

THE MIND AND THOUGHT OF TIRUVALLUVAR

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FOREWORD

Ever since Dr. Albert Schweitzer's statement on the Tirukkural of Tiruvalluvar drew the attention of the world to the philosophy of world-affirmation, the study of Tiruvalluvar's thoughts has received a new impetus. The Tamil world of scholarship has shown a quick response to it, as the plethora of recent writing on the subject in Tamil as well as in English would show. We are fortunate indeed in being able to place before the literary public of the world, the thoughts of distinguished writers on this great Tamil classic.

The author of this booklet is a great scholar in Tamil and a linguist, author, and lexicographer and is bringing out an up-to-date commentary on Tirukkural himself. His ideas on Tirukkural are quite out of the beaten track, but as he kindly admits, they are based on the new light thrown on the problem by Schweitzer as also by the questions raised against the orthodox conceptions by the great recent leaders of Tamil thought.

We are grateful to the author for allowing his valuable thoughts to reach the public through us, and we hope the public would welcome our new venture and encourage us in bringing out works of the kind that introduce to the world the great heritage of the Tamil people.

SEKAR PATMIPPAGAM

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THE MIND AND THOUGHT OF TIRUVALLUVAR

1. The Universalism of Tirukkural

The illustrious Tirukkural of Tiruvalluvar is easily the best-read Tamil work among the Tamils themselves : it also happens to be the best-known and the most oft-translated Tamil work in the various other languages of India and the world. So far as we know, it has kept up this place of honour all along the history of the Tamils. For there is not a single literary work in Tamil from the days of the Tolkappiyam and the Sangam Classics to the national poems of Bharati and Bharatidasan of our own day, that has not paid its tribute to Tiruvalluvar either by direct praise or by quoting from him or by using his own characteristic words, phrases or ideas amidst their own as a mark of their appreciation of his inimitable splendour.

The laurel that this great God-Poet has won in Tamilnad is but as a spark to the full effulgence of his glory in the wide world of letters among different religions and different peoples, talking different languages, paying allegiance to different religions and creeds and belonging to different ages and periods. It appears that this has been the case even a thousand and odd years ago. For an ancient Tamil poet that goes under the name of Kalladanar has thus sung about him.

'Truth is this' says one,
 'Not that' says quite another'
 'Nay, neither; quite different'
 Cry those of the six creeds :
 But, 'Truth is this: this is good'
 Agree all the six :
 Such is the excellence
 Of the word Muppall¹ of Tiruvalluvar!²

The six creeds of the days of Kalladanar have since then ramified into six and sixty or more in our own days and promise to grow veritably into six hundred and sixty-six in the future. But like the Fixed Stars in the distant spaces of the heavens, Tiruvalluvar's Tirukkural seems to hold its place unalterably, as the Universal Book of Humanity for all ages and climes.

What is the secret of this highly remarkable, almost tanlalizing universalism?

To begin with, it is not merely universalism, but modernism that is so remarkable in Tirukkural.

In postulating a humanistic ethics quite independent of heaven or hell, of sin or merit in the religious sense of the term; in setting at naught all distinctions of caste or creed, race or varna, class or sex; in bestowing the highest respect to the individual man and in insisting on the equality of rights as well as duties; in giving emphasis to a life of action based on mental purity and love; in eschewing all but strict monotheism in religion and strict monogamy based on Platonic and intellectual pleasures of love in family-relationship, establishing the former on the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood and Sisterhood of Man and the latter on the highest and the most productive and permanent good of the race itself; in building up a

¹ Muppall (the Triple Path) is the ancient name of the work Tirukkural of Tiruvalluvar.

² 'ஒன்றே பொருள்' என்னின், 'வேறு' என்ப; 'வேறு' என்னின் 'அன்று' என்ப ஆறுசமயத்தார்—நன்று என்ன எப்பாலவரும் இயைபவே வள்ளுவனார் முப்பால் மொழிந்த மொழி.

Philosophy of Life whose apex is God-in-Man and God-in-Human-Life, whose base is Nature and whose ambit holds all human life—family, state, religion and all of human art and culture in one single sweep; in formulating a state wedded to the collective as well as individual welfare, adjusted so nicely as to act and react upon each other favourably; in raising Woman to a high pedestal from which she is to fulfil her own special mission of rearing and regenerating mankind; in blending together harmoniously into one variegated thread the multifarious ideals of knowledge and power, goodness and beauty and truth; in breaking off all barriers between this world and the next, between the real and the ideal, between the practical or the worldly and the spiritual, between the interests of the classes against those of the masses and between the various arenas of life—the family, the society, the state and religion; in spinning and weaving all these into one indivisible secular-spiritual activity starting from Nature and passing along the road of life and proceeding for ever towards the eternal goal of perfection, the God-head; in doing all this and more, we may say, Tiruvalluvar the Poet-Saint-Philosopher of all time and of all climes appears to be extraordinarily ultra-modern, if he is not ultra-West as well.

Tirukkural is better known to the world abroad than the language and the land of its birth, albeit in a manner confined to a limited circle of intellectuals all over the world. Despite the inadequacies and imperfections of many of its foreign translations, the all-conquering universality of its appeal is such that it has permeated every land and every age, every tongue and every creed, and has won unstinting tributes from even those whose knowledge of the Tamil language, literature or culture is otherwise negligible.

Even under these circumstances, the great thinker of recent days, Alfred Schweitzer has remarked, while referring to this work, that it has been the leaven that continually inspired and embellished the evolution of religious thought in India all through the centuries from the age of the Vedas to that of

Saint Ramakrishna and his great disciple, Swami Vivekananda, of Mahatma Gandhi and Poet Tagore.

This universalism and modernism—we may almost say—this seeming advance far ahead of the march of times, cannot on the face of it, be a mere accident of history. Nor can it be the effect of a mere eclecticism as may appear at the outset and as is believed to be the case by the public at large. For whatever be the period in which this great Poet-Saint-Philosopher lived and thought and wrote—whether he lived in the early centuries B.C. or A.D. as is held by the majority of the Indian Scholars, or far earlier, as the present author finds reason to believe or even quite later, during the 5th or the 7th century AD, as the venerable late Dr. Vaiyapuri Pillai chose to hold, quite irrespective of the period of the work itself, the theory of eclecticism has to be given up once for all as one that can hold no water. As a matter of fact even if, for the sake of argument, we concede that he lived in the 20th century somewhere in the East or the West, one would feel quite surprised at his hinting at developments of quite recent days—take for example his ideal (vide couplets 739, 734 and 731) of a welfare state that has come upon our intellectual democratic world quite in the decades following the Second World War!

Tirukkural appears to us to bridge up the gulfs between all creeds—not only ancient ones like Saivism and Vaishnavism of the Hindu fold, Mithraism, Buddhism, Jainism and Judaism of the ancient world and Christianity and Islam of the middle period of history, but also quite recent ones like Sikhism, Brahmoism and Aryanism (Arya Samaj).

A perusal of the following chapters of this booklet will show that Tirukkural successfully spans the great chasm that has existed and exists between the creeds and cultures of East and West, as also between the various schools of thought in philosophy, politics, religion or art in the different periods of the ancient, mediaeval or modern world, both East and West.

If the secret of Tiruvalluvar's remarkable universalism and modernism cannot be accounted for as due to eclecticism or a reconciliation of differences actually seen or felt by him, we have to probe deeper into the matter to explain these attributes

We see many of the distinctive features of Tamil religion and culture foreshadowed in Tirukkural. For example, his idea of a casteless, classless society (vide couplet 972) finds its echo in the songs of the Saiva and Vaishnava saints of Tamilnad, the Nayanmars and Alwars of the first millennium of the Christian era. His love of the good for its own sake, irrespective of its rewards here or elsewhere, now or hereafter (vide couplet 222), is insisted on in the Sangam classics and in Manimekalai, even though the latter is a Buddhist epic. Instances like these can be cited *ad infinitum* from the Tamil poets of every age and every school of thought or creed or religion.

Rightly or wrongly, one particular couplet of Tirukkural (55) has had an exceptional influence on the thought and beliefs of the people in Tamilnad as well as in other parts of India

and abroad. The couplet seems to hint, or at any rate, has been taken to hint at a subtle connection between Karpu or Chastity of a woman and the fall of timely rain from the heavens. The same couplet also seems to talk of a chaste woman as one who would not deign to pay homage to any other deity but her own lord. Both these ideas are repeated parrot-like throughout Tamil literature from the days of the Sangam. Vestiges of these beliefs are found in many places of India and South Eastern Asia, not to say of regions beyond. A veritable Creed of Chastity (Pattini cult) has left its mark on the rural folk in India, Ceylon and China.

The universalism and modernism of Tiruvalluvar's Tirukkural thus appear to be due really to its far-reaching, though silent influence over the evolution of religion and culture, thoughts and ideas of people in Tamilnad and India in particular, and of the wider world in general, in the course of ages.

Students of English literature often wonder why the English of the Bible, which really belongs to the 17th century, looks far more modern and up-to-date than many of the prose works of the 18th century. The real explanation is, of course, simple. While other writings, whether late or early, simply followed the development of the speech-habits of the Englishmen of their

own days, the Bible, because of its great authority and vogue, influenced those very speech-habits and governed that very development.

One of the reasons why the late Dr. Vaiyapuri Pillai wished to assign a later date to Tiruvalluvar was the this very modernity and comparative up-to-dateness of Tirukkural in the matter of style and manner and usages as of ideas. We have seen above that the execeptional regard for Tiruvalluvar all along the ages induced people to quote or follow him verbally, possibly often quite uncoscious of any such following. The modernity of Tirukkural is therefore quite like that of the English Bible: it did not follow Tamil usage, it started it! The same may be said about the universalism of Tiruvalluvar—Tiruvalluvar did not follow the universe, the universe followed him!

Alfred Schweitzer reads the influence of Tiruvalluvar's thoughts and ideas in the evolution of India's religion and culture through the ages. However, as he accepted the age of Tiruvalluvar as the 2nd century A. D. following current ideas about the same, he had to postulate a theory of his own in order to account for and explain this influence, which according to him began far earlier than the 2nd century A. D.—in fact began earlier than the Vedas. He concedes for this purpose that the maxims of Tiruvalluvar existed long before him, and were only codified by him in the literary form of Tirukkural as we see it. The wisdom of Ind, which according to him, is the same as the wisdom of Tiruvalluvar, hae slowly seeped through from the masses below to the classes above, to be accepted and adopted by the latter in slow and steady stages, evolving thus the magnificent structure that we call Hindu thought and Hindu culture today.

We see the Sun only through the light that emanates from him. Had it not been for the casual phenomenon of darkness at night, and gradations of light and shade, variation of temperature even in daytime, we perhaps would not have been conscious of the fact that we are able to see the the Sun only because of the light that he disseminates. This fact is in a

great degree applicable to Tiruvalluvar—we often see Tiruvalluvar through the cultural light that he himself has helped to throw around us. This is the reason why few until recently have ever stopped to think of Tirukkural as a work of philosophy. Probably Alfred Schweitzer was the very first to see any philosophy in Tirukkural at all. However, even he, as we have seen above, has not credited Tiruvalluvar himself with the authorship of the philosophy. He gives the credit to the Dravidian masses or the so-called Depressed Classes of India, whose age-long wisdom was only codified by Tiruvalluvar, according to him.

However great the name and fame of Tiruvalluvar, till recently his great book has not been considered as a work of philosophy but as a book of maxims, as a literary work of general wisdom or at best a treatise on popular ethics. Indeed in recent days, from the time of V. O. Chidambaram Pillai of the Shipping Satyagraha fame, certain scholars have denied Tiruvalluvar even the credit for the codification that Alfred Schweitzer allows him. They imagine him to be the author of only a formless jumble of loose maxims codified by somebody in the present form of the Tirukkural, in the same manner as the collection of maxims in Sanskrit known as the Hitopadesa.

That Tirukkural is no out-and-out ethics or stray maxims has however been recognised early by a picked few. Among the early eulogists of Tirukkural (collected for us in the Tiruvalluvar Malai, which is not later than the 9th century A.D.), one (Madurai Tamil Naganar) has chosen to call it an encyclopaedia.

‘In this work, one can see everything ;
There is nothing it does not contain’¹

Scholars quite recently have sought to collect the ideas that form the background of Tiruvalluvar’s mind and to see some individuality or other among his conceptions. They have searched for his ideas on Ethics from the section on Aram, of politics

¹ எல்லாப் பொருளும் இதன்பால் உள ; இதன்பால்
இல்லாத எப்பொருளும் இல்லையால்—மதுரைத் தமிழ் நாகனார்.

from that on Porul, of Love from that on Inbam or Kamam. Some have gone deeper and tried to cull out some system from his ideas through a study of individual chapters or even couplets—his ideas on economics or agriculture, education, warfare, espionage etc. But these are possibly no more than literary studies, more or less like the studies of Shakespeare's dramas to elicit his ideas or knowledge of particular fields like medicine, law, statecraft etc. But these are characteristic of the spirit of the times, that is not satisfied with the verbal interpretation of the couplets, but wish to get into the mind of the great sage and understand his innate ideas and ideologies.

In this connection, the considered opinion of Tiru. T. P. Minakshisundaram, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Madurai and a highly distinguished scholar of the day, is an eye-opener with regard to the trends of thought at the present to show us further possible lines of research. While some recent commentators have tried to suggest that individual maxims of Tirukkural are not to be taken absolutely at their face-value but must be interpreted according to the context and in consonance only with the section or subsections to which they belong, Tiru. Meenakshisundaram argues that all the truths mentioned in the Tirukkural have a common bond, as they are all clearly correlated with each other to form a harmonious system of philosophy as their fundamental basis. While the commentator seems to think that taken out of their context, one maxim may go against the grain of another, Tiru. Meenakshisundaram and some of the commentators¹ hasten to assure us that while every maxim has its special application to the particular section or sub-section, the general harmony and correlation of parts renders every one of them to have a general application also.

The hand of the time-spirit thus shows that it is high time to study Tirukkural as a whole and see what are Tiruvalluvar's innate ideas on the essentials of life, how far they have influenced the progress of human civilisation and guided it, and in what

¹ The two schools of commentators referred to here may be represented by Pulvar Kulantai on the one side and Kavignar Ramalingam Pillai on the other.

respects they are in advance of our age and can give us light and guidance for the future.

Tirukkural, as many early eulogists of Tiruvalluvar claim and as Tamil tradition affirms, has long been considered as a Veda or Bible, and has often been called the Bible of the Tamils. It has also been styled as Podu Marai² or the Bible of All Humanity.

If these claims are correct, it follows that the Kural is not mere ethics, not mere philosophy, but a full-blooded religious philosophy that has a unique message to mankind covering all the requirements of man. What that message and that philosophy is, is the object of the study of the following pages.

² பொது மறை.

2. Tiruvalluvar's Conception of Godhead

Tiruvalluvar's conception of Godhead is of very vital importance in his philosophy of life, for it forms the pivot round which that whole philosophy revolves.

The word used by Tiruvalluvar for Godhead or God is *Irai* or *Iraivan*¹ which means All-Pervasiveness or the All-Pervasive. It is significant that the words *irai* or *iraivan* (probably Tiruvalluvar would have likewise written the words without capitals if he had written in English) as well as their root *iru*² (be all pervasive) also connote kingship or tax or tribute or king and his act of taxing (which is a symbol of his presence or distributive personal contact with every one of his subject-citizens). The same words have a third application also, as Master of the Household or of Love i.e. Husband, with a feminine form *iraivi* meaning the Mistress of the Household or Love i.e. Wife (as well as goddess and queen.) The verb in this third context would mean 'pervade' as love pervades in the whole family and the social environment and in all social associations of the family.

¹ இறை or இறைவன். This word can mean Godhead, God, King or Sovereign Master.

² இறு means be all-pervading. It also means 'pay tax' 'percolate' as water in a sieve or sand-bath)

Tiruvalluvar, like every other great philosophers of the world, must have considered God as Absolute, Transcendent and Impersonal in His Essence. But as his theism is one that is indissolubly connected with life, evolution of life and the ever-growing principle of human civilisation, he keeps his idea of this Impersonal Absolute God quite in the background. This God is, as it were, the static aspect of God or God-in-Nature who is a Principle keeping Himself in the background and forming the Root-Cause of all phenomena. He is the Changeless in an ever changing, the Non-Growing in an ever-growing process of Nature that we call life (Piravi¹).

Tiruvalluvar makes direct reference of this Static, Impersonal Aspect of God (Aruva Irai²) twice only, that too in an indirect way in two places of his first Chapter entitled the 'Invocation of God'. His direct references to God always depict him as Personal or Immanent God, God-in-Life or God-in-Action³ who is not Static but Dynamic, who is constantly in motion, who always changes, changing all nature and all life and all humanity and all civilisation with Him. This form of God, the Second Person of God as it were, is the Form of Life, of Evolution, of History, of Civilisation.

Most people of the modern world, not aware of the association of Tirukkural with the stream of religious thought in the world, miss this basic idea of Tirukkural mainly because of the symbolism that Tiruvalluvar uses in his first chapter, and which, strangely enough, continues to be connected with the symbolism of all religions in the world, particularly those in India to express the idea. God-in Life is by Tiruvalluvar represented in the Personal Aspect as the First God-Teacher (Ati-Pakavan)⁴ or the World Teacher or the Premier Prophet of Humanity. He is also represented as the Feet of God,⁵ Feet being the emblem of God's working grace, that walk on the flowery path of the

1 பிறன் is really birth, or period of life, or living being.

2 அருவ இறை or இறைவனின் அருவப்படிவம்.

3 இறைவன் or இறையின் உருவப்படிவம்.

4 ஆதி பகவன் is the God-Man God-Teacher, the World-Teacher or the first great Prophet of Mankind.

5 இறைவன் தாள் or இறைவன் அடி.

human hearts (vide couplet 3) and set them on the journey to perfection.

In Tamil, to this day, the godly men are called Adigal¹ (the Feet) or Adiyar² (Those that Bear the Sacred Feet in their Hearts.)

In Saiva Siddhanta, God Siva is represented as God-Teacher. In the life of Manikkavachaka, one of the great apostles, the Lord appears in bodily form as spiritual Teacher giving him the Baptism of the Feet³.

The tradition of the World Teacher is preserved in India in the person of Lord Siva as Teacher in Saivism, the First Tirthankara as God-Teacher in Jainism, the Buddha and the Christ as Saviours in Christianity and Buddhism, Father Abraham or Gabriel the angel in Judaism and Islam and the Vehicle Garuda or the Premier Saint Nammalvar in Vaishnavism.

The Impersonal God is always worshipped by the Bhakta in the form of the Personal Lord. But this form is only for the spiritually mature mind to attain to. There is a third form which is constantly residing in every soul, guiding it as an intimate friend and companion. This is the Personal-Impersonal Form of God⁴ that is considered to be identical with the Veda⁵ or the Word of God.

These Three Forms of the Godhead, the Transcendent and Formless One, the Personal Lord, and the Personal-Impersonal Veda, as early adumbrated by Tiruvalluvar, agree with the respective. Forms of the Trinity in the various philosophical schools of India and in the various religions of the world. It is the Sat, Chit and Ananda; Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma; Father, Son and the Holy Ghost; the Lady, the Drink and the Book (of the Sufis and of Omar Khayyam, the Sufi poet). It will be of interest to note here, that in all these triads, the first category always represents either the Absolute or the Unchanging Eternal

¹ அடிகள் literally the Feet.

² அடியார் literally Those of the Feet.

³ பாத தீட்சை.

⁴ இறைமை or இறைவனின் உருவாருவப்படிவம்.

⁵ வேதம் or the Traditional Holy Book which is to be chanted constantly by the race of man (ஒது, to chant is the verbal form of Veda in Tamil. meaning chant traditionally from father to son in the race.)

Verity or in the case of the Lady, the Changless Adorable One amid the ever-changing aspects of exterior beauty; the second or third representing the Dynamic or Changing Aspect; and the third or sometimes the second representing the Word and denoting the Constant in and through the everchanging phenomenon.

It will be seen that Tiruvalluvar's God is neither a Being alien to and isolated from the aspects of reality like Nature, Living Beings and thir Life as is the case with the popular Theism of our day, nor identicial with any or all of them as is the case with the Pantheists. Further his Godhead is not a metaphysical idea of a purely intellectual nature that is divorce do fall living cultural, emotional or artistic activity. For in His Three-fold Form, the first signifies Truth, the second Beanty, and the third Goodness and Bliss.

Further, the first of the Three Form represents God as the Root-Cause or the Beginning of Life and of All Things—a Beginning of course that has no beginning. The first couplet of the first chapter of Tirukkural invokes God in the form of the Ati Pakavan or the Wolrd-Teacher in this aspect.

The Second or Personal Aspect is the Goal of Life—it marks the perfection or the *beau ideal* towards which all things and all life, all cultural and intellectual developments tend. It is the suammation of all great ideals of mankind ascribed to Godhead as His Attributes. Couplets 2 to 9 of the first chapter invoke God as representing these various attributes of perfection that form the Divine Goal of Life on earth. Truth or Knowledge (and hence Education), Infinite Love for Living Beings, Selfless Impartiality, Pure Untainted Potentiality for Goodness, Unlimited Bliss, Matchless Sovereignty, Endless Concern for Living Beings, and lastly, the Embodiment of Eternal Perfection¹—these are the epithets of God in couplets 2 to 9 respectively.

The Third or Impersonal—Personal Aspect of God is the Lord as Ever-Present Companion, Helper and Friend of the

* வாலறிவன், மலர்மிசை ஏகினான், வேண்டுதல் வேண்டாமையிலான், இருள் சேர் இருளினையும் சேரா இறைவன், பொறிவாயில் ஐந்தவித்தான், தனக்குவமையில்லாதான், அறவாழி அந்தணன், எண் குணத்ததான் are the qualitative epithets of God here referred to.

Living Beings in their everyday life. This is the Form of God as the Veda. This aspect is specially mentioned in the last couplet of the first chapter of the Tirukkural, the Invocation of God.

The conception of God as seen above is not in any way foreign to the great Theistic religions of the world, but it will be readily noted that by its very nature, it has nothing repugnant to even those religions or schools of thought and philosophies that cannot call themselves strictly Theistic. The conception is such that even Atheists, not to speak of Agnostics, will readily subscribe to the broad basis of the idea, even if they object to the word God used in the context. Nor is this all. No account of God by the traditional religionist or description of Godhead by the metaphysical philosopher would be likely to satisfy the pure Ethicist or Moral thinker or the Poet or artistic thinker as such. The best that religion or philosophy can offer in this line is either devotional poetry which is only devotion plus poetry or intellectual or philosophical religion which is only religion plus philosophy — in neither case are the two identified as a single category. Tiruvalluvar, on the other hand, unites into his one single conception of Godhead almost all the ideals of humanity, intellectual, ethical, emotional as well as artistic and, what is more, has worked them up into one single indivisible category.

‘The Poet, the Lover and the Mad-man are all of imagination compact’ said Shakesphere. ‘Truth is Beauty, Beauty Truth’ — so says the lyrical poet, Keats. But Tiruvalluvar has gone one degree further: he identifies Truth, Beauty and Goodness into one ideal and equates it on to his conception of Godhead. How he has been able to unite these varying and conflicting attributes into one single ideal and how he identified the union of these with Godhead will be fully discussed in the ensuing chapters.

In a study of Tiruvalluvar’s conception of Godhead, it is highly important to note that he is an uncompromising Monotheist. The great Theistic religions of the modern day, Islām and Christianity, Judaism and Zorastrianism, and three out of four of the Indian religions viz. Jainism, Saivism and Vaishnavism will

find him no less staunch than they themselves in this matter — indeed he is stauncher than the last two which have historically compounded themselves with some sort of polytheism or other, derived either from local custom or from the Vedic pantheon; and rises clean above even the earlier four which have positively accepted the reality of Beings like Satan, the Devils, the Angels etc. It may be said that Tiruvalluvar too, has calmly referred to Indra, the Deities, the goddess of Wealth or the goddess of Poverty, But any serious student of literature can easily see that they are no more than adoption of traditional beliefs in the way of symbolism or personifications at one. Further he seems to philosophize over them and weave his own new conceptions into them, thus equating the Deities (Teyvam) not only with the natural forces of a beneficent Nature but also with the personalities of the Dead Great who had lived their life on earth as heroes of peace (vide couplet 50). He also elevates the Rain-Cloud into almost a new deity, making it a symbol of God's Own Mercy and of qualities of humanity that derive from that divine source or are inspired by it.

There are those who interpret or translate references to Teyvam or Tevar in Tirukkural as God or god or Deva. But it is heartening to note that the great commentator Parimelalagar makes that mistake very rarely. He even goes out of his way to tell us that the word Teyvam and Pal are synonymous with Fate (Uzh). His thorough acquaintance with Sanskrit on the one side and his insistence on the Sanskrit connotations of the word on the other, have greatly helped him here. For while in the Tamil and other South Indian languages the word Teyvam or Daivam (the Sanskrit form of it) means God or gods only and not fate, in Sanskrit it connotes fate alone in its noun form, while denoting 'godly' or divine in its adjectival form (Daiva from Deva, means belonging to the Devas.)

Tiruvalluvar's idea of Fate or Destiny makes him kin with the religions of the wide world, and in particular, with the religions of the West. This is not a matter of chance or accident; it is due to historical reasons.

The earliest idea of fate in the world seems to have been different from that entertained by the great religions of today.

For to the peoples of the pre-historic days and even to the Greeks and the Romans and to the Germanic peoples, Fate was a blind force or force born of the caprices of the gods or often a capricious force swaying even the gods. In the Theist world that succeeded to this prehistoric age, Fate was at first the will of a beneficent and just God and later it became His personality or Will or His Grace. The Pantheists and the Zwinglians and other Predestinationists of Middle Europe in the 17th century revived the conception of Fate again as a blind capricious power even though it was considered to be the will-power of God during the time of creation. Third in order, if not altogether in time, came the Buddhist and Post-Buddhist idea of Fate in India, which tied it down to a new philosophic though mechanical idea of Karma and identified it with Karma, which again irrevocably bound it up with the philosophic conception of Transmigration.

The Predestinationists of Middle-Europe, though coming late in the evolution of ideas, were probably only a distant Western echo of this Post-Buddhist development.

Tiruvalluvar's idea of Fate is nearer to that of the West today than to that of the East mainly because it is Pre-Buddhistic and belongs to the earlier common Theism of West and East, from which the East has since gone off to have a separate development, albeit only for a time. In accordance with this earlier Theism of Tiruvalluvar and the world, Fate is tied up to God and not to Man and Living Beings and their Karma as is the case with Buddhism and Post-Buddhistic Jainism, Saivism and Vaishnavism and all the various schools of Philosophy since born and bred in Post-Buddhist India, whether they are Theist, Pantheist or Atheist.

Thus in the history of the evolution of the conception of Fate in the world, Tiruvalluvar has had a place and a function to perform. For he came immediately after the first Pre-historic period when Fate was a blind force but quite in the second period of antiquity when the theory of Fate as the Power-Aspect and the Mercy-Aspect of Godhead was having its full vogue. Thiruvalluvar lived and wrote pretty well before the Buddha and his schools of thought and had no direct touch

with them, though in a way he served as the crucial original type from which they derived their new inspiration. He may thus be said on the one side to be earlier and different from them in his conception, and at the same time on the other side he had a part to play in the rise of the new school of thought as their original inspirer.

We find herein one of the main historical reasons for his wonderful universalism and modernism. He is the life-source of all the Theistic, Pantheistic and Atheistic thinkers of history and bears the same relation to them that the Bible bears to the various Christian schools of thought, or the Quran to the various schools of Islamic or Sufistic thought, or the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutra and Bhagavadgita for the various branches of modern Hindu Philosophy.

Tiruvalluvar's idea of Fate as probably the source or possibly the type of the earlier idea common to the whole world of culture is indelibly recorded in all the civilized languages of today. Students of Western languages can still note that the older word Fate in English records the prehistoric conception unconnected with the Godhead of Monotheism while the newer Romance and the Renaissance words, providence and destiny connote Fate when normally written, but denote God when written with capital letters (as Providence or Destiny). This aspect of Tiruvalluvar's ideas is recorded in the languages of the East as well, and in less ambiguous manner. For the word for Fate in Sanskrit (Vidhi) connotes both Fate and the Lord of Fate i.e. Brahma, who is the Creator as well as the Revealer of the Vedas. It is also remarkable that as Master of Fate, he is also called Vedhas or Vedha (note this word so suggestive of Veda has absolutely no connection with that word in the Sanskrit spelling).

Tiruvalluvar's concept of Fate and God have their imprint even more unambiguously in Tamil.

According to Parimelalagar, the great commentator, Tiruvalluvar uses three separate words as almost synonymous for Fate—they are Teyvam¹ Uzh² and Pal³. But these three words

¹ தெய்வம்

² உழ

³ பால்

are not out-and-out synonymous, for they really connote the Three Aspects of Fate (corresponding to the Three Aspects of Godhead).

Teyvam or its Sanskrit form Daiva denotes God-in-Nature or godly beings in Tamil. It has at present no other meaning, since it has now lost the meaning of fate. In Sanskrit in its noun-form it has lost the sense of God-in-Nature or godly being, and means now only fate as the blind force of chance or luck, though in the adjectival form the term means divine, belonging to god.

As Parimelalgar reminds us with his bilingual scholarship, Teyvam in the Tirukkural idiom denotes Fate as the Law of Nature—not the wild capricious Law of the Prehistoric periods but yet the inexorable Cosmic Law. This term thus reminds us of the God-side or God-aspect of Fate and corresponds to the Impersonal Aspect of Godhead. We may also call it the inanimate, inorganic, static part of Fate.

Uzh is usually the generic or comprehensive term for Fate but it also expresses the Life-Power Aspect of Fate. It is Fate as the Law of Society and the Race, as the Law of State as Justice. It corresponds to the Personal Form of God and may be said to be the World-Aspect of fate. It is not a static power but a dynamic force. It is the Personality and Power of God expressed in terms of Justice.

The third term Pal means divison or distribution in Tamil (Pal is really Pakal, derived from paku, to divide: note the divisions of the Tirukkural into three parts or pals). It corresponds to the Personal-Impersonal Aspect of God, to God as Friend and Guide and Companion, as Dispenser of Mercy to All. It is neither a static force, nor a mere dynamic force—it has the force of alchemy or a touch of magic in it. Its Eternal Form is the Veda or Word of God that makes everything perfect, undying, everlasting and that for ever grows, and is growing into Eternal Bliss.

It may be of interest to the English-speaking people to note that there is a Tamil word to express this idea of dynamic dynamism of the Third Power of Fate as well as the Third Power of God, Pongal (literally, welling up, cooking by boiling) and that the English word 'well' (noun and verb, as its counter-part) form part of the new idea of welfare state among us.

It is a fashion in the West to dub India or the whole East as other-worldly or fatalistic. This has a surface-appearance of truth in so far as it concerns mediæval or decadent culture of India and the East, as it is perhaps equally true of mediæval Europe also. But the mediæval age in the West is said to begin after the fall of Rome and ends by slow degrees after the Renaissance or revival of Greek and Classical learning. In India and the East, on the other hand the mediæval age may be said to have begun long before the Buddha and to be only coming to a close towards the present or the near future. As we see in the West a full-blooded culture in the ancient days of Greece and Rome and a revival of it in our own days, we see in Tirukkural, Tolkappiyam and the Sangam classics of Tamil and the Upanishads of the Older Sanskrit, glimpses of a Glory that was East, a revival of which is beginning only in our own days. A study of Tirukkural afresh in the light of this ancient period of the East, and research in the spheres of the literature and the culture of the Age of Tirukkural can alone bring that Golden Age of the East back within our reach.

We see in Tirukkural the spiritual excellences of the age of the Upanishads and the secular excellences of the age of Tolkappiyam and the Sangam Classis in their fullest swing. We see a life spiritual that is yet secular, a life secular that is yet spiritual to the core. We see not even a shade of that distinction between spiritual *versus* temporal that continues today as a vestige of the lingering Mediæval spirit even in the West.

Tiruvalluvar's God is neither a spritual God of the Mediæval ages nor a secular God of the Modern West. He is a full

blooded positive God of a secular-spiritual world. He is not the Woman-God of the pre-historic peoples, nor the Man-God of the modern or Neo-Mediaeval world—He is the fullest representation of a Super-Man-Woman God, who is the perfect idealized attribute, dynamic idealization of all that is best in Man and all that is best in Woman. He is not the God of the Masses of the Prehistoric peoples, nor a God of the Classes of the Mediaeval and modern ages but quite a God of Humanity and the Living Beings in its fullest extension. He is not a God of the democratic mobocracy of the pre-historic age nor a God of the republican class-rule of the middle ages—He is the Dynamic Head of a Spiritual Hierarchy that is ever evolving itself cyclically round Him, towards Him, becoming 'Him', i.e., developing Him in themselves and developing themselves in Him.

In our world today God and religion are just a department of life. He has no place in our education as a whole, He and His religion are honoured only by a reverend but out-of-the-way place in our curricula out of some old antiquarian regard for Him. One can see that to Tiruvalluvar God was Education and Education was God (vide couplet 2). Our God of the moderns world has no place in our morality—if He has, it is only to intimidate the 'weak' good with fears of hell or sin or effects of sin in the coming births. The Jain Naladiar (122, 123) regarded by Tamils the highest ethical work next to the Tirukkural, lays it down that he who eats crabs in this birth shall have leprosy in the next, and that he who encages the birds in this life shall suffer imprisonment in the next. One may wonder now-a-days what sin Mahatma Gandhi did in his previous births in order to merit in our days incarceration by the British rulers, or what sin Jesus or the Prophet did in their former lives to merit the rough treatment they had among their respective fellow men.

The Tamils even of the Sangam days appear to have had a veritable scorn for such commercial, utilitarian, selfish morality. For the Poetess Avvaiyar praising Prince Ay says. 'Thou art not a trader in morals that does good deeds here anticipating good in the coming births.'

Tiruvalluvar's God, one can easily see, is above all our Gods, God of Gods—certainly He is the God of Mahatma Gandhi, of Tolstoy, of Jesus and the Prophet. It may be said that all great men, all great Founders of Religions came into the world to fulfil the Mission of Tiruvalluvar—they have vindicated him—but the world is yet quite far away from fulfilling their dreams.

A re-reading of the Bible, of the Quran, of the Gita is, we venture to think, certainly necessary in the light that is given us by the philosophy of Tiruvalluvar, if we are to prove worthy of the rich heritage they have left and if we are to fulfil or at least progress in the direction of fulfilling their dreams. But before we can do that, we have first to re-read Tirukkural itself with the aid of the Light that the great Prophets of God have given us. Tirukkural is perhaps more woefully under-understood by us than any other scripture because it is not the scripture of some denominational group, it is not even seriously taken to be a scripture by the modern world.

Tiruvalluvar's God is undoubtedly a Theist's God. He is the Original Pattern of all the Theist's conceptions of Godhead, But He is more than this. He is also the Original Pattern of the God of the Pantheists, Deists and all Heretics—Nay, in so far as he has equated God with the goal of Human Culture and Civilization and the Culmination of the Evolution of All Creation, his God-Plan is the Original Pattern for all Rationalists, for all Agnostic and Atheistic thinkers of the world.

Tiruvalluvar was one—probably he was the first and possibly the last, so far as we know—who planned out a way to Life and a way of Human Civilization and Culture, ideal enough to be for ever beyond our reach like the horizon, attractive enough and practical enough to be unconsciously and at the same time successfully followed by man up to our own day and variegated enough to include all possibilities of development and to enlist unto itself all kinds of tastes and capacities. He discovered a Universal and Common Target for all competitors for glory in the race of civilisation, whether they chose the path of intellect or science, religion or art, wealth or service—and that Target he called God.

It is scarcely recognized today, despite the discovery of the Modernity of Tiruvalluvar by Alfred Schweitzer, how much we and our religion and our conception of God owe to Tiruvalluvar. We glibly talk of One God or One World or one human family as if they are each one of them an unconnected separate isolated entity. To Tiruvalluvar and to many a great Tamil Saint after him they are all like the successive premises of one argument, steps in the realisation of one truth.

We can put it logically thus.

The world is one.

Therefore Humanity and all the Living Beings and all Creation are one family.

All Men and all Living Beings, even all objects of Nature are therefore fundamentally equal and free though dependent on each other for good, as brothers and sisters of one family.

The Basis of this world, the Original Plan of this world must be One. The Original Plan must be with us at every stage of our construction i.e., with our life. The Original Plan, or the fulfilment of it, must be also our final consummation or aim.

That Original Plan is God

Therefore that God is One, One Organic Indivisible Category.

If Tiruvalluvar had lived in the days of the Upanishads, or among the Greek philosophers, probably he would have argued his case with a dry philosophical tone like this. He would have written volumes that could have filled old Book-Temples and been buried or burnt or destroyed by moths by now. Belonging to the age when philosophers and prophets and heroes were poets, he has given his philosophy of God and Life to us as a beautiful compendium of poetic sketches!

The first chapter of Tirukkural is entitled Invocation of God and the first couplet thereof invokes Ati Pakavan. It is quite natural for any one to take Ati Pakavan as equivalent to God and many of the recent commentators and annotators easily paraphrased Ati Pakavan as God who is the First Cause. But while

the ancient commentators left it at that, they most evidently had some compunction in the matter and simply paraphrased Ati Pakavan as Ati Pakavan. The reason for their hesitation is easy to see — Tiruvalluvar never again uses this word to refer to God.

Some people have taken courage to see in Ati Pakavan the names of Tiruvalluvar's imaginary parents. For this of course they have absolutely no other warrant but their fertile imagination.

Some wish to paraphrase it as the Sun, the Source of all. But here also there is only a slight shade of fancy (the Sun praised before Rain in the next, chapter). Yet others take it to denote Basic or Sovereign Reason. When the following couplets praise God, there is no reason why the author should go out of the way to avoid it to mention Reason or the Sun.

The only possible solution is that Ati Pakavan does not verbally mean God but yet is used as equivalent to God. It may be Tiruvalluvar's direct Master or Teacher, or a World Master or World Teacher to whom he wishes to pay his homage as he is to all intents and purposes a Visible God and a Symbol Personal of the Impersonal Godhead.

If this is so, Ati Pakavan is the prototype of the world tradition that came to be known as Messiah or Christ or the Prophet in West Asia, Tirthankara and Bodhisatva among the ancient Buddhists and Jains, World Teacher (Jagadguru) in Sanskrit schools of South India, Nayanar (Master) and Alwar (Devotee) among the Saivas and Vaishnavas. This again agrees with the general conclusions of our study that Tiruvalluvar is the progenitor of the line of Spiritual Thoughts and Institutions all over the civilised world.

Tiruvalluvar's idea of Godhead is connected with a Real Christlike person and through him with all Life, as is shown in the chapter on the Three-fold Path which follows,

3. The Threefold Path

Tiruvalluvar's philosophy of life hinges round his conception of Godhead, for God to him represents the *summum bonum* of life and the ever-growing, ever-approching but ever-distant goal of perfection towards which the evolution of life and the Human Race is for ever proceeding and ever advancing.

The Three Forms of Godhead have, in the case of Tiruvalluvar, their counterparts in the Three Forms of Fate. which are in fact, according to him, the Three aspects in the Evolution of life and culture. Both these triads are intimately connected with the Threefold Path of Life known in Tamil and in Tirukkural as Aram¹, Porul², Inbam or Kamam³ and corresponding to Dharma, Artha and Kama of the Sanskritist.

There are those who take the Threefold Path as three separate ways. But as the Three Forms of Godhead do not by any means refer to Three Gods but only to the Three Aspects of One Godhead, and as the Three Forms of Fate by no stretch of imagination can become Three Fates but only Three Aspects of One Fate, even so the Threefold Path contains no reference to Three Paths, meaning only Three Aspects of One only path, Muppai⁴ that may otherwise be called Life.

¹ அறம்; ² பொருள் ³ இன்பம் or காமம் ⁴ முப்பால் not to be understood or translated as Three Paths as is done by many but as the Threefold Path or Triple Path ie Path having Three Aspects.

This position may be illustrated by means of the following parable or allegory.

A traveller to a distant place (we may call it T) has to pass over land and back-water and ice-fields and so equips himself with a bike, a boat and a pair of skates. The bike bears him on across land and also helps him to take with him the boat and the skates. On water, the boat takes him up along with the bike and the skates. But on ice, the skates help him on, taking him along with the bike and the boat.

The Threefold Path is very much like that traversed by the traveller above. Aram, Porul and Inbam are like the three forms of conveyance, the bike, the boat and the pair of skates that help him on his journey. It may be noted that every one of these conveyances, conveys not only the traveller but also helps to convey the other conveyances also. This is illustrative of the nature of the Three Aspects of the Path. They not only help the Soul to traverse the Path but also support each other in the respective Aspects of the journey.

The Path of the Traveller in the parable denotes Life—not the life of the individual Man or Living Being or Soul but the life Eternal of the Race of Man or the Living Beings or the Souls, which is a Life never ending, everlasting. The Traveller is none other than Man or Living Being or Soul—not the individual Man or Living Being or Soul but the Race Everlasting which is a chain composed of Souls or better, a net-work of souls. The distant place of T in quest of which the Traveller journeys is the Endless, Everlasting, Unlimited and Ever-growing Joy of Life or Happiness Enduring or Bliss¹ that is otherwise known as God.

In Tiruvalluvar's philosophy—in ancient Tamil philosophy in fact, of which Tiruvalluvar is, so far as we know, the earliest and probably the first protagonist—the individual soul, or the individual man, masculine or feminine, is not considered to be a unit or a whole category. He or she is not even considered to

¹ இன்பம் as Goal or Life is பேரின்பம். இன்பம் as the way of Life is called சிற்றின்பம் which is the name of sex-love also in Tamil.

be an organ or organic unit of the Universal Soul or the Race. The real organic units of the Race are the Society and the Family—if the Race is the whole tree, which has but one life, society is like its branches, the Family, Living Beings and Men are like its leaves, flowers or fruits. The Individual Living Being or Soul, the Individual man or woman are no more than cells in the leaf or flower or fruit, that have only a relative, not an organic life or function.

Not only this. The individuals, even in the family, are not integral factors. For an individual is not born as a member of a family, he becomes one only after his or her or its mating or marriage. Family thus begins its life not with what we now call the 'birth' of the individuals, but the marriage of 'two' individuals. In the same way, the lives of the individuals, the husband or the wife are but passing events in the life of the family. For the family is not affected in the least by the death or life of any one of them—the family continues its existence or existences until the next Marriage or Marriages of the progeny. It will be seen thus, that the family is born not in one family but in two, and that it never dies at all, it continues its existence through the matings of every one of its progeny with the progeny of utterly different families.

Family is but a link of the fibres making up the Network of Life or the Race Eternal. Every family is connected at birth with all the other families of the Race (through the parents of each generation multiplied *ad infinitum* during every generation) and is likewise connected during its duration, which is really endless, with all the ensuing Families of the Race through its progeny. Thus the Family is really a Junction in the Endless Life of the Race.

Living Beings without Family belong to the lowest rank in the Evolution of life. The lowest living beings that have no family life have mouths but to eat, not to make noise or speech. They have no communication with each other and are utterly unconscious of their kind. But among Living Beings there are some who have not developed the Mating Instinct or the Family but who have yet some sort of life with their own kind. We call this Society or Social life.

Birds have developed a high type of love as well as family life. Poets are therefore very fond of comparing highest human love to the love of birds—to the Tamil poets, the symbol of the highest love is that of the twin-birds 'Anril'. In the same way some birds like the heron or swan, have developed a high sense of society without any comparable development of the idea of family. The Zonal birds have a mating season and a mating zone, and a living zone thousands of miles far away. Their eggs are laid or hatched in one zone and grow with no knowledge of their parents and go to the living zones of the parents by mere instinct.

Among the insects like the Bee and the Ant, Society is organized on a most complex pattern with the result that society becomes the family. The Bee Society is a barbarian society of class organization reminding us of the Nazi conception of life. The Ant Society likewise suggests an advanced organization of the Mediaval Indian type of Varnasrama-dharma complete with slavery, class of farmers, soldiers and rulers intact. They had ant-cows reminding us of the wet-nurses of Anglo-Indian or Eurafasian society.

Civilisation or culture, biologically, may be said to begin with animals that have developed a Family first and a Society afterwards, giving equal importance to both. The highest conception of Family-Society development—Valluvar's conception, we may call it—may be said to be attained to in a crude form even in the animal kingdom in the life of the Elephant. Strict monogamy and organization of the herd or society with a view to the good of the race are found here—the fundamentals of Valluvar's ideology cannot be better cherished even in Man!

Family, Society, the Race—these then are the component parts or units in Tiruvalluvar's philosophy of life. The Family unit has its existence from the mating of two parents on to the mating often in their own life-time of a pair or pairs of young souls one of which pairs is their own progeny. The Society unit is composed of groups of such Families existing side by side and leading a common life together as components of one Race. The Race is the continuum or extension of the society and its groups of Families in the Fourth Dimension of Time.

It is not known to the lay public but only to the world of Tamil scholars that, while the time-unit of a day is from sunrise to sunrise to the Easterners in general, from sunset to sunset to the Islamic world and the Middle East, from midnight to midnight to the West, the same is calculated by the Tamils from midnoon to midnoon. We see something of the same in the unit conception of the duration of the Life of the Family and the Generation of Family and Society of Tiruvalluvar. To the moderns, the life of the Individual as well as the Family begins with the birth or births and the death or deaths of the individuals. But to Tiruvalluvar, there is no life of the individual apart from the family, and the unit of family as well as generation is from marriage to marriage.

Tiruvalluvar and, following Tiruvalluvar, the Tamils considered Life Eternal of the Race of Man and the Living Beings as an illimitable Ocean in which the depth is Time, the Surface is Space and every Wave its linear dimension. The individual soul or life is an atom or a minute formless drop in the ocean the family is the wave of the Sea, society the surface of the water and the race, the full ocean, with its continuity from the beginningless beginning of the Past to the endless end of the Future and living in the ever-living present. In Tiruvalluvar's Thre-fold Path, Aram corresponds to the impersonal aspect of Fate, the Law of Nature. The Pre-Tiruvalluvar Tamils, like all Pre-historic peoples, equated Aram with this static, mainly destructive and negative force of Nature. But to Tiruvalluvar Aram is the conquest of the Forces of Nature by the Race by means of its invention (if we may call it so) of the Family and the Society and by means of its unconscious, sub-conscious or conscious planning of Life. In this planning, so far as the Human Beings and the Higher Animals are concerned, there are three aspects. One is the unconscious aspect of the individual. This is scarcely different from the position of the Lower Animals, for basically, man or higher animal without a family or society is quite in the position of the lower animal. The second is the sub-conscious aspect of the individual in the family. As soon as an individual becomes member of a family, he automatically becomes a member of the Society and of the Race—his real life begins. He partakes in Aram, or the Plan

of Life kept ready for him and works out the destiny of the Race just because he is the member of the family and because he works for his family. But he is yet unconscious of any Plan for Society, much less a Plan for the Race. The Third aspect of the individual is the Conscious Aspect. This part is Tiruvalluvar's own conception and has never yet been dreamed of either by the other Tamils or by any other philosopher of the world. According to this conception the philosophic leaders of society and the race, who look on society and the race as one unit, consciously plan for its welfare and plenitude utilising every opportunity and every institution for the furtherance of this object.

Tiruvalluvar peoples society with two sorts of men or women. There are those who are members of family and society and race who run the plan as subconscious agents, acting under the example and direction of those who are leaders of A-ram, Porul or Inbam i.e. the leaders of the Society and the Race. These latter form the second class of men and women, the God-men and the God-women who are the Governors of Men and Women and plan their life for them and administer their plan for their eternal good. Being God-men, they are often able to administer the Law without the power of the Law-for they have the power of Love (Anbu) which is the greater power on earth and which is born of Family Love (Kadal).

The Sub-conscious Law of Love among the Members of Family is called General Aram or Family Aram (Illaram¹) by Tiruvalluvar, while the Conscious Law planned and organised by the Masters of Family, Society or the Race is called the Special or Higher Aram (Turavaram²). The latter is called Turavaram (Path of Renunciation) mainly because the Masters who follow them are those that have altogether renounced Self-interest which is the very basis of the life of Common-men. The Common man lives and works first and foremost for his own self and for his family and only through the family for the Society and the Race. He is actuated by Self-interest first and Love as a secondary principle after it and so his Love works outwardly in concentric circles from himself and proceeds through the Family and Society towards the Race. The Masters on the other hand are

¹ பொதுவறம் or இல்லறம், ² சிறப்பறம் or துறவறம்.

actuated by Pure Love without the tinge of Self-interest, and so their Love works in concentric circles inwardly, proceeding from the Love of the Race (Love of one's own kind of Keats and Shelly) downwards to the Love of Society and the Family and lastly to the individual.

The Love of the Common Man is an expanding Love while that of the Master is a gradual growth in intensity.

One can see that Tiruvalluvar's Turavu (Renunciation) and Turavi (Ascetic) are of a quite different kind from the general idea of these both East and West, and yet a careful reading of the spirit of the great religions of the world will show that Tiruvalluvar's conception is the same in essence as that of the great Masters of Religions from the Buddha and the Christ to the Mahatma of our own days—the great Masters of Religions were themselves great Masters or Turavis of the Tiruvalluvar type.

Tiruvalluvar's Aram deals with the duty of the individual as Member of the Family to the Family, Society and the Race. As explained already the common member follows his duty as prescribed by the Master while the Master governs the Common members by example and precept and by means of his own dynamic power of Love.

Tiruvalluvar's Porul deals with the duty of the Society to individual as members of Family and to the Family and to the Race.

Tiruvalluvar's Inbam deals with the duty of the Race to the individuals as members of the Family and the Family and the Race.

It can easily be seen that the popular conception that Aram is Ethics or Morality; that Porul is Politics and Sociology; that Inbam is Love as a Sex-phenomenon as well as a Family Phenomenon agrees with Tiruvalluvar's classification broadly but does not do full justice to the basic unity of the classification which after all is his characteristic excellence. It also expresses the harmony of thought in him that is missed even in modern

days of democracy — the harmony that requires a duty in the individual to the state and society and race and a corresponding duty in the State and Society and the Race to the individual, thus ensuring basic equality and unity to the whole and also achieving the Communistic ideal of 'all for one and one for all.'

The conception of the Common Membership and the Governing Mastership that marks Aram runs through Porul and Inbam also. In Porul, Society is conceived of as the Body Politic or the democratic basis of state which subconsciously carries out the government of the state. The Masters here form the real governing class but are not the actual rulers or the government, who are also part of the Common Man, having the same duties and rights as the common people. The governing class of Masters rule over the people as well as the government and keep the balance between the interest of the rulers and the ruled. In Inbam, Woman as the Master of Love is the sub-conscious member of the race and sets the whole Machinery of Family, Society and State going by means of the dynamic effect of Love. But the Masters here are the highest class of Turavis i.e. the Antanar or embodiments of God-Love who set the world going, even as the family, on the path of Divine Love.

Tiruvalluvar considers Sex-Love (Kadal) as the basis of Social Love (Anbu) and Social Love, the basis of Spiritual Love (Arul). The Three forms of Love are thus the actuating principles of the Three Aspects of Life—Aram, Porul and Inbam. It is very interesting to note that the unity of this conception of the Three-fold Love is admirably suggested in the English language by one and the same word expressing all the three aspects.

The Three-fold Path (Muppai¹) is a complete whole in itself, as indeed the allegory of the traveler and his path clearly shows. The three Conveyances of the path, the bike, the boat and the skates do not render the path three, but one. But the Conveyances themselves can be considered three or even four, if we include the body of the traveller himself as a basic Conveyance.

A fourth entity called Vidu¹ in Tamil that corresponds to the Moksha of the Sanskritists, is added to the Triad or the Three-fold Path to make it a Tetrad or a Four-fold Path (the Narpal²). As the extension of the allegory above shows, this fourth really is not a fourth Conveyance, but the basic Conveyance of the other three. As in each of the Three Aspects, there is a Sub-Conscious or Common element and a Conscious or ruling element, the ruling element in all the three is thus abstracted out and considered to be the Fourth Aspect. In reality Vidu is the summation of all the other three units, but it is more than that. It is the basic governing part of all the three put together. It is the inner life of Aram, Porul and Inbam and so is called the Agappal³ or the Inner Path. It is the Spiritual Path (Atma Marga) of the Sanskritists and the West, though outside Valluvar its real connection with the Temporal Path or the Three fold Path is generally missed. The Temporal Path is for the ordinary members of Society and the Spiritual Path is for the Masters who lead them in it.

The Spiritual Path is often considered to be the Path to the Other World. The Other World in this sense is really the Inner World or the Ideal World, the World of the Future as planned by those who dream about it. Later ages seem to have left the Spirit of Tiruvalluvar's words and taken them by the letter. This is not quite unusual as this has been the case with almost every one of the great Masters of Religion. To the anxious question of Peter, 'Where shall be our Church when Thou art gone', Jesus the Christ seems to have answered, 'Why on thee, Peter'. The word Peter in the Hebrew language means 'rock' and Jesus' statement evidently contains a poetic play on the word, meaning that Peter as a rock of faith, would sustain the Church. But Peter and his disciples understood it in the letter of the word and the seat of the Head of the Church of Christendom was erected over the tomb of Peter in Rome!

The Tamil people had an acute genius for classification which we find in Sanskrit also, but to a far lesser degree. The Tamil classifications also happen to be far more highly

¹ வீடு, ² நார்ப்பால், ³ அகப்பால் is the Spiritual Path.

philosophical and often-times quite modern in their principles of classification, even ultra-modern and suggestive of quite unthought-of ideas to the west for future sustenance. We may cite for instance their five-fold regional classification of the world, the lands of the particular region, their respective flora and fauna, the special forms of Life and influences on Life they exert over their inhabitants, all these being rolled as one unit called Tinai¹ after the region of their birth; classification of all literature into two, Aham² and Puram³ the Subjective or the Lyrical and the Objective or the narrative; their classification of language itself i.e. arts as expressed through language into three, the Three-fold Tamil, Iyal⁴ or Serious Literature with its appeal to the Mind, Isai⁵ or Music and Musical literature with its appeal to the Ear and the Mind and Natakam⁶ or literature of Dance or Drama and Dance-Drama with its appeal to the Eye, the Ear and the Mind.

The world today—and for that matter the Tamils and the Tamil scholars themselves of today—are spiritually blind to the significance of this classification as they have lost touch with the continuity of the living traditions of these classifications, for they take each and every one of these classifications as a separate and isolated one by itself and miss the basic spirit and the inter-connections between them. In reality, they are not independent isolated classifications but really part and parcel of the network of classifications that the philosophic Tamilian of a bygone day has spun out of his fertile brain, probabey actuated to it by that Wonderful God-Man and Poet-Philosopher-Saint of antiquity, that we now know as Tiruvalluvar.

It may be noticed, for instance, that the Aham-Puram classification cuts across the seven Tinais (the five regional and the two non-regional tinais) to make the Tinais really fourteen, while the Tinais themselves cut across another three-fold classification recorded by Tolkappiyar, the earliest Grammarian and Linguist and Critic of Tamil—Mudal Porul⁷ or the Natural Background of Regional Life, Karupporul⁸

¹ திணை ² அகம் ³ புறம் ⁴ இயல் ⁵ இசை ⁶ நாடகம்

⁷ முதல் பொருள் ⁸ கருப்பொருள்

or the Regional Fauna and Flora and the arts and modes of life which are the instrumentalities of the cultural life of the Region, and thirdly the Uripporul¹ or the Real Life Cultural of the Region and the influences of that Real Life on the Race.

What we have seen so far about the other classifications holds good with regard to Tiruvalluvar's classification of Life into the Three or Four Aspects. For the Threefold Path is not the truncated rump or headless trunk of the full complement of the Four-fold path as is often believed nowadays on the authority of the early medievalists in India and in Tamilnad. They are as much the classification of the philosophic Tamils as the Aham—Puram classification or the Tinai classification, and what is more, has its own vital indissoluble connection with them as part and parcel of the Tamils' basic network of classifications.

Tolkappiyam (which, according to the present author, is only a little less ancient than Tirukkural) speaks both about the Threefold and the Four-fold classification, making a significant difference between them. The Threefold classification is for Art and Literature, whereas the Four-fold one is specially for Science and Philosophy (the ancient Tamil word for which is Nul²). This points out to the fact that the fourth aspect Vidu is not a separate category like Aram, Porul or Inbam but one that contains them all and is contained in them, as the inner core of the other three. While the Three deal with Life in Full, the Fourth deals with the same on a higher plane. The Three are general treatment for the commonalty, the Fourth is special treatment for the elite. Further the special is contained in the general in a suggestive way, for the Third Aspect, Inbam, includes it and symbolises it.

The proper elucidation of the relation between the Aham—Puram classifications with the Threefold and Four-fold classifications will make this clear.

Aham and Puram are themselves sub-divided into Aham and Puram and it is this double division that is responsible for both the Three-fold and Fourfold divisions.

¹ உரிப்பொருள். ² நூல்.

The Puram of Puram is Purappuram or Aram.

The Aham of Puram is Ahappuram or Porul.

Aham is Inbam. But Puram of Aham is Pura-Aham or Kamam or the Lesser Inbam (Cirrinbam)¹. Aham of Aham is Aha-Aham or Higher Inbam (Perinbam)² which is also Aham of the summation of all the Three, Aram, Porul and Inbam. It is the inner core or Life of Muppall or the Three-fold Path.

The Three-fold classification is intimately connected not only with the Aham—Puram divisions but also with the Tinais.

The Aram of Tiruvalluvar corresponds to the Mudal Porul of Tolkappiyar; the Porul with the latter's Karupporul; and Inbam with the Uripporul. For both Tiruvalluvar and Tolkappiyar have seen the Life of the Race or the Evolution of Life and Culture as a grand Drama in which all men and Living Beings are the Actors as well as the Audience. The Theatre and the Stage is the Mudal Porul or Aram; the scenery and the utensils of the Stage are the Karupporul or Porul; the actual plot of the Play and its denouement are the Uripporul or the Inbam.

There are those who take part in the play as actors without seeing the drama as a whole, for the drama has no beginning and no end. They are the common men. But there are among them a few who not only act in the play but also see the play and often-times the basic plot and the probable denouement of the play. They are the Masters of the Threefold Path.

The whole plan of the drama as well as the architect of the whole, who is in the play as well as out of the play, who remembers the beginningless beginning and dreams of its endless end—the play as well as play wright is God.

Tirukkural is called Marai⁴ (Mystic Work) as well as Veda (Bible). It is called Marai because it treats of the Threefold Path in such a way that each part of the work deals with a separate path and at the same time, every one of the paths deals with a part of the Inner Path also, making the last Aham deal with the Inner Path of Aham ie Vidu in its fullest aspect.

¹ சுற்றின்பம். ² பேரின்பம். ³ மறை.

The Tirukkural closes with Sulks (Udal¹) which is really a depiction of Love in the Family. The body of the work begins with Family in Love. He also points out to us that out of Love (Sex-Love) is born Family-Love (affection) Social Love (Justice,) and out of it Race-Love (divine or Godly, love, arul). Thus we see Tiruvalluvar envisaging Life as a passage through Aram, Porul and Inbam in a circle and then a coming back to Aram for the next cyclic advance on a higher plane.

In this cyclic passage of the Threefold Path, each cycle is a part of an everlasting spiral ladder, each circular passage is the Threefold path in exterior aspect, the rise at the end of each cycle is Vidu which is the progress of the Race in its evolution.

The end and aim of the spiral is to go up and up, towards God who is the embodiment of the ever-growing dynamic ideal of the race. The Masters see farther above than the others and are also able to lead the others by the hand, often guiding them as to where to set their feet by their own act as an example. They are the God-men bowed up to as to God.

The Threefold Path is an outer path and it progresses from Aram to Porul and Porul to Inbam. Those who have finished one cycle, start on the Second and become the Master of others in their normal life-circle. But the Masters have to go through a cycle of their own, the inner-cycle, in between each revolution of the outer cycles. The progress of the inner-cycle is in a direction contrary to that of the outer-cycle, for it is a progress from Inbam to Porul and from Porul to Aram.

The body of the Tirukkural is divided into Three 'Pals'² representing the three aspects of the Threefold Path, Aram, Porul and Inbam. They contain the Inner Path (Vidu) as well. But the Introductory part (Payiram)³ containing the Invocation to God is one that specifically deals with the Inner Path. As the Inner Path is the Path of the Ideal, it deals with God first, who is the Perfect Ideal. The Masters in their Inner Path pass through the Threefold Path in the reverse order Inbam, Porul and Aram. Of the four decades (Adikarams⁴) of the Intro-

¹ ஸூலம் ² பால் is the major division of Tirukkural dealing with one aspect of the Three-fold Path.

³ பாடியீரம் is name of ancient division of a work corresponding to the modern Introduction.

⁴ அடிகாரம் is Chapter.

ductory Part, the three that follow the Invocation of God, therefore, become the Invocation of the God-head in His Three, Aspects, Love, Truth and Justice. Love is here symbolized as Rain, Truth as Master and Justice as Aram, i.e. the Ethics of Love.

Love and Mercy have always the greatest symbolic relation to Rain in the case of a suggestive mind. We see Shakespeare's Portia pouring out her speech on Mercy to Shylock using the very same symbolic metaphor :

‘ The quality of mercy is not strained,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven !’...
It is enthroned in the hearts of Kings,
It is an attribute to God Himself !’

4. Sociology and Politics in Tirukkural

Sociology and Politics are so intertwined and interwoven together in the case of Tiruvalluvar that they form one single system, which, for the sake of convenience, we shall, in this book, call Socio-Politics.

Porutpal¹, the second major section of Tirukkural, is in reality, a treatise on Socio-Politics.

Tiruvalluvar's idea of state and society as well as his system of Sociology and Politics are a part and parcel of his philosophy of life, which, as we have already seen, is closely connected with his idea of Godhead. This is especially so in the case of his Porutpal, for his socio-polity or system of government is one that we may call a Divine Democracy. It is in fact a model, or if we may say so, a proto-type of Plato's Ideal Republic, of Jesus's Kingdom of God and of Mahatma Gandhi's Rama Raj or Svaraj.

The Social Polity depicted in Tirukkural may be represented as a triangle in which the King or the Ruler as the Visible Head of State and the Political Section of the Social Polity together form one angle which we may call the Exterior or Secular Government representing these rulers: while the people and the popular institutions and the social

¹ பொருட்பால் i.e. pal or section dealing with porul or socio-polity.

section of the polity together form a second angle which we may call the Democratic Side of the Government, representing those who are ruled; and thirdly a spiritual God-side activating on the one hand the popular side and on the other the ruling section, forms the third angle of the polity that is set to govern both these as an Invisible Government in the background.

God is the Prime Mover in all life or Muppai (the Three-fold Path) and sets in motion all activity in Porutpal or Social Polity also, in His Form as the Lord of Justice. But God is represented on the visible external or secular plane of social polity by the king, while on the internal or spiritual plane he is represented by a class of God-men called in Valluvan parlance, the Secular Ascetics. One of the Chapters of the Payiram is called after them, the Greatness of the Secular Ascetics¹.

The Payiram is not only the Introductory Part of Tirukkural, but the representation of the Fourth Aspect of the Four-fold Path, called Vidu or Moksha, depicting really the internal or spiritual side of the Three Aspects. This is the reason why in the chapter on the 'Greatness of the Secular Ascetics' which is a special introduction to Porutpal, Tiruvalluvar makes no mention of the King as representative of God-head in the region of Social Polity. For the class of the Secular Ascetics is the direct spiritual representative of Godhead on earth so far as Social Polity is concerned, and the Valluvan King, though he appears to an external observer, to all intents and purposes, as an autocrat, is really a distant or indirect representative of God on earth, holding direct authority from the Class of the Secular Ascetics only, and responsible, in the long run, and as a final sanction, to the considered will of that class of God-men.

Externally, that is, in its purely secular, or to be more correct, legal aspect, Tiruvalluvar's conception of state may

¹ ஒழுக்கத்து நீத்தார் பெருமை : the commutators and following them, the Translators, quite at a loss as to the connotation of the compound term, have rendered the heading as நீத்தார் பெருமை, Greatness of the Ascetics. See toward the end of this chapter for a definition of the term Secular Ascetics.

appear to be an autocracy. To those who give attention to the abstract duties and responsibilities of kingship that are emphasised by Tiruvalluvar, the idea may be improved a little into a sort of limited monarchy. (This is the stand taken by Dr. M. Varadarajanar in his admirable Tamil book "Tiruvalluvar or Philosophy of Life" and the author's own Tamil book on Democracy). But to those who look at the diagram of the Triangle as a whole, it is really a Divine, that is to say, an Ideal Republic or Democracy, with the Kingship meant to be only a connecting link between the three groups of that republic or democracy. For the King is the liaison not only between God and the State, but between the Political, Social and Spiritual or Racial or Internal Aspects of the State. The British democracy with a nominal kingship may be said to be the nearest approach in history to this ideal of Tiruvalluvar. But Tiruvalluvar's idea of the state is an eternal national state having both the spatial extension over the area of the State and over the entire length and breadth of its body politic and society plus the extension of time over the evolution and blossoming-out of the State towards its fullest but endless potentiality for perfection.

One is likely to think that of the three aspects of the Social Polity of Tiruvalluvar, the first i.e. Politics alone is represented in the modern state and the other two were significant by their absence. But as we have hinted at above, the so-called democratic or elective side of modern politics is none other than a lineal descendant of the Social part of Valluvan polity. Further, what we have called the internal or spiritual side of the polity is not a mere metaphysical or semi-religious category as may appear at first sight. For it represents the race - aspect or the time dimension of the triangle of which the other two by themselves form only the visible base of the present aspect of time alone. It is, as a matter of fact, the most important aspect of Social Polity, as it is the one factor that gives continuity to the state and gives it an organic unity and a place in the evolution of the race. It is also the eternal, limitless aspect of time, for its dimension of time is really the dimensions of time as well as space illimitable, having no beginning or end, having a centre here, but no circumference or boundary anywhere.

The Third Arm of the State of Tiruvalluvar, called above by us the Spiritual or Internal Arm is actually represented in our own modern state under different names. While the first Arm is known as the Executive and the second as the Popular or Political sections of the state, the third is known as the Law—as Judicature or the Administration of the Law and as Legislature or the Making of the Law. It may also be mentioned here, that in direct line of descent from Tiruvalluvar, even today we consider Judicature as independent of the other two sections of the Government, the Executive and the Popular, and occasionally even passing judgement over them. Further though we have had to throw the Legislature on to the side of the Popular wing for want of a better solution of the problem, it may be noted that the State Legislature's power is, like Tiruvalluvar's third arm of politics, the only category of polity that is unlimited in space or time—it is the will of the nation in its full dimensions of space and time.

It is an evidence of the remarkable vitality and virility of Tiruvalluvar's ideas that the Western English word politics which like its equivalents in other older languages of the East including Tamil, originally denoted the first arm of Valluvan polity is now definitely moving in significance from the first to the second and even from, second to the third arm and hence the first is now being increasingly styled as merely Executive or Official Side. From considering the King or even Government as the most important element in the state, we are now definitely moving towards considering the people's opinions or even the trend of public opinion as the chief motive force having the upper hand in the state. But in Tiruvalluvar's state the hand of emphasis steadily moves on from the first arm to the second, and from the second to the third and seeks to see in it a dynamic force that may serve as the abiding motive power for the destinies of the Social Polity covering all Space and all Time.

The main sub-divisions of the Porutpal (70 chapters) of Tirukkural, according to his classic though the latest commentator Parimelalagar, are Kingship or Arasiyal¹ (25 chapters); Instruments of Government or Angaviyal² (32 chapters) and

¹ அரசியல் ² அங்கவியல்

Miscellanea or Ozhipiyal¹ (13 chapters). There seem to have been other kinds of sub-divisions also, some dividing it into seven sub-divisions (vide stanza 26 of Tiruvalluva Malai) and some into six (vide those of the commentator Manakkudavar) but all these classifications agree in having the first sub-division Arasiyal consist of the first 25 chapters. They also agree in having the last sub-division contain 13 chapters, though Manakkudavar alone gives it the title Kudiyaial² (on the People) while the others call it Miscellanea.

Whatever may be the merits or demerits of these respective classifications, one can easily see that the very differences show the ultra-modernity of Tiruvalluvar that baffled all the medievalists while at the same time quite evidently attracting their better judgements. It may also be inferred that there are broadly three divisions, the first concentrating on the King, the second dealing with Politics or the art of Government and the third dealing with the People or Society. One can also see the general trend of the author's thoughts in and through these sub-divisions—the section on the King deals with the qualifications of the King who is the head of the Government but also about the general planing of the national life of the state. For otherwise the chapters on Education immediately following the first chapter on the Greatness of the King can have no significance. It cannot mean the education of a king as the die-hard commentators insist.

The section on the Instrumentalities of the State deals with the various branches of the state-craft and the officials, the internal and external condition of the state and the broad principles of polity and management both from the point of view of the bosses above as of the inferiors. It ends negatively with a warning against the common solecisms of the great and the small. The last section on the Subjects of the People is really the Sociological or the Democratic section that has been least understood by the medievalist and least searched into even by the moderns. It deals with a hierarchy among the populace (see later on in this chapter) that give the people their contact with the King, the Head of the Political State, on the one hand.

¹ ஒழியில் ² குடியியல்

and with the class of Secular Ascetics, the representative of God-head in the socio-polity of the State on the other.

The idea of the Secular Ascetics is a specifically Valluvan conception in philosophy and heads a whole hierarchy of leadership of society and the race in the social polity. It forms the corner-stone to the arch of Tiruvalluvar's Socio-Polity and a key to the understanding of his conception of State.

The idea behind the word ascetic (Turavi¹) and behind the word spiritual (Aham²) have changed a lot in their meaning since the days of Tiruvalluvar. Our modern conception of the word is only the mediaval one—it represented a person who either hated or abstained from the pleasures of life and the desires and who threw off all interests and duties of family or society or state. This idea has thrown and is throwing a veil over the earlier or Valluvan conception of an ascetic, who renounced all self-interests and thoughts of self and lived for the sake of others—sinking his pleasures in theirs and his sorrows in working against the sorrows of others. So far as the East is concerned, this conception of conquest of self and self-interest of the Valluvan period has been reiterated by every school of thought, Theists, Pantheist or even Atheist, who hold that there can be no spiritual advancement of the soul without giving up the sense of 'mine' and utterly destroying all feeling of 'I'. But strangely enough, in East as well as in the West, even in spite of the precept and example of the great Founders of Religions like the Buddha, the Christ and the Prophet, the man of religion failed, as he continues to fail even today, to connect this conception with the word ascetic and God or with the kindred words like penance, sacrifice, austerity etc.

The history of the connotation of the word ascetic has its parallel in that of the word 'spiritual' also. The terms 'spiritual and secular' now connote opposite ideas. But from Valluvar's point of view this opposition is no more than that of the popular conception of cold and heat as opposites, i.e. attributes qualitatively or absolutely different from each other. Modern Science however knows that cold and heat are only relative and

¹ துறவி ² அகம் ³ நான் எனும் செருக்கு, எனது எனும் பற்று in Tamil and அகங்காரம், மமகாரம் in Sanskrit.

quantitative terms and mean lower and higher levels of one and the same attribute, temperature. The Valluvan idea of the 'Secular and the Spiritual' are only similar relative and quantitative terms like these. The Secular is the name given to the short term plan of life within the limits of the society of the present, while the Spiritual is the name for the long-term plan of life far beyond that confined area, far out into the illimitable space and time in the evolution of life of the Future of the Race.

The ascetic of the highest order in Tiruvalluvar is the 'antanar¹'. The word in the singular 'antanar' is used all along Tamil literature as a term of honour to God Himself, for it means as Tiruvalluvar himself explains (vide couplet 30^a), an incarnation or an embodiment of Universal Love. The various teachings of the Great Founders (Tirthankaras) of Jainism and the various fables of the Buddhist Jatakas about the doings of the Bodhisattvas and the many stories of the Saiva and Vaishnava Puranas are eloquent commentaries on the Valluvan significance of the word Universal Love.

Gold is desired by everybody but in its purest form it is of no earthly use except in occasional rare cases of Tamil medicine or even rarer cases in Western Science: it is too soft, too pliable for even the most delicate workmanship in the world without some admixture of lower metals like copper. The 'antanar' is of like nature in Valluvan polity—he reminds one too much of God, too little of man—it is a tonic to see him or hear him or think of him during crises of one's life, but he is no fit companion for anybody.

Students of Tamil literature meet with these antanars in the sweetest and saddest, but always ideal occasions—in love escapades, parents of girls always find in them wholesome instruction with the gentlest of sympathy and rarest of wisdom. (vide Kalittokai 9^a).

¹ அந்தணர்.

² அந்தணர் என்போர் அறவோர், மற்றெவ்வுயிர்க்கும் செந்தண்மை பூண்டொழுக லரன்.

³ This is one of the most beautiful poems on love in any literature set, as most ancient Tamil poems are, in a dramatic setting.

The sway of the antanar is for aspects of Aram and Inbam but they have a place in the Socio-Polity also. They are the authors of the Science of Politics, and also the Section of the Veda on Aram (vide couplet 543)¹. They are also the makers of the Law Ideal, fashioning and refashioning it always in the light of human experience, and checking and guiding and leading the course of man-made laws (which are like by-laws in reference to them). But, as the couplet referred to just above (543) shows, they are makers of law, not those who can keep the law. Just as the legislators of today have to be protected by the hand of the law they themselves make, these 'antanars' are the gentle spirits that make the law, which has to be protected by quite other agencies along with these makers of the law themselves.

The King, the head of Executive of the Social Polity has the great responsibility of protecting the law and the ideal law-giver, the 'antanar.' But the King himself is helped, governed, even controlled in this rule of the Law by a class among the 'antanars' themselves and they are the Secular Ascetics above referred to.

The Secular Ascetics are double ascetics. They first become the highest class of ascetics, the antanars by, renouncing all self-interest and all feelings of self and becoming one with God-head Himself in his Form of Universal Love. They are fit to walk the earth as Shadows of God like the great Tirthankaras and the Bodhisatvas themselves. But having thus attained to the highest position of Man and approached God-head even like the Antanar, they turn their backs to God and look again on the Face of Man.

In modern religious parlance of the Hindu theism, we may call antanars as the Videha Muktas and the Secular Ascetics as the Jivan Muktas. The life of Manikkavachaka in Tamilnad, the lives of Rishabha Deva, the Buddha, Jesus Christ and the Prophet, are in various ways glittering examples of what a Jivan Mukta is. They are like men who have grown to their utmost, but at the last moment remembering their mother, become once again children for her sake. In Christian

¹ அத்தனார் நூற்கும் அறத்திற்கும் ஆதியாய்
கின்றது மன்னவன் கோல்.

phraseology, we may say that they have searched for God's service and after having quite attained the same, relinquished it, preferring to it, the Service of Man.

If an 'antanar' is one who becomes great by renouncing Self-interest and Self-love and thus attaining to a Universal-Love that loves the very Sinner and his Sins, that has attained a poise wherein he can embrace a dog with the same ardour as he would have when embracing a Saint — the Secular ascetic is an antanar who has renounced that Universal Love itself for the opportunity of Serving the suffering mankind who can never reach his ethereal goodness etherea.

Antanar is one who treats sinner and saint alike and loves them alike—the Secular Ascetic is one who loves them alike but treats them differently, so that the Saint may continue a Saint but the Sinner reform and gradually advance towards Saint-hood.

The antanar is worshipped by the King and people alike, and the worship does good to both of them. But the antanar can only love, he cannot condemn, he knows no anger. The secular ascetic is like the antanar in being worshipped by King and people alike, and the worship here also is quite good for both. But the Secular ascetic can condemn as well as love, he can be angry too, for the good of the King and the People, if he feels it his duty to do so (vtde Couplet 29).¹ His condemnation is rare, his anger is still rarer, but it is there in the background always, and it is this anger that is the Final Sanction searched for by Idealist Thinkers of all time in a perfect or divine democracy or ideal republic. This Sanction searched for by all the great thinkers of the world has been found by none, being reached by Tiruvalluvar alone.

The anger of the Secular Ascetic is often expressed by the metaphor of the Thunderbolt of God familiar to the Theists of the Old Testament.

The Thunderbolt of the great Secular ascetic, described in one couplet (29¹) with about as much power as in the chapters

¹ கணமென்னும் குன்றேறி மின்னூர் வெகுளி
கணமேயும் காத்தல் அரிது

of the Old Testament, finds a place, it must be remembered, in the Chapter on the Greatness of the Secular Ascetics which is in the nature of a special introduction as well as a final spiritual sanction of Porutpal. It must be remembered also, that the same Chapter contains a definition of Antanar, for the definition of the antanar and that of the Secular Ascetic is the same. Further the antanars, besides being authors of the Aram, are also the authors of the Fundamental Principles of the Law which are in the nature of Aram.

We may note here, for the better understanding of Valluvan polity, certain inherent paradoxes in our modern democracies. Various parties in the legislature gather together to elect a President of the Republic or an Assembly or Council. or it may be, a Union of States. It is patent to all that the man of the most powerful party can alone be elected. But we want and expect him to be above 'Politics' i.e. of party interests and have even set up a convention that he shall belong to no party and that his voice is final even to the parties.

We see the same convention in the selection or appointment of a Supreme Judge, Judge of World Court and even in the election of a President of the United States Organization. The paradox is still greater but more beautiful in the institution of the Advocatus Diaboli in the Papal Republic and the honour shown to the Leader of the Opposition in all the great modern democracies.

These are indications of an underlying Valluvan principle—the essence of democracy is not only above autocracy and the executive, it is also above the conflicting parties of the day—the ideal of democracy is the ideal of the universal, the ideal of all place and all time.

Parties are of the day, Nation is of all time.

Similarly we may say, Nations are of the day, the World is of all time.

The conception, it may be noted, leads upto an Absolute of Space and Time—God!

Of all the systems of Government in the world, of all the various types of democracies in the world, the Divine Democracy of Tiruvalluvar alone satisfies this criterion as a Fact instead of having it as a mere convention !

For in the case of Tiruvalluvar, in the final sanction, the *real power in a democracy, the last word, should vest in a friend and intimate of the democracy who is not a member of the Body Politic of the democracy.*

This is the reason why Tiruvalluvar has created the institution of ascetics and a whole hierarchy above and below him who are by gentle gradation within and without the Society.

Man's self and self-interest are the very basis of life. Family and Society and the Race are built upon that living bedrock. If this self or self-interest leads to differences, they also lead to co-operation, negotiation and serve as an ingredient to a strong enduring unity. Self-interest may be said to be the very spice of life; the salt wherewith every thing else on earth is salted.

But salt itself, nay even sweetness itself, when too much, cloyes. It has to be kept in limit by some other quality or qualities.

People with self and self-interest are considered to be Members of Family, Society and the Race in Tiruvalluvar's philosophy of life. They are like the bricks in the building of human culture. People who have the rare quality of self-expansion ie. altruistic love, are the cement that hold the bricks together. Sex-love, as the quality promoting family and gradually expanding into social and human love, is the basic ingredient of this cement. This second class of altruists are the good citizens² (Vide Chapter 96³) of Tirukkural. He wishes to be law-abiding even when he is not in the know of the laws of Society or the state or the race. He is ready to follow the lead in these lines, if and when the lead is given by those who are known to be in the know regarding these matters.

¹ நன்மக்கள்

² குடிமை

Just above the good citizens are the elite (panpalar)¹ and the leaders (canror)² and the Champions or the elders of society (Periyar)³ who respectively belong to the higher levels of social culture, each class electing the class above them successively by natural methods of recognition and public opinion. The elite are those who are true-bred in the ways of courtesy and good manners externally and in good thoughts and ideas and feelings internally and whose actions are faultless and full of concern for others and for the general good (vide Chapter 100). The leaders are paragons setting an example to others, even to the elite, and rising above the little-mindedness and narrowness due to self-interest or group-interest. They are always impartial and forgiving. The word Salpu⁴ and 'canror' to this day keeps up this tradition (vide chapter 99).

The elders are people who are not only paragons of virtue and conduct and broad-mindedness like the leaders but also having exceptional knowledge, ability and genius for service (vide chapter 98). Tiruvalluvar himself gives a definition of the term Periyar as those who achieve things that are rare or impossible for the lesser men (vide Chapter 26)⁵.

The various levels of this social hierarchy are levels within society and therefore within the pales of the race also. They are leaders leading others who are members of society and race though they themselves are members — they are of the ruling classes of society. They have got social privileges and rights which are different from political or legal ones in that they are meant to be voluntarily given and not to be legally enforced and are expressions of the common ideals of society rather than common will.

The Secular Ascetics and the Antanar belong to the top rank of this hierarchy and are the natural leaders of society only through these social leaders. But they differ from the whole hierarchy they lead in that they are free from self-interest and self or self-love and in that they are consequently not members of the society or the race but live on a plane above both. While the good citizen, the elite, the leader and the champion are

¹ பண்பாளர் or பண்புடைமையார், ² சான்றோர், ³ பெரியார், ⁴ சால்பு,

leaders of society in society, these are leaders of society without being in society or even in the race of which society is only a part as members.

The final good or the final sanction that the Secular Ascetics are able to exercise over the social polity of the state which governs all Government comes to them from the power of their leadership which is based on love but not on force, which is yet greater than any force because they are not tied down, as the theoretically sovereign leaders today are tied down, to the society or to the race.

The word God-men is applicable to them not merely as a poetic sentiment but in reality for they are different from the common run of men and even their leaders as not being tied down to any worldly connections and in not being bound by any interest. It is this aspect that slowly led to the degeneration of the connotation of the word ascetic in the Medieval days all over the world.

The antanars who do not choose to serve society as Secular Ascetics are even more free than the Secular Ascetics, for they are not members even of the race or even the ruling class of the society or the race. They are not Godmen but men-Gods, who flit over the earth like shadows of God, ennobling all that they touch and touching all that are noble. They are the living 'devas' in whose association the departed great or teyvams spend their spiritual life wafting their protecting spiritual influences over the expanse that was once their society or race, and that still continues to be their 'astral body' and 'astral regions.'

The antanar too have a part to play in society and the race, for as we have mentioned, they are the ideal makers of Law and makers of the ideal law. They are also the spiritual power behind the reigning spirit of the Secular Ascetics.

Three of the classes out of the great Valluvan social hierarchy deserve special mention here, as they have special function's to perform in the Valluvan hierarchy which have not completely lost their functions even today. The elite are called 'panpalars' because they were the people who helped to keep the cultural

life going in the society and in the race. In Tamil to this day the word retains this concept, 'as panpu¹ is the word for the basis of culture and panpadu² the word for culture. Similarly the leaders are called 'canror' and the Valluvan conception 'calpu' has a new lease of life. For one of the functions of these leaders was to be the Judges and the Juries of the society, as the canror were expected to be above partiality and to hold the standard of impartiality high. The Tamil word canror to this day means exemplars of society, and the Jury have ever been called canrayar³ in the Tamil Courts. Thirdly the elders are called Periyar. Apart from the definition of the word Periyar and description of Periar's qualities or greatness in the first section on Aram, there are two whole chapters in the second section, Porul, that give us an inkling of the part they had to play in the social polity. Those chapters are 'Gaining the support of the Periyars'⁴ and 'Keeping up without loss the Support of the Periaris.'⁵ The former exhorts the King to endeavour always at any cost to gain the support of the Periyars. The latter warns the Minister to be careful never by any means, to lose the support of the Periyars,

We had occasion to remark earlier that the Valluvan king as head of the executive, was all in all, was to all intents and puposes an autocrat in the State. For the Minister is counselled gently to deal with him with great care as if dealing with fire, neither approaching too much lest one be singed, nor keeping too far away, for fear of being left in the cold. But this is not to mean the Minister was to be servile.

Tiruvalluvar advises the minister not to fail in scorching rebukes when he feels it his duty. He also advises the King to bear patiently the rebukes of staunch ministers and friends.

Tiruvalluvar here does not tell us what the King can do or what he cannot do. But he warns him of his fall—of King Charles I, of Louis XV and the Czar of Russia—if he goes wrong. He does not tell the Minister when he has to be careful in his dealings and when he is to administer a rebuke and risk his own fall. He leaves these things to be filled in. But the

¹ பண்பு ² பண்பாடு ³ சான்றியர் ⁴ Chapter 45 பெரியாரைத்
தூக்கிக்கொடல் ⁵ Chapter 90 பெரியாரைப் பிழையாமல்

chapters on Periyar indicate to us what he had in his mind when he gave these advices to the King and the Minister alike. The Periyars are not individual men of a hazy metaphysical nature. They are people regularly chosen and elected step by step from local bodies and sitting at the centre as a Body of Elders. The Upper Chamber or the House of Lords of modern state today as well as the Areopagus of the Greeks are the type of bodies associated with them. The Ministers and the King were to be in the final instance responsible to them. The Ministers were to deal carefully and tactfully with the king in matters which could not, either on account of their insignificance or on account of their mere political nature, gain the active support of the Periyars. He was to rebuke the king when he feels himself to be right, especially when his action is approved of by them.

This interpretation is confirmed by another pair of Chapters in Tirukkural. Regard to the Council is given as advice to the King and courage in assembly is given as advice to the ministers. The regard is for the Council of the elders, who only advise but whose advices are weightier than commands. The courage is for the Assembly of Peoples' Representatives when the Minister is to place before the people the schemes of the Government of the day for ratification or for approval.

The salient features of Tiruvalluvar's system of politics may be restated as follows :

We generally think of Politics as a thing concerned with the present and with the space aspect of reality defined by the limits of the state alone, relegating the time-aspect to be dealt with by history. But Tiruvalluvar's state has a universal application to the full aspect of Space, extending individually and collectively to all individuals of the state and to the full aspect of Time, to the past, present and future of the life of the state or nation.

Secondly while Politics and Society form different entities in other systems of Polity, in the case of Tiruvalluvar, both form one indivisible unit as Sociopolitics. Further there is a third element in the polity that connects it with life and its

ideal and with Godhead, rendering the Polity both divine and dynamic. The influence of the Supermen, the Secular Ascetics and the God-men, the antanar, makes it an ideal coming close to or embracing the modern conceptions of Socialism, Communism and Welfare State.

Lastly, it is not for nothing that Tiruvalluvar begins his Tirukkural with an eulogy of the Rain. For it is highly suggestive of Tiruvalluvar's ideal of life as well as his idea of state. For he has expressed this same ideal in his definition of the good state in a couplet (739¹) referred to in the opening Chapter of this book.

‘A state would be called a state by the wise only if it gets its resources beyond the aspirations of its people. A state where the resources are in accordance with the aspirations of the people is no state to reckon with’.

The idea is so ultramodern, even to the philosopher-politician of the West, that we do not wonder at the mediaeval commentator failing to digest the idea. He has rendered the phrase, ‘beyond the aspirations of its people’² as ‘not laboured for’³ and the phrase ‘in accordance with the aspirations’⁴ as ‘obtained through labour’⁵. The commentator's interpretation given here is not only a far-fetched and unnatural twisting of the word as well as thought and grammatical construction of the original but utterly against the trend of any sane and sound philosopher, not to say Tiruvalluvar. For it makes the author wish for a Lotos-Eater's land, where indolence will be the only industry thriving. The Devil himself cannot create a better land for the down-fall of Man!

If Tiruvalluvar meant even a tenth of what the commentator here makes him say, he must be considered out-of-date and unprogressive even in the eyes of the Sangam poets who sang

1 நாடென்ப நாடா வளத்தன நாடல்ல

நாட வளந்தரு நாடு

2 நாடா 3 தேடி வருந்தாமல் தானே வந்தடையும்—பரிமேலழகர்

The English above given is the translation of R. Drew.

4 நாட 5 தேடிவருந்த—பரிமேலழகர். The English given is the translation of R. Drew.

O Chezhan

Increase the reservoirs for water made
Who bind the water and supply to fields
Their measured flow, these bind
The Earth to them. The fame of others
—passes swift away¹

The Sangam piece referred here not only vouches for our interpretation but proves the living vitality of the ideas of Tiruvalluvar long after him. For like Tiruvalluvar, the Sangam poet praised a state for the capacity of the ruler, not for its natural fertility.

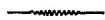
A nation is not made of land, it is its people. The people's lives are not all body, they are mainly the people's soul. A great state is one that improves these, continues to improve these *ad infinitum*. If these are achieved against adverse environments of nature, the state is all the greater.

The motto of Tiruvalluvar's state can be expressed as follows :

'Give unto everyone what he demands as well as what he deserves: but see that he knows his demands and that he demands more and more; that he is constantly raising up his deserts, so that what he demands may ever be more worthy and ever make him more and more worthy.'

It is an ideal far above our democracy, far above our dreams of Socialism and Communism, far above our cherished desire of a welfare state.

The Translation is that of G. U. Pope.



5. The Problem of Sex

The ancient Tamil people had their own modes of thought and their own conceptions of sex or love that are recorded to us in the Tamil language and the Tamil literature of the classical period. But the ideas and conceptions of Tiruvalluvar in this respect are distinctive and singular even among the Tamils and form so integral a part of his philosophy of life and God-head that he has found it necessary to define his basic terms before he rears up his philosophical edifice upon them.

The Tamils divided love into two broad stages, that suggest to us the titles of the two immortal songs of Spenser, the Prothalamion or Love before Marriage and the Epithalamion or Love after Marriage. The pre-marital love or Courting was known as Kalaviyal¹ and the post-marital love was known as Karpiyal² in Tamil. They were conceived of as Twin - Dramas of gigantic life-size dimensions, each divided and sub-divided into Tinais³ or acts and Turais⁴ or scenes. Onesided love known as Kaikkilai⁵ and unbalanced love known as Peruntinai⁶ had no place in this regular organic drama, and were treated separately as farces or freaks or abortions i.e. unfulfilled or rejected pieces of acts or scenes.

1 களவியல் 2 கற்பியல் 3 திணை 4 துறை 5 கைக்கிளை 6 பெருந்திணை.

It may easily be noted that in this set-up, there is no place for the mediaeval or even quasi-modern conceptions of love as unconnected with marriage or not leading up to it, much less of the Westerner's idea of love that finds its grave in marriage; nor of marriage without love i.e. the '*Marriage de Convenance*' or the marriage of duty or law or even marriage as a mere religious consummation of rites. Further equality, unfettered liberty and perfect spontaneity were the very spices of life to the Tamils of those days and were insisted on by them in the matter of Sex and Love as in War and Worship—they considered love between unequals as monstrous, war between unequals as un-heroic and unchivalrous, even devotion or patti¹ that was not born of perfect human love, or was directed towards a hero or God beyond the comprehension of spontaneous 'love' as a fetish — for all these were clubbed together by them along with Kaikkilai and Peruntinai as Purappurattinai² i.e. items outside the pale of the legitimate culture of Aham and Puram.

The Tamils could not conceive of love as a purely physical phenomenon as Katsyayana, the author of the Kamasutra of Sanskrit and many modern Sexologists would have it, nor as a purely spiritual or a platonic sentiment cut off from the other aspects of life, of the family or society or the race as some philosophers, ancient or modern would have it. It was to the Tamils the result of the full-blooded blossoming of body as well as soul in man — the fullest expression of the physical, psychological, moral, aesthetic and spiritual potentialities that are latent in man or woman, the surging up of a wave of eternity from the hum-drum level of man's individual life that lifts him above Family, above Society, above the Race, making him for once realise the perfection of Beauty Eternal that is God-head!

The Tamils saw in war the natural training ground for the development of qualities that go to make up a healthy culture—equality and self reliance, love and forgiveness. They called this stage of culture the Puram or the exterior or social stage. Sex-love was to them the next higher step in the development

1 பத்தி Love between God and Man, both being considered equals in love even as Woman and Man.

2 புறப்புறத்தினைம் i.e. புறம் of both Aham & Puram.

of the fuller human personality and spirit that draws him spiritually one degree nearer in the direction of God-head. This higher stage of culture is called Aham. For the War of Love teaches men and women the highest lessons of the Spirit, the lesson that defeat in love alone is the real victory, for, **Blessed are the humble in Spirit** (in accordance with the statement of the Bible.)

Tiruvalluvar brings out this lesson in his final subsections on Love, the sulks or utal.¹

The faith of the Tamils in the highest spiritual and cultural influence of the sex which is called in Tamil Akapporul² or the spiritual experience is well brought out in a literary anecdote of the Sangam period, that is recorded to us by the commentator of the Kurincippattu² of Kapilar in his colophon.

Brihaddhatta, an Aryan King of the early centuries A.D. and a great Tamil scholar and poet, had his head turned by his own sense of superiority and had to be brought down to his senses by the great poet Kapilar through convincing him that knowledge of Tamil language or even ability to write poetry in Tamil could not by themselves make one a Tamil poet—he must know Tamil culture! Kapilar succeeded in convincing Brihaddatta of this, and he became a disciple of Kapilar. In order to further instruct him in the mysteries of the Tamil culture, Kapilar composed his Sex-Love Epic Kurinjippattu which impressed upon the student the lesson of the Tamil philosophy of the Sexes.

The British often say that the soul of their culture lies in cricket—the Tamils of those days could say equally, that the soul of their culture lay in the Tamilian attitude to the sexes.

Sex-love and God-love were not to the ancient Tamils as far off from each other, even so utterly different and contrary to each other that the one was accounted among sins and the other counted as a saving agency from sin, as they have been

¹ ஊடல் or Sulks is a specific Tamil conception for it emphasises the individuality of woman and her final victory in love.

² அகப்பொருள் = குறிஞ்சிப் பாட்டு one of the ten Idylls or பத்துப் பாட்டு of the Sangam.

to the Medievalists and as they still more or less continue to be for the moderns. To them they were as like to each other as the written form of the letter and its sound, and as the song and its music. It may be said that this was so to the Tamils even earlier than the days of Tiruvalluvar, for the Tamil word joy (Inbam ¹) expresses both the Sex-joy or Lesser Joy (cirripam ²) and the Higher Joy or Bliss of God (perinpam ³). In the same way the arena of the Sex-Joy of the family (the home) and that of the Bliss of God (the heaven) are both denoted by one and the same word in Tamil, the Home (Vidu ⁴). Indeed the authors of the Saiva Sastras go to the extent of pointing out that the words used in classical days for the Lover (talaivan ⁵ in the singular masculine) and the Lady Love (talaivi ⁶ in the singular feminine) can be expressed as One Lord-Lady (Talaivar Oruvar ⁷ in the peculiar Singular-Plural common gender of Tamil) to mean both the Lady Love and the Lover as well as Godhead.

The Problem of Sex was fully a problem of the Sexes to the Tamils. For it may be said, that the Tamils and the Tamils alone, have had the unique fortune of studying both the sexes as human beings with bodies as well as minds, and forming not isolated units but component factors or members successively in family, society and the race; and of adjudging the relation between the sexes as a two-sided reciprocal one, having the peculiar characteristics of giving and taking joy, of dynamically multiplying the pleasures of each other *ad infinitum* and of being beneficial to the giver, the receiver, and the whole society and state or the race in which the giver and the receiver have their being.

The mediavalist, even the ancient Greeks, implicitly believed in the supremacy of the male sex, and some among them went to the extent of deriding women, insisting on their slavery or even on the need of suppressing them. Sex was considered to be an unavoidable sin, and the ideal of spiritual life, was considered as equivalent to the avoidance of and renunciation of sex or sexual relations. In contradiction to this old fallacy, the

¹ இன்பம் ² சிற்றின்பம் ³ பேரின்பம் ⁴ வீடு ⁵ தலைவன் ⁶ தலைவி
⁷ தலைவர் ஒருவர்.

'modern West, often sub-consciously continuing the feelings and sentiments of the medievalists, pays lip-service to or sometimes extols the equality of the sexes, without taking into consideration the inequalities inherent in such treatment.

The Tamilian attitude is quite different from either of these.

The Tamils recognised the fundamental equality of the sexes. But they consider that neither the male nor the female form integral or whole units or even integral parts or organs of society and the race. The unit of humanity and society is not the individual man or woman, it is the family, composed of man plus woman along with the little societies and 'humanities' (We here mean the children) that await their fuller evolution under the protecting light of their love.

The abstract or even fundamental equality of the sexes thus becomes to the Tamils a functional equality. They are complementary to each other in life as well as in their respective evolution, though in life as well as in evolution, they are inseparable companions in a common destiny.

In family, society and the race, the right of one sex is always equated not with the rights of the other, but with the duties of the other. The duties of the one likewise, is equated not with the duties, but the rights of the other.

With regard to membership, woman is directly connected with the race and the family, i. e., with the past and the future of the race of mankind. Man's place is with Society alone and with the present. We may express this relation as that of capital and interest, as Bernard Shaw has shrewdly stated, though in a way not complimentary to Woman. Woman maintains the stock of culture, receiving it from the past and communicating it to the future of the race. But Man, as the representative of woman, i.e. Mankind in the Society of the Present, undertakes the all important function of the growth of the race through the growth of the society.

Thus, if Woman keeps life going, Man keeps it growing.

In love, i.e. the relation of the sexes, the Tamil point of view is really the biological point of view prevalent in the Higher Animals and all over mankind, though the recognition and reckoning of it as the basis of culture is specifically Tamilian.

In mankind, even as in the Higher Animals, the initiative in sex-love is the sole property of man or the male. But the final word of acceptance or refusal rests with the woman or the female alone. Man and Man alone can approach the woman and express his love and ask what is called in the West the Eternal Question, 'Will you marry me and become my wife?' Woman and woman alone can give the reply 'Yes' or 'No' to this—she may even signify assent by a single word or dissent by a shake of the head—she can even give an acquiescent silence or a sullen silent refusal. But the final clinching of the problem is always hers—her part is often called in the West, the Eternal Answer.

It is strange to find that the Western or Saxon or the British point of view in this respect is also the ancient Tamil point of view.

The Tamil poets of the later epic and Itihasic period, like Tirutakka Tevar and Kambar, and following them, Indian poets like Tulsidas as well, were so bound up with this national tradition of the Tamil masses that they had to twist and turn their un-Tamilian traditional stories to get them recognised with the inevitable love wedding of the Tamils that had established its sway upon the Indian masses.

The Tamil conception forms but a pedestal for Tiruvalluvar to raise the statue of his own construction upon. For he has studied Woman as none else—not even other Tamilians, nor even woman—has done, while his study of Man, who is her counterpart, is in no way less characteristic of him.

Tiruvalluvar sees in Woman the fulness of human sensibility: he finds in her the summation of the experiences of the five senses at their best (vide Couplet 1101¹).

¹ கண்டு கேட்டு உண்டு உயிர்த்தது உற்று அறியும் ஐம்புலனும்
ஒண்டொடிக் கண்ணோ உள

In Woman alone one finds all the five senses meet
Sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch.

He probably suggests in this way that she and the selfless pleasures of the sex she represents are nearer to God and His Bliss than any other earthly thing—being the fulness of the five senses, it is the readier to swell over and bubble in the sixth sense of the mind and heart also. This can, as a matter of fact be readily inferred by his naively asking his reader, (vide couplet 1103 ¹).

The vaunted pleasures of the world of the Lotus-eyed—
Are they really sweeter than the gentle bosom of
the One that is beloved ?

The section of Tirukkural on Love (Kamattuppal or Inbattuppal ²) is among the most sensuous poetry in the world, comparable only with the young outpourings of the heart of highly sensuous poets like Shakespeare, Milton and Keats. But there is in Tiruvalluvar's poetry this difference—it is not the poetry of the flesh alone, or the sensuousness of the five senses alone, for to him sex-love is the gateway to all the noblest things of life and all the highest pleasures of the intellect and the spirit—it is a spiritual ladder from the lowest earth to the highest heavens. Sex—the real sex as seen by Tiruvalluvar—makes every moment the dawn of a new era of eternity as yet unknown, even as, every step in knowledge opens up a vista of unexplored expanses of knowledge as yet unknown (vide couplet 1110 ³)

The celestial ambrosia is said to bring back life to the dead—Tiruvalluvar sees a constantly active ambrosia in the eyes of the beloved, for at every glance of those eyes, new life surges up into the nerve-centres of the lover and kindles him with an ever-fresh sense of pleasure (vide Couplet 1106 ⁴)

1 தாம் வீழ்வார் மென்தோள் துயிலின் இனிது கொல்
தாமரைக் கண்ணன் உலகு

2 காமத்துப்பால் or இன்பத்துப்பால்.

3 அறிதோற்றியாமை கண்டற்றால் காமம்
செறிதொறும் சேயிழை மாட்டு

4 உறுதோறுயிர் தளிப்பத் தீண்டலால், பேதைக்கு
அமிழ்தின் இயன்றன கண்

When the tiger preys on the lamb, the tiger feels the pleasure, the poor lamb pays for it in pain and death. When we eat the luscious mango, we feel the pleasure—not the mango, it is incapable of pleasure or pain. But in sex-love, the joy of the one who enjoys has its endless reverberations in the joy of the other who receives.

Sex is the only two-sided commerce in the world of enjoyment, it is the only item of the finite world that is infinite in its cosmic reactions.

But in order to attain to this joy infinite, a rare condition has to be fulfilled. One has to have the fortune of being loved by the one whom he loves—it is the rarity of two eternities meeting in the spur of a moment.

See how admirably this ever-fresh, eternal truth is expressed by Tiruvalluvar (vide couplet 1191¹) 'It is only they who have the rare fortune to be loved by the one they love, that can be said to have acquired the luscious fruit that is all flesh and no stone—the fruit known as Sex - Love !

The sugary words and the honeyed poetry of Tiruvalluvar may often throw a veil over the rarity of his thoughts and the priceless jewels of his philosophy. Probably he himself was conscious of this, for he takes great pains to raise up intellectual pictures before us in the form of similes and other figures of speech, subtle suggestions about the inter-connections of sex-love with other aspects of life and culture and religion, and lastly etymological disquisitions and philosophical definitions inset within the limits of his couplets.

What is the secret of the infinite capabilities of this Sex-Love ?

Tiruvalluvar gives his great philosophical dictum on love as an answer to this question and, 'by the way, introduces one of his etymological explanations in the form of a familiar simile (vide couplet 1196²)

¹ தாம் வீழ்வார் தம்வீழ்ப்பெற்றவர் பெற்றாரே
காமத்துக் காழில் களி

² ஒருதலையான் இன்னது காமம் : காப்போல
ஒருதலையானும் இனிது.

'Sex-love is unbearable indeed, if it is one-sided ;
 If it has equal poise on both sides
 Even as the, lever of the balance (Ka),
 It is then sweet.

Ka is a Tamil word still in use variously as the lever of the balance or the shoulder-staff of the porter or the shoulder frame kavati¹ of the festive dancers on the pilgrimage to the shrines of Muruga all over Tamilnad. Everywhere the principle of the Ka is in its equal poise at the ends. Tiruvalluvar uses this word Ka in another instance also in the sense of a weighing balance or lever of weight. Evidently, he considers the Tamil words of Sex-love (kamam, often used mainly for the mental aspect of Sex-love, as a verbal noun from the verb root Ka and suggests that this verbal meaning itself emphasises the nature and essence of Sex-love—its spontaneous equality between either of the parties.

We may point out here that Tiruvalluvar is not banking too much on etymology here, as the philosophical implication of equality being the basis of legitimate love can be strengthened by other philosophic implications of the root Ka as well as Pa². If Ka means balance, Pa, itself a modification of paku³ (the nouns from which are pal⁴ and pakal⁵) means equality of division. The Tamils believed equality not only as the soul of Sex-love but that of healthy social life and security also. Hence the root Ka by itself generally or the perfect participle of pa (pattu⁶ patu) along with Ka as patuka⁷ connotes the sense of protection. An equal deal among the people is the surest means of protection of the race, as the ideal of socialism in modern states, especially Physical aspect or Sex-Love and kadal always used only for the rationing of commodities during crises, amply show.

What Tiruvalluvar says about the spontaneous two-sided equipoise of love in the section on Love, is carried over by him to the section on Aram with a crucial differentiation of emphasis. What was said of the equipoise there as a boon common to the sexes, is here emphasised as the special boon of the woman.

¹ காவடி ² பா ³ பகு ⁴ பால் ⁵ பகல் ⁶ பாத்து ⁷ பாதுகா
 means to protect and cherish even as கா means to protect.

Woman as the Lady of Love in the section on Love becomes Woman as Wife in the section on Aram—her joy, her wealth, her rarity, her fortune become greater, not less. For she is now her-self a boon to her husband and to the society all around her. She is the patron of Aram or social service. So her boon now becomes ten-fold as the boon of society. She who was a heaven to her Lover now becomes heaven herself. Tiruvalluvar says (vide couplet 58)¹:

If woman obtains as her Lord-Divine him who has already found in her his Lady-Divine, she gets even here in this life the Blissful Heaven of the gods that in regard to others is in store for the future alone’.

We have seen above that Tiruvalluvar has recourse to etymology in his definition of the idea of love. He follows the same method to better advantage in the word Karpu into which he has thrust so much of his own personality and personal philosophy that he has converted it from being a specific Tamil word into a specific Valluvan word.

The Tamil word ‘Karpu’ has been considered to be equivalent to the Sanskrit word of Pativratya which it is often translated into. Pativratya of Sanskrit has been likewise translated sometimes as chastity and some times as constancy in English. But even a very slight acquaintance with Sanskrit or Indian culture would show one that the Sanskrit word Pativratya cannot be represented either by chastity or by constancy or any other word in English—it is quite incapable of translation at all into English or any other Western language because the Sanskrit idea behind the word is quite foreign to the conception of the society and sex as obtained at present in the West. One can also see that Shakespeare’s English and Shakespeare’s England were nearer to the Indian Society of today and that Shakespeare’s contemporaries would better be able to grasp the idea of pativratya than any modern Westerner.

The translation of the Tamil word Karpu into the Sanskrit word pativratya or the English words celibacy or constancy is of the same nature as the translation of the Sanskrit word

¹பெற்றூற் பெறிற் பெறுவர் பெண்டிர் பெருஞ்சிறப்பும்
புத்தேளிர் வாழும் வாழும் உலகு.

into the modern Western languages—Neither modern languages of the West nor Sanskrit can have the word Karpu translated into them for it had associations with social and psychological factors that the ancient Tamil was aware of, but which are beyond the comprehension even of the Tamilian of today.

The word Karpu is used in classical Tamil in close association with the Tamil idea of love and marriage, for, as we have seen above, married or post-marital love is called Karpiyal and pre-marital love is called Kalaviyal. We have also noted that in Kalaviyal, it is man that takes the initiative and woman that has the final word of decision in varaivu ¹or marriage. This clearly and definitely indicates to us the ancient connotation of the word Karpu. It is a quality that has no place in love without marriage nor can have its being in marriage without love. Secondly, it can find itself only where there is a perfectly spontaneous love based upon the equality and freedom of the sexes. Any intrusions of parents or relatives, society or friends, even of God into the sovereign right of the young couple will have the effect of removing the attribute of Karpu. Thirdly woman as the queen of love has the supreme right of being approached and courted by man and the supreme privilege of decision in the matter of love and marriage. If these three conditions are fulfilled in a woman's life she is said to stand on the pedestal of her Karpu or to be a woman of Karpu,

We never come across a man or a woman loving more than once in the classical literature of the Tamils. It almost appears that the Tamil ideal of marriage was one man-one woman, one marriage-one life-time, or we may say a marriage for eternity. This seems to have been the ideal of Jesus also when he said to his followers regarding the right of divorce, 'What God has joined, let not man put asunder.'

Poet Bharati of our own days seems to have seen this ideal of the Tamils, the ideal of Jesus, in one single flash of his poetic genius. He sang :

¹வரைவு.

'Oh love, oh love, oh love !

If no love, then death, then death, then death !'¹

This idea agrees also with the highest ideal of love and marriage of poets of all ages and climes—the universal attraction of the love of Romeo and Juliet or of Laila and Majnun is due to the unconscious or sub-conscious recognition of this ideal by the youth of the world.

Tiruvalluvar's idea of Karpu is a tree which has its roots in the classical Tamil idea, whose branches and foliage have spread across the ideals of mankind and the ideal attraction of the youth of the world and whose blossoms have their potential being in the bosom of the future.

Tiruvalluvar makes womanhood itself the pedestal of Woman but karpu, the statue of glory that he raises for her. He says (vide Couplet 54²) :

'What greater thing than woman is there on earth !

All the more so, if she have the Karpu or the Power
[Invincible].

The first sentence of the couplet shows Tiruvalluvar giving the highest respect for woman as woman, even without her special glory of karpu. But with Karpu, he says, she is quite incomparable as a power to reckon with in the world.

The definition of karpu that he gives here is Tinmai³, which means strength, firmness or steadfastness. We may note here that even the ultra-progressives of the modern day would think thrice before daring to postulate strength or firmness as a chief attribute of woman, called even by us the weaker or the softer or the gentler sex. The New Woman herself would not like to characterise womanhood with strength as her attribute.

¹ காதல், காதல், காதல்!

காதல் போயில், காதல் போயில்

சாதல், சாதல், சாதல் !

² பெண்ணிற் பெருந்தக்க யாவுள, கற்பென்னும்

திண்மை உண்டாகப் பெறின!

³ திண்மை.

Yet among the great ideal women created by poets—Kannaki, Imogen, Iphigeneia, Antigone—we do see firmness as the innermost characteristic of even womanly woman.

Tiruvalluvar's definition of Karpu as Power Invincible i.e. firmness and strength is, like his definition of Kamam or Kadal, suggestive of the etymology of the word Karpu. This word as well as words for education (kalvi), art (kalai), college (kalluri or kalviyuri) have their common root kal¹ which means as a noun, stone and as a verb, dig as with a stone.

Tiruvalluvar manifestly connects the word karpu with the earlier sense of being steadfast as a stone, but he was probably subconsciously thinking of the other sense of digging, studying, investigating etc. His couplet (vide couplet 1110) comparing sex-love with intellectual investigation is indicative of this.

The etymological definition of karpu by Tiruvalluvar presupposes and includes the classical conceptions of karpu above described. For to Tiruvalluvar as to the classical authors that came after him, karpu was not the duty of woman, it was woman's supreme right and privilege. Her husband has nothing to do with this, for the moment he is aware of it, he ceases to be the husband. The history of the Lady of Karaikal is proof of this. If duty it must be called, it is the duty of society to respect this woman's privilege of karpu and the duty of the race to worship it. Tiruvalluvar's definition goes one step still further—karpu is not duty, not right or even privilege alone—it is power invincible—it is a law unto itself and unto everything else—and further, it is also the final sanction and the executor of the law.

Karpu is Power Invincible, power dynamic—it sets its environment, the world, going right on its path, and if by chance, the environment or the world goes wrong, it annihilates the world.

¹ கல், which as a noun with a falling accent means stone, but as verb with a falling accent means to dig, and the same with a rising accent, means learn, study investigate etc.

Kannaki's fire of indignation on Madura is an instance in point.

Tiruvalluvar exalts woman in more places than one, and each time he does this, the medievalist commentators and the quasi-modern translators are at pains to compromise his ultra-modernism with their own convictions or standards. But there are couplets where their diffialty seems to be of the opposite kind. His definition of education as a means to God-realisation (vide couplet ²) and his exaltation of Man as the husband-God (pati dev, as Mahatma Gandhi says in his autobiography), by means of whose worship, according to the interpretation of the commentators, to the exclusion of any other God, woman's karpu is capable of making it rain when she wants (vide couplet 55 ³).

This may be a superstition, but on the authority of so venerable a rationalist as Tiruvalluvar, it has gained currency in the Tamil literature of the last two thousand years, and even gained approval from the peoples and religious faiths all over India and the East.

But in the couplet referred, Tiruvalluvar has really said nothing of the kind imagined by the fond believers in easy divinity or miracle. Tiruvalluvar says therein :

“No other god she worships—her Lord she daily worships
and so rises

She is like the rain that rains at will.”²

Man is the eternal supplicant, the eternal experimenter. But he is a dreamer and a votary of Beauty though a polytheist votary at that. He sees it in every passing figure and makes his applications whenever he has a chance. His is the task to ask, but it is hers to refuse or to bestow. But once his application is accepted, he has to meekly acquiesce in it. But the eternal dreamer cannot altogethor slumber, the eternal supplicant has to supplicate shadows, at least. The polytheist, even when he sees no God, has to pray as God some idol or other.

¹தெய்வம் தொழாஅள் கொழுநன் தாழு தெழுவாள்
பெய்யென பெய்யும் மழை.

Woman is not a votary by nature, she is a Goddess. She continues a Goddess until Man in search of his Goddess, comes towards her as a suppliant and is accepted. From that time Man ceases to be a votary, he becomes a God (the Pati-dev of Mahatma Gandhi's youthful dream.) She now becomes a true votary. But she becomes an unwavering votary of Man, and as she is at heart a monotheist, the rule of Man-God becomes supreme.

Man is born un-free and gains his freedom only after he gains his Woman and sits down as God to enjoy for ever her worship. The position of woman is just the opposite. She is born free, and free she remains so long as she does not know that she is somebody's Goddess. But from the time she accepts her votary and makes him her God, she loses her freedom for ever. She becomes for all eternity a willing slave or votary to the idol God of her making.

Woman's choice of Man as her God binds her and her decision to consider him God and worship him as God and make him a God at any cost (this is her Karpū) keeps her a bond-slave to him for ever. But her slavery is not only sweet to her, it is interesting, for it is not a static but a dynamic slavery—the eternal waywardness of Man saves her from the opposite evil.

Woman's ideal of single devotion to man and her strength of purpose in considering him God, worshipping him, making him a God is her Karpū. Man's occasional but frequent lapses, his repeated rebellions constitute his Nirai¹. It is the individuality or personality of Man asserting itself against his natural submission to his Goddess and which endears him all the more to the Goddess, as his rebellions alone can keep her adoration ever fresh, her love ever dynamic, her Goddess-hood ever kept in the background or kept forgotten.

Woman as the maintainer of the race is the static God or Impersonal God who can be induced to action only by her Votary-God, Man, who is in the position of the Personal God. Woman

¹ நிலை.

is the Slumbering capital in the Business of Life, but kept dynamically dreaming and actually dynamised by Man who is the Interest and the gradual accretion and growth of the capital of the race. As woman is the representative of the race of Mankind, her whole life is but a part of her love and there can be no life to her outside of that love. But as Man is only a representative of society, his love forms but a part of his life. To woman love is her destiny, life is but an instrument. To man life is his destiny, love is but an instrument, a support, an aid to his life's great mission.

The poets of the Sangam Classics, who came long after Tiruvalluvar, had not forgotten the salient points of this ancient philosophy of the sexes. The Sangam Poet sings (Vide Kuruntokai 135¹)

Man is the life of the woman at the hearth, of bright
forehead,
But action is Man's life.

Man's nirai is his individuality or personality that triumphs over the influence of woman over him. This nirai is the exact complement of Woman's Karpu, for it is of the essence of noble womanhood, that it never can truly love a man who is her bond slave. For when all is said and done, Man's ideal of a woman, of his woman in particular, is that of a pure unsullied flower, a spotless virgin Goddess, one beyond the reach of everybody else but him. Woman's ideal of man on the contrary is a full-blodded Man, not a pure unsullied virgin God—she loves in Man the rebel against her own slavery. What many poets and philosophers call waywardness or paradoxes in a woman's nature and what even intellectual women writers are unable to read properly, is this mysterious ideal of a woman who loves Man as a Rebel against her own slavery and spends all her life, wishes to spend all her life in subduing that Rebel—she fights a battle in which she would be glad of defeat and would rue herself for any victory.

¹ வினாயே ஆடவர்க்குயிரே ; வாள் நுதல்
மனையுறை மகளிர்க்கு ஆடவருயிர்.

We can cite many poets who have had this insight into the mystery of the woman's ideal, which is also the mystery of man, properly read and understood by the Sangam poets.

One of Sir Philip Sidney's poems makes the lover sing to his Lady of a first Love he has had before her. To appease the rising crimson of her face, he quickly explains that the first love is the first foe in the field, adding, that if he had not loved that First Foe, he could not have had the fortune of winning her.

Tennyson's *Morte d' Arthur* is an epic tragedy of a perfect man, King Arthur. If he had been born a woman, his perfection would have made him an angel of a wife, but as it was, the perfection in him made him lose the love of his wife, the great Queen Guinivere. Tennyson knows and shows to the world the Classic Tamil lesson that woman would deify a full-blooded sinner like Launcelot rather than a faithful ineffectual saint like King Arthur.

Poets and philosophers, according to the great Tiru V. Kalyanasundaram, are feminine souls clothed in man's body. It explains, why, according to him again, great poets like Kamban or Milton could not love the God (God the Father or Rama) they created as much as the villains (Satan, Ravana, or Kumbhakarna) fashioned by their own art.

Karpu is the specific property of woman, but Nirrai is really the property of both the sexes. But the nirai or individuality of woman is used by her as God is said to use his Maya—it is her Veil of modesty and reserve, (Nanam¹), her real or or feigned humility ignorance to (Madam²), her figned fear (accam³), her natural aversion to every new experience (payirppu) all of which go to the winds when her idol of a God approaches. For the Veil is meant not only to hide her from others, often-times it is meant to hide her from herself.

The Sangam poets and Tiruvuallavar have made capital use of these subtle traits of the woman to enhance the subtle magic touch of their own poetry.

Woman often pretends to herself to fight for Victory. In fact she prays for defeat and will glory in such defeat, success would only damp her spirit for ever.

A ceremonial rite in the Tamil wedding illustrates this. Among the many items of mischievous pranks played on the wedding couple, one item sets the pair to compete to pick out a ring dropped in a vessel full of water, both the couple dipping their hands and searching under the water. Chance sometimes makes the ring fall into the hands of the bridegroom, and sometimes into those of the bride. Brides that have studied their family lesson properly, do not vaunt their success even if they succeed in getting the ring. They enact their first scene in the drama of their love by handing over the ring to the groom with hands under the water. Her defect only increases her happiness in every way.

Woman's Nirai or Personality is meant to quicken the Nirai of Man into greater activity and thus spend itself out in his service.

Nirai is also called Peranmai¹ and the pathos of the losing battle waged by woman's peranmai against that of Man is dramatically described by woman in a Sangam poem (vide Kuruntokai 43²)

I thought in my pride that he will not go,
He thought in his pride that I will not bar;
Thus going,
The issue of the battle of the two prides.
Biting deep like the good cobra,
Confounds this wretched heart of mine.

One can see between the lines here, there is a suppressed throb of pleasure and pride at the thought of the overwhelming strength of Man beneath the outward show of pathos.

¹ பேரான்மை.

² செல்வார் அல்லர் என்று யான் இகழ்ந்தனனே,
ஒல்வாள் அல்லள் என்று அவர் இகழ்ந்தனரே,
ஆயிடை,
இருபேரான்மை செய்த பூசல்
நல் அராக் கதுவியாங்கு, என்
அல்லல் நெஞ்சம் அலமலக் குறுமே!

How cleverly, how tantalisingly, the Lov this putting up her fight just long enough to vex her man without putting him out, is admirably portrayed in the final chapters of the section on love, dealing with Sulks or Udal.

Woman is conscious of her sweet duplicity herself and says (Vide Couplet 1321¹)

‘He is not of course, really in fault, but yet I shall chide and sulk as if he were—how else shall I obtain yet a little more of his love!’

The last chapter but one on the minute innuendos of the sulking woman is such a realistic *yet* attractive portrait of the winsome ways of the sex that it is hard to believe that the author, Tiruvalluvar, was a mere man!

In love man and woman have equal rights and equal status but their special attitudes to love, their varied psychological poses, their specific privileges, specific strengths and weaknesses, specific likes and dislikes, the plays enacted in their respective minds by the juxtaposition of the logical and psychological forces—all these make man and woman seemingly opposite poles attracting each other just because of their being opposite.

The Tamils of the first millennium B. c. have studied this drama of the sexes more deeply than any other people in the world. But to Tiruvalluvar it was not only a poetic drama, of the utmost beauty and pathos; it was a deep dive into the waters of the sex for the priceless pearls of the eternal truths of life to be gathered therein.

In the second chapter of Tirukkural, Tiruvalluvar sings the praises of Rain and makes it the symbol of God’s grace.

‘The quality of mercy is not strained

It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven.

Upon the place beneath; it is twice blest;

It blesseth him that gives and him that takes;

¹ இல்லை தவறு அவர்க்கு ஆயினும் ஊடுதல்
வல்லது அவர் அளிக்கும் ஆறு

It is mightiest in the mightiest ; it becomes
 The throned monarch better than his crown.....
 It is enthroned in the hearts of Kings,
 It is an attribute to God Himself,
 And earthly power doth then show likest God's
 When mercy seasons Justice.

These words of Portia (in the drama Merchant of Venice of Shakespeare, Act IV Scence i) may well be a commentary of the second chapter of Tirukkural. But rain is as much a symbol of Sex-love seasoning Man, as of God's Mercy seasons his Justice. Nor is love less wonderful as a philosopher's stone than Mercy in turning all dross into the purest, glittering gold.

6. Thiruvalluvar's Ideal of Education

Life to Thiruvalluvar is like the Blue Mountain with its ups and downs, its rich valleys, deep ravines and wooded slopes. God is like the health-resort at its summit. Education is the pathway up the mountain, now rising, now falling, turning now to left and now to right, often making full turn-about and meandering round and round the various contours of the hillslopes, but finally reaching the health-resort at the top.

The comparison would be perfect had it not been for certain subtle differences—the mountain, however spacious and high it may be, is finite whereas life is infinite: the mountain path may be ever so long and meandering but it has a beginning and an end, whereas education has no beginning and no end: the health-resort may for ever so long a time be a distant view, but earlier or later it spreads around the erstwhile traveller, to be no more a destination but a dwelling place, whereas God is an everlasting, ever-growing ideal—for the ideal is for ever growing into the eyes and the mind and the personality of the observer, making him the God of his erstwhile view who continues to see his God as a new ideal yet farther off in ever greater splendour and ever more infinite in His Glory.

The simile, despite these differences is significant as showing us a three-cornered relation between God and Life and

Education. In these days one need not labour the point with regard to one arm, the basic arm of this triangle, the relation between Life and Education, but this cannot be said with regard to the other two arms, the axial arms, viz, the relation between Life and God and that between Education and God. The idea of God as the ever-lasting and never-to-be-reached ideal of both Life and Education, and the conception of Education as the Golden Way of Life towards Life's destination as well as destiny i.e. God, are special contributions of Tiruvalluvar to human culture as well as the cultural philosophy of the world. For what we call civilization and culture are only the levels reached by the Race and by Society in the evolution of the race, which are analogous to the distance covered by the traveller up the mountain-path.

Tiruvalluvar hastens to assert this principle of the simile quite early in his work ; in fact he gives it the high preference and place of honour in the second couplet of the first chapter on the invocation of God, suggesting to us thereby that the place of education in humanity is second only to that of God !

He says there (vide couplet 2¹).

‘What is the permanent earthly value of Education, if despite its attainment, one does not bow down to the Feet of the Lord who is the very Embodiment of Pure Reason ?’

The staunchest Theist among us would hesitate to affirm that the relation between Life and God is that between a dynamic evolution and its dynamic goal. In the same way, the staunchest Humanist would hesitate to affirm that Education is but the part of the individual and society in that evolution and in its progress towards Godhead or the Target of Perfection. But as, to Tiruvalluvar, Education is the quest after Perfect Truth, Perfect Beauty, and Perfect Goodness and as God is the projection of that Perfect Infinite Truth, Perfect Infinite Beauty and Perfect Infinite Goodness on to man's little pearl-like soul, which is finite but yet capable of infinite expansion and dynamism due to its mystic contact with God, his ideal of education

¹கற்றதனாலாய பயனென்கொல், வாலறிவன்
கற்றான் தொழாஅர் எனின் ?

forms a pivot on which the three Eternal Verities of Religion, God, the Individual Soul and the World revolve.

All search after Truth is Science, all quest after Beauty is Art or Aesthetics or the Humanities and all thirst after Goodness includes useful arts, discriptive sciences and arts and studies, and social or political training of the citizen. Since Education is but the summation of these three aspects, God who is the embodiment of Truth, Beauty and Goodness naturally becomes the end and aim of all Education. Thus Tiruvalluvar's concept is not really so far-fetched as may at first appear to an Educationist even of the modern day, or so much of an exaggeration or at the least, a felicitous poetic expression or figure of speech as may seem to a normal Theist or to a matter-of-fact follower of religion.

The chapters that fully deal with Education in Tirukkural happen to find their place in the early part of the Section on Porul or Politics.¹ The medievalist commentators account for this inclusion in their own way, saying that Tiruvalluvar here means to insist upon knowledge of military or political sciences in a King, though they themselves accept that the subject is so treated as to cover general education for all. The slightest acquaintance with Tiruvalluvar's statements on education will, however, show how baseless this explanation of the commentators is.

The commentators have not of course taken into account Tiruvalluvar's conception of God as the end and aim of Education. But apart from it, the following ideas of Tiruvalluvar on Education may be cited against them (vide couplets 410, 392, 393)

The relation of those who are learned in the cultural sciences and the others is like the relation that men have with the beasts²

¹ Chapter 40 Education (Kalvi); 41 Want of Learning (Kallamai) 42 Knowede through Association with the Learned (Kelvi); 43 Knowledge as power (Arivudamai)

² விலங்கொடு மக்கள் அனையர், இலங்குநூல்
கற்றாரோடு ஏனையவர்.

'The numbers i.e. the sciences, the letters i.e. the Arts—these two are really the eyes of the of the Living Beings (Note Living Beings here, not men!)'¹

'The learned alone are worthy of being considered as people with eyes; the unlearned, it must be said, have only two ailments in the face.'²

These statements show that Tiruvalluvar's ideal of education is not only beyond the comprehension of the mediaevalists, it is really far beyond the very dreams of the modern educationists, the democrats, and even the votaries of the Welfare State.

Education has always been considered as a luxury. In general, it has been valued for the advantages it gives to an individual, or his class above that of the others. Even in our own days, in popular estimation, the value of education is its conferring upon a member of the masses or lower classes a place in the higher strata of society—very often it also means economic advantage in the form of service under government or under the institutions conducted by the richer or higher classes or by business magnates that have a flair for popularity or the rarer altruistic interest in society and culture.

The earliest idea of education as a thing that contributed to the welfare of the state probably came from benevolent despots from the days of the Sumerians and the Egyptians to the days of Napoleon near our own time. The idea of Education in modern states, democratic or other, cannot in reality be said to be higher than that of these despots. For they talk of universal education for the masses only for the sake of its utility to the state which is still ruled by the classes in their own interest, though it pays them to talk democratic language. This can be clearly seen by the fact that the Socialist, the Communist or even the votary of the Welfare State, who have gone beyond the democrat in the economic sphere, have not moved any farther than he in the sphere of education - for nothing more than rudiments of Education are intended in their Schemes of National education or Universal free education.

¹ என்னென்ப, ஏனை எழுத்துஎன்ப - இவ்விரண்டும்

கண்ணென்ப வரமும் உயிர்க்கு.

² கண்ணுடையர் என்பவர் கற்றோர், முகத்திரண்டு

புண்ணுடையர் கல்லாதவர்.

It would have been noted above that to Tiruvalluvar the ideal of education is higher than the ideal of any others—it is not for the good of all humanity alone, it is for the good of all living beings—this is the meaning of his statement that God is the end and aim of Education.

We may also note that Education as well as the ideal of Education is dynamic, ever-growing and never-ending—as the lotus flower is as high and the lotus-stalk is as long as the height of the level of water, these two ideals grow with the growth of human culture.

To Tiruvalluvar Education is not a luxury of humanity nor a preserve of the classes—it is not even the so-called right of the masses to receive the rudiments of knowledge for the smoother running of the rule of the classes—it is to him the basic necessity of man as man. For he says that the learned alone are fit to be human beings, having the qualifications necessary for membership in family and society and race. He who is not learned is a beast though he lives as man among men—he is really a spiritual out-cast quite thrown aside beyond the pale of normal family or society.

This Basic qualification of man is not the basic education of reading and writing and simple arithmetic envisaged by the modern politicians—it is the essence of a living system of education. Tiruvalluvar's insistence on learning not only through books and schools and colleges, but through association by all and sundry with the learned (vide chapter 43) and the same for the King and Ministers (vide chapters 45 and 90) prove this. *

All medievalists and even many moderns are likely to interpret education as the three R's,—readings, writing and arithmetic—Tiruvalluvar was probably conscious of this. He has therefore insisted on the learning of the sciences and the arts (vide couplet 392 quoted above). It is remarkable that some at least of the commentators have interpreted the 'numbers' and 'letters' of this couplet as reading and writing and arithmetic. But Tiruvalluvar as if anticipating even this, has said still more unambiguously in the next couplet (vide couplet 393

quoted above) that only those who are learned in the Cultural Sciences are people with eyes—the eyes of the others are but ailments!

Tiruvalluvar has included his treatment of Education in the Section on Politics and Sociology, to be more correct, in the subsection on Politics properly. He could with greater propriety—according to the moderns, have, included it in the section on *Aram*, or at least in the Section on Sociology. But he considered that the moral level of the individual man depended on education among the people of the Society, and that the education among the people of the Society depended on the National planning of Education by the Government. The king is not only the King of the State, he is much more important as the King of Society. His organization of the Government is the Executive, of the administration of Law or the Judiciary, of the making of law or the Legislature and of the national economy collectively of the people and distributively of the individuals—none of these are so important to a God-King as the organization of Political, Social, Family and Race-educations.

We define democracy as a Government of all, by all and for all. This three-forked political torch is flourished before our masses to flatter them in times of election, or may be, to keep them from thinking beyond their present level of culture. But the emphasis is mainly on 'of all and by all', not on 'for all'.

For the modern man thinks that if he rules himself, it will be best for him, and he easily forgets that he does not rule himself, his passions rule him. Mahatma Gandhi in our day had the spiritual insight to point out this, but he was so far in advance of his time, which was and is only a quasi-medieval period that his voice, like the voice of Christ before him, was a voice in the wilderness.

The King must plan his education in such a way that all must aspire to the good of all, all must work for it and co-operate with the work of others towards it. For this purpose it is highly necessary that the highest knowledge be within easy reach, of the lowest. The insistence of Tiruvalluvar on association with the learned is pertinent only upon this basis.

This ideal of Tiruvalluvar has not been a barren one—the world is still steadily moving in the road chalked out by him even though the world has not yet fully understood him. It is sometimes said that the best Government is a fool-proof Government and the best institution is a fool-proof institution. Despite the fact that Tiruvalluvar and his Tirukkural have not been known to the world till recently, and even when known, not fully recognised to be the Bible of Philosophers that it is, its influence on the world and the history of the human Culture is immense, thanks to the spiritual continuity Tiruvalluvar's way has had in the world and in history though great God-men like Zarathushta and the Buddha, the Mahavira and Confucius, the Christ and the Prophet, and last though not least, Tolstoy and the Mahathma in our own times. But all these influences of the box without the key, is quite likely to be multiplied a hundredfold, if the world turns to this treasure-box with the living key of historical and comparative research.

Tiruvalluvar's conception of the world as a living World, of God as a living God, life as a living Life, help us in understanding his ideal of Education also as a Living ideal of Education whose seed probably has issued from his fertile mind, but whose roots have gone deep into Nature and human life and whose growth therefore has had a continuous activity in history up to the present and is likely to put forth blossoms of untold virtue and excellence for a new Renaissance of the World in the future.

7. The Individual and Tiruvalluvar

There are three kinds of Individuals in the world, particularly in the world of men—we may even say, in the world of Masculine men!

The basest individual is he who belongs to a stage in the evolution of the world of life when the individual was isolated and lived as an individual for his own sake—it was an age when God had not created sex or even after creating it, had not moulded it into the basis of all Culture, the Family and the potentiality of Culture, the Society and the dynamism of Culture, the sense of the Race. This individual is self-centred, lives for himself and takes no care about others.

Tiruvalluvar's word for this primitive being is *kayavar*¹ (the base) and he devotes one chapter for him at the end of his section on Politics and Sociology (vide *Kayamai*, chapter 108).

The second type of individual is the ordinary 'good' men' of the world. By themselves, they are no better than the first kind, indeed, intrinsically they are one degree worse in a way, in that their want of self-emphasis makes them weaker, and have less of what, in English usage, is known as personality or push. But if they are often weaker, it is their strength as

well as their weakness. For they weld into the family and the society with greater ease—needless to say the type belongs to the age following God's creation of family and society in the evolution of animals.

They may be graded on the basis of two attributes they have in different quantities or degrees. One is the self-push or personality or capacity they derive as the legacy from the first kind. The other is the personality of a different kind they anticipate from the third kind to be described—a dependance on family, society or race that slowly, subconsciously, grows into an altruistic or positive love.

The majority of individuals in a Valluvan society—induced in any cultured human society—belong to this type. They have self-interest, but the sense of space and time, eternity, and the limited nature of their own capacities and experiences teach them *the new principle of love*.

Of course, the first manifestations of love are that of the sex and of the family—however, love of children, parents, love of brother and sister slowly expands sex-love into social love. As a result, the self-interest and self-push of the primitive man which induced him earlier to kill and hurt, to eat his own kind, to plunder the weak and often-times to pilfer and steal, and occasionally to turn to stratagems and base cunning born of fear and the instinct of self-preservation, slowly become expanded into 'interest' of dependence, what the religious people call the interest of 'mine' or desire of one's own people, groups or things.

Tiruvalluvar's ordinary member of family, society and race whom he calls Home-culturist or social culturist or the follower of the Home-way of life (Illarattan¹) belongs to this second class of individuals. In him self-interest is a centre, radiating outwards in concentric circles of group interest and group-love.

The third class of individuals in Tirukkural are, according to him, the Governing Class of Society and the Race. They are fit to govern others because they have first governed

¹ இல்லறத்தான்.

themselves—they have learned the bitterest lessons from space and time and society and race—that to hate is to die, to love is to live; that the best use of death is to conquer death; that real wealth is love of man, real death is want of such love. This makes him slowly give up all self-interest and become all love. Love of God i.e. of the Race Eternal and Everlasting becomes his second nature, and in him self-interest becomes Race-interest. This is what religious people mean or ought to mean, when they speak of Love of God or Bhakti.

In some this noblest of passions becomes the Passion for Truth, they become the purest Intellectuals, Philosophers, Scientists. In others it becomes the Passion for Beauty, they become the Poets, Artists, even Great Lovers like Romeo or Juliet, or Laila or Majnun. In still others it becomes the Passion for Righteousness, Goodness, Moral Love, and they become Saints, Bhaktas and other Heroes of Peace.

What War is to the first kind, Competition and Trade are for the second, that Sacrifice becomes to this third kind.

Some of the noblest thoughts and sublimest pieces of poetry in Tirukkural and the Sangam poetry belong to an appreciatory description of the God-like personality of these people.

The hierarchy of the Third Category in Valluvan polity is really the hierarchy of this Third Class. In the lower levels (which are the higher levels of the second class) they continue to be members of Society and the race—i.e. self-interest, competition love of pleasure and hatred of pain sway them. They are respected by the King and government, but still they are subject to his law, though they bear it as silken bonds. In the higher levels, however, i.e. the levels indicated by the words Periyar, Secular Ascetics and antanar in the previous chapter on Politics and Sociology, they cease to be members of society and the race—i.e. they are not subject to the King or great men or even to the Priests—they are the real 'ascetics'. They derive all the powers from antanar, who derive it from God, who resides in the hearts of every member of society and the race—every living being that is touched by the magic wand of culture in the course of the Evolution of the race.

We have remarked above in the earlier chapters that in Valluvan conception, the individual as individual has no place in family, society and the race. But as Tiruvalluvar's Three-fold Path is a cycle, and a spirally revolving cycle, family, society and the race are but intermediate stages in the revolutions—they are in fact a round of the cycle. In between two such cycles, the upward progress of the cycle is one of the pure individuals.

In other words, in the secular life, the individual is nothing—is but a member of the family, society and the race. But in the spiritual life, in the life of the race-evolution between the cycles, the leaders or masters shed all family, society and race in their flight to a higher plane. For if to the ordinary men, individuals make up family, society and race to the Masters or spiritual men, family, society and the race go to make up the individual. For the master has no other individuality but the race. God is his soul, the race is his body, society is his limb, family is his very life—He is God himself.

This brings us to the mystic lesson of Tirukkural, that is behind all religions—deep in the spirit of all creeds—as the Society is the epitome of the Race, family that of the society, in the same way, the individual is the epitome of the Family, Society and the Race. As in a fluid body like water or air, the pressure of each drop is equal and opposite to the pressure of the whole body or all the drops put together, the individual is potentially equal to the whole, and becomes really equal to the whole in essence when he realises it.

There is a Tamil proverb, the Cosmos is equal in its contents to the Atom, and the Atom is similarly equal in its contents to the Cosmos.¹ The man of cosmic wisdom, therefore, loves the Atom in the same way as he would love a Universe—to him sinner and saint, dog and god are one. He may not see ugliness in beauty, but he sees beauty in ugliness.

Poet Bharati instinctively entered into the spirit of Tiruvalluvar, when he said.

It just one little individual has to go without food in a
[world]

¹ அண்டத்தில் உள்ளது பிண்டத்தில் உண்டு.

We shall destroy that world ¹

Tiruvalluvar said likewise :

If one is left to no other resource but to beg in a world

Let Him who had ordained it so be eternally damned ²

To Tiruvalluvar every individual, man or woman, is a family unto himself or herself, a whole society, a race in epitome, a world. As in family man and woman rule each other for the good of the soul, as in society the rulers and the ruled govern each other for the good of the race, so in man's mind his intellect and his passions control each other for the good of his spirit which is a combination of both (Unarvu ³ or the higher spirit in Tamil is a combination of Arivu ⁴ or intellect and Unarcci ⁵ or emotion.

The rights of the individual are called in modern law as the Fundamental Rights and form the object of the most serious study by the most intellectual Men of modern times. But in practical life, it is followed more in the breach than in the practice. In fact it is a glittering ideal that dances before our better selves for a moment like the bubble, to lose itself in no time in the waters of the reality of our life.

Tiruvalluvar has reached the highest ideal of individual liberty without at the same time sacrificing the least sense of duty or interest of the community. A study of Tirukkural as Ethics or Law or Politics alone will not reveal to us the secret of Tiruvalluvar's success in the line - one will have to dive deep in to his Philosophy of life.

Tiruvalluvar solves the problems of the community by sinking the interests of the individual in that of the race. For as we have noted in a previous chapter, if his Aram is the duty of the Individual to Society and the Race, his Porul is duty of Society to the Individual and his Inbam is duty of the Race to the Individual.

¹ தனி ஒருவனுக்கு உணர்ச்சியெனில்
சகத்தினை அழித்திருவோம்.

² இரந்தும் உயிர்வாழ்தல் வேண்டின் பரந்து
கெடுக உலகியற்றி யான்.

³ உணர்வு. ⁴ அறிவு. ⁵ உணர்ச்சி.

The Nazis and the Fascists and other Totalitarians trod under foot all individual rights in the interests of the collective good; the Pacifist and the Anarchist threaten to do the same for all social and racial life in the name of individual liberty; the democrat talks of duties and rights *ad nauseam* until we often do not see where duty lies and where rights survive.

A complete harmony of the individual rights with those of the race, is the secret of Tiruvalluvar's surprising universalism and modernism.

8. The Ahimsa of Tiruvalluvar

'Kill not' is one of the Ten Commandments of God, and is respected as such by Jews, Christians and Muslims. But where self and interest pinch, every man becomes a lawyer, and as history of law shows, in the eternal fight between the makers of law and the interpreter, it is the latter that slowly gains the upper hand.

Kill not your friend !

Kill not your own kind !

Kill not the good !

Kill not men !

The meaning of 'kill not' can be narrowed down to almost nothing, without any reduction in the two words, or without changing them at all. Every addition to the words serves not to add to the meaning, but to Cripple it.

The old controversy in India belonging to the decadent days of Buddhism is an instance in point.

'Do not eat meat, for to kill animals for meat is sin' said the Jain.

But the Buddhist of a latter day said, 'You can eat meat without killing. So you need not bother about killing or the sin of killing'.

Strangely enough, this argument of the so called decadent Buddhist, appears to have descended from a very early day, for the Sravanas and Brahmanas, the prototype of the later Jains and Buddhists, had the same argument in the Vedic and pre-Vedic ages.

Tiruvalluvar says, - 'almost in the words of the Jains :

If the world does not buy meat in order to eat, there will not be available those 'who would sell it'¹ It is some times maintained on the basis of this couplet that Tiruvalluvar knew Buddhism and that as he condemns it almost in the words of a Jain and as Ahimsa and Vegetarianism, though common to all the religions of India, are specially the principles of the Jains, Tiruvalluvar must have been a Jain.

While this appears plausible on the face of it, a deeper study shows that Tiruvalluvar originated, rather than followed Buddhist or Jain ideals.

Tiruvalluvar considers Ahimsa (Kollamai) to be a basic virtue (vide couplets 321 and 324). He esteems the life of every living being sacred, and requires that one should not cause death to any living being even indirectly and should succour it even at the cost of one's own life (vide couplet 327). Even if great prosperity should result through killing, that line of action is to be despised (vide couplet 328).

These couplets gently lead one on to the laudation of the principle of vegetarianism which seems to be based on the principle of Ahimsa. He asks a question of the meat eater which reminds us of Portia's question to Shylock. 'How can a person who does not show mercy to others, hope to expect mercy from God?' asks Portia of Shylock. Tiruvalluvar asks similarly of the meat eater, 'How can you expect mercy of God when, for the mere purpose of fattening your flesh, you eat the flesh of other animals? (vide couplet 251). He argues that the taste of flesh induces in the mind callousness of killing and sin (vide couplet 253). Abstinence from killing alone is worth a thousand elaborate rules of worship (vide couplet 259). He finally says that the man who renounces killing is a veritable God to the world of living beings (vide couplet 260).

It will be seen by the above that to Tiruvalluvar, Ahimsa and Vegetarianism are not two separate virtues but one, and that if Ahimsa is the basic virtue, vegetarianism is higher, as the latter presupposes the former and is the symbol of extreme Ahimsa.

In the high place of honour Tiruvalluvar gives to Ahimsa and Vegetarianism, he is doubtless nearer to Jainism than any other religion. But it must be said at the same time that his Ahimsa and Vegetarianism have a far higher plane of idealism than they have in Jainism or any other religion of the world. For as the stanzas from Naladiyar quoted in an earlier chapter of this work would show, Jainism appeals to self-interest in this as in all other principles of conduct, emphasising that killing of animals have their retribution in the coming births. Tirukkura is free from any threat or any appeal to self-interest.

‘Do not kill, for it is not kindness’ seems to be the only refrain in Tiruvalluvar’s argument. One may sense behind the argument his deep sense of the sacredness of life, of its ultimate unity with us and all other living beings that would make all one in the basic aspect of God.

Vegetarianism is a principle of caste in many groups of people in India. In these cases, it becomes a habit, shorn of all moral to spiritual sense. Tiruvalluvar would not commend these people. The same may be said about the Jains and the Buddhists. Vegetarianism and Ahimsa do not appear to have made them kinder and more loving of animals.

To Tiruvalluvar the mind and the attitude of the mind are for more important (Vide Couplet 34). The mind of the follower of Ahimsa and vegetarianism is what he emphasises, not their acts. The acts are lawdable but only after the attitude of mind that is developed and is shown by these actions.

Tiruvalluvar’s rules of conduct are not separate rules without connecting link or a soul underlying them. They are all aspects of one conduct, and the underbying soul of conduct in all of them is love of Living Beings.

Acts by themselves are not noble if the men that do them are not noble.

Tiruvalluvar's principles of Virtue are not static virtues. Virtue to him is a tree with branches and twigs which are the various Virtues. The Virtues grow in the mind and the twigs become branches, the branches, trees.

They eternally grow and continue growing towards the perfection of Virtue which is God.

Thiruvalluvar's Virtue is not utilitarian in the sense that it appeals to self-interest. At the same time it is not abstract in the sense that it cares only for means and not for the end. It does care for the end also. But the utility it aims at is within, it is the spiritual i.e. the long term utility for society and the race that weighs in the estimation of the Valluvan scheme of life. The mind is the action potential—the act of today is a single act, whereas the mind that acts is really the reserve force of acts to come.

Ahimsa and Vegetarianism of Tiruvalluvar, like all the principles of his, are a part and parcel of his golden gospel of love, for to him more than to any other philosopher or ethicist or poet of the world, God is Love and Love is God.

9. The One-World of Tiruvalluvar

The world is not yet one as a political unit, though a war-weary world is labouring hard to create some sort of world organisation that would make the realisation of that ideal a possibility in the near future. But long before such political unification was thought of, there have been world forces slowly and steadily, though blindly, working towards it.

The great world-conquerors like Alexander or Caesar, the Imperial Pandiyas or Cholas, Chengizkhan or Napoleon have successively attempted to achieve some sort of world dominion, though only for a time. The great religions of the world particularly monotheism, worked almost side by side with these conquests and achieved some-what more permanent results. But neither of these have quite covered the whole world, as Empires competed with Empires as well as with Time and the religions also could not quite achieve dominion over each other except through extinction of one before another.

The third great world force is that of the silent conquests of culture and arts. Though their dominion is less spectacular and less defined they may be said to be achieving in a slow and steady manner, what has been left undone by the earlier two forces. It may be said that like the subtle and unfelt fragrance of the Makizh flower which is wafted across the breeze when the petals are quite withered, Tiruvalluvar's Tirukkural has spread along

as a cultural background of world culture to throw its gentle dominion of unseen, unheard, unfelt love over the world and finally inspiring it to ever lasting unity and Bliss Secular.

The influence of Tiruvalluvar's thoughts on world unity is not only due to its cultural elements but also to the philosophical content it has in its unsounded depths, though the world is slow in grasping them. As the thoughts and sentiments born in the small state of Palestine was destined to permeate and conquer the all-conquering Roman empire, as the fervour raised among the Arabs in the sands of Mecca and Medina was destined to spread light and culture over the three great continents of the civilised world, Asia, Europe and Africa, even so is the Gospel of Tiruvalluvar destined to spiritualise the powerful material culture and secularise the powerful spiritual forces of a world drunk with its own power of science and the sublime victories of the science of today.

The power of Tirukkural in the field of the One World movement today is due to its combining in itself all the three historical forces that have contributed to its development. Along with its sister-gospels, the Bible and the Quran, but without the great authority and power of sanction that their all-conquering religions have afforded them, it is spreading its gentle influences over the civilised world. If it has less power and less authority, if its conquests are not as effective as theirs, it has the advantage of being not tied down to any denominational religion, however great it is. For in this way it has the opportunity of making their conquest its own, and rendering its own conquests theirs. It has also the peculiar advantage, which is theirs also, of originating from a people [who, despite their tradition of conquest, have never aimed at mere political or even cultural domination.

While Tiruvalluvar's Tirukkural has the authority of literature, art and philosophy alone, it has the good fortune to receive light in its interpretation from the light of the great Books of God, the Bible and Quran, not to speak of other Divine Literatures like the Gita and the Pitaka, and the greater good fortune of throwing its own reflected glory on them and produce a United Front of God's forces against the Natural Forces of Darkness in the world.

Tiruvalluvar, as we showed in the earlier chapters, unites the conception of the One-God with the conception of the One-World, and in addition to these two great assets, has successfully bridged over the two great conceptions with a greater conception of his own, the One Path of Life. It is this third concept that happens to be a New Revelation of God to the Godless and the Rationalist-Atheist—for by expressing the unknown quantity of God in terms of the known quantity of Life and its Aims, Tiruvalluvar has become the Higher Mathematician of Religion, who not only bridges up the chasms of the Materialist World with his theism as also constructed a bridge between the various denominational theisms and the still greater bridge over the far greater chasm between Theist and the Atheist.

The Tamil Purana says that when India lost her balance as the North groaned under the weight of the great crowd of Gods and men who blocked to see the marriage of Lord Siva with His consort Parvathi and threatened to throw the South up, the little thumb-sized Sage Agastya was sent down to the South to restore the balance. The world today is in a similar predicament. Science has made phenomenal progress in the world to the detriment of other phases of human culture, especially in the humanities that have failed to compete with the spectacular victories of the New Science. The West, particularly the North West corner of the world has grown top-heavy with its great contributions to world culture and world civilisation, and the East, in particular, the South East is in a position to be altogether forgotten in the race for the prize of the Future of the World.

The word Tirukkural literally means in Tamil the 'Holy Dwarf', as the couplets of which it is made is the shortest known meter in Tamil prosody. May it be that the destiny of this Holy Dwarf should restore the balance to a world that is threatened with annihilation by its own 'unbalance' just at the time when we are racing up towards our conquest of the Moon and the Mars.