the demographic details of their own land and have adequate knowledge about the religion. Whereas, for the TL readers who are completely unfamiliar to

the SL society and religion mentioned in SL text, it is difficult. They cannot understand both the term *Tirumetrali* and *Tirumetrali Iraivan*. But, the translator has translated the theonym literally as, 'Lord at Thirumetralee' (162). Here the translation lacks in creating the clear ideas to the Target text readers about the SL term and leaves them unanswered to the question who is the god at Tirumetrali.

To conclude, the SL theonyms provide religious connotation that is imbibed with the context. It creates a noticeable contextual significance and special connection amidst the readers and the text. Hence it is the responsibility of the translator to either preserve or retain the contextual significance provided by the theonyms in SL. Thus it becomes inevitable to translate the implicit theonym that holds some contextual significance. It cannot be easily replaced or omitted during a translation.

### **Suggestions for further study:**

Based on the study, it is suggested to use additional explanation in the forms of classifiers, notes etc in order to retain the connotation of the theonyms. The few approaches suggested which are based on the types of theonyms are,

Explicit theonyms: Transliterating with honorific appellatives or mythoappellatives, it is more effective.

Polyonymous theonyms: Translation of polyonymous theonym with its direct theonym reduces ambiguity.

Retaining the connotative meaning of the polyonymous terms with addition of information in the form of classifiers, descriptive clauses, attributives etc will be more effective.

Implicit theonyms: As the implicit theonyms are purely invisible to the TL readers, it is the translator's responsibility to decide and maintain the fidelity of translation and justify the SL text by contextual stance taken during the translation process.

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