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DARK PSYCHOLOGICAL ELEMENTS IN THOLKAPPIYAR'S THOLKAPPIYAM

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Abstract: Abstract

This research paper explores the principles of 'Meyppattiyal' (the aesthetics/physical manifestations of emotions) in the Porulathikaram of Tolkappiyar's Tolkappiyam through the lens of modern 'Dark Psychology'. This study demonstrates how 'Meyppadus'—the physical and psychological expressions of internal and external human emotions—relate to dark psychological traits such as internal emotional conflict, deceit, manipulation, mental stress, vengefulness, and social dominance. By analyzing the eight primary emotions specified by Tolkappiyar—humor/mockery (Nakai), sorrow (Alukai), contempt/degradation (Ilivara), wonder (Marutkai), fear (Acham), pride/valour (Perumitham), anger (Vekuli), and joy (Uvakai)—along with their underlying causes and manifestations through classical poetic tradition, this paper uncovers the implicit psychological strategies utilized in ancient Tamil culture. Specifically, it examines how 'Ilivara' (self-degradation/loss of dignity), 'Vekuli' (anger/vengeful wrath), 'Acham' (fear/dominance through intimidation), and the subtle nuances of 'Nakai' (dark humor/mockery) align with human negative and dark psychological states. Ultimately, this work establishes that ancient Tamil grammar is not merely a linguistic framework, but also a sophisticated psychological document offering deep insight into the darker dimensions of the human mind.

Keywords: Tolkappiyam - Meyppattiyal (Aesthetics of Emotion) -
Tolkappiyar - Dark Psychology - Eightfold Emotions (Envakai Meyppatukal)
- Emotional Manipulation - Negative Emotions - Tamil Literary Psychology.



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Introduction

Tolkappiyam is universally acknowledged by scholars as an peerless document that proclaimed the culture and civilization of ancient Tamils to the world. It stands as the foremost work among all available Tamil texts today. Porulathikaram, which prescribes the grammar for human life, reveals Tolkappiyar's multifaceted expertise and encyclopedic wisdom. By dividing human life into Akam (interior life/love) and Puram (exterior life/war and ethics), Tolkappiyar laid the foundation for numerous disciplines that are developing in Western nations today.

The vast field of psychology is currently developing and establishing itself at all levels across the globe. The credit for laying its seeds also goes to Tolkappiyar. Scholars are well aware that elements of psychology permeate all chapters of Tolkappiyar's Porulathikaram. Although psychology has branched into various subfields, 'Dark Psychology' is emerging in modern psychology as a branch that investigates the dark sides of toxic individuals—specifically how they manipulate human minds for personal benefit, deceive, exert control, and prevent others from acting autonomously.

Purpose of the Research

Although the concepts and principles of dark psychology are spread across the entirety of Tolkappiyam's Porulathikaram, the primary objective of this paper is to analyze how these theories correspond fully with the Meyppadus (emotional manifestations) outlined by Tolkappiyar in Meyppattiyal.

Research Methodology

- **Analytical Method:** Analyzing Tolkappiyar's Nuurpas (grammatical verses) and the commentary perspectives of commentators such as Ilampuranar and Perasiriyar.
- **Comparative Method:** Comparing ancient Tamil psychological principles with modern dark psychology theories.
- **Data Sources:**
 - **Primary Source:** Tolkappiyam - Porulathikaram (Meyppattiyal Nuurpas)
 - **Secondary Sources:** Tolkappiya Meyppattiyal, Sangam Literature, and modern psychological research papers

Dark Psychology

Dark Psychology is the art of maliciously utilizing the workings of the human mind to control, deceive, and emotionally manipulate others for personal gain. It is an insidious act that uses coercion, deception, and emotional control to fragment an individual's independent thinking. It consists of three primary components known as the Dark Triad:

- 1. Narcissism:** Characterized by excessive grandiosity, lack of empathy, and an inflated self-concept.
- 2. Psychopathy:** Characterized by a lack of guilt, absence of compassion, and extreme selfishness.
- 3. Machiavellianism:** Characterized by a cunning disposition that justifies any means to achieve one's ends.

Pioneers of Dark Psychology

Although Dark Psychology is not officially recognized as a standalone branch of psychology, the following pioneers contributed significantly to its historical foundation:

- **Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527):** In his world-famous work *The Prince*, he explained how ruthless tactics, deception, and duplicity could be used to acquire and maintain power. The term Machiavellianism, describing psychological manipulation, originates from him.
- Sigmund Freud (1856–1939)
- Edward Bernays (1891–1995)
- Robert Greene
- **Delroy Paulhus & Kevin Williams:** These two researchers categorized human dark traits into three primary divisions and named it the Dark Triad theory. They explained their concepts through this model, which serves as the core focal point of dark psychology.

Psychoanalysis and Tolkappiya Meippadu

Rather than offering a simple definition for Meyppadu, Tolkappiyar outlines its classification in the first verse of Meyppattiyal. Its deeper meaning is understood through the commentators' explanations. Ilampuranar explains: "Mey = body, Paadu = occurrence/manifestation. The physical variations occurring in the body according to the feelings arising in the mind are called Meyppadu." Perasiriyar states: "Mey = subject/reality, Paadu = manifestation; hence, the expression of internal states like laughter is Meyppadu."

*“Pannai thonriya ennaanku porulum
Kanniya purane naanaank enba.” (Tol. Meyppattiyal, V. 1)*

Ilampuranar notes that Pannai refers to play/amusement, standing metonymically for a group of uneducated or uneducated people engaged in play. Therefore, the grammar presented in Tolkappiya Meyppattiyal addresses human beings who lack moral discipline and exhibit toxic tendencies. As Ilampuranar clarifies: "These sixteen states are said to appear in play because they do not arise in the assembly of learned, righteous, and wise people. Why? Because derision, which causes malicious laughter, does not arise in them..."

Thus, Meyppattiyal aligns directly with concepts found in modern dark psychology. The following comparative analysis illustrates this connection:

S.No	Meyppadu (Emotion)	Manifestation Causes	Dark Psychological Component
01	Nakai (Laughter/Derision)	Ellal (Derision), Ilamai (Youthfulness), Pethaimai (Ignorance), Madan (Foolishness)	Gaslighting and Schadenfreude
02	Alukai (Sorrow)	Ilivu (Humiliation), Izhavu (Loss), Asaivu (Helplessness), Varumai (Poverty)	Playing the Victim and Guilt Tripping

03	Ilivaral (Contempt/Disgust)	Muuppu (Old Age), Pini (Disease), Varutham (Distress/Effort), Menmai (Frailty)	Social Devaluation and Ostracism
04	Marutkai (Wonder)	Puthumai (Novelty), Perumai (Grandeur), Sirumai (Minuteness), Aakkam (Transformation)	Cognitive Overload and Confusion Tactics
05	Acham (Fear)	Anangu (Deity/Supernatural), Vilangu (Wild Beast), Kalvar (Thieves), Irai (Ruler/Authority)	Fearmongering and Conditioning
06	Perumitham (Pride/Valour)	Kalvi (Learning), Tharukan (Fearlessness), Isaimai (Fame), Kodai (Generosity)	Narcissistic Grandiosity
07	Vekuli (Anger)	Uruparai (Mutilation), Kudikol (Family Ruin), Alai (Harassment), Kolai (Murder/Slander)	Tactical Intimidation and Aggression
08	Uvakai (Joy)	Selvam (Wealth), Pulan (Sensory Knowledge), Punarvu (Union), Vilaiyaattu (Recreation)	Love Bombing and Exploitative Hedonism

Analysis of the Eight Primary Meyppadus

1. Nakai (Laughter / Derision)

- **Ellal (Derision):** Laughing at others in mockery (Kali. 61), or laughing when mocked by others (Akam 248).
- **Ilamai (Youthfulness/Immaturity):** Laughing at others due to one's own immaturity (Kali. 88), or laughing at another's youthfulness (Akam 16).
- **Pethaimai (Ignorance):** Laughing at others out of one's own ignorance (Akam 248), or laughing at another's lack of intellect (Akam 56).
- **Madam (Naivety/Stubbornness):** Persisting stubbornly; laughing at others out of naivety (Kurun. 169), or mocking another's foolishness (Akam 121).

In Dark Psychology, these are identified as Gaslighting, Negging, and Schadenfreude. It serves as a strategy to derive pleasure from others' errors or ignorance, diminish their self-esteem, and establish psychological dominance.

"Negging is a dark manipulation tactic where low-grade insults and subtle put-downs are used to erode a person's confidence and increase their dependence on the manipulator." — **Peter K. Jonason (The Dark Triad of Personality, p. 112)**

2. Alukai (Sorrow / Emotional Victimhood)

Modern psychology defines this as playing the victim and guilt-tripping—exhibiting personal suffering or loss to induce guilt in others and force compliance. Tolkappiya Meyppattiyal categorizes its origins into four states:

- **Ilivu (Humiliation):** Weeping because one was mocked by others (Akam 175), or weeping upon seeing someone else humiliated (Kali. 37).
- **Izhavu (Loss):** Weeping over one's own loss (Puram 249), or weeping upon seeing another's loss (Akam 73).
- **Asaivu (Distress/Frailness):** Weeping due to personal fatigue/distress (Kali. 139), or weeping at another's distress (Puram 252).
- **Varumai (Poverty):** Weeping over one's own poverty (Puram 164), or weeping at another's poverty (Puram 19).

Dark psychologists view this as a tactic using deceptive sorrow and tears to induce guilt and achieve personal agendas.

"Playing the victim is a powerful manipulative strategy designed to elicit pity, avoid accountability, and force others to comply with emotional demands." — **George K. Simon (In Sheep's Clothing: Understanding and Dealing with Manipulative People, p. 84)**

3. Ilivaral (Disgust / Social Devaluation)

Dark psychology views this as a method to portray someone as degraded or repulsive, encouraging social exclusion (Dehumanization and Ostracism). Meyppattiyal breaks this down into:

- **Muuppu (Old Age):** Despising one's own aging (Puram 242) or mocking another's old age.
- **Pini (Disease):** Feeling disgust at one's own illness (Kurun. 158) or mocking another's infirmity (Kurun. 128).
- **Varuttham (Effort/Distress):** Mocking others based on one's own struggles (Kurun. 337), or despising oneself upon witnessing another's arduous effort (Kurun. 128).
- **Menmai (Frailty):** Showing contempt due to one's weakness (Puram 239) or despising another's frailty (Puram 239).

Psychologists highlight that using weakness or disease to demean someone shatters their mental resilience.

"Dehumanization reduces emotional empathy, making it significantly easier for manipulators to target, isolate, and exploit their subjects." — **William Cooper (Dark Psychology: Secrets of Emotional Manipulation, p. 58)**

4. Marutkai (Wonder / Confusion and Shock Tactics)

Dark psychology explains this as inducing awe or confusion in an opponent to paralyze their rational thinking and subjugate them (Shock & Awe / Confusion Tactics). Meyppattiyal outlines four causes:

- **Puthumai (Novelty):** Wondering at something novel within oneself (Akam 82) or in others (Akam 82).
- **Perumai (Grandeur):** Marveling at greatness manifested in oneself (Kurun. 03) or in others (Kurun. 03).
- **Sirumai (Minuteness):** Expressing shock at extreme insignificance/pettiness in oneself or others.
- **Aakkam (Transformation/Prosperity):** Wondering at radical transformations in oneself (Puram 05) or in others (Naladi. 38).

Overwhelming an opponent with unexpected marvels or erratic behavior paralyzes their critical faculties.

"Inducing a state of shock or confusion paralyzes critical thinking, leaving the target exceptionally open to immediate suggestion." — Robert Mendelson (The Psychology of Manipulation, p. 142)

5. Acham (Fear / Fearmongering)

Psychologists view fear as a dark tactic used to intimidate individuals and enforce absolute submission. Tolkappiyam lists four triggers:

- **Anangu:** Fear of supernatural entities, snakes, thunder, deep darkness, or raging fire (Perumpan. 134).
- **Vilangu:** Fear of wild beasts.
- **Kalvar:** Fear of thieves/outlaws (Kali. 87).
- **Irai:** Fear of the king or ruling authority.

Using external threats or tyrannical authority instills deep dependence on the manipulator.

"Fear is the most potent emotional lever; once induced, it overrides logical judgment and forces compliance for safety." — Richard Campbell (Dark Psychology and Gaslighting, p. 97)

6. Perumitham (Pride / Narcissistic Grandiosity)

Modern psychology views this emotion through the framework of narcissistic dominance, where an individual exaggerates their superiority to force others into submission (Grandiosity & Narcissistic Dominance). Meyppattiyal grounds it in:

- **Kalvi (Learning):** Boasting of intellect/scholarly achievement (Kali. 141).
- **Tharukan (Fearlessness):** Displaying extreme audacity or ruthless valor (Kali. 141).
- **Isaimai (Fame):** Parading one's reputation (Akam 112).
- **Kodai (Generosity):** Displaying ostentatious philanthropy (Kali. 141).

Exhibiting superiority in wealth, knowledge, or power induces inferiority in others.

"Narcissistic grandiosity uses an inflated sense of superiority to intimidate others and demand unearned submission." — Dr. Craig Malkin (Rethinking Narcissism, p. 123)

7. Vekuli (Anger / Intimidation & Explosive Rage)

This represents the tactical display of rage to frighten an opponent into compliance (Intimidation through Explosive Rage). Tolkappiyar details four expressions:

- **Uruparai (Mutilation):** Threatening or causing bodily disfigurement (Kali. 52).
- **Kudikol (Ruin of Kinship):** Plotting harm against another's spouse, family, or lineage (Puram 278).
- **Alai (Harassment):** Physical torture or persistent torment using weapons/canes (Puram 100).
- **Kolai (Destruction/Slander):** Destroying another's intellect, reputation, or life (Puram 72).

"Strategic display of anger is designed to create immediate compliance by threatening the safety or comfort of the target." — **Beverly Engel (The Psychology of Emotional Abuse, p. 165)**

8. Uvakai (Joy / Love Bombing)

Dark psychology interprets excessive displays of affection and pleasure as a mechanism to lower a target's guard and trap them (Love Bombing and Emotional Entrapment). Tolkappiyar lists:

- **Selvam (Wealth):** Gratification derived from material consumption (Kali. 12).
- **Pulan (Sensory Delight):** Intellectual pleasure gained through learning (Kali. 40).
- **Punarvu (Union):** Physical intimacy or deep friendship (Akam 142).
- **Vilaiyaattu (Recreation):** Indulging in festivities, rivers, and pleasure gardens (Kali. 30).

Showering a target with intense affection disarms their defenses.

"Love bombing involves overwhelming a target with excessive affection and joy to build trust rapidly, creating emotional dependency." — **Margaret Thaler Singer (Cults in Our Midst, p. 115)**

Psychoanalysis of the Thirty-Two Secondary Meyppadus

Beyond the eight primary emotions, Tolkappiyar details thirty-two secondary emotional manifestations. These also map directly onto modern dark psychological concepts:

S.No	Meyppadu	Literal / Contextual Meaning	Dark Psychological Trait
1	Udaimai	Possessiveness	Possessive Control
2	Inpural	Hedonism	Exploitative Pleasure
3	Naduvunilai	False Neutrality	Strategic Gaslighting
4	Arulal	Performative Compassion	Virtue Signaling / Savior Complex
5	Thanmai	False Humility	Self-Effacement Manipulation
6	Adakkam	Submissive Trapping	Covert Aggression / Victim Playing
7	Varaithal	Boundary Manipulation	Isolation Tactics

8	Anbu	Love	Emotional Grooming	Blackmail	/
9	Kaimmigal	Immorality / Transgression	Boundary Violation	Absolute Power Corrupts	/
10	Nalithal	Inflicting Pain	Sadism	/	Learned Helplessness
11	Suulchi	Manipulation / Plotting	Machiavellianism		
12	Vaalthal	Performative Praise	Dark Flattery		
13	Naanuthal	Exploited Shame	Weaponized Guilt		
14	Thunjal	Denial / Apathy	Psychological Blindness	/	Silent Treatment
15	Arattru	Induced Delusion	Drama Creation / Gaslighting		
16	Kanavu	False Hopes	Fantasy Trapping	/	Grandiosity
17	Munithal	Weaponized Hatred	Group Polarization	/	Intimidation
18	Ninaithal	Obsession	Fixation Manipulation		
19	Veruuthal	Panic / Dread	Fear-Mongering		
20	Madimai	Depletion / Lethargy	Weaponized Incompetence		
21	Karuthal	Selective Memory Revival	Guilt Tripping / Cold Profiling		
22	Aaraatchi	Deceptive Profiling	Cold Reading	/	Hyper-vigilance
23	Viraivu	Artificial Urgency	Pressure Tactics		
24	Uyirppu	Predatory Energy	Emotional Provocation		
25	Kaiyaaru	Induced Helplessness	Co-dependency		
26	Idukkan	Exploiting Distress	Predatory Opportunism	/	Manufactured Crisis
27	Potchappu	Cultivated Carelessness	Strategic Neglect	/	Plausible Deniability
28	Poraamai	Envy	Envy-Driven Sabotage		

29	Viyarthai	Visceral Exposure	Anhedonic Stress / Stress Indicators
30	Aiyam	Induced Paranoia	Triangulation / Gaslighting
31	Migai	Arrogant Dominance	Grandiosity / Catastrophizing
32	Nadukkam	Trauma Bonding	Freezing Effect / Terror Conditioning

Categorization of the 32 Secondary Meyppadus

These 32 states can be synthesized into five overarching functional categories:

1. Control & Manipulation Tactics

Strategies designed to subjugate others and force compliance:

- **Udaimai:** Possessive control.
- **Arulal:** Savior complex / love bombing disguised as compassion.
- **Adakkam:** Feigning submission to lower an opponent's guard.
- **Varaithal:** Isolation tactics.
- **Anbu:** Exploiting affection for grooming/blackmail.
- **Suulchi:** Machiavellian plotting.
- **Vaalthal:** Strategic flattery to dull vigilance.
- **Karuthal:** Profiling weaknesses to exploit them.

2. Deception & Passive-Aggression

States aimed at concealing true intent while causing indirect harm:

- **Thanmai:** Wearing a false persona/mask.
- **Naanuthal:** Inducing guilt and low self-worth.
- **Thunjal:** Punishing through silence or indifference (Silent Treatment).
- **Madimai:** Strategic incompetence to evade responsibility.
- **Potchappu:** Calculated forgetfulness (Plausible Deniability).
- **Poraamai:** Sabotaging another's reputation out of envy.
- **Aiyam:** Planting seeds of doubt (Gaslighting).

3. Fear & Aggressive Provocation

Tactics that induce fear and destroy an opponent's emotional stability:

- **Kaimmigal:** Severe boundary violations.
- **Munithal:** Intimidation through suppressed malice.
- **Veruuthal:** Fear-mongering to paralyze action.

- **Viraivu:** Applying artificial urgency to force rushed decisions.
- **Uyirppu:** Provoking extreme emotional reactions.
- **Migai:** Exaggerating minor issues (Catastrophizing).

4. Defense Mechanisms & Self-Delusion

Psychological mechanisms used to escape reality or shield oneself from accountability:

- **Naduvunilai:** Detaching emotionally to escape uncomfortable truths (Intellectualization).
- **Nalithal:** Feigning weakness (Learned Helplessness).
- **Arattru:** Creating drama to divert focus onto oneself.
- **Kanavu:** Retreating into grandiose fantasies.
- **Ninaithal:** Obsessive fixation on past wounds or individuals.
- **Idukkan:** Manufacturing artificial crises to play the savior.

5. Internal Drives & Physiological Leakage

Physiological markers of subconscious desires and uncontrollable stress:

- **Inpural:** Impulse for immediate hedonic gratification (Id).
- **Aaraatchi:** Hyper-vigilant surveillance driven by insecurity.
- **Kaiyaaru:** Helpless co-dependency.
- **Viyarthal:** Somatic stress indicators (sweating) when lying or panicked.
- **Nadukkam:** Freezing responses triggered by severe trauma.

Category	Primary Objective
1. Control & Manipulation Tactics	Seizing authority and subjecting others to one's will.
2. Deception & Passive-Aggression	Inflicting damage secretly without revealing intent.
3. Fear & Aggressive Provocation	Destabilizing an opponent through fear and agitation.
4. Defense Mechanisms & Self-Delusion	Masking faults and evading reality.
5. Internal Drives & Physiological Leakage	Subconscious drives and involuntary somatic stress markers.

Twelve Flaws Unbecoming of Leaders - Psychological Theories

Tolkappiyar concludes Meyppattiyal by outlining twelve negative qualities that are unacceptable in leaders (Thalaimakkal). These align directly with modern Dark Psychology principles:

- 1. **Nimbiri (Malicious Envy / Sabotage):** Pretending friendliness while secretly undermining an opponent's success (Silent Sabotage).

"Envy is the secret ulcer of the soul that drives silent destruction." — **Francis Bacon (Essays, pp. 21–25)**

2. Kodumai (Sadism / Intimidation): Inflicting physical or psychological pain to assert control (Sadistic Control).

"Cruelty is the power to cause pain without purpose, other than to demonstrate control."
— **Roy F. Baumeister (Evil: Inside Human Violence and Cruelty, p. 60)**

3. Tharpukazhtchi (Grandiosity / Narcissistic Impression Management): Inflating one's accomplishments to create an artificial hierarchy and force submission.

"Grandiosity is a protective armor designed to make others feel inferior and compliant."
— **Dr. W. Keith Campbell (The Narcissism Epidemic, p. 48)**

4. Puranguural (Smear Campaign / Triangulation): Spreading falsehoods behind someone's back to ruin their reputation and isolate them socially.

"A smear campaign is a weapon used to destroy a person's reputation when you cannot control their reality." — **Dr. George K. Simon (In Sheep's Clothing, p. 110)**

5. Vansol (Verbal Abuse / Emotional Conditioning): Using abusive, degrading language to shatter an opponent's self-esteem.

"Verbal toxicity is crafted to erode self-worth and install self-doubt." — **Dr. Evan Stark (Coercive Control, p. 118)**

6. Potchappu (Strategic / Weaponized Carelessness): Feigning forgetfulness or neglect to cause mental stress and overload for the victim.

"Calculated negligence is often more destructive than active assault." — **Dr. Robert D. Hare (Without Conscience, p. 78)**

7. Sombal (Depletion / Induced Passivity): Inducing lethargy and passivity in others to paralyze their critical thinking.

"A passive mind is a mind ripe for manipulation." — **Dr. Joost Meerloo (The Rape of the Mind, p. 30)**

8. Kudimai (Class Primacy / Elitism Exploitation): Using lineage or social class to make others feel inherently inferior.

"Superiority based on lineage is the ultimate tool to enforce unearned submission." — **Niccolò Machiavelli (The Discourses, p. 112)**

9. Inpural (Schadenfreude / Exploitative Pleasure): Deriving covert joy from another person's tragedy.

"Schadenfreude is the dark satisfaction gained when another's tragedy becomes your triumph." — **Robert Greene (The Laws of Human Nature, p. 310)**

10. Elaimai (Exploitation of Vulnerability / Financial Coercion): Leveraging a person's poverty to enforce dependence.

"Poverty is leveraged not to help, but to anchor dependency." — **Dr. Philip Zimbardo (The Lucifer Effect, p. 245)**

11. Marappu (Selective Amnesia / Gaslighting Tactics): Denial of past wrongdoings (Strategic Amnesia) to make victims question their own sanity.

"Strategic forgetfulness is the refusal to accept reality, forcing the victim to question their own mind." — **Dr. Robin Stern (The Gaslight Effect, p. 85)**

12. Oppumai (Toxic Comparison / Value Devaluation): Constantly comparing an individual unfavorably to others to destroy their self-worth.

"Comparison is the weapon used to strip away an individual's worth and enforce compliance." — **Dr. Brené Brown (Daring Greatly, p. 98)**

Conclusion

Tolkappiyar, who divided human life into Akam and Puram, undeniably laid the groundwork for modern social and psychological sciences. The tenets of Dark Psychology map cleanly onto the Meyppadus outlined throughout Porulathikaram. Ancient commentary traditions affirm that Tolkappiyar's emotional grammar was formulated precisely to identify and address toxic human behaviors. This study demonstrates that classical Tamil grammar is far more than a linguistic guide—it is an advanced psychological treatise detailing the darker mechanics of the human mind.

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