

Glossary

Unless otherwise stated, terms are in Tamil.

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| <i>agrahāram</i> | Skt., Brahmin settlement |
| <i>ahiṃsā</i> | Skt., nonviolence |
| <i>akkā</i> | elder sister |
| <i>alaṅkāram</i> | decoration of an icon; more generally: embellishment |
| <i>alaṅkāra tīpārāṭaṇai</i> | ornamentation and worship of a deity with a light |
| <i>ammaṅ</i> | appellation of a female deity (marking her out as female) |
| <i>antāti</i> | (lit. “end-beginning”) a poetic style in which the last word of one verse becomes the first word of the next |
| <i>āppam</i> | eatables |
| <i>bali/pali</i> | Skt./Ta., sacrifice |
| <i>bhakti</i> | Skt., devotion |
| <i>cāmiṅvākku</i> | divine utterance |
| <i>cāmiyāṭi</i> | god-dancer |
| <i>cāmiyāṭṭam</i> | dancing (under possession of) the deity |
| <i>Ceṭṭi</i> | the merchant social group |
| <i>cumaitāṅki kal</i> | a stone formation upon which to set down loads |
| <i>darśana</i> | Skt., a devotee’s vision of a deity |
| <i>deva</i> | Skt., a divinity |
| <i>devadāsī</i> | Skt., female temple dancer (one of whose main functions is to light lights for the gods) |
| <i>devatās</i> | Skt., minor deities |
| <i>dṛṣṭi</i> | Skt., evil eye |
| <i>gopuram</i> | Skt., tower |
| <i>ilaṅkam</i> | a building |
| <i>kācu</i> | a unit of currency |
| <i>kalam</i> | a unit of measure for grain |
| <i>Kālī/Kāḷi</i> | Skt./Ta., the name of a pan-Indian Śaiva goddess |
| <i>kaḷḷi</i> | a milky sap-bearing shrub/weed (<i>Euphorbia tirucalli</i>) |
| <i>kamukampū</i> | areca flower |
| <i>kaṅṅi</i> | virginal woman |
| <i>kāppiyam/kāvya</i> | Ta./Skt., long narrative poem |
| <i>Karaiyāḷar</i> | (see <i>Vēlāḷa</i>) |
| <i>katai</i> | story |
| <i>kaṭakam</i> | silver bangle |
| <i>kāṭu</i> | forest, wilderness |
| <i>koṭai</i> | gift, festival in honour of a local deity |
| <i>kōyil/kōvil</i> | temple, shrine |
| <i>kulateyvam</i> | lineage deity |
| <i>kuṅkumam</i> | red powder, vermilion |
| <i>kuravai</i> | a ululation sound made by flapping the tongue against the inside of the mouth |
| <i>kuṛi</i> | sign, prediction |
| <i>kuṭam</i> | pot |
| <i>liṅga</i> | Skt., phallus-shaped stone |

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| <i>mañcaḷ</i> | turmeric |
| <i>mañcaṇai</i> | a mixture of yellow turmeric, <i>kuṅkumam</i> powder, and oil |
| <i>mangala</i> | Skt., auspicious (vs. <i>amangala</i> , “inauspicious”) |
| <i>maṇṭapam</i> | hall |
| <i>mantiravāṭi</i> | (lit. “one who [utters] mantras”) a sorcerer |
| <i>māppillai mañcappillai</i> | a kind of ritual |
| <i>māṭaṇ</i> | appellation for certain deities (marking them out as males) |
| <i>māṭṭkās</i> | Skt., mother goddesses |
| <i>mēkalai</i> | a waistbelt (an emblem of long life) |
| <i>mokṣa</i> | Skt., freedom from <i>samsāra</i> |
| <i>mudrā</i> | Skt., ritual hand gesture |
| <i>mūlasthāna</i> | Skt., foundation, base |
| <i>muni/muṇi</i> | Skt./Ta., sage, ascetic |
| <i>mūtēvi</i> | the goddess of misfortune |
| <i>nāñcil</i> | plough |
| <i>nāṭakam</i> | drama |
| <i>nātasvaram</i> | an oboe-like instrument |
| <i>nāṭu</i> | land |
| <i>nērccai</i> | thanksgiving gift |
| <i>nīm</i> | Hi., margosa (<i>Azadirachta indica</i> , Ta. <i>vēmpu</i>) |
| <i>pālabhiṣeka</i> | the ceremonial pouring of milk |
| <i>pālai</i> | wilderness (a landscape associated with dryness) |
| <i>pantal</i> | canopy |
| <i>pantam</i> | flaming torch |
| <i>paral</i> | a token used when taking an oath |
| <i>paṭaiṭṭu</i> | offering |
| <i>patikam</i> | preface, introduction; stanza |
| <i>perampu</i> | staff, stick |
| <i>pēy/peya</i> | Ta./Prakrit, hungry spirit (the spirit of a dead person in limbo) |
| <i>pūṭam</i> | a platform |
| <i>poṅkal</i> | rice cooked in milk in an earthen pot until it boils over (symbolising abundance) |
| <i>prasāda</i> | Skt., a food offering for gods, upon being returned to the devotee |
| <i>pūjāri/pūjāri</i> | Skt./Ta., non-Brahmin priest |
| <i>pūkkuli</i> | fire walking |
| <i>pūppaṭaiṭṭu</i> | flower offering |
| <i>pūppaṭukkai</i> | flowerbed |
| <i>pūtam/bhūta</i> | Ta./Skt., demon |
| <i>puṭṭu</i> | eatables |
| <i>rākṣasa</i> | Skt., demon |
| <i>sati</i> | Skt., the self-immolation of a widow along with her deceased husband |
| <i>tālampū/tālai</i> | screw pine (<i>Pandanus odoratissimus</i> , Skt. <i>ketakī</i>) |
| <i>tāli</i> | marriage badge; a conventionally recognised emblem of maturation in matrilinear systems |
| <i>taluk (Engl.)</i> | Hi. <i>tāllukā</i> , an administrative unit below the district level |
| <i>Tamiḷakam</i> | Tamil country |
| <i>taṅkai</i> | younger sister |
| <i>tīrthaṅkara</i> | Skt., fordmaker |
| <i>tuvaḷai</i> | kid goat |
| <i>vacaṇam</i> | narrating in rhythmic prose |
| <i>vēcai</i> | harlot |
| <i>vēl</i> | spear |
| <i>Vēlaḷa/Karaiyāḷar</i> | landowning peasant-farmer |
| <i>vēmpu</i> | margosa (<i>Azadirachta indica</i> , Hi. <i>nīm</i>) |
| <i>viḷaiyāṭal</i> | play, amusement |
| <i>villuppāṭṭu</i> | bow-song |
| <i>virāl</i> | a species of fish |
| <i>yakṣīs</i> | Skt., a type of semi-god |