

“The Mind-blowing Teachings of Thiruvalluvar In a philosophical perspective”**Prof. T. Sebasthi John Baskar***Assistant Professor of Tamil, A. V.C College (Auto), Mannampandal, Mayiladuthurai. (T.N.), India***Abstract**

In the History of Tamil tradition and more than ever in the globe of Sangam literature Thirukural is considered to be one of the supreme works in Tamil. It has been described rather justifiably as life and soul of Tamil tradition and it is rather very unique to the tradition. There are three holy works in Tamil literature, namely Thirukural, Thiruvagasam and Thirumandiram by which the Tamil language has been made worldwide and everlasting. And among these three, the Thirukural propagates ethical values for peaceful living; However, Thirukural stands out as a life giving mechanism. Aram, Porul and Inbam are the three major parts divided by Thiruvalluvar in his work called Thirukural. One without the other becomes meaningless. So one has to live morally (Aram) and generate money through proper means (Porul) and enjoy life in all dimensions (Inbam). All these three aspects are interconnected in themselves and are essential principle for day to day living (Aram leads to Porul and Porul leads to Inbam). When people deviate from this then life will be miserable. The philosophical teachings infusing ethical values all over, like a flower spreading its feeling of existence everywhere. It is rightly said by Dr. G.U. Pope that “Thiruvalluvar's poem is thus by no means a long one; though in value it far outweighs the whole of the remaining Tamil literature, and is one of the select numbers of great work which have entered into the very soul of a whole people, and which can never die”.

Key Words: Aram, Porul, Inbam, propagates, interconnected, deviate, and miserable

Introduction

Thirukural was composed over 2000 years ago, is adored by Tamil people, as a sacred text. It was written by Thiruvalluvar during the first century BC. The ways of life suggested by him are still worth, appropriate and incomparable for the humanity to follow time to come. Among those works on ethical living, probably the only one of its kind which uses the shortest type of couplets to convey the universal truths and practical wisdom covering all the areas possible with the richness in the language and accuracy of its sentiments. In his work of Thirukural, he was touching upon the essential ethical values of life and also the five branches of philosophy which are inter-related. Thus he proves to be a great philosopher and a man of great

wisdom. Sri Rajagopalachari rightly said: "Thiruvalluvar was one of those rare and great men whose all-embracing spirit raised above all kinds of castes and creeds, and whose vision was not clouded by dogma or prejudice of any kind". When world after religions and gods for Morals, but Thiruvalluvar penned down a treasure that talks about life, education, society, friendship, love, lust and everything under the sun. So similar to that of Thiruvalluvar, the modern philosopher Immanuel Kant would say that 'religion is based on morality but morality is not based on religion', so for Kant, morality comes first and religion next. So the teachings of Thiruvalluvar give importance to a large extent to the human society and its realization towards liberation. It is worth

knowing and learning the morals on the deep rooted thoughts on various aspects connected to human society. And therefore to cull out and expose the unique treasures found hidden in his teaching, we need to probe into it. It will be very much fitting and proper to say that a world that lives by its teachings shall enjoy eternal peace, harmony, health, wealth, power, grace and bliss. So let us all promise to live out by the ethical values put down by the great saint and the liberator so as to enjoy eternal peace, harmony, grace and bliss.

The Five Branches of Philosophy

Philosophy can be divided into five branches. All these branches have been touched upon by Thiruvalluvar very systematically and profoundly. There is a hierarchical relationship between these branches. At the root is Metaphysics the study of existence and the nature of existence. Thiruvalluvar in his first chapter, talks about the imminent and transcended aspects of God. He says that we as human beings must worship the one who is the source of all living things. In him everything proceeds and subdues. 'If a learned men fail to worship Him, then having such wisdom of knowledge is of no use', says Valluvar. As it is rightly said by a famous philosopher 'I think, therefore I exist'. All of us exist as a rational being and our existence become completed when we are realized to liberation. So metaphysics is closely related to **Epistemology**, the study of knowledge and how we know about reality and existence. Dependent on Epistemology is **Ethics**, the study of how man should act. Ethics is dependent on Epistemology because it is impossible to make choices without knowledge. All these aspects have

been dealt intensely in the first Part on **Virtue (Dharma)** by Thiruvalluvar.

A subset of Ethics is **Politics**, the study of how men should interact in a proper society and what constitutes proper. It is the area which elaborately discussed in the second Part on **Wealth (Artha)**. In this, he brings out the all that essential to keep the state intact, namely sovereignty, the cabinet, fortress, economy, defense, partners and public.

Esthetics, the study of art and sense of life is slightly separate, but depends on Metaphysics, Epistemology, and Ethics. This is very much in line with the third Part on **Love (Kama –Inbam)**. Where, he teaches how to look at life more esthetically and to enjoy it more ethically. The experience on love makes one fully human and full alive. So the five branches of philosophy are interconnected in the teachings of Thiruvalluvar; and especially the three major divisions with all its dynamics are incorporated systematically.

'Finite' Being in relation to the 'Infinite' Being

Thiruvalluvar begins his Kural with the praise of God in the first chapter. God or Deity is the source of all things; it is beginningless and endless, eternal and omnipresent; IT is the origin of all; all things proceed from IT. First Kural begins "In Praise of God" and the very first verse runs thus, " 'A' is the origin of all letters; likewise God is the origin of the world." Doesn't Shri Krishna say in enumerating his Divine Vibhutis (Universal Divine Perfections): "Among letters I am the vowel 'A'?" "A" is the first of all letters by eminence and affinity. In Christianity also we find similar approach by the theologians about the conception of the infinite being, which is the 'Alpha and

Omega'. Valluvar points out that the idea of the Supreme is the first impression the world produces on the reflecting mind. Also, in the following verse we get a clue to Valluvar's conception of God. He says: "Of what avail is learning, if due reverence is not paid to Him who is Immaculate Wisdom?" (Kural 2)

Describing the state of those who have reached the goal of evolution he says: "Those who find refuge at the Great feet (of Him) who lives in the lotus of the heart (of the devotee) live eternally in heaven. (Kural3). In the subsequent verses the poet points out that good and evil spring from the darkness of the mind and that those who still the five senses and walk in Truth will ever live in happiness. The Gita says: "The man who restrained the senses and organs and hath faith obtained spiritual knowledge, and having obtained it he soon reached supreme tranquility." (Chapter IV)

In the next verse he describes God as "Lord of eight attributes," and says that the head that does not bow down and worship in spirit and in truth "the Lord of eight attributes" is like the palsied sense. What are the eight attributes that the poet had in mind, it is difficult to say. One of the commentators enumerates thus: Essential purity; Intuitive wisdom; Infinite intelligence; Essential freedom; Infinite grace; Omnipotence; and Infinite Love. 'Cling to the feet of God can cross the widespread ocean of mortal birth and be absorbed into the Divine Essence.' Nothing in this world comparable to God, so to lead a calm and peaceful life in this world, faith in God is must which brings liberation to all.

Birth and Death- Realization

It is because of the ignorance, man has been held in the repeated cycle of Birth

and Death. The Supreme Being's divine play is to get the man out of this repeated cycle of Birth and Death (Kural 362). In Ancient Scriptures, this Birth & Death cycle is called as Samsara Sagaram. "Death is like sleep and birth is like waking from the sleep". It is said by Thiruvalluvar. He further goes to say that only the body contains the soul is undergoing death but soul is ever there and is immortal. When the soul goes to deep sleep then the body dies and coming back of the soul from this sleep is birth. This birth happens in a new body. This divine wisdom told in simple words by the poet.

What is the end of this never ending cycle of birth and death? Siddhars has sung "When I attain the state which gives the bliss of sleeping without really sleeping". Keep working till you attain your destiny (true destiny of human beings). Our True Destiny is attaining immortality (Ascension) and divinity. Jesus Christ has told this in Bible as "One who does not take birth again will not be eligible to enter into the Divine Kingdom".

Birth is called when Soul incarnates in to Human body. Divine wisdom of soul is to live ever in this body (state of Ascension), surpassing the death allows Mind, Body, Spirit and Soul to live forever. This state is said to be divine deathless life. We will take a new birth only if our Body Dies; there is no birth if there is no death. Virtuousness is the only thing that makes the man to become divine. We have to treat our virtuousness more than our life and have to follow the good character and behavior throughout our life. As said by Thiruvalluvar. Since both the soul and body were related we need virtuousness to keep it together. This virtuousness of the soul is what our saint Valluvar calls as

Jeevakarunyam (Compassion to all living beings) and everything comes under it. People will understand better if we tell what things that were non-virtuousness are and what are the things to avoid getting virtuousness. Whichever destroys our body and which makes our soul to leave our body soon were non-virtuous things. These were called as Panchpadagam (Five Great Sins). They are namely, lying, killing (violence), theft, liquor, lust. And it is rightly said that 'Lamps do not give the light that holy men desire. It is the light of truthfulness that illuminates their path' and through which one attains self realization which is the infinite himself. We find place in him and in him we dwell. Jesus also brings out this point of realization of the self by saying "I am in the Father and Father is in me and who ever knows me knows the Father who sent me".

Greatness in Renunciation

Thiruvalluvar shows the greatness of renunciation as also the whole subject of asceticism is dealt with exhaustively in chapters 25 to 37. It is said that only the wise men have no attachments that have risen above the pairs of opposites and can point out the way and explain to mankind Dharma, Artha, Kama that is Virtue, Wealth and Love or Happiness. In the first verse he points out that the one supreme thing which all scriptures affirm is the great renunciation of those who walk in right conduct. And he goes on to say that He who has understood what birth and deliverance mean has accomplished the greatest this in life. He who knows the qualities of the five senses namely taste, sight, touch, hearing and smell, said to have full knowledge of the world. He who controls his five senses by his will gains heavenly bliss (Kural24, 27).

Shri Krishna in the Sixth Chapter of the Gita points, "The man who hath spiritual knowledge and discernment, who standeth upon the peak; and hath subdued the senses, to whom gold and stone is the same, is said to be devoted" In the last four verses the poet Thiruvalluvar tells us that he alone is perfected who has completely subdued his senses and has a perfect comprehension of their operation. Speaking about the Powers of the Great Ones, he says that they can read the Past, the Present and the Future clearly and thus prophesy things and events to come. They have reached the peak, the world of enlightenment.

"The soul from body any day,

Like bird from egg-shell, flies away".

(338)

Thiruvalluvar deals with the subject of reincarnation. Reincarnation is one of the cardinal tenets of the Hindu religion for which renunciation is necessary.

"Death is sinking into slumbers deep

Birth again is waking out of sleep".

(339)

The goal of life is the attainment of the state of permanent happiness. For this, renunciation is necessary. Renunciation means giving up all wealth, pleasures of the senses, and the fruits of all actions. It does not mean running away to a cave or to an Ashram. The senses must be subdued and the ego crushed. Birth carries with it the seeds of suffering. Happiness comes only when we realize God and overcome both birth and death.

EQ – Emotional quotient

From 1930 onwards and even in 1960 that most of the scholars believed that it was IQ that matters for success. But it was a later realization to the scholars to say that it is

EQ which matters for success of the person and that was propagated by Daniel Goleman in 1995. According to him the Emotional intelligence refers to “the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships” So the Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize your emotions, understand what they're telling you, and realize how your emotions affect people around you. Emotional intelligence also involves your perception of others: when you understand how they feel, this allows you to manage relationships more effectively. It is said that 80% of EQ and 20% of IQ which involves in the process one being successful in his career. And it is very interesting to note that the famous poet Thiruvalluvar has discussed this matter of EQ in 2000 years ago in the book of Thirukural. And he says very clearly that if a person knows to wine over his emotions and to whom everything will fall in line. And if you are not known the ways to treat the emotions then what all you did will perish.

Though some small gain of good it seem to bring,

The evil word is parent still of evil thing. 128

If a man's speech be productive of a single evil, all the good by him will be turned into evil.

In flesh by fire inflamed, nature may thoroughly heal the sore;

In soul by tongue inflamed, the ulcer health never more.129 The wound which has been burnt in by fire may heal, but a wound burnt in by the tongue will never heal. These happen due to

lack of emotional intelligence. So we need to become mastery over our emotions.

Who learns restraint, and guards his soul from wrath,

Virtue, a timely aid, attends his path.130

Virtue, seeking for an opportunity, will come into the path of that man who, possessed of learning and self-control, guards himself against anger.

Self -Control

Self-control is the mark that identifies a wise man. He has perfect control of the senses, and withdraws them just as a tortoise withdraws its limbs into its body. At a rash moment it is possible to do harm which would take time to heal. The tongue is a troublemaker. Valluvar urges its control. One who controls his tongue perfectly is free from anger. Anger is your worst enemy. Swami Shivananda says that of all the spiritual practices the most difficult one in which to succeed is to be able to bear insult and injury. This is called patience. The poet Valluvar also requests us to forgive and forget. Do not return evil for evil. Not even the penance of fasting can compare with the penance of refusing to respond to the hurt caused by the cruel words of others.

Self control places one among the Gods: lack of it leads one to the darkness of hell. (122). Guard self control as wealth and there is no gain greater than that to human life. (122). Humility is another virtue which all should cultivate. The first requisite for humility is controlling the tongue. If not it will land you in distress (127). There is no possession more precious than self-control. The injury caused by a burn heals, but the pain caused by the thoughtless word is never forgotten

by the man who is hurt. It remains forever in his mind like an ugly scar. If a man knows how to control the rising anger in his mind and guards himself against losing his temper, all other virtues will seek him out and wait on his pleasure.

Do not be envious of the success of others. Do not be greedy. It is better to confront someone directly; slandering and backbiting are wrong. He who speaks ill of others will find others speaking ill of him. Idle, useless talk is the mark of the unwise. Hence, refrain from it at all costs. Gossiping, faultfinding and slandering should not be indulged in. Give to others with a loving heart, and the world will one day be at your feet. Pure, loving charity is one of the greatest purifiers of the heart.

Conclusion

Thiruvalluvar was one of the greatest social philosophers of the ancient world. His writings show that he was interested not only in the behaviour and conduct and bearing of a person, but also in the

harmonious development of society. He encourages the growth of intellectual and spiritual development. He wants people to acquire learning and, having learnt, practice it.

His teachings have had a warm place in the hearts of the Tamil people for many generations, and have become part of their culture and life. They have always taken an attempt to follow the saint, and all the more they have loved, cherished and revered him. Maharishi Shuddhananda Bharati says: "The Thirukural is the guiding light to humanity. It leads one to live in moral purity, in eternal wisdom, in spiritual knowledge, and in perfect prosperity, wealth and health. It is a faithful friend to the family man, to the mother, to children, to teachers, artists, scholars, rulers and politicians". So let us imbibe the teachings of Thiruvalluvar which have crossed the threshold of the soul of a people and made them to transcend from the unreal to real.

References:

1. Elangumaranar, Madurai. Thirukkural Vazhvial Urai, Trichy: Thiruvalluvar Thavachalai, 2002. Print.
2. Chattopadhyay, Aparna. Pearls of spiritual wisdom, Delhi: Pustak Mahal, 2003 print.
3. Ganesalingan, S. Arthasathiramum Thirukkuralum, Chennai: Kumaran Publishers, 2001. Print.
4. Good News Bible -with deuterocanonical books, India: Swapna Printing works Pvt. Ltd., 1976 fourth Edition.
5. Kanthasamy, S.N., Thirukkural Koorum Uruthiporul, Chidhamparam: Meiyappan Thamizhaivagam, 2002. Print.
6. Mani, ed. Thirukurall 6 in 1, Chennai: Aruna Publications, 2014. First print.
7. Vaswani, Sadhu. The Bhagavad Gita: The Song of life, India: Gita Publishing House.
8. Sawhney, Clifford, The world's greatest Seers and Philosophers: Plus the philosophy of Bhagavad Gita revealed by Bhagawan Krishna, Delhi: Pustak Mahal, 2007. Print.
9. Thamizhiraivan, Thirukkural Sirukathiagal, Chennai: Abinaya Publications, 2006. Print.
10. Web Sites: 1. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kabir 2. tp://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vemana 3. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thiruvalluvar 4. www.dlshq.org/sa