

A STUDY OF THE TAMIL TIRUKKURAL¹

The *Tirukkural*, a work written in Tamil, belongs to the Late Classical Period of Tamil literature, approximately between the third and the sixth century A. D.², and is thus nearly contemporaneous with the *Laws of Manu*³ which is an ethico-legal document of the Aryan section of the people of India. By the beginning of the Christian era, Aryan culture had spread to the south of the subcontinent, resulting in a synthesis of Aryan and Dravidian beliefs and customs. The *Tirukkural* is an expression of this blending of cultures. It does not, like the Early Classical Tamil literature, speak of *akam* "inner world", the poetry of love and private life, and *puram* "outer world", the poetry of heroism, war, public and political life.⁴ It speaks instead of *aram*, *poruḷ* and *inṭam* which correspond to *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma* which, along with *mokṣa* (liberation) are the four goals of human existence spoken of in the *Laws of Manu* and Sanskrit literature. Though centuries old, the *Tirukkural* is a work of perennial interest, a work whose popularity and relevance have not waned with the passage of time. Referred to as the Tamil *Veda*, no lecture or school essay would be complete without a quotation from the *Tirukkural*. It seems to have sayings appropriate for all occasions.

There are reasons for this popularity. The primary reason appears to be the fact that under the broad headings of *aram*, *poruḷ* and *inṭam*, it deals, not with matters of temporary interest, but with the normative values of honesty, gratitude, affection, wisdom, modesty and the like, in short, with the whole art of noble, ethical living. Nor does it deal merely with platitudes. The verses often reveal such a depth of insight that one marvels at the wisdom of the author.

1. The *Tirukkural* has been translated into a number of languages. The most important English translations are: F.W. Ellis ca. 1918, Madras, republished by R. P. Sethupillai as *Tirukkural, Ellis' commentary*, Madras, 1955; J. Lazarus, *The Kural of Thiruvalluvar*, Madras, 1885, G.U. Pope, *The Sacred Kural of Tiruvalluvar Nayanar*, London, 1886; H.A. Popley, *The Sacred Kural, the Tamil Veda of Thiruvalluvar* Calcutta, 1937 (Second Ed. 1958); M.S. Purnalingam Pillai, *The Kural in English*, Tirunelveli, 1942; V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar, *Tirukkural*, Madras, 1940; K. M. Balasubramaniam, *Tirukkural of Tiruvalluvar*, Text and English translation, Madras, 1962; A. Chakravarti, *Tirukkural*, Madras, 1953. The most valuable editions of the *Kural* are those of W.H. Drew (1840-52), G.U. Pope (1886), V.R.R. Dikshitar (1949), R.P. Sethu Pillai - F. W. Ellis (1955). The best commentary is that of Parimelalakar (13-14 Cent.). For further bibliography see K.V. Zvelebil, *A History of Indian Literature*, ed. Jan Gonda, vol. X, fasc.1, Wiesbaden (1964), pp. 132 - 3.
2. Kamil Zvelebil, *The Smile of Murugan* (E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1973) p.156.
3. *Mānavadharmasāstra*, with the commentary of Medhatithi, Bibliotheca Indica, Calcutta, (1932); *The Laws of Manu*, Translated Georg Buhler, Sacred Books of the East, No. 25, Oxford (1886).
4. *Ibid.*, p. 21

These verses, a thousand three hundred and thirty of them, are in chapters of ten distiches each. Each chapter deals with, one topic which, within the limit of the ten verses, seems to distil the essence of the subject at hand. The verses are brief, pithy, easily memorized *kural* "couplets", whence the work derives its name. The attractive brevity of these couplets, adds in no small measure to the popularity of the work.

Tradition has it that the author, Tiruvalluvar, was a Jain and belonged to a low caste. This might account in some measure for the fact that the *Tirukkural* makes little or no reference to the four-fold division of society into castes. Kings and the duties of kingship are mentioned, but no *ksatriya* caste. In one of the few references to brahmins, the author states what it means to be a brahmin. One of the Tamil words for brahmin is *antanan*, literally 'he who possesses beautiful, cool graciousness.' The author says brahmins are those men of virtue who are gracious to all around, and therefore deserving of the name *antanan*.⁵ In this regard the *Tirukkural* differs from the *Laws of Manu*, which is based on the assumption that the division of society into higher and lower castes is necessary for the smooth working of the social structure. In the *Tirukkural* there is no talk of the privileges and immunities of the higher castes nor the social disabilities of the lower castes. There is instead a sort of universal *dharma*, an ethical code that is applicable to all alike. Distinction between people is based not on nobility of birth, but on nobility of character. The *Tirukkural*, as most ethical works of Tamil literature, loves to expatiate on this subject, on what constitutes nobility of character. The *Tirukkural* goes so far as to say that the manner of birth is the same for all men; it is the difference in the quality of the work they are engaged in that creates a variation in excellence.⁶

In this connection we should also keep in mind that the fourfold division into castes is something Aryan. The Dravidians from earliest times had their own *jātis* or groups within society, each engaged in its own trade or craft. This is still the pattern in South India and in the North and East of Sri Lanka, where the Tamils live. With the spread of Aryan culture to South India, the brahmins, who were the custodians of Aryan religion and education, also migrated to the south, but kept themselves an exclusive, endogamous community within Dravidian society. The native Dravidian social system with its graded hierarchy of *jātis* remained unaltered, the majority of these being treated as *śūdra*, or the lowest caste by the Aryan immigrants. So the silence of the *Tirukkural* on the division of society into castes is not altogether surprising.

5. 30

6. 972

The *Tirukkural*, as mentioned earlier, is reputed to be of Jain authorship; however there are facts in the work that would challenge the tradition. Unlike Jainism, which does not believe in God, the *Kural* often speaks of God.⁷ Like most works in Hindu literature, it begins with praise of God. The very first couplet claims: "Even as all the letters have the letter 'A' as their origin, so the world has God as its origin". It goes on to say: "What is the use of all learning, if the learned do not worship the good feet of Him who is pure knowledge." God is referred to not by any sectarian name such as Śiva, Visnu or Śakti, but as "He who ordains,"⁸ "He who is beyond desire or aversion,"⁹ "He who is incomparable"¹⁰ Discussing these epithets of God, Kamil Zvelebil¹¹ asserts that these are as equally applicable to the Jaina Arhat, and would take these references as suggestive of Jain influence on the *Kural*. But the fact remains that the *Kural* displays no avowed sectarian leanings, be it Jaina or Hindu, which adds to its appeal to all who believe in the existence of God.

Another aspect of the *Kural* that seems to challenge Jain authorship is its positive attitude towards life. Jainism emphasizes the impermanence of life, youth, the body and wealth. The *Kural* contains very little of this pessimistic philosophy. On the contrary, it speaks of the joys of human relationships, of wife, children, relatives, friends and guests. "A virtuous wife is a blessing to a home and good children are its ornament,"¹² says the *Kural*. At the same time, however, it preaches a philosophy of detachment: "Man cannot be hurt by whatever he has renounced,"¹³ or "If you would be freed from attachment, cling to Him who is without attachment"¹⁴ In short the *Kural* preaches a philosophy of life-involvement and at the same time a detachment of the mind from things worldly: "To be in the world and yet not of the world," an attitude found in other great Indian religious classics such as the *Bhagavad Gita*¹⁵ and the *Dhammapada*.¹⁶

Of the three main sections into which the *Kural* is divided, the first one deals with *aṟam*. *Aṟam* is the closest parallel we have in Tamil to the Sanskrit word *dharma*. *Dharma* also is commonly used in Tamil. *Aṟam* may be translated 'righteousness', 'virtue' or 'what is fitting'.¹⁷ *Aṟam* as a legitimate goal of life takes

7. Gods in general 18, 43, 86, 121, 213, 234; Indra, 25; Laksmi 84, 167, 179, 617; Visnu 610
8. 377
9. 4
10. 7
11. *Op.cit.* p. 157
12. 60
13. 341
14. 350
15. A sacred book of the Hindus, included in the *Mahābharata*.
16. A popular text of the Theravada Buddhists, included in the Khuddaka Nikaya of the Pali Canon.
17. Kailasapathy, K., *Tamil Heroic Poetry*, (Oxford, 1968) pp. 91 - 2

precedence over *poruḷ* 'wealth' and *inṭam* 'happiness'. Defining *aram*, the author says: "By practising *aram* one gets true happiness; what one gets by other means is neither happiness nor of good repute.¹⁸ "There is no greater good than *aram* and no greater danger than in forgetting it."¹⁹ *Aram* is also generosity. Man is urged to practise *aram* because that will be his succour when death approaches²⁰. To practise *aram* is to be pure in heart and to be free from desire, envy and harsh speech.²¹ *Aram* like *ṛta* in the Veda appears to be regarded as a moral force and is on occasion, personified as if it were a deity that watches over men's conduct, meting out reward and punishment.²²

The *Kural* does not speak of all the four stages of life, the student, the householder, the forest dweller and the ascetic defined by the *Laws of Manu*. It confines itself to just two, the life of the householder and that of the ascetic and speaks of the *aram* of the householder and the *aram* of the ascetic. The *Kural* speaks very strongly in favour of domestic life. The householder is, as it were, the backbone of society. He is the one who sustains the ascetic and the poor. It is his duty to give offerings to the dead ancestors, sacrifices to the gods, to entertain guests and to care for relatives and family. The duty of hospitality is of primary importance.²³ The author sums up his view saying, "If one can pursue a householder's life in accordance with *aram*, what need is there to tread another path?"²⁴ In this section on the householder's *aram*, the author speaks not merely of home, wife and children, but lists a number of virtues, affection, gratitude, sweet speech, modesty and the like that the householder should cultivate and vices, envy, slander, idle speech, coveting another's wife and the like that he should eschew. The householder was not only the backbone of the social economy, but he was also the cement that held the different units together. It was his business to ensure that harmony prevailed within the home and also with friend, neighbour, stranger, the rich and the poor. It was necessary, therefore, that he practise virtues that promote this harmony and guard against vices that would disturb it.

The second part of *aram* deals with the ascetic life. The word for asceticism in Tamil comes from a verbal root which means to be 'detached from', 'to renounce'. So the *aram* of the ascetic is the life of withdrawal. The first step on the path of renunciation was the realization of the impermanence of life, that "he who was yesterday exists not today"²⁵ and that "the love of the soul for the body is as

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18. 39
 19. 32
 20. 36
 21. 34, 35
 22. 130, 204, 1018; see personification of Justice in the *Laws of Manu*, viii. 12, 14-17. For Dharma as a deity see J. Gonda, JRAS, 1971/2, pp. 120 - 33.
 23. 42,43; See the *Laws of Manu*, iii. 69; hospitality, one of the 'five great sacrifices' to be performed daily.
 24. 46
 25. 336

tenuous as that of a bird to its broken shell."²⁶ He had to realize that attachment causes sorrow and pain²⁷, and so be freed from the pull of the senses and the agonies that thinks in terms of 'I' and 'mine'.²⁸ Above all he had to rid himself of the delusion that makes him regard the transitory as ultimately real²⁹ for it is such delusion that entangles him further in the cycle of rebirth.³⁰ In this life of renunciation, he had to discipline his body by the practice of self-control³¹, abstain from eating flesh and avoid killing, doing evil, hypocritical conduct and fraudulent gains; he has to train his mind to speak the truth, to refrain from anger and desire, to practise compassion towards all life and to accept what Fate had in store for him. It is not shaving one's head or growing matted hair or any of the outward symbols of asceticism that matters³² it is inner purity,³³ the outward expressions of which are non-violence and universal benevolence. The idea very familiar in the Epics and *Purānas*³⁴ that penance is 'power', is also hinted at in this section.³⁵

A passing comment may be pertinent in this context. It appears from the *Laws of Manu* that it was incumbent on every male born a brahmin, *kṣatriya* or *vaiśya* to abide by the four stages of life.³⁶ The age for initiation as a student is laid down³⁷ and so is the time for the transition from the domestic life to the forest life.³⁸ The *Tirukkural* sets forth no such binding prescription. The householder's life and the ascetic life seem to be two alternative ways of life, which do not have to follow in sequence. Nor is the ascetic life seen as a life of hard penance as a recluse, away from human society. It seems instead to be a withdrawal of mind from things worldly while living amid people,³⁹ though without active participation in the common round of 'getting and spending'.

26. 338

27. 341, 347, 359, 360

28. 268, 346

29. 351

30. 356, 357

31. Chapters 26, 28, 29, 32, 33.

32. 272, 274, 280

33. 271, 275, 278, 298

34. Epics - The two great epics in Sanskrit, the *Mahābhārata* (circa 4th Century A.C) and the *Rāmāyana* (circa 1st Century A.C). *Purānas* Religio - historical Sanskrit texts of the post - Epic period.

35. 265, 269, 270

36. vi. 34 - 37, 96

37. *ibid.* ii. 38

38. *ibid.* vi. 2

39. Hence the necessity for compassion, speaking of truth, avoidance of hypocrisy, fraud, anger and injury to others

It will be noticed that the philosophy of impermanence, nonviolence, renunciation and the avoidance of killing and flesh-eating — that which gives a Jain flavour to the *Tirukkural* — is confined to the chapters on the ascetic life and the chapters on the praise of God and ascetics in the Preface. The rest of the *Kural*, one can safely assert, preaches a positive philosophy of love and life-affirmation.

The second section of the *Kural* deals with *porul*, the Tamil equivalent of *artha*. *Porul* means 'wealth' and in this context 'what pertains to politics and economics.' This section of the *Kural* is said to be based on the *Arthaśāstra*⁴⁰ analysis of the seven *āngas*, 'limbs' or 'constituent elements' of royal power, namely the sovereign, the ministers, fortifications, treasury, the army, allies and subjects. Under these headings the author defines for us his ideal of kingship and of a country that is administered, not for personal profit, but with the sole aim of the happiness of the subjects. Kings in Ancient India had, beside their crown and their throne, two symbols of their duty and office. One was the white royal umbrella held over the king, symbolic of his protection, that he was guardian of the land. The other was the sceptre, the symbol of justice. It is said that the sceptre should not sway, should not dip to any side.⁴¹ In other words, there should be perfect justice, no partiality, injustice or unnecessary harshness. In the chapter on Just Government, the King is compared to life-giving rains: "Just as people all over the world depend on rain, even so subjects depend on the king's sceptre."⁴² "The king's sceptre is the support of the brahmin's *Veda* and of *aram*.⁴³ "In the country of a king who wields justice, rains and plentiful crops will not fail.⁴⁴ The opposite is the picture of a country where the king is forgetful of his duties or or is needlessly harsh: "The country of the king who does not daily inquire into wrongs and mete out justice, will daily fall to ruin."⁴⁵

Such an ideal of government required that the person at the helm of affairs, the king, be a man of virtue. He had to be fearless, generous and wise. It was important that a king be learned. He had to possess not merely the knowledge that comes from study but the knowledge one imbibes by listening to others, and the wisdom consequent thereon. The author brings home to us the importance of learning by summing up that the unlearned beside the learned are like beasts beside men.⁴⁶

40. A work on Indian polity, *Arthaśāstra* of Kautilya, ed. Shastry R. S. Government Oriental Library Series, Bibliotheca Sanskrita, 54, Mysore 1919.

41. 546, 554, *Laws of Manu*, vii, 102

42. 542

43. 543

44. 545

45. 553

46. 410

The *Kural* lays special emphasis on three qualities of kingship, namely kindness,⁴⁷ accessibility⁴⁸ and sweet speech.⁴⁹ It was the king's duty to mete out justice, but it had to be justice tempered with mercy. He had to be easy of access, so that even the meanest of his subjects might voice his complaint and receive justice. Above all, he had to be a person of sweet speech. It is said that the great wealth of a king who is of harsh words and lacks kindness, will soon perish instead of abiding long with him.⁵⁰

The task of government required that the king be a man of sound judgement and decisive action. He should be able to gauge his own strength and weakness and those of his enemy,⁵¹ he should be able to decide on the right time, place and strategy and to implement it.⁵² A wise king would bide the right time.⁵³ Impetuosity,⁵⁴ vacillation⁵⁵ forgetfulness⁵⁶ would be detrimental to a king's success. He had to have the acumen to estimate the capabilities of men, to use the right man for the right task.⁵⁷

The *Kural*, which talked of the inexorability and acceptance of Fate in the *aram* of the ascetic, preaches a philosophy of vigorous self-effort for the king. Energy, manly effort, freedom from sloth and courage in trouble, are seen as qualities necessary for a ruler.⁵⁸ Many times in the *Kural* one comes across the phrase, "There is nothing impossible to him who..."⁵⁹ or "He will gain the whole world who..."⁶⁰ There is a condition of course, but the conspicuous use of these phrases, implies that the author did not believe in passive acceptance of what destiny decreed. He would rather think lofty thoughts, and dare the difficult.⁶¹ If one does not succeed, one should still not give up aiming high.⁶² The *Kural* sums up this philosophy in two telling couplets: "Even if Fate be unfavourable, one's bodily effort will yield its reward."⁶³ "Those who persevere with unflagging zeal will some day defeat even Fate."⁶⁴

47. 566, 578, 579
48. 386, 548; See 565, 'difficult of access'
49. 387, 525; see 386, 566, 567, 'harsh of speech'
50. 566
51. chapter 48
52. chapters 47, 49, 50
53. 485, 490
54. 487, 488
55. 465, 510, 519
56. chapter 54
57. 516 - 518
58. chapters 60 - 63
59. 462, 472, 483, 537, 540
60. 484, 485, See also 578, 610
61. 538, 595, 596, 611
62. 596
63. 619
64. 620

There are certain sins ancient Indian kings were warned against, namely gambling addiction to liquor, excessive attachment to women and prostitutes and love of hunting.⁶⁵ The *Kural* speaks of the first three of these, and that not with particular reference to kings. These were sins that king and commoner alike had to eschew. Kings, moreover, had to be circumspect about the company they kept, for evil associates tend to taint all around.⁶⁶ Kings had to be guarded against the common failings of anger, pride, lust and niggardliness.

It is clear that the king was not regarded as divine or infallible. He was as human as his subjects, prone to the same failings. But his was a sacred office which required that he did not swerve from virtue and kept unsullied the dignity of his office.

The *Tirukkural* does not define the basis nor the limits of the king's power. There were no constitutional checks on the ruler, as we understand them now. But kings of ancient India were not absolute monarchs either, because they were, to some measure, answerable to their subjects,⁶⁷ elders⁶⁸ and *aram*.⁶⁹ It was to their advantage to seek the advice of ministers and of elders: 'A king who is not protected by elders, who would rebuke him, will go to ruin even without enemies.'⁷⁰ Not only should there be people to advise the king, but he too should be willing to accept criticism: "The earth abides under the royal umbrella of that king who is willing to accept words that are bitter to his ears".⁷¹ He himself should be self-critical, able to see his own faults.⁷²

It is evident from the foregoing that the *Kural* ideal of kingship is government for the people. The king's primary task seems to be to refrain from oppression and to protect the subjects from oppression.⁷³ Even the harmony and regularity of the natural world seem to be dependent on the king's faithfulness to his *aram*.⁷⁴ In pursuance of this objective, he has, of necessity, to punish offenders. Punishment is thus seen as a necessary duty and is not to be deemed as sullyng his good name as protector:⁷⁵ "Punishing murderers with death is like plucking the weeds to save

65. *Laws of Manu*, vii. 47, 50

66. Chapter 46

67. 470

68. 896, 899

69. 547

70. 448

71. 389

72. 436

73. 388, 390, 544, 547

74. cf. 545, with 559, 560

75. 549

the corn.⁷⁶ But punishment should be after proper inquiry and should be commensurate with the offence.⁷⁷ Both the *Kural* and the *Laws of Manu* reveal a horror of a king who exceeds justice and is harsh.⁷⁸

Next in importance to the king was the minister. The council of ministers was, as it were, the executive arm of the throne. It was important therefore, that the minister too should be a man of sharp intellect and decisive action.⁷⁹ He should, in addition, be a man of eloquence, able to gauge the mood of the royal assembly and capable of presenting his view boldly, in well-chosen words.⁸⁰

The *Kural* speaks but briefly of the fortifications, the army and allies. The ideal kingdom would be one blessed with natural fortifications such as mountains and forests and able to produce enough food for a time of siege.⁸¹ The virtue required of the army was fearlessness and the willingness to lay down one's life for one's king.⁸² The *Kural* does not define enemy and friendly states; it speaks in general about friendship, the evils of bad associations and the like.

Though the political situation required that the army be in readiness, that the country have good defences and that there be allies to help, peace and not war was the goal of the *Kural* view of kingship. The ideal country is that which is free from external hostility and internal dissension. Dissension should not be tolerated anywhere, whether it be with another kingdom, with one's relatives or in one's family.⁸⁵ "A thorny tree should be cut down while it is still young; when it is mature, it will pierce the hand that cuts it down."⁸⁶

This is also the view of the *Arthashastra* and, significantly, of Jain thinking on the subject.⁸⁷ War was seen as one of the six expedients of royal policy, to be used only as a last resort. The *Kural* describes the type of foe who would succumb to attack and advises war against him; but with an enemy more powerful than oneself, conciliation would be the better policy.⁸⁸ One could discern here a slight shift from the heroic ideal of Early Classical poetry, when the hero chose to die gloriously in

76. 550; cf. *Laws of Manu* vii. 110

77. 541, 544 - 546, 561, 562

78. chapters 56, 57; *Laws of Manu* vii. 111; 122 - 124; 127 - 129; viii. 15; 126 - 130

79. chapters 64, 67, 68

80. chapters 65, 69 - 73

81. chapters 74, 75

82. chapters 77, 78

83. 734

84. 735

85. Chapter 86 and 871, 873, 880, 886 - 890

86. 879

87. Wm. Theodore de Bary, ed. *Sources of Indian Tradition*, Columbia University Press, (1958) p. 87

88. 679, 680, 874, 875. See *Laws of Manu*, iii, 87, 107 - 9, 206

battle, establishing his claim to immortal fame.⁸⁹ In the late Classical poetry of the *Kural*, the fame or good name one wins on earth is still repeatedly emphasized.⁹⁰ but it is not so much the glory of the battlefield as the respect given to an exemplary life.

One of the 'elements' of royal power was the treasury. Despite the importance of a full treasury to a king, the author devotes but one chapter to it. Scattered elsewhere in the work, however, many references to wealth reveal the author's views on the subject. There is no gainsaying the fact that wealth is necessary for life in this world "This world is not for those who have no wealth," says the *Kural*. Wealth makes possible the pursuit of *aram* and happiness.⁹¹ Wealth is what saves you from the ignominy and pain of begging.⁹² Wealth is not to be hoarded, however, but to be distributed generously as charity to those in need, be he relative or stranger.⁹³ One must be like the crow that conceals not but shares its food or else one's wealth will be as useless as the ripe fruits of the poisonous tree in the village centre.⁹⁴ Wealth must be judiciously expended with an awareness of the amount spent, and guarding against over-expenditure.⁹⁵ Wealth is also to be righteously acquired. In the chapters on the avoidance of covetousness and stealing, and in the chapter on 'purity in action' and elsewhere,⁹⁶ the author warns against the unrighteous acquisition of wealth and the evil results consequent thereon. This standpoint of the *Kural* is very different from that of the *Arthasāstra*, which suggests many dubious methods to keep the treasury full.

That good government, nay, life itself, is in the final analysis dependent on the production of food, is recognized by the *Kural* in the chapter on agriculture. Agriculture is the truly autonomous profession; it is able to give to those who ask and to those who cannot produce food for themselves.

The *Kural*, which thus far has defined for us the ideal householder, ascetic, king and minister, sets out now to delineate the ideal citizen. The ideal man is a person of noble, magnanimous nature. Such an ideal is not confined to the *Kural*. It is, as Kamil Zvelebil points out, an ideal that is a "distinctive feature of Tamil literature."⁹⁷ In fact the Sangam literature of the Early Classical Period, though focusing primarily on the twin themes of love and war, reveals that the kings, poets and people of that age cherished magnanimity in thought, speech and action. The key-

89. Kailasapathy, *op. cit.* pp. 231 - 34

90. 156, 195, 296, 533, 556, 652, 653, 1003, chapter 24

91. 754

92. chapters 105, 107

93. 88, 432, 438, chapter 101

94. 527, 1008

95. 477 - 480

96. 112, 113, 281, 755, 1009

97. *op. cit.* p. 17; see also Xavier S. Thaninayagam, *Tamil Humanism: The Classical Period*, Bunker Memorial Lectures, (Jaffna College publication, 1972), p. 40 - 49; S. Vithiananthan, *Tamilarcālpu*, Kandy: (1954) pp. 149 - 166; Cami Citamparanar *Caṅkat Tamilar Caṅmārkkam* Madras: (1060)

word that denotes this ideal man, the word *cāṇṇon*⁹⁸ with its many synonyms and near parallels, occurs many times in the *Kuraḷ*.⁹⁹ The *cāṇṇon* has an inborn sense of self-respect that shrinks from shame or infamy;¹⁰⁰ he would not at any cost do something that is wrong or degrading;¹⁰¹ he has a lofty concept of duty, truth and justice,¹⁰² and a natural graciousness that permits him to be pleasant and generous to all around.¹⁰³ Those who are devoid of this magnanimity are veritable trees though human in appearance,¹⁰⁴ and are a burden to the earth.¹⁰⁵ In the character of the *cāṇṇon* is seen another proof of the permeation of Buddhist and Jain thought into Dravidian ideals.¹⁰⁶ The *cāṇṇon* of the Early Classical Tamil literature was a person of heroic and fearless aspect, different from the ideal man of the *Kuraḷ* and later Tamil literature.

It will be seen that much of what is treated of in this second section entitled *poruḷ*, though connected with the seven elements of royal power, is also of universal application. They are moral sayings valid for all time and have, therefore, contributed to the perennial interest in this work.

The third section of the *Kuraḷ* entitled *inṭam* 'joy', describes the joys of courtship and married life. It approximates to the third goal of human existence, *kāma*, often translated 'pleasure'. The Sanskrit word *kāma* in its current usage in Tamil, has a slightly different connotation. It is more like the English word 'lust' implying pure physical desire. The *Kuraḷ*, though it uses the word *kāma* here and there in its verses, prefers to call this section *inṭam* and the two stages in the attainment of this 'joy', courtship and married life are called *Kalavu* 'secret love' and *Karpu* 'married love' respectively. The *inṭam* that is depicted in the *Kuraḷ* moreover, is very different from the *kāma* depicted in that classical text book of love the *Kāmasūtra* of Vatsyayana.¹⁰⁷ The latter work teaches the whole art of love and physical satisfaction, but a *kāma* that is divorced from feeling. The *Kuraḷ* on the other hand, describes a love that is vibrant with emotion, joy, longing, anxiety and disappointment, a love that meets, loves, marries and is faithful despite the pain of temporary parting on account of work or the misunderstandings of lovers' quarrels.

This last section of the *Kuraḷ* does not have such ethical prescriptions for behaviour as are found in *aram* and *poruḷ*. But its inclusion in an ethical work of this kind is an acknowledgement that *inṭam* is as much a legitimate goal of life as

98. 115, 118, 148, 197, 657, 840, 922, 923
 99. 136, 201, 215, 219, 311, 597, 892 and many others
 100. 433, 794, 969, 1011, 1015
 101. 954 - 56, 962
 102. 951, 952, 981, 994, 1021, 1025, 1026
 103. 953, 960, 979, 980, 985 etc.
 104. 576, 600, 997, 1020
 105. 189, 572, 990, 996, 1003
 106. Kailasapathy, *op. cit.* p. 230
 107. 2 volumes, Bombay, 1856,

aram and *poruḷ*, and underlines the realization that life without joy would not be complete. After all, this joy is the foundation of the happy family and social life described in *aram*. It must also be mentioned that this section carries on the tradition of the *akam* 'love' poetry of the Early Classical period, and is thus the most typically Dravidian of the three sections.

We must remember that the *Kural* focuses more on *aram*, *poruḷ* and *inṭam* life-affirming values—than on *mokṣa* (liberation), life-negating value. The *Kural* ideal of life is life in all its fulness, with the joys of home, family, friends, relative and guests, with sufficient wealth for one's life, to entertain guests and to care for the poor, and the good name and respect one wins in society. It makes one condition however: such a life must be lived in accordance with the dictates of *aram* in the full awareness that it is not the ultimate destiny of man. However good the end, the *Kural* does not condone the adoption of immoral means to further that end. In other words, it does not let *poruḷ* and *inṭam*—one's own worldly interest and joy—take precedence over *aram*, the way of right and virtue.¹⁰⁸

To sum up the ethical view of the *Kural*, we would refer again to the blending of Aryan and Dravidian cultures. The philosophy of detachment as also the references to *karma*, rebirth and renunciation reflect, no doubt, the influence of Upanisadic, Buddhistic and Jaina thought.¹⁰⁹ The *Kural* holds out freedom from rebirth or happiness in the next life as incentives for ethical living.¹¹⁰ More importantly, however, whatever a man thinks, says or does will have its good or evil consequences now, in this very life.¹¹¹ Man, therefore, is urged to live an ethical life to avoid the evil results that would necessarily follow on unethical living. A higher and more altruistic level of ethical thought is seen in those verses that advocate good action for no other reason than that they are good.¹¹² One must be like the rains which seek no return for their abundance.¹¹³ The climax of ethical thought is reached, however, in those couplets which preach forgiveness for injury and returning of good for evil.¹¹⁴ Man must regard others as he does himself; then he will not do to another what he knows causes pain to himself.¹¹⁵ The *Kural* carries on the humanistic ideals of the Early Classical Period, ideals of generosity, nobility, justice, caring and industriousness. The *Kural* considers human birth a far surpassing gift. The human being is distinguished from the rest of animate creation in the capacity he is endowed with for noble thought and behaviour. To live in a manner that is derogatory to one's humanity is to live like an animal or be insensitive as a tree.

108. 39, 49, 113, 173, 179, 754

109. Kamil Zvelebil, *op. cit.* pp. 16. 55 - 6, Kailasapathy K. *op. cit.* p. 230

110. 36, 38, 44, 58, 86, 98, 121 etc

111. 83, 112, 114, 116, 135, 165 etc

112. 81, 101, 212, 215, 216, 222 etc

113. 211

114. 151, 152, 157, 158, 160 etc.

115. 315, 316, 318

Such noble manhood, as the *Kural* envisages, finds expression in an altruistic way of life, in holding one's wealth in trust to be used for the greater good of others, in a love of learning, in a sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others, and above all, in an inner conviction of one's worth and responsibility as a human being that deters one from all that is shameful or demeaning. Man acts nobly, not through fear of the gods nor even through dread of the evil consequences of wrong-living as out of an inner conviction of his responsibility as a human being. Jain ethics, despite the non-violence and compassion, is a 'cold' ethics,¹¹⁶ practising a rigorous withdrawal from pleasure and attachment. The *Kural* would have us put down our defences, dare to live nobly, go all out to face life and take whatever troubles come with a smile, knowing that it is the common lot of man.¹¹⁷

We should notice in our study that the *Kural* attempts a re-interpretation of some common Tamil words and concepts: "To love is to be alive; to be without love is to have a body which is mere bone covered with skin."¹¹⁸ "True charity is giving to the poor; giving of any other kind is in expectation of a return."¹¹⁹ "To be rich is to be rich in kindness; other riches even the base possess."¹²⁰ These and many more such formulations¹²¹ could be discovered in the *Kural* where the author focuses our attention anew on words and concepts that have been dulled through familiarity. In these and other ways the author of the *Kural* lifts his work out of the social and time milieu in which it appeared and makes of it a book for all times and seasons. The *Tirukkural* not only depicts an ideal life, but an idea that is not unattainable. Is it any wonder then that the *Kural* leaves the fourth goal of life undefined? An ideal life such as this, if lived, would necessarily be followed by liberation.

116. *Sources of Indian Tradition*, p. 50

117. 621, 627, 728

118. 80

119. 221

120. 241

121. 30, 34, 133, 261, 291, 364 etc.