Kinship Terms in Jaffna Tamil Dialect - A Sociolinguistic Study

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Abstract: The main objective of this paper is to classify the kinship terms used in modern Jaffna Tamil social structures and life styles which were collected through field work. This classification is basically undertaken by differentiating and identifying the semantic contents of the collected kinship terms. Further more detail descriptive analysis is done on the usage of the kinship terms in different social contexts, based on the information collected from field work reports. This study involves the descriptive type of methodology. Appropriately, wherever possible and necessary historical explanation of the form use and semantic of kinship terms are given in this paper. Descriptions of historical explanations are generally based on Tamil literatures and dictionaries. Out of 132 kinship terms collected through field work, we found out only 38 are identified to be common to lexicon, kriya and Jaffna spoken variety. Detail analysis was done to understand the functions of the kinship terms in Jaffna society. We investigated how kinship terms are used in the various social environments, viz., terms of address and references, non kinsfolk, fictive kinship usage, personal names and divine relationships. The work and analysis undertaken in this paper significantly contributes to identify the social patterns of the Jaffna society, via the kin relationship between the society and the language. In addition to this, the work provides useful information to understand more on the descriptive, historical and comparative views of the Jaffna society.

Keywords: Dialect, Kinship, Semantics, Sociolinguistics.

I. INTRODUCTION

Kinship plays an important part in all human societies both in the regulation of behavior between persons and in all the formation of social, political and territorial groups. A part of every kinship system is a set of regulation concerning marriage between persons related by kinship and through marriage. In the Jaffna society a person has a choice among several terms to identify his kinsmen and describe broadly the kind of relationship he has with them both consanguineous and affinal. The kinship terms have always been understood to form an important semantic structure. The structure of the kinship terms vary from country to country and society to society. Similarly, kin terms, semantic content and functions also vary. Kinship terms in Jaffna Tamil dialect also differ very significantly in other Tamil dialects in their social uses, semantic content and functions.The purpose of this paper is to analyse kinship terms briefly in most of its structure and functions in Jaffna society.

What are kinship terms? We begin with kinship relations. Members of a family or marriage relations or both relation become kin relations. The Concept of family is commonly expressed in Tamil by the term 'kutumpam'. A family man and woman are known as kutumpakkaaran, kutumppakkaari. Kin terms in Tamil function as both address and reference. Phrase 'uravup peyar' in Tamil is used as translations of kin terms; earlier the word 'muraippeyar' was used in spoken variety and written variety. 'Tolkappiyar' also used the word 'muraippeyar' [2]. In the Jaffna Spoken Tamil dialect, the word 'muraippeyar' is still being used.

II. Lexicon and Kriya Dictionaries

We are all aware of Language dictionaries which give the meaning of the words and meaning of kinship terms. It does not give the whole list of kinship terms and we can't expect this. Dictionaries differ among them in giving the kinship terms in a Language. Language is a living thing and subject to constant changes. The functions of the kinship are bound with the culture. So, some kin terms accept changes: When we analyse the kinship terms, we should consider the dictionaries, because they give the kinship terms and their explanations. In Tamil many dictionaries were published from time to time. In this research study, only the Great Tamil lexicon which was published by the Madras University in 1924 and the modern Tamil Kriya dictionary which was published in 1992 were considered.This study is chiefly based on the author's observations. Her speech represents the Tamil dialect of Jaffna and the data collected in five villages around Karainagar. We indentified 690 kinship terms from madras Tamil lexicon [1]. However T.P. Meenakshishundaran listed 900 kinship terms from Tamil lexicon [2]. This difference arose because we omitted words like Pankaali aansantati, tooli, in our identified list. We also noticed that with regard to the number of kinship terms, there is a big difference between the Great Tamil lexicon and the Kriya dictionary. Actually Tamil Lexicon contains many more terms from old Tamil Literature and of regional varieties. However many of the kinship terms listed are not in use in the modern Tamil Society. Interestingly, we noticed that Jaffna society does not know several kinship terms given in the lexicon. At the same time it is worth to mention that lexicon did not adopt some popular kinship terms used in Jaffna Tamil dialect. 132 kinship terms were collected through field work by us. In Lexicon, There are 1772 words seen [4] which belong to Jaffna Tamil dialect. Among these, there are 19 kinship terms. It is crystal clear that the Indian Tamil dialect was not known to these 19 kin terms. The kriya dictionary points out that some words belong to Srilankan usages. It has given 436 words [3]. It is said that these are introduced to Indian Tamil. There are five kinship terms among them. We will see that the kinterms are together.

Table 1: Lexicon kin terms

appi	elder sister
kaavalaaLi	husband
kunci	mother's sister
	Father's sister
kunciyaacci	mother's sister
kunciyaayi	mother's sister
koppaaTTan	third grandfather
ciRRappan	step father
tankaaL	mother
toTTaaycci	step mother
nallappan	father's brother
nallammaaL	mother's sister
nallaacci	mother's sister relationship
nan maccaan	uncle's son
nan maRumakaL	niece
nan maaman	mother's brother
nan maami	father's sister
peyaran	grand father
moon	son
vampu	illegal child

<div align="center">**Table 2:** Kriya kin terms</div>

appappaa	grandfather
peetti	grandmother (only Jaffna)
peertti	grandmother
peeran	grandfather (only Jaffna)
maccaaL	cousin sister
	sister in law (Name refering to relations)

Kriya dictionary which gives the kin term appappaa does not give the terms ammammaa, appammaa, ammappaa these are the new kinterms [3]. Most kin terms given by the lexicon are not known by the Jaffna society. Kaitay, koNTavan, koLunti, cakkaLati, taatai, numbi, akkan, accan, anpan, aayanti, oorpaTi, oorakatti, kaavalaaLi, kaitaay, koNTavan, etc the reason for this is that among these kin terms there are either old literary usages or today's Indian's speech variety, like the kin terms ammankaar, aamutaiyaan, orakatti, attimpeer, naaTTuppeN, naakaran, etc. Nowadays these kinterms are introduced in short stories, TV drama, cinema etc. Some kin terms in the kriya dictionary are not familiar to Jaffna Tamil dialect. Some examples are taayaati, pitaamakan, kutumpi, koLuntanaar. In speech variety there is a possibility of increasing the number of kinship terms. Some kinship terms are disuse in the Jaffna society.

<div align="center">III. KINSHIP TERMS IN JAFFNA TAMIL</div>

There are several kinship terms to identify and describe broadly the kind of relationship both consanguineous and affinal. The following are the kin terms: kuuTappiRanthavar, cakootaRaNgaL, uTanpiRantavar or orutaay (vayiRRup) piLLaiyaL "born together/children born of same mother (mother's womb), tuTakkukkaaRar "people who share impurity", kiTTaTiccontakkaaRar "close relations", oNTai viTTa "step" , oNTai viTTa makan "step son". Ontai viTTa makaL " step daughter, vaLaRppuppiLLaiyaL "adopted children", oru capai cantikkaaRar "people who sit together and eat (at ceremonies)" campantiyaL "relations by marriage" pala vaLiyilai contakkaaRar "relations in many ways", oree aakkal "one people", oru vaLiyilai contakkaaRar "relations in a restricted way", uRRaar uRavinar "relations and friends", ina cannam "relations in a general way" tuuRattucontakkaaRar "distant relations" [4]. The above used kin structure is real and still functions in Jaffna Tamil dialect.

<div align="center">**Table 3:** Important kin terms of the Jaffna Tamil</div>

akkaa	Elder sister
akkaattai	Elder sister
attaan	Husband
	Elder sister's husband
	Husband's or wife's elder brother
attai	Father's sister
appaa	Father
appu	Father
	Mother's or Father's father
appappaa	Father's father
appammaa	Father's mother
appaacci	Father's mother
ayyaa	Father

aNNaa	Elder brother
aNNaacci	Elder brother
aNNi	Elder brother's wife
ammaa	Mother
ammammaa	Mother's mother
ammappaa	Mother's father
ammaan	Mother's brother
aacci	Mother
	Mother's or Father's mother
aattai	Mother
	Mother's mother
iraTTaippiLLai	Twins
iraTTayar	twins
uTan piRantavaL	Own sister
uTan piRantavar	Own brother
uTanpiRappu	Own brothers and sisters
uRRaar uRavinar	Relations
oru taay piLLayaL	Sibling
oree aakkaL	Relations
kaNavan	Husband
kunci	Mother's younger sister
	Father's younger brother
Kunciyappan	Father's younger brother
	Mother's younger sister's husband
kunciyappaa	Father's younger brother
	Mother's younger sister's husband
kunciyappu	Father's younger brother
	Mother's younger sister's husband
kuncaiyaa	Father's younger brother
	Mother's younger sister's husband
kuncammaa	Mother's younger sister
	Father's younger brother's wife
kuncaacci	Mother's younger sister
	Father's younger brother's wife
kuTumpakkaaran	Married male with children
kuTumpakkaari	Married female with children
kuzantaikuTTi	Children in different ages
kuzantai kuTTikkaaran	Man with a big family
koppaaTTan	Third great grandfather
koppaaTTi	Third great grandmother
koLLuppaaTTan	Great great grandfather
koLLuppaaTTi	Great great grandmother
cakalan	Wife's sister's husband
cakootaran	Own brother
cakootari	Own sister
camcaaram	Wife
campantakkaarar	Parents of bride and bride groom
campantakkudiyaar	Parents of bride and bride groom
campanti	Parents of bride and bride groom
citti	Mother's younger sister

ciRiyatakappan	Father's younger brother
	Mother's younger sister's husband
cittappaa	Mother's younger sister's husband
	Father's younger brother
cinnammaa	Mother's younger sister
cinnaiyaa	Father's younger brother
contakkaaran	Relation
takappan	Father
tankai	Younger sister
tankacci	Younger sister
tattuppiLLai	Adopted child
tantai	father
tampati	Husband and wife
tampi	Younger brother
tamakkai	Elder sister
tamayan	Elder brother
taattaa	Grandfather
taay	Mother
taaytantai	Parents
taayppaaTTan	Mother's father
taay maaman	Mother's own brother
taaram	Wife
Pappaa	father
paaTTan	Parent's father
paaTTaa	Parents' father
paaTTi	Parents' mother
piriyan	Husband
piLLai	Child
piLLai kuTTiyaL	Children
purucan	Husband
peNcaati	Wife
peNTaaTTi	Wife
periyappaa	Father's elder brother
	Mother's elder sister's husband
periyappu	Father's elder brother
	Mother's elder sister's husband
periyayyaa	Father's elder brother
	Mother's elder sister's husband
Periyataay	Mother's elder sister
periyammaa	Mother's elder sister
	Father's elder brother's wife
Periyaacci	Mother's elder sister
Petta takappan	Father
Petta taay	Mother
Petta piLLai	Own son or daughter
peRRaar	Parents
peRRoor	Parents
peetti	Grandmother
	Daughter's or son's daughter
peeran	Grandfather
	Daughter's or son's son
peerappiLLai	Son's or daughter's children

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makan	Son
makaL	Daughter
makkaL	Children
maccaaL	Wife's sister
	Brother's wife
	Mother's brother's daughter
	Father's sister's daughter
maccaan	Wife's brother
	Sister's husband
	Mother's brother's son
	Father's sister's son
maccinan	Brother in law
maccini	Sister in law
marumakaL	Son's wife
marumakan	Daughter's husband
manican	Husband
manici	Wife
maappiLai	Bridegroom
maamaa	Mother's own brother
	Father's sister's husband
	Husband or wife's father
maami	Father's sister
	Mother's brother's wife
	Husband or wife's mother
meeL	Daughter
meen	Son
moon	Son
mooL	Daughter
vampuppiLLai	Illegal child
vaLarppuppiLLai	Adopted child

On the other hand, it is more reasonable to consider as a borrowed word in Jaffna Tamil dialect as the similarity can be explained. The English words 'daddy' 'dada' and 'dad' are used for 'F' both in address and reference. 'Mummy' 'Mom' and 'Ma' are used for 'M' both in address and reference 'Uncle' and 'auntie' also used. These new terms have caused certain changes in the patterns of kinship terms use. All these are caused by the socio psychological reasons [5].

Most kinship terms in Tamil function both as terms of address and terms of reference but some only as terms of reference. The reference of kin address and kin reference having to two different types contrasting in their usages. The right choice of a suitable term to address and reference to a kin group was expected, encouraged and emphasized for long in the Jaffna society. Generally speaking the youngest generation in our society has a trend to look at any elderly man or elderly woman outside the family or close relative with whom as an 'uncle' or 'antie'/'auntie' in the same order .kin terms are mainly used either for address or reference to kinsfolk. Kin terms are also used as polite, intimacy, respect and affection to familiar non kinfolk. appu, ayyaa, appaa 'father' aacci,ammaa 'mother' aNNai 'elder brother' akkaa 'elder sister' tampi 'younger brother' tankacci 'younger sister' These are currently used both for address and reference at different social levels. The terms takappan,teeppan, appan, tantai 'father' taay,maataa 'mother' tankai 'younger sister' annan,tamaiyan 'elder brother'tamakkai 'elder sister'function only as terms of reference.

Fictive kinship is not something unknown to early Tamil society. There are evidences in Tamil Literature like Narrinai, Cilappatikaaram, and kamparaamaayanam for the occurrences of fictive kin terms [4]. Fictive use of kinship terms happens more in village background instead of in town settings. Only a limited number of terms used in certain selected situations are welcome to them but generally kin terms like appu, ayyaa, aacci, amaa, annai, akkaa, tambi, tankacci are used.

Most kin terms also changed the function as personal names. Earlier both were very closely related kin terms with personal name, kin term with part of the personal name and kin terms with nick names are used in Jaffna society. For example appaiyaa, tampiyappaa, aaccippillai, paaraatai etc. Names such as these are gradually becoming out of fashion. Some have almost fallen in to disuse among the younger generation. In Jaffna Tamil dialect most kin terms occur in pairs. For example: annan tampi, akkaa tankai, appaa ammaa, maaman maami. In pairs consisting of masculine-masculine terms and feminine-feminine terms. Usually the term that stands for an elder kin occurs as the first member, but in pairs where both terms belong to different genders, the masculine terms occur as the first. This pattern is more flexible nowadays.

To express surprise, excitement or thrilling feeling the following kinship terms are used. Appappaa, ammammaa, appaati, ammaati. When either exhausted, sad or unable to bear any burden more, when there are more worries in the mind, when fallen sick we can hear people calling appu, appaa, ayyaa, ammaa, taayee. By calling these kinship terms louder it seems that people get some kind of satisfaction or consolation. Kin terms are not only used to kins and non-kins but also used towards God When people pray God piously if SHE is a Goddess they call her aacci ammaa, taayee and taayee aacci, ammaa, taayee. If 'HE' is a God we can see the people calling him loudly as appu, ayyaa, appanee, ayyanee and worship him in the temples. When God is called by the names of appan, ayyan, the names are not considered below dignity.

IV. CONCLUSION

Nowadays, the functions of kinship terms are found to be very flexible. The kinship terminology and usage have been changed both qualitatively and quantitatively corresponding to certain social changes. The general tendency seems to be towards a reduction in the number of kin terms that are being used. Some kinterms disappeared and archaic is in the usages. So intervention is needed to collect and document those words.

A comparative study of the kinship in between the dialects of Tamil would be useful for Tamil language development and the understanding of different cultures. Systematic comparative study of old Tamil Literature kinship terms and modern Tamil kinship terms will be useful indeed to Tamil Literary heritage and Tamil Language development.

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