

USAGE OF SIMILES & METAPHORS IN DENOTING DEATH

IN TAMIL JAIN DIDACTIC LITERATURE

Jaina Literature:

Jaina literature comprises of various texts in different languages namely, Prakrit, Apabhramsa, Sankrit, Hindi, Marati, Tamil and Kannada.

Tamil Jaina literature is rich in the expression of the Jaina ethical values and reflection of the Jaina philosophical thoughts. The Tamil didactic literary texts exhibit the deft handling of the similes and metaphors in connecting with the ethical and philosophical doctrines to facilitate a quick grasp of the essence.

Allegory:

An ‘allegory’ is a literary device or a rhetorical device that conveys the hidden meanings through symbolic figures, actions, imagery, and/or events, which together create the moral, spiritual or political meaning the author wishes to.

An allegory in a literary text is that which can be interpreted to reveal the latent meaning of an abstract subject through the use of figurative speech. This is widely employed in explaining an idea or principle in both prose and poetry in all languages.

Simile:

The word ‘simile’ originates from the Latin word ‘similis’ which means something similar and that is basically what a simile is. It is a comparison between two things that are different but may seem similar in a way.

A 'simile', is therefore, a figure of speech that makes a comparison, showing the similarities between two different things that are alike in some way.

It is different from metaphor as it does not say that a particular thing is exactly like some other thing like a metaphor, instead it directly makes a comparison.

Unlike a metaphor, a simile draws resemblance with the help of the words 'like' or 'as'. Therefore it is a direct comparison.

Metaphor:

A 'metaphor', is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable.

It is an expression, often found in literature that describes a person or an object by referring to something that is considered to have similar characteristics to that person or object or that identifies something as being the same as some unrelated thing for rhetorical effect, thus highlighting the similarities between the two.

While a simile compares two items, a metaphor directly equates them and does not use the words 'like' or 'as' as a simile does.

The purpose of their usage in literature:

- Similes and metaphors are of immense use in prose and poetry.
- Similes and metaphors make the language of a text more descriptive and enjoyable.
- They add depth, and clarity to the subject.
- They bring in beauty and aesthetics to the narrative style of the texts.

- They are the tools to express the authors' imagination and delivery of communication.
- They are the standing proofs for the authors' language proficiency, creative ability, and skills of connective apprehension.
- They enable the readers to have a quick grasp of the essence of the most abstract themes.
- They break the monotony of the texts.
- Some of them are found to be common between *two or more authors and also among the texts of different languages.
- From such common usage, one can admire the identity of ideas that had crept in the minds of the authors and the poets.

***Note:**

In this presentation it can be found out that two poets have handled the same simile

1. A bird flying away leaving its nest uncared for is compared with the soul leaving its body on death. This comparison is found in both the texts of 'Tirukkural' and 'Naaladiyaar'.
2. An actor or a dancer performing different roles in a play or in a dance drama is compared with the soul taking different births in different bodies. This comparison is found in both the texts of 'Naaladiyaar' and 'Elaadhi'.

Aim of the presentation:

Death has been an inseparable, inevitable, and indispensable part of human life. It strikes us in the most unguarded moments. Though birth and death are the two facets of the same coin, death is considered to be most dreadful misery. The

purpose of this presentation is to discuss how the Tamil Jain poets have handled these figures of speech in their texts, to explain death and the transient nature of the body.

Scope of the presentation:

The scope of this presentation is restricted to the following Tamil didactic literary texts.

<u>S.No.</u>	<u>Name of the text</u>	<u>Name of the Author</u>
1.	Tirukkural	Acharya Kunda Kunda
2.	Naaladiyaar	Jain Monks
3.	Pazhamozhi	Mundrurai Araiyanar
4.	Elaadhi	Kanimedhaaviyaar
5.	Naanmanikkadigai*	Vilambi Naaganaar

***Note:** There is no evidence that this text is authored by a Jain poet.

Thirukkural (திருக்குறள்) :

The following couplets are from the chapter no.34, by title, 'Impermanence of mundane things' (நிலையாமை).

“நாள் என ஒன்று போல் காட்டி உயிர் ஈரும்
வாளது உணர்வார்ப் பெறின்”

-334, திருக்குறள்

Meaning:

A day may appear merely as a unit of time but the one who realizes its true nature will recognize in it, a saw that cuts one's life gradually.

Commentary:

Time is divided in to various units seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, fortnights, months and years. An ordinary man wakes up in the morning thinking that he has a happy day ahead, but a wise man who knows the nature of time and its relation to life will realise that a day lived is a day shortened in his life. The lapse of every day leads to the shortening of his life. Hence it is compared to a saw that gradually cuts the life through.

This can be kept in parlance with the ‘Avichi Maran’ which implies that everyone is heading towards death from the moment of birth, as narrated in ‘Bhagavati Aradhana’.

“குடம்பை தனித்து ஒழியப் புள் பறந்து அற்றே
உடம்பொடு உயிரிடை நட்பு”

- 338, திருக்குறள்

Meaning:

Just as a bird flies away leaving the nest empty, so is the friendship between the soul and its body.

Commentary:

According to the principle of transmigration, the soul quits its body, when the life span is over, seeking another body as its abode. This is brought out by the comparison to a bird quitting its nest migrating to another place to build another nest as its habitation

In the transmigration of a soul, it must have been associated with innumerable bodies which it calls its own at that particular period of life.

According to this truth, there is no wisdom in calling one's body as one's own. There is no physical body as one's own for this soul, when innumerable bodies which it had inhabited in various periods of its transmigration are realised.

“உறங்குவது போலும் சாக்காடு உறங்கி
விழிப்பது போலும் பிறப்பு”

- 339,திருக்குறள்

Meaning:

Death is similar to sinking into deep slumber and birth again is like waking up from sleep.

Commentary:

This comparison is intended to emphasise the permanency of the soul. Ordinarily falling in to sleep leads to unconsciousness and yet waking up from sleep next morning one regains one's consciousness and goes about one's work quite refreshed. Similarly death is but a temporary loss of consciousness which may be regained at the next birth. This is necessary corollary of the doctrine of the soul. On death, it is the body that perishes and not the soul. Soul survives the body and is not influenced by death which can affect the body alone.

Naaladiyaar (நாலடியார்):

“வான்இடு வில்லின் வரவு அறியா வாய்மையால்
கால் நிலம் தோயாக் கடவுளை - யாம் நிலம்
சென்னியுற வணங்கிச் சேர்தும் எம் உள்ளத்து
முன்னியவை முடிக என்று”

-1, நாலடியார்

Meaning:

The human body is as transitory as a rainbow. Knowing this truth, let us bow down with our heads touching the ground in obeisance to the god who stand with his feet a little above the ground praying for the completion of our tasks.

Commentary:

The time of appearance and disappearance of a rainbow is difficult to predict. So is the case with the birth and death. With this truth in mind, let us pay obeisance to the ‘Arhat’ who stand with his feet a little above the ground, and pray for the successful execution of our tasks before our bodies perish away.

This is the first verse of this text. It is the invocation to the God, for composing this text. (‘கடவுள் வாழ்த்து’)

“தோற்றம் சால் ஞாயிறு நாழியா, வைகலும்
கூற்றம் அளந்து, நும் நாள் உண்ணும்; ஆற்ற
அறம் செய்து அருளுடையீர் ஆகுமின்; யாரும்
பிறந்தும், பிறவாதார் இல்”

-7, நாலடியார்

Meaning:

The following verses are from the chapter, ‘Impermanence of body’. (‘யாக்கை நிலையாமை’)

“நார்த்தொடுத்து ஈர்க்கில் என் நன்று ஆய்ந்து அடக்கில் என்
பார்த்து உழிப் பெய்யில் என் பல்லோர் பழிக்கில் என்
தோல் பையுள் நின்று தொழில் அறச் செய்து ஊட்டும்
கூத்தன் புறப்பட்டக் கால்”

- 26, நாலடியார்

Meaning:

The soul, an actor, during its stay in a body which is but a bag of skin, does all possible deeds and experiences the outcome of such deeds. If that soul leaves

the body, it does not matter whether the body is tied and drawn by rope or it is cleaned up and buried or it is left uncared for or it is complained of.

Commentary:

It is the soul that inspires to do a deed and it is the same that experiences the result of such deeds. Therefore one has to be mindful of one's deeds done during his lifetime, but as the soul is subject to different type of mental dispositions and deeds it is aptly called to be an actor.

This poem reminds us of a similar metaphorical expression found in one of the works of William Shakespeare, which goes as follows:

**“All the world's a stage,
And all men and women are merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances.....”**

-William Shakespeare, As you like it, 2/7

**“படுமழை மொக்குளின் பல்காலும் தோன்றிக்
கெடும் இது ஓர் யாக்கை என்று எண்ணித் - தடுமாற்றம்
தீர்ப்பேம் யாம் என்று உணரும் அறிவாளரை
நோர்ப்பார் யார் நீள் நிலத்தின் மேல்”**

- 27, நாலடியார்

Meaning:

There is no one who has the wisdom to consider that one's body is like a bubble of water formed by the pouring rain and hence to be engrossed in Dharma to avoid the miseries of births and deaths.

Commentary:

Even on witnessing the bubbles of water in the pouring rain that are short lived, there is hardly anyone who could get wiser by thus comparing and contemplating over the transient nature of one's body and get engrossed in performing the deeds of Dharma in order to put an end to the misery of transmigration.

யாக்கையை யாப்புடைத்தாப் பெற்றவர் தாம்பெற்ற
யாக்கையால் ஆய பயன்கொள்க - யாக்கை
மலையாடும் மஞ்சுபோல் தோன்றிமற் றாங்கே
நிலையாது நீத்து விடும்

-28, நாலடியார்

Meaning:

Those who got their strong physique out of their meritorious deeds should perform good deeds as the physical body will perish like the misty clouds over the mountains.

“புல் நுனி மேல் நீர் போல் நிலையாமை என்று எண்ணி
இன்னினியே செய்க அறவினை - இன்னினியே
நின்றான் இருந்தான் கிடந்தான் கேள் அலறச்
சென்றான் எனப் படுதலால்”

-29, நாலடியார்

Meaning:

It is often said that a person, who had been seen to be standing or sitting or lying just till then, was declared dead with the yelling of his kith and kin. One should contemplate over the fact that one's body is as transitory as a dew drop on the tip of a blade of grass and therefore practise Dharma.

Commentary:

It is often difficult to believe one's own ears, when being told, that a person who had been just seen to be standing or sitting or lying till then, was to be declared dead with the hue and cry of his relatives. Thus one should compare this with that of the dew drop on the tip of a grass blade and contemplate over the transitory nature of the body and be in the practice of Dharma.

“கேளாதே வந்து கிளைகளாய் இல் தோன்றி
வாளாதே போவரால் மாந்தர்கள் - வாளாதே
சேக்கை மரன் ஒழியச் சேண் நீங்கு புள் போல
யாக்கை தமார்க்கு ஒழிய நீத்து”

- 30, நாலடியார்

Meaning:

The human beings who are born into a family without any prior information would leave their corpses with their kith and kin, like the birds, after having stayed in their nests in a tree, migrate away leaving their nests as they were.

Commentary:

The human beings take birth in a family without the prior knowledge of the family members, and leave their mortal remains with them on their deaths. This is compared to the flying away of the birds on migration unmindful of their nests in which they had been staying for so long.

அரும்பெறல் யாக்கையைப் பெற்ற பயத்தால்
பெரும்பயனும் ஆற்றவே கொள்க கரும்பூர்ந்த
சாறுபோல் சாலவும் பின்னுதவி மற்றதன்
கோதுபோல் போகும் உடம்பு

-34, நாலடியார்

Meaning:

This rare human birth is got out of the auspicious karma; therefore one should accumulate such auspicious karma. This sugarcane juice like karma helps the soul; the body is left behind as the bagasse after the juice.

கரும்பாட்டிக் கட்டி சிறுகாலைக் கொண்டார்
துரும்பெழுந்து வேங்கால் துயராண் டுழுவார்
வருந்தி உடம்பின் பயன்கொண்டார் கூற்றம்
வருங்கால் பரிவது இலர்.

-35, நாலடியார்

Meaning:

Those get the jaggery out of the sugarcane juice will not care about the bagasse being burnt; in the same way those who practise Dharma will not worry about their death.

Pazhamozhi (பழமொழி):

“திரியும் இடிஞ்சிலும் நெய்யும் சார்வாக
ளரியும் சுடரே ரனைத்தாய்த் - தெரியுங்கால்
சார் அற ஓடிப் பிறப்பு அறுக்கும் அஃதே போல
*நீர் அற நீர்ச்சார் அறும்”

- 397, பழமொழி

***Note:** Each verse in this text ends with a proverb.

Meaning:

A light can glow only with the support of a lamp, ghee and wick. Similarly, the misery of births and deaths can be removed only by the destruction of the three types of Karma. Where there is no water, the life forms thriving on the support of the water will also perish away.

Commentary:

The lamp, ghee and wick are indispensable for a light to glow. In the same way, the destruction of three karmas is indispensable to remove the misery of transmigration of a soul. They are as follows:

Dravya karma - the subtle karmic matter
Bhava karma - the mental dispositions of passions
No karma - the physical body

Further the same is reiterated by citing another example by a proverb, which states that where there is no water, there would be no life forms that thrive on the support of the water.

Elaadhi (ஏலாதி)

“பிணி பிறப்பு மூப்போடு சாக்காடு துன்பம்
தணிவில் நிரப்பிவை தாழா - அணியின்
அரங்கின் மேல் ஆடுநர் போல் ஆகாமல் நன்றாம்
நிரம்பு மேல் வீட்டு நெறி”

- 24 ஏலாதி

Meaning:

Disease, birth, old age, death, the earning the means and the insatiable poverty are the miseries of the human life. Like a dancer who changes different roles on the stage, one should not be lost in the vicious cycle of different births and deaths but should try to attain the liberation.

Commentary:

Disease, birth, old age, death, the earning the lively hood, and the insatiable poverty are the miseries in one's life. A dancer performs different roles on the stage. Likewise, one should not be lost in the vicious cycle of transmigration but to should take to asceticism to attain the ultimate liberation.

Naanmanikkadigai (நான்மணிக்கடிகை):

“என்றும் உளவாகும் நாளும் இரு சுடரும்
என்றும் பிணியும் தொழில் ஒக்கும் - என்றும்
கொடுப்பாரும் கொள்வாரும் அன்னர் பிறப்பாரும்
சாவாரும் என்றும் உளர்”

-60, நான்மணிக்கடிகை

Meaning:

As the stars, the sun and the moon are forever, as the deeds and hurdles are forever, and as the givers and takers are forever, so are those forever, who are born and died.

Commentary:

As long as there are the stars, the sun and the moon, as long as there are deeds and hindrances to such deeds and as long as there are givers and takers, there would be always births and deaths.

Conclusion:

The above verses of poetry very clearly depict the impermanent nature of one's mortal body through a variety of similes and metaphors relieving one of the mystifying hearsays about death and guiding one in seeking for a deep spiritual contemplation on the pure intrinsic nature of one's own immortal soul.

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