





Kural

Portraits

A Translation of *Kuralovium*

Dr. KALAIGNAR
M. KARUNANIDHI

Annamalai University


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Kural - Portraits

by

Dr. Kalaignar M. Karunanidhi

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Kural - Portraits

Dr. Kalaignar M. Karunanidhi's

Kuralovium

PART-I

A Translation from Tamil

by

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Annamalai University
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Author's Preface

Tirukkural is the great intellectual treasure-house gifted by Valluvar who evolved a code of life two thousand years ago.

In these days when science has developed so much we are delighted to see the skill of the photographers in portraying in different angles of vision a grove brimming with beauty or a lofty temple tower or a statue of a dancing damsel, each according to their creative ability and imagination. Similarly many are the scholars who have offered to *Tirukkural* of immortal fame, word-by-word explanations, extended commentaries or elucidations.

In addition to the commentaries on Kural by Parimelazhakar, Manakkudavar, Parithiyar, Kalingar and Paripperumal, many great scholars of later days have also made rare interperations of *Tirukkural*. Speaking on the greatness of Kural, Kapilar, a poet of those days shows his admiration saying: "Just as the little dew drop as small as a millet reflects the shape of the lofty palmyrah tree..."

Kapilar one early morning sees a green blade of grass. He also sees a dew on the edge of the grass lying low on the earth. He gazes at the drop. Within that dew, the entire shape of the lofty palmyrah tree which stands erect by its side is visible. That sight sets Kapilar's poetic wings in flight. "Ah!, don't we see the palmyrah tree which stands by in its entirety in the small dew. Like this in the couplet of Valluvar also lies capsuled all the great wisdom (wealth) this world needs."

Works such as *The Quaran* and *The Bible* are respected as religious scriptures by millions of people who belong to the particular religion who put them on a pedestal and follow them as beaconlights of grace which will illuminate their life. Kural is not a book of guidance confined to any particular religion or way of life but shines as a Book of Life, a common code of living to all.

The great Valluvar who wielded his mighty pen in the midst of the social environment that had taken shape in

Tamilnadu two thousand years ago categorically defined (Aram) Ethics or Virtue. He not only brought out the sweet flavour of domestic bliss, the way in which asceticism can become useful, all the do's and don'ts in life, but also evolved political theories or principles which though meant as guide-lines for a monarchical set-up are relevant even to democratic societies. Eventhough the sex-drive of all biological species has the power to enslave man with the sixth sense, he beautified it with an armour of linguistic and literary charm.

Tirukkural is the sweet 'ambrosia' made up of a sweet mixture of the triple aspects of the milk of life and the honey of Tamil poured out deep into our hearts.

I have had an urge to attract as many as possible to read Kural with love by commenting on the couplets in an attractive way and not simply giving word-by-word meaning, and thus to impress the ideas in their mind.

I made my first attempt in 1956. I decided to write in a serial form under the caption Kuralovium (Pen-pictures from Kural). The couplet I chose first for my pen-picture was: 'If in dying you can bring tears to your protector's eyes, that graveyard deserves to be obtained even by begging.' It means: 'One must obtain death in the field even through begging, which will fetch melodious tears from the eyes of the leader who protected him.' This Kural-picture was written impelled by a desire to have the blessing of my leader Anna shedding tears on my body when I lie dead in the field having sacrificed my life for a cause. But things have happened quite contrary to my desire. My leader has preceded me.

When *Murasoli* which was first published as a weekly became a daily, I also lost the opportunity of writing Kuralovium every week. My friend from Vellore, Krishnan of Dravidar Publications, brought out a small book compiling the Kural portraits published so far.

After a long gap, my writer friend Savi was suggesting to me to write Kuralovium in the weekly *Dinamani Kadir*, of which he was the Editor. Kuralovium found a place in *Dinamani Kadir* every week. After that it was continued in the weekly *Kungkumam*, published by Murasolimaran.

This book contains 300 Kural portraits based on 354 couplets. The section-wise break-up is:

The book of Ethics (Aram)	76
The book of Wealth (Porul)	137
The book of Bliss (Inbam)	141

Those who read this book could see that Perfect Tamil (Sentamil) with a vibrant vitality helping me in drawing pen pictures for those 354 couplets. Even when I was in the office of *Kudiyarasu* under the care of Tantai Periyar, I introduced a style which will convey ideas with simplicity and beauty without mixing poetic style with prose and thereby making it tough. Then only I began to write new-wave poetry under the title "This is not poetry."

"Perished your son in the battle field" said he;
Broken-hearted mother raised her head once,
When we play dice, we cut the pieces;
The battle field is also like war;
Is the wound on the chest or the back?
"Speak" said she "At the back" said he,
The old woman quivered with pain; her heart burst out;
She took the sword;
Towards the direction where drums were beaten
She sped.

I gave my milk to a coward.
Can a stupid block who lies fallen flat on the face be called a hero?
Once upon a time
As if to answer the spear
Which flew in front of him
My husband showed his chest and fell on the floor,
Dead but Immortal.
Ah, was he his child?
"Here is his honour?"

These are only a few lines from the new-wave poem which I wrote with the title "The Mother of Purananuru."

When I was undergoing a six months rigorous imprisonment in the Trichy prison for participating in the Kallakudi

agitation, many pen-pictures were composed in the style of new-wave poetry. They have been published in the book form with the title 'The diamond jewels' (*Vaira Manikal*)

Fame! You are a strumpet.
Fame! You are the lunar orbit,
Many a genius has failed in his attempts to reach you
Fame! You are the peak of Himalayas: a few will grasp you through persistent endeavour.
Fame! You are a piece of ice.
Fame! You are a jug of wine into which flies fall but cannot rise again.
Fame! You are a shadow which follows those who do not care for you."

This is an example to show that I attempted to create pen-pictures or portraits which have now acquired the nomenclature of 'new-wave poems,' even forty years ago.

"O hill! Under the roof of Heaven,
in which the lamps of diamond jewels twinkle (radiate) the mother earth sits majestically on her royal throne:
I will say that you are the crown of jewels
Made of Gold gilded with green.
I wonder in bewilderment if all the white clouds of the Heaven Dropped down from the sky and then
Grew up to an invisible height
When you are covering your body with the blankets of dew."

These are quite a few similar 'sculptures' chiselled by me when I was in prison.

Tamilnadu knows that I am also used to the technique of publishing many poetic short-stories under the title, "The Honey Waves".

Hence I had no hesitation or difficulty in taking lovely Tamil, translating it into a tapestry of words and creating pictographs of Kural.

I beg you not to misconstrue this as an arrogant proclamation of my powers.

These are only examples to show that I did not require any special or new training, and this is only the continuation of my

task of projecting the rich Tamil Language, in pictures through various angles during the forty years — and not as a consequence of any pride. Even an iota of that evil quality never found a place in my heart.

There are those who wove Kural verses into a garland of prose.

There are those who wrote commentaries on Kural in verse.

There are those who gave word-by-word interpretations to Kural, briefly and interestingly.

There are those who delighted the minds of readers by rendering Kural in musical Tamil.

Amidst these interpretations, as my contribution, I have transcreated the verses of Kural into scenes, by making events pictures, in a style smacking of the sweetness of the flowing water amidst trees providing shade, and the vigour of beating of the drums which inspire fire and passion in the hearts, using Tamil which evokes tears in the eyes of the reader.

I am grateful to the friends of Bharathi Patippakam, who came forward to publish the first edition of this book in Tamil.

I am equally grateful to the Annamalai University, particularly its Vice-Chancellor for arranging to get part of it translated into English and bringing out the same as a prestigious Diamond Jubilee publication. I hope that this will make the entire English-speaking world to know more about our great Kural. I am particularly happy that a University committed to Tamil values and ideals has undertaken this.

I am grateful to Prof. K. Chellappan of Bharathidasan University for having translated this into English.

I dedicated my Tamil version to all the Tamil scholars with self-respect who are devoted to literary endeavours to promote Tamil culture and values. Now I am happy to extend my dedication to the entire humanity to which Kural rightly belongs.

M. KARUNANIDHI

Foreword

Prof. K. Anbazhagan

Eventhough politics is not always a battlefield, no one can deny that it is a fiery furnace most of the time. Kalaignar has identified himself with the roles of a devotee, as well as a captain and a leader, who works in the political smithy incessantly.

One who works continuously standing by the furnace may have to go on with his work to the extent of his work being obstructed by the sweating generated by the heat of the furnace and then he becomes a bit exhausted.

If the politician, who has the task of forging the weapons in that smithy, strolls out in a garden, the soft breeze blowing will inspire in his heart great joy, exuberance and content-ment, and kindle a smile in his lips. Similarly Kalaignar stands by the smithy of politics and he has made strolling in the literary garden his second-nature since his fifteenth year. He used to inhale the fragrant scent of all the flowers there. He will also intellectually analyse and distinguish them one by one. He will recreate that fragrance in his words and offer it as feast to others. Being such a great artist with a literary bent, he has been using such excursions into literary gardens as an antidote to the moments of exhaustion in his political life.

Perarignar Anna had served Tamilnadu by pursuing a similar path. However great his political involvement was, he was equally involved in literary activities. Kalaignar who is the unfailing younger brother of Anna, who has been sticking to the path of Anna unswervingly and progressing in that direction, was praised by Anna himself as an able brother who could perpetuate this tradition as well. Now, he has presented the *Kuralovium* to the world.

Valluvar gave Kural — the diamond gems he had imbedded on a golden plate. He had divided Kural into three parts. When we look at these diamond gems they dazzle our eyes. However beautiful they may be, we cannot see them directly because of their intellectual brightness.

We can go a step further and say that the beauty of the diamond cannot be preceived when its brightness only glitters. Then its brightness alone is visible. But when that very same diamond is put together with emerald and a variety of other many-coloured gems and held by the gold not only does the diamond acquire a distinct brightness but it emits a light so as to make its entire beauty visible.

Similarly, Kalaignar has embroidered Kural with a fine tapestry of pictures so that we can perceive with our own eyes the brightness of this great diamond. What is done by the goldsmith with diamond and gold, Kalaignar has achieved for Kural with his golden pen and sweet Tamil, and thereby fulfilled a great task.

As all the lines of Valluvar show the path of proper living, Bharathi said that Tamilnadu, by giving Kural to the world, won sky-high praise. There are not many who can convey the wisdom of Kural in an attractive way to us. Parimelazhakar, Manuppulavar and the scholars of our times like Ka. Su. Pillai, Dr. Mu. Va., or my dear teacher Dr. V.Sp. Manickam and poets like Bharathidasan, the Revolutionary Poet, Pulavar Kulandai, and Namakkal Kavignar have given a variety of interpretations, which help us see only the ideas of Valluvar from a particular perspective as provided by the commentators.

When Kalaignar shows us Valluvar through whatever couplet, he gives us a *total perspective* of the poet.

He shows Valluvar's charm, his mien, his anger and his intellectual eminence. He shows Valluvar as a leader and even depicts the heroine of Valluvar's imagination. He shows Valluvar as a tradesman, and even as a hunter.

He shows that Valluvar's mind as a world by itself and unravels its varied dimensions.

Kalaignar has proved that he has partaken of the very spirit of Valluvar through his *Kuralovium,* so that we may say that this twentieth century mind is the very replica of Tiruvalluvar who lived two thousand years ago.

The Kural-portraits painted by Kalaignar will have an eternal fame — like the Ajanta paintings or immortal pictures painted in our holy shrines.

The Tamil Race will live forever through the Kural portraits and along with that, the glory of Kalaignar's name will also last forever.

Long Live Kalaignar!
May his fame flourish!

Foreword

Dr. Tamizhkkudimakan

Which will last longer, the Valluvar Kottam (a monument) built by Kalaignar or *Kuralovium* (the Kural-portraits) painted in words by Kalaignar? Should there be a debate on it, I will speak only in favour of *Kuralovium*. Because the monument being built in stone may develop cracks after years. But no Tamil scholar has so far painted a portrait so as to immortalise the ideas of a great literary master of two thousand years ago.

Eventhough hundreds of scholars have published glosses and commentaries on *Tirukkural,* Kalaignar alone has recreated it by using completely new techniques so as to imprint Kural in every mind.

Kural has been included in the curriculum of schools and colleges. But students don't care for it. But that is no fault of *Tirukkural.* It is only the fault of the educational system . which has not used any method to inculcate it in the minds of students.

As a teacher I can say with confidence that instead of simply prescribing *Tirukkural* as a text, if three or four portraits of Kalaignar are prescribed, that will appeal to the students more easily and effectively.

If the scholars who are Members on Boards of Studies overcome their political differences and remain neutral and if there is a sense of gratitude commended by Valluvar, they should prescribe this without any hestitation.

Preface

Prof. Rm. Sethunarayanan

Tirukkural is the greatest gift of Tamil Culture to the world, and it has become a world classic by its comprehensive and universal vision of life which is clothed in fine poetry. The vitality of a classic like *Tirukkural* can be seen in its capacity for continual expositions and critical reinterpretations by different cultures and periods. Starting from Parimelazhagar, quite a few scholars have written commentaries on this Book of Wisdom. Dr. Kalaignar M. Karunanidhi's *Kuralovium* is almost a crown of this process as it attempts to render the wisdom of *Tirukkural* in relation to practical situations in a pictorial language. Kalaignar has thus both enhanced its pictorial beauty and extended its reach to the common man. The Annamalai University which has been a prime institution in promoting Tamil Culture is proud to bring out this English translation of *Kuralovium*, a modern classic written by a scholar-statesman.

As a University is a symbol of the universal spirit, it should strive to promote that spirit through scholarly activities. This publication is one more step in that direction. Mahakavi Bharathi said that Tamilnadu gifted *Tirukkural* to the world, we are happy that our University is presenting *Kuralovium* (and thereby Kural also) to the entire English-speaking world. We are profoundly grateful to Dr. Kalaignar M. Karunanidhi, the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, for having permitted us to publish this work. I am sure that the community of international scholars would laud the scholarship of Kalaignar. We are grateful to Prof. K. Anbazhagan, the Hon'ble Minister for Education, and Dr. Tamizhkkudimakan, the Hon'ble Speaker of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly for all their help and particularly for their permission to publish their forewords to this work.I am happy that Dr. K. Chellappan, Professor of English, Bharathidasan University, an old student of the Annamalai University and a scholar in English and Tamil, has translated this work.

My grateful thanks are due to our Pro-Chancellor, Dr. M.A.M. Ramaswamy, for his encouragement and support.

Translator's Preface

Tirukkural is a world classic embodying a philosophy of world affirmation; and though it is rooted in Tamil culture, it belongs to the entire world, as it contains in a capsule form a miniature vision of the life with its infinite variety and complexity. *Tirukkural* is unique because it reconciles ethics with an infinite gusto for life, an idealism of a very high order with acceptance of human realities, philosophic complexity with great poetic beauty. As Dr. Johnson said of Shakespeare, Tiruvalluvar has no heroes or heroines of any country his hero is entire Humanity, and his profound criticism of life is relevant to all possible situations in life. Shelley said that poets are the unacknowledged legislators of mankind. We may say that Tiruvalluvar will soon be recognised as an *acknowledged* moral legislator of mankind.

It is interesting that Hon'ble Dr. Kalaignar Karunanidhi an acknowledged political legislator of Tamilnadu has undertaken the task of recreating and reinterpreting this great constitution of mankind. Great literature not only interprets life constantly; but it allows life to interpret it in every new phase of history. Every generation has seen something new in this Universal Mind, and discovered his image in a new angle. Kalaignar has attempted through *Kuralovium* two things — new interpretation as well as recreation of Kural as word-pictures. To translate a classic into another language is itself difficult; to translate it into another mode, while retaining the verbal medium is a gigantic task. All poetry is verbal painting; all painting is silent poetry. In *Kuralovium* as well as in *Kural* pictures and poetry merge into each other. Kalaignar has provided *Tirukkural* with illustrations from life and thereby restored *Tirukkural* to life where it rightly belongs. We find *Tirukkural* being reenacted on the world's wide stage. Kalaignar has unearthed this visual element hidden in the subtext of *Tirukkural* by converting events into scenes. Significantly by choosing quite a few illustrations from

Sangam poetry, he has related *Tirukkural* to its milieu as well as modern times. *Kuralovium* thus establishes a continuity between the past and the present.

Several new techniques have gone into this. He has combined several couplets wherever possible and sometimes they belong to sections which are apart, and thereby made not only one Kural comment on the other but established their interrelatedness. Some of these portraits can be combined and seen part of a continuous drama. In fact the portraits dealing with Kamattuppal can be seen as several scenes of one single love drama. The juxtaposition technique reconciles opposites and reveals new dimensions. The first portrait itself is a classic example of new interpretation based on juxtaposition and Kalaignar's concept of god as Man is close to that of some modern existential philosophers.

Because of all these, my task became more difficult and though I am very happy to have been associated with this monumental work and I am very grateful to both Dr. Kalaignar and Prof. Rm. Sethunarayanan, Vice-Chancellor of Annamalai University, for having given me this opportunity, I am very conscious of my limitations. Kalaignar's prose is rooted in the rich Tamil Sangam literature but it has also the vigour and vitality of our contemporary consciousness. To translate this poetic prose is not an easy task and if I have not been able to recapture all the subtle nuances and sweetness of Kalaignar's prose, I hope that the readers will pardon me. But I hope this will provide a stimulant for many to learn Tamil so that they can encounter and experience both *Kural* and *Kuralovium* direclty.

I have now translated 110 portraits from the first half of the book and I hope to complete the other half soon. I have used Pope's translation mostly, and whereever I found Pope's version inadequate to the original or Kalaignar's interpretation, I have translated the couplets myself. I am grateful to Prof. R. Sundararaju, formerly Head of the Department of English Annamalai University, and Prof. S. Balachandran (Bala) of H.H. Rajah's College, Pudukkottai for going through the manuscripts and making valuable suggestions.

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K. CHELLAPPAN

1

Did Tiruvalluvar accept (believe in) God or not? Both the arguments saying 'Yes, he did' and counter-arguments affirming 'Not at all' have been going on all the time. We are able to infer from literatures of venerable antiquity that only people with faith in God lived in the Tamil land when Tiruvalluvar composed his *Kural*.

The sky has no limits. Nature has not drawn any borderline to indicate the edge of the ethereal space. In this space which is spread out over the entire universe only those bodies (Planets) which have been identified by the old Sastries of the past down to the great men of science of to-day, come under our calculation. We also know that there are also stars which are many times bigger than these planets revolving in a distance of millions of miles and twinkle to us. How many are such stars? -(No one knows).

This earth is only a speck that shot from the Sun, one of the planets. After several millions of years, this earth which was once a ball of fire got cooled and attained varieties of wealth such as fields, hills and vegetation and became ripe for the emergence of living creatures such as worms, insects, germs, etc. The reproduction mechanism on physical union of living species led to the emerging of the beast, the bird and mankind.

Rains poured from the sky (Heaven), the wind blew where it listed - man's brain developed to such an extent that it could see and wonder at Nature's marvels. This growth is distinctly different from that of other species. Man came to conclude that all this evolution (changes) could not happen, either on earth or in the sky without a power - and chose to describe it as God. Does that have limbs? Can it speak? Will it grant boons? Those who had no time for such questions accepted the existence of such a power.

Even if it is not possible to believe that someone sitting somewhere engineers all these wonders, that all that moves, moves only due to the motion of a perfection which includes this

world and all the worlds beyond this mundane system cannot be denied by even those who deny God completely.

That they called *Iraivan* (or the Lord); they also referred to it as *Irai*; neutrally they also referred to it as *Kadavul* (that which is beyond and within) not specifying whether it is masculine or feminine. They also called it *Teivam*, where religions came into being everyone gave it different names, to suit their natures and need.

Valluvar has not failed to portray the Zeitgeist or the spirit of his time. Not only he did not ignore the attributes or the defining qualities of *Iraivan* or God but also he described that man should live as an image or embodiment of that. In the chapter on *Hymn to God* he says that *Adi Bhagavan* is the beginning of the world just as Alpha is the first in the Alphabet. Describing him as *Valiraivan* or one who radiates in the form of pure intelligence, he asks "Of what avail is learning if one does not surrender at His holy feet?" He said that there is no suffering for those who seek the shelter of one who is beyond desire and hatred.

"One who has no peer,"
"the sacred wielder of the wheel of Dharma,"

such are his epithets describing God.

The idea is that one should live here on earth with all those great qualities pertaining to God.

That is why he proclaimed to the world categorically:

"There are so many rare qualities attributed to God. One who lives on earth adhering to the code of ethics pertaining to this life on earth will be placed on equal footing with the deities whose dwelling is Heaven (or who have Heaven as their abode)."

Who shares domestic life, by household virtues graced,
Shall, mid the gods, in heaven who dwell, be placed.

Chapter 5 *Domestic Life* *Kural 50*

2

In the dusk—near the grove—the damsels with spear-like eyes, will indulge in love. Similarly, women separated from their heroes will undergo torment and suffering like the sugar-cane crushed. They will gaze at the beauty of the twilight sky-but will be disheartened thinking that the handsome heroes who will compare its beauty to their lips are not there. The breeze will remove their dress. But the women will feel sorrow as their heroes who will thank and bless the breeze (for this) and laugh at them are not there. They will also note the nature of the honey-bee coming before the flower on the stem unfolds its petals. But they will yearn for their lords who will bring the cup of bliss saying, "Sweet, look at the flower embraced by the bee." They will be swollen with grief. The evening time would appear to attack their hearts with an army. They will describe love itself which is the source of joy as a disease. Valluvar only portrays that state of mind beautifully. This sickness of love buds in the morning, gets ready to bloom throughout the day and blossoms fully in the evening. Hence the couplet:

This sickness buds in the morning, gets ready to bloom
Throughout the day and blossoms out in the evening.

How does that damsel see that evening when that sickness blossoms? The army bent on killing her is said to be a messenger of that fiery evening. "In order to kill; as a messenger for the fire-like evening" - Not only that. In the evening time, the shepherd is playing on the flute from which sweetness pours like a waterfall. If that music confers sweetness on the breeze, the flower bunches appear to be dancing to the music of flute. They say that the music of the flute will make even the snake get dizzy. Do you know what that lovelorn beauty says of that music of flute? She mournfully cries: "The army afflicting me seems to come not only as messenger of the evening but also as a flute of the shepherd she wails."

As an ambassador to the fiery evening, this army
Arrives and slays me, as the shepherd's flute.

Chapter 123 Lamentations of the Evening Kurals 1227, 1228

3

My life partner is a golden sculpture - well-chiselled, the November-flower creeper of the domestic garden. Her two eyes are like the beetles on the lotus flower. Her laugh is the garland of pearls. I am peerless on earth if the damsel of such an eminence also plays on a lyre. The breeze carrying the flavour of the tender flower sheath of the coconut will touch my body gently. That lyre will triumph over it. But to triumph over that lyre of my partner there is nothing on earth. I have listened to the music of the cuckoo (*Koel*). The music of the lyre I play upon has cloyed me. I would say that the joy flowing from the lute played by my lover is the Great Bliss. The melody coming from the flute of my lord is a flood of cool sweetness.

To excel or triumph over him who plays on the flute with the lips which shower the juicy kiss, there is none in this entire world girt with the roaring sea.

The wife who is a lyrist and the husband who is a flute-player praised and blessed each other. They embraced each other thinking that nothing can be sweeter than the flute and the lyre - and then forgot themselves. Was the flute sweet or was the lyre sweet? They found out that there is one sweeter than both. Not then; after a year or two. The family became a holy trinity of two flowers and a bud.

A testament of love – a treasure of beauty – a portrait of rare perfection moves hither and thither at home. It makes the porridge a kind of elixir by mixing it with its tender hands - and imparts joy to the parents touching their body.

It makes a challenge saying: "Here is my prattle - which will triumph over your flute and lyre."

The husband and the wife conclude that neither the flute nor the lyre can come anywhere near the half-ripe words which flow from the tender lips. Not only the lyre or the flute but everything is only next to this.

Only this joy is enshrined in the following two lines by Valluvar.

Sweet are the flute and the lyre, say those who have
Not heard their children prattle.

Chapter 7 *The Gift of Children* *Kural 66*

4

When we admire someone's ability, we say that there is no one on earth to excel (win) him. Our knowledge is confined only to the village. We don't know whether there is a person of such ability elsewhere in the world. Even then, when we praise this man we speak in an exaggerated language by juxtaposing him with the entire world. Suppose someone who was drowned in the flood survives, when we see him, we tell him that he will not submit to death even if he is hurled down headlong from the Himalyan peak. Thereby, we only appreciate his capacity for survival eventhough he was drowned in the river. How do we know that he will not die if he is thrown down from the peak of a hill? Now also we only exaggerate his capacity for survival when we speak in such an exaggerated manner. "You can't pay back your indebtedness to him even in seven births." When we say that, we don't believe in the theory of seven births, that is, in the concept of rebirth. Even then we indulge in hyperbole. The fear (concept) of rebirth was inculcated in people only to prevent them from indulging in evil deeds.

This condition was prevalent in the days of Valluvar also. That is why he praises education limitlessly when he speaks about its value and need.

"The education one acquires in one birth has the potency to help him not only in that life time but in all the seven births."

"Brother, Your education will stand in good stead in seven births." When such things are said to a young man, we must realise that the importance or emphasis given is only to education and not to the seven births.

The education one acquired in one birth, will safeguard

Him in all the seven births.

Valluvar says that the education acquired by one in one birth will help him in all the seven births. This is only an exaggerated statement of the importance of education, and would not mean that he accepted the theory of seven births. All

the children born on earth, grow into young tender minds and go to schools seeking education. Did all these children not have education in their earlier birth? If there is such a thing as previous birth and if they had studied then they need not study now!

The conception of seven births which was in vogue (prevalent) in the days of Valluvar also - and Valluvar only exploited it to illustrate and enhance the greatness of education. What does Valluvar who has spoken like this in the chapter on 'Education' say about 'births' in the chapter on, 'Realisation of Reality or Truth' is worth noting .

If the mind perceives the truth or reality through deep analysis with conviction,
There is no need to think of successive births.

He says that if the mind is clear and steadfast there is no need even to think of rebirth or having to be born again.

Education is needed for the mind to acquire clarity and steadfastness. Yes, is there not a kind of education even to illuminate and reveal clarity of mind? Education of that type is needed if we acquire learning, that will be of use in all the seven births.

If one's education will kindle (lit) the lamp of steadfastness through investigation of inner reality, there is no place for the thought of successive births. Yes, such a thought will not arise. The idea of seven births was used to establish the greatness of education. Only to emphasise the need for the steady mind to penetrate the inner nature of reality, he categorically says that such men are free from birth.

These two couplets together only testify to the desire of Valluvar to bring home to the people the power of perception of truth, of reality and the value of education at least through exaggeration.

Chapter 40 *Education* *Kural 398*
Chapter 36 *Realisation of Truth* *Kural 351*

The doctor gives an injection, which causes some pain in our body. But the medicine which passes through the injection is of great help in curing the illness. The doctor has the painful injection; and the injection has medicine to remove the pain itself.

Please note that Tiruvalluvar here introduces a doctor through a couplet. A beautiful girl looks at a handsome hero. He describes that look. That woman-deity has a dual (two-fold) look. One kind of look creates pain and the other removes it. Please listen to the greatness of the 'vision' of this strange 'lady doctor' in the words of Valluvar himself. "Twofold look (double-edged) has she; one look generates sickness; the other is its antidote." But because she has such a look, does the hero keep quiet? He seems to be a mischievous lad. See what he says in his state of intoxication with love, "When I look at her, she does not look at me, but only on the Earth. But when I don't look at her, she looks at me smilingly." But if he says so, that is if he does not see her when she sees him, how does he know that she sees him? Similarly when he looks at her, she looks at the earth, how can that be? Only after glancing at him she could move her eyes in another direction. Probably only such a look is called 'looking without seeing.' What does Valluvar illustrate with this event? Not only that he is lying - even if they try to move their eyes in other directions, they encounter each other. This is what Valluvar says - of course without explicitly saying so.

When I look at her, she looks at Earth;
When I don't she looks on and smiles gently.

Chapter 110 *Recognition of Signs* *Kurals 1091, 1094*

6

"I shall carry a hill on my shoulders and tour the entire country. This is my first plan. I shall bend the sky in the shape of an arrow, and tie it with a knot made of a sand rope. This is my second plan. I have so many such plans which will follow one another in quick succession. I will fulfil them in the presence of the people of this land."

A young man made a challenge line standing in the middle of a public assembly hall. The people's heads were dizzy when they listened to his words with wide open mouths. The news that a man was strutting, boasting of his heroism like this reached the ears of the King also. He ordered that he should be brought to the King's court. When the hero entered the hall with a majestic gait, the King without ignoring him asked him whether it was possible to execute the schemes he had announced. "Nothing is impossible on this earth," he proclaimed to the King with an erect head. "I will definitely execute the plans I had announced."

"If so, O brave youth, please show before me that you can fulfil your first plan. Are you prepared for it?" The young man quietly answered this anxiety-ridden question of the king.

"O King of Kings, Don't we need some facilities for any thing? I will certainly fulfil the deeds promised or proclaimed in the presence of the people as well as your Majesty. But there is one thing. I am very tired after having travelled for a long time. If it pleases you, I request you to accept me as a royal guest in your palace for a month or two. When I gain strength in the body, I shall perform the first feat, that is carrying the mountain on my head."

The King gladly accepted it. "Why one or two months? You can take full three months. During that entire period, you will be provided with all the facilities required by you in the palace," said the King, patting on his shoulders.

The public waited counting days, and anxiously looked forward to seeing his performance. In the palace he had a

luxurious life. Food varieties which will impart strength to the body, delicious drinks which will invigorate the mind. He was given everything he asked for. "If he can execute the plans he had announced, he could be easily made the Chief captain of the army," said the King to his Ministers.

Three months were over. The day for performing the first programme — carrying the mountain on the shoulders — was announced. The entire country flocked at the bottom of the hill. The King, his Ministers, the Lords and the officers of the palace were seated in places allotted to them. The youth came in a colourful chariot and got down. His body glowed with a new freshness and vigour. The effect of his three months stay in the palace could be seen in his body-build.

On seeing him the King as well as the people clapped their hands in order to welcome him. The drums thundered, musical instruments were played. The youth raised both his hands. There was complete silence consequent on the cessation of all the sounds. He went towards the bottom of the hill. All the eyes were gazing at the direction in which the marvel was to take place. "As proclaimed, I am ready to walk carrying the hill." There was a rapturous applause.

But what happened really? He did not lift the mountain. He was only saying again and again, "I am ready to walk, carrying the mountain." All got tired on hearing these words again and again and moved close to him. "Why are you only saying it again and again. Show it in action," said the King raising his voice.

"O King! I only said that I would walk, carrying the mountain on my head. All of you join together and lift the mountain and put it on my head. Then you see whether or not I can walk throughout the country, carrying it." This was the polite explanation of the young man.

"Arrest this fellow," roared the King like a leopard.

"You may do whatever you like with me hereafter. But one thing. I have fulfilled the pledge made to my wife. That is I had taken a vow that I would come back after staying in the palace as a chief guest at least for a month."

That youth replied without any fear whatsoever with a smile blooming in his face. "Ah, if you had such a desire, you

could have told us what was possible for you to do and then swallowed all the palace food," the King rebuked him.

"If you speak of what you can do, who cares for such a person? Oh, only if you say that you can perform miracles, there will be poojas for you and loving welcome! Everything you get." When the King heard his reply he got furious and said, "Oh only because of that you cheated us." "Oh King of Kings, When I entered this land I enquired whether *Tirukkural* was in vogue here. When I was told that even the King does not know *Tirukkural,* I plucked the courage to plunge into this plan. If you had studied it, neither you or your people would have believed what I said." Thus replied the youth.

"What! Is there in Kural - so valuable?" the King asked.

The Kural which he said as his reply follows:

Easy for any man to speak but
Rare is the ability to live accordingly.

It is easy for anyone to say with one's mouth that he could do a deed. But it is not at all easy to fulfil it in deed. It is a very rare thing. That is the meaning of that couplet.

Chapter 67 *Power in Action* *Kural 664*

7

On the road a few were walking, carrying a palanquin. They were making their journey enjoying the natural scenery on both the sides of the road, they were fulfilling their duty against great odds - with sprain in their necks, and their feet swollen. Two old men saw this scene sitting in a public resting house. One of them was well-versed in Tamil literature. He said: "Look, here we have the illustrations for those who had done good deeds (*Punya*) and those who had done evil deeds (*Pavam*) in their lives." The elderly person who was with him asked him, "How?" The other person who was steeped in Tamil literature explained it thus: "In *Tirukkural*, Valluvar has portrayed this very effectively. We need not conduct research into books to find out the fruits of ethical deeds. Even by looking at the person who carries the palanquin and the person who sits in it, we can say who has done good deeds and who has not. The person who has done deeds in the path of virtue (*Aram*) travels on this in accordance with his earlier deed. Those who have not done such good deeds carry the palanquin."

Even when he was giving such an interpretation a voice asserted loudly. "What an injustice! Why are you burying *Kural* itself into the bowels of earth?" The two elders turned in that direction and Valluvar was standing with tears in his eyes. They bowed to him. Valluvar also returned the greetings and said "I do not know who gave such an unacceptable interpretation to the couplet I wrote. Gentlemen, the interpretation you gave, based on those who carry the palanquin and those who travel in it is not correct. I did not mean to say that the person who sits in the palanquin has done just deeds and those who carry it have not. That is illogical. Those who go along the path of virtue will persist in their journey like those sitting in the palanquin, considering alike both the joys and hardships in the journey. Whereas those who have succumbed to the evil path, will, like those who carry the palanquin neither find peace while enjoying pleasure nor have the maturity of mind to face suffering, but consider life itself as a burden. Thus I only

compared the effect of just deeds in relation to those who travel in palanquin and those who carry it and did not simply correlate them with those who did good or bad deeds. Without understanding the spirit of my saying don't spread false ideas among the people." He ended his explanation with such a passionate plea. The literate old man apologised to Valluvar for what he had said and promised to reform himself. But Valluvar said that he must also reform the world and took leave of him. But by that time the palanquin had gone quite far.

Needs not to speak of virtue's fruits; compare
The man in litter borne with them that carry it

Chapter 4 *Emphasising the importance of Ethical code* *Kural 37*



8

Senkuttuvan is the elder son of Imayavaramban Neduncheraladan, his younger one was Ilango. One day a palmist who came to their royal court emphatically told them based on his astrological calculation that even though Senkuttuvan was the elder one, he did not have the possibility of becoming the ruler of the land whereas his younger brother Ilango was destined for this. But Ilango decided to disprove this prediction, left the palace, and put on the ascetic robe and went to stay in the shrine at the Kunavayil (Eastern Gate) Kottam.

Thereby he paved the way for Senguttuvan ascending the throne without any hindrance whatsoever.

Now let us imagine that one of his dear friends met him at Kunavayil Kottam. "What Ilango! What have you done? How many forts were there with ramparts in which flags flew triumphantly! How many sky-soaring towers which stood up loftily so as to embrace the clouds! How many halls and palaces which were fragrant with the perfume of burning sandal! The floor was covered with silk so that the feet walking on them will not be hurt. The battalion of men who were at your beck and call — the embroidered dress inlaid with the nine jewels! The grand sight of damsels with lovely eyes who were ready to accept you as their lord! What tributes which the princes of smaller kingdoms were willing to pay! A life of luxury and pleasure! A kingdom of comforts! The days of exuberant gaiety! Having lost all of them you are seen in the ascetic garb, bereft of everything. Why should you volunteer to accept such an affliction on your own?" Ilango gave an immediate answer to his dear friend who put this question sincerely with great pain in the heart. "Friend! When I had all this wealth and comforts which you now described, I never thought of myself: 'Ah! I have the rare fortune of a person who have all these! I did not even think that I had all these for a moment and wanted to save them. If I had then thought of it like that, their loss would definitely pierce my heart now. Because I can view with equanimity both the states - the state of possession and the state of deprivation, sorrow does

not even touch my heart." On hearing this explanation Ilango's friend tried to prostrate at his feet. But Ilango went half way to prevent it and simply embraced him and showered his affection on him. Here is the couplet:

Who boasted not of wealth, nor gave it all their heart,
Will not bemoan the loss, when prosperous days depart.

Chapter 63 *Not Despairing in Distress* *Kural 626*

9

The moon seems to be like the mouth of a silver milk pot. The sky with its stars are mistaken for a pond with its lily flowers. After their long talk about all these things, the two people remain still and forgetful of the entire world, like two good lutes. Afraid to disturb the dreams of the two living lutes the gentle breeze lulls the lovers with gentle strength.

But the stars on the sky are engrossed in a great confounding research. What research?

Where are we? And where is the moon?--this is their problem.

The stars wonder if they see the woman's face on the mirror in the sky; or do they see the moon's face in the mirror on the earth? She was such a great beauty, beautiful with the face of the moon.

And hence the stars were perplexed and they knew no difference between the moon and the woman's countenance. Here is the *Kural*:

The stars perplexed are rushing wildly from their spheres;
For like another moon this maiden's face appears.

When one finds a young man lying in embrace of such a beauty who was perplexed by her beauty, even for the stars it is natural to feel envy for him. But Tiruvalluvar's mind poses an intelligent and a beautiful question: Is the heaven of the lotus-eyed God as sweet and joyful as that of the youth who sleeps in the delicate arms of his beloved? No, not at all.

Here is the portrait:

Sweeter can it be the world of the lotus-eyed
Than the embrace of the delicate arms of the beloved.

Chapter 112 *The Praise of her Beauty* *Kural 1116*
Chapter 111 *Rejoicing in the Embrace* *Kural 1103*

10

Valluvar's student one day sought a clarification from his teacher: "You have written a couplet saying that there is no need to fear enemies who are like swords. What is the basis of this comparison of enemies with the sword? When there are so many weapons, for what purpose was this comparison made?" This was the query of Valluvar's student and the reply follows: "Friend! Please study the couplet deeply more than once. Then what I intended to mean will be clear. I have only emphasised in this couplet that much more than the external enmity or the enmity that is known outside clearly, the internal enmity which pretends to be friendly and attacks you suddenly unawares is very dangerous; and also that if we do not fear external enmity it won't matter much, but we must fear internal enmity and behave cautiously."

On hearing this clarification the student raised another question. "Sir! even the sword is now and then seen outside; on other occasions it lies hidden in its sheath. When we consider this, would it not be more apt to compare the enmity which shoots from the dark, to the sword? How can you compare it with openly declared enmity?"

Valluvar replied smilingly: "Even when the sword is in its sheath, it does not hide itself completely. Its big handle will be peeping outside the sheath. Here are enemies who completely mask themselves and behave like intimate friends and at the most opportune moment make an all out effort to crush you. Only because of this I have contrasted the enemies who *are* like swords with the enemies who *act* like friends."

Valluvar's reply made the scholar profoundly happy. Yes, the sword in the case can be taken out and thrown at us. Or the sword that had been drawn out and held above our head could also be thrown at us. We can know beforehand and the later probability. But we should not give any scope for the other kind of enmity in which enemies behave like our men, develop friendship, and wait for the right moment to harm us. And it would be wise to guard us from such enemies.

This idea is illustrated beautifully in this couplet:

Dread not the foes that as drawn swords appear
Friendship of foes, who seem like kinsmen, fear!

Chapter 89 *Enmity Within* *Kural 882*

11

Most of the commentators on this couplet seem to have gone wrong in their interpretations. When a woman who worships her husband thinking that there is no God higher than her husband commands and says, 'Let there be rain,' there will be rain. Such interpretations, and even more reactionary than this, have been put forward for this *Kural*. Scholarly minds could accept only the interpretation offered by our revolutionary bard Bharathidasan. The phrase 'the rain falls instant at call' can only mean the rain that falls the moment we need it. One who considers her husband as the husband is like rain. To whom? To her husband. What kind of rain? That which fall the moment the word 'Let it fall' is uttered.

The land lies parched without rain. The plants have been longing for water. At that moment the farmer turns towards the sky. There is no rain. The farmer in misery sings a song of sorrow:

The rain works all; it ruin spreads, then timely aid supplies:
As, in the happy days before, it bids the ruined rise.

Is not the rain all powerful? Can mankind live without it? We must perceive the rare meaning in comparing the life-giving and world-cherishing rain with women. This lofty place given to women by Valluvar has been deprived by the commentators.

If only it rains immediately when the farmer feels the need for it for his fields, that rain gets the garlands of praise from so many families. Innumerable are the garlands of praise acquired by the rain that rains the moment it is commanded.

So is the woman who considers her husband as God. Only this idea is woven into the beautiful poetic texture of the following couplet:

Not worshipping God, she rises up bowing to her Lord;
(Like) the rain (that) falls instant at her request.

Chapter 2 — *The Excellence of Rain* — *Kural 15*
Chapter 6 — *The Goodness of the Help to Domestic Life* — *Kural 55*

12

Tamil literature speaks gloriously about the events in the battle-field and the oath or conditional threats uttered by the kings when they go out for a war.

"If I am defeated in the war let no poets sing about me."

"Let my people speak of me as a tyrant with contempt."

The history of Tamils is full of descriptions of the Princes of lands entering the battle-field proclaiming such oaths and imprecations:

"My son has gone to the battlefield. Here is the den in which that lion lived," said a mother who showed the belly which had carried her son.

Another lady is said to have wept saying, "I am happy to learn that the king shows a special kind of attachment to my son in the battalion which has gone with the king. But how is it that I have not yet heard the news that my son died in the battlefield with a hero's wound in his chest. Then only can he bear testimony to the fact that he worships the king and the land as his own life."

The Chera king heard that Kanaka and Vijaya spoke ill of the Tamil kings and went to the North, vanquished them and made them carry stones in their shoulders for erecting the statue of Kannaki.

The Chola kings defeated their foes and set up their triumphant flag in far-off Kadaram.

The young Pandiya king who was like a tender plant, rose up like a lion when he heard the trumpets of war and fought with many a king simultaneously in a field and defeated them.

These are glimpses from the heroic past of the Tamils.

Even if your eye blinks at the sight of an arrow fast approaching you, it was considered to be an ignominous thing.

Two soldiers were engaged in a conversation. They belong to two different warring nations:

Soldier I: At the back of my king, your king's sword cannot pierce.

Soldier II: Yes, it is true. It is not the habit of my king to throw the dart at those who take to their heels with their back turned.

Does not this dialogue bear testimony to the high esteem in which the Tamil soldiers held their kings?

Valluvar who says in a couplet that the real army is one which even if the god of death opposes will stick to the guns united also defines the qualities which soliders of such an army would possess.

He categorically says that physical valour, sense of honour, the path of glory and confidence are the four great qualities which the soliders must possess in order to make their army great.

It is not enough if bravery is only in the words. It has to be proved in the battle-field.

Only because of that, the sense of honour is also insisted upon. That means the ability to stand up to any calamity and prefer death's devouring mouth to surrendering at the enemy's feet.

Similarly the soldiers must also be impelled by the desire to follow the great tradition of the heroes who have made themselves heroes of history with their heroism and love of honour. With these three qualities they should also enjoy the trust of their leaders.

Valluvar's definition of the four heroic qualities here in the tradition of the *Puram* songs will be relevant to the warfare of all times.

Valour, honour, passage in the path of glory, and confidence;

These four are the army's guards.

Chapter 77 *Greatness of the Army* *Kural 766*

13

A woman with hips slim like a creeper finds her bracelet slip off her arms. Yes, her bangles too slip off her hands. Her arms have become weak. This happens at times of separation from the consort and also speaks for the glory of the hero in a way. The greatness of the cool shades is felt not when one stands in a shade but at the times of a hot day. Likewise the woman finds her lover's greatness in his absence. Within her mind flashes many a scene of their happy days when they were together; the scenes in which he pasted *khumkhum* on her forehead, he touched her person and pulled her towards himself, he doted her with encomiums, he kissed her all over her silken body, his demand of more from her and her pretensions of 'no.' And now she lies wearing an apparel of sadness unable to bear with the biting cold wind called love-feelings. In her grievous pain of separation from her consort she has become emaciated and her bracelets and bangles have deserted her arms and hands:

I grieve, it is pain to me to hear him cruel chid,
Because the armlet from my wasted arm has slid.

The people in the village feel sorry for the woman who was made weak by separation. Her friends too share her sorrow. They all call her lover 'a cruel man'. "This woman could not bear with the separation from her lover. The man who has grieved her so should be a cruel one"--thus they declare him guilty for her plight. But the woman beauteous like a peacock feels all the more sad when she finds her lover accused by others. But this is not the end of her tale of sufferings.

She begins to talk to her eyes. "My eyes! My eyes which are praised by my lord as fishes! Don't you hear what I beseech you? Enough you died for him searching in all directions, enough that you made me like a land parched with lack of rains. Please listen to the humble appeal of my heart. If at all my lover presented himself at least in my dreams I could tell him how I manage to live out an existence in this world. I would tell him,

"Dear! You are not kind to come before me in this earth, but I exist still, thanks to it that I see you at least in my dreams."

Him, who in waking hour no kindness shows,
In dreams I see, and so my lifetime goes!

How could I tell him this, if he did not come in my dreams? And who is responsible for not being able to see him in my dreams? My eyes! You are the guilty! You don't close your lids and go into sleep! If you agree to sleep I would see him in my dreams. I would tell him about my life. Hence I beg you, my eyes, to go to sleep.

Thus Tiruvalluvar presents the beautiful woman made beauteous with flowers and shows how she is weak with pangs of her separation from her consort in his chapters, 'Wasting Away of Body' and 'Visions in the Dreams'.

If my dark, carp-like eye will close in sleep, as I implore,
The tale of my long-suffering life I'll tell my loved one over.

Chapter 124 *Wasting Away of Body* *Kural 1236*
Chapter 122 *Visions of the Dreams* *Kurals 1213 , 1212*

14

The blue-lotus, seeing her, would eye the ground,
with head cast down
And say, 'I am no match to the eyes of this excellent-
jewelled one.'

If the blue-lotus flowers had been endowed with eyes to see, they would, on seeing this excellent-jewelled lady, say, "Ah! We cannot vie with the beauteous eyes of this lovely lady," and in shame they would put down their head. She was so beauteous-eyed.

She once decked herself with *anicham* blossoms with their stems unnipped. And her delicate waist grieved in pain for she could not bear with the added weight of the sepals.

The silver stars on the sky, it is claimed, got confused unable to distinguish between the shining moon and the beauteous woman!

She had silky and rosy feet and it is claimed that they were so delicate that even the soft *anicham* blossoms and the down feathers of swan would hurt her feet like the thorny fruits of *Nerunji*!

***Anicham* and feathers of the swan, to the feet of the**
females,
Are as the thorny fruits of *Nerunji*.

A handsome youth desires that beautiful woman who seem to exist as a living testament for beauty, and he wishes to keep her for himself ever in his eyes. But the abode of his eyes should remain vacant before he could usher in the queen of beauty. Hence he implores the tenant of his eye-abode to kindly vacate. Hear his words in Valluvar's lines:

"Oh! Pupil of mine eyes! There is no room for my beloved. So you be gone!"

He bids farewell to the pupil of his eyes which endow him with the faculty of vision and wishes to accommodate instead the woman who would grant him laurels of kisses.

Pupil of my black eyes! May you depart? since
There is no room for the fair-eyed beloved.

Chapters 112, 113 Eulogy on Love Kurals 1114, 1120, 1123

15

A close relative's daughter's marriage was fast approaching. It was to take place in a far off place. However he cannot but attend the same.

Hence he started on a journey with his kith and kin to attend the function. There was the interruption of the night. Hence a condition arose by which he was compelled to stay overnight in some place for sleep.

There was an old choultry where travellers could stay. He and his family slept there during the night. His wife who woke up first shrieked with a shock and shouted, "What is it? What happened to our baggage?"

He too cried, "Oh! my money bag is missing!"

The food they had brought and the money he had in his person have been stolen. What can that family do but weep? There was no one around to come to their rescue.

How to proceed with the journey? How to meet their hunger? The flood of sorrow overwhelmed them.

The children pleaded to them to make some arrangements for their food and cried in a concerted manner.

The head of the family had not expected such a storm to blow in his life. At that time a beautiful damsel with eyes as beautiful as fish came there with a basket of fruits for sale. On seeing them, she enquired, over with wonder, "You! Madam, Where did you come this far? Why do children cry?" The lady of the family told her about the terrible trial they were going through. The fruit-vendor heard their sufferings and her heart melted in sympathy. She gave all the fruits she had on the plate to children. She did not stop there. She said, "If you don't mistake me, you should come up to my house. I will be glad to share the gruel-like food of rice in my pot with you and after drinking it you can continue your journey. I have some money also. You can take it from me for your expenses on the way."

The head of the family could not believe such words of affection coming from her. As if to clarify his doubtful surprise he was experiencing, she added:

"Are you thinking why she should come forward to help us? But this would not equal even a bit of the generosity of your wife extended towards me even without knowing my identity. Once I sought asylum in your village to escape from some wicked men. Then I suffered like anything, in starvation. Though I went from street to street begging for a mouthful of food no one helped me. Only this 'mother' relieved me from hunger. How can I forget such an act of kindness till I die?"

With eyes overwhelmed with tears of gratitude, she forcefully took them home. On the way he spoke thus to his dear wife:

"The words of Valluvar have come true in toto. Quenching the hunger of starving souls can never become a waste. That is the treasure or the bank in which we could save our wealth so that it can help us in future. Do you see the greatness of the quality of mercy now?"

Let man relieve the hunger men endure;
For treasure gained thus finds he treasure-house secure.

Chapter 23 *Giving* *Kural 226*

16

The citizens writhed in pain like the insects put into the flaming furnace. They could not endure the Government's fiendish leash of terror. They did not have even the right to cry "Ah, we are unable to bear!" Their mouths were locked, their hands tied. The stomachs of the prison chambers got bulged. The hunger of the hanging machine was alleviated more than fifty times every day. The heavy burden of taxation broke the back bone of the people. The fierce demonic dance of poverty was just unbearable. If they dared cry, "We are hungry," they were sent to that land where there would be no hunger at all.

In the excuse of ensuring peace of all the country, the Government created only a kind of wild peace of a desert. Saying that discipline is the apple of their eye it only imposed slavery of the people which would submit to anything in silence. Don't we have an expression such as, "Imprisonment for saying 'm', Expulsion for asking 'why'?" But this Government went a step further. Even not to say 'm' would invite imprisonment, and not to ask 'why?' drove them to forests. Sentencing to death on pillory-poles of the men who differed from the official views and victimisation of those who chose to advise the Government became the sport and pastime of that Government.

One could say that in that land of terror, the flaming fire and not the rod of justice reigned. Thinkers were crushed like little ants. But slanderers were honoured with awards everyday by that unjust Government.

One heroic young man who was in prison sentenced to death escaped from the prison out of the country and saw Valluvar.

"Eminent Sir! in our country the fire in flames is called water. The wild order of the forest is masquerading as the civilised Government of the land. To change it, and to save the people kindly suggest a way." He cried to Valluvar. His voice resounded in the shrine of Valluvar, By then the jail officers who followed him caught hold of him and chained his hands. Valluvar was calmly observing that scene. They tied him to the

chariot's wheel and drove fast to their country. Valluvar also followed them. He searched for that young man who was led forcefully into that land of terror. The preliminary arrangements were going on to hang him in a public place. Thousands of people had been brought to witness that scene. Then only they would live like tortoises in meek servility and fear. Before he was executed, paying no heed to the guards who tried to prevent him from speaking, the young man put them a series of questions.

Those questions painted a powerful picture of the prevalent afflictions of that country — the cry of the widowed women; the agony of the children bereft of their mothers; the groaning of the mothers who had lost their children -- this melancholic song was sung by his dried lips. The heroic youth saw tears brimming over the eyes of the people who had assembled like floods. "Ah, are not these tears the weapons to destroy this tyranny! Why hesitate further? The tears welling up from your eyes are the life blood gushing from your heart. March to demonstrate the power of the tears!" Thus the youth sang a warsong. The ocean of the people swelled up in fury and took the shape of dam-shattering floods. The hang-pole was shattered into pieces. The handcuffs of the youth was also broken. The array of the armies took to their heels. Those drops of tears penetrated the forts as well. But before they entered in, the royal family and their hierarchy had escaped to some other place. There, see, the royal members running! They have lost their land, their cities, their majesty and wealth. Valluvar sees this scene. Did he not also witness the upsurge of the people who blew the trumpet of regeneration in response to the call of the youth near the hang-pole. He wonders at the power hidden in the tears of those people. He thinks of the way in which those who had the glamorous life of the palace with elephants, armies and thousands of pomps and comforts were completely stripped of everything. The voice of the youth becomes a lovely Tamil couplet, a couplet inspiring heroism, a speech which serves as a beacon-light of hope.

His people's tears of sorrow past endurance, are not they
Sharp instruments to wear the monarch's wealth away?

Chapter 56 *The Cruel Sceptre* *Kural 555*

17

The woman, beautiful like a peacock, was lying on the silver sand-bed. The youth from a distance happened to see her. Immediately he thanked his eyes, congratulated them for granting him such a sight sweetened by the rays of emissions of beauty!

The gentle breeze that brought him coolness in its air now seemed to have got mixed with the warm feelings of love. He remained still, still like a statue. When he got his sense back he moved towards her. But the woman was not there!

His heart was wrought with pain: "Alas! Why did I see her? Had I not looked on her person, I would not have to feel pain now." The man chided his eyes again and again for his present state of heart-ache. He went home. But he could not sleep. He wept a little thinking about her. He felt a bit relieved.

His heart then murmured: "My eyes! You brought me this pain. However I am delighted now that you weep. 'What is done in the forenoon in turn grows in the afternoon' — is an old adage. And I am delighted that you are now punished."

See how Valluvar expresses this in his Kural:

Oh! how sweet a thing to see! the eye
That wrought this pain, in the same gulf doth lie.

Chapter 118 Eyes Consumed with Grief Kural 1176

18

"Youth cannot keep her lustrous eyes." The well built structure of human body loses its shape. Above the forehead, which was compared to the crescent moon, the white hair -- as white as the full moon -- comes up. On the face which gave delight when looked at the mirror, millions of lines were drawn to signify, as it were, the arithmetic of ageing. The legs which moved like that of a leopard is now swollen and bleeding. The fingers which played on the harp and composed ambroisal music are themselves like the strings of *Veena*, trembling. Phlegm! Cough! A gulp of water to quench the thirst of the parched throat! A condition in which nature's calls cannot be attended to. Everything is done on the bed. Having hidden themselves as long as one had physical strength, all kinds of illness and diseases rolled into one come together in a batallion, once the weakness has creeped in, and they hoist their flags of victory on the ramparts. Even after all this, the life has no courage to invite "death" to come.

Somehow we want to survive, by the ability of the doctors, by the power of herbs and medicines; there is a desire to revitalise and live to drink the joys of life to the lees, as one never gets satiated with them in spite of having enjoyed them so long. Some people still yearn with an endless zest for life in this world.

Valluvar goes far and wide in search of a simile to describe such people. At last he finds one in a gambling place. Some of the gamblers had pledged their wealth and lost it. They face failure after failure. But still they have some hope -- that if they persist in playing -- they can regain their lost wealth.

The more they lose, the more they are attached to the gambling. They belong to one category.

Some others, having suffered due to some illness and lost their strength, and with just bare life left on their body, still have unquenchable desire and attachment towards that body.

How to praise the intellectual abilities of the great mind which composed a couplet illustrating one with the other!

Howe'er he lose, the gambler's heart is ever in the play;
E'en so the soul, despite its griefs, would live on earth away.

Chapter 94 *Gaming* *Kural 940*

19

When lovers part, it is claimed, immediately a pallid hue spreads over the person of the lady love. In his chapter on 'The Pallid Hue' Tiruvalluvar deals with the pangs of such pallid women.

Darling words of sweet lovers spill from the nuptial bed; songs and dances, feigned quarrels and happy unions--all such things vie with one another there. Next morning when the lady looks herself in the mirror, she forgets for a moment that the image is none other than herself and covers her cheeks into her hands. She realizes after sometime that what stands before her is her looking glass and the image is her image. She feels relieved that no one has seen her cheeks. This experience becomes a daily routine but she cares not about it during the night, and makes no attempt to be cautious. So a circle of pallid hue is formed on her cheeks. Being shy she wants no one to know of it; instead she touches it gently with her fingers with a sense of recollecting something that happened in the past, and smiles to herself. This circular sign creeps onto her cheeks as soon as her lover departs from her; she sees it in the glass the next morning, and she feels it to be a feast for her eyes and a sweetener for her mind.

Tiruvalluvar shows a beautiful woman talk in a similar strain. The lover has left her after saying good-bye to her. A pallid colour creeps onto her countenance once he has left her, just as the waiting darkness creeps onto the sky once the shining moon is gone away. The woman finds sallowness spreading all over her body. She feels sorry that this has been caused by her lover; but in the midst of her sorrow she has a sense of pride too.

Just as the lady who got a circular sign of love on her cheek--derived a sense of satisfaction amidst her shame this woman also feels proud amidst her sorrow: "This pallid colour has spread all over my person, and this has been given to me by my lover--it gives a sense of pride to think like that."

'He gave': this sickly hue thus proudly speaks,
Then climbs, and all my frame its chariot makes.

Chapter 119 *The Pallid Hue* *Kural 1182*

20

The King who had vanquished his foe was returning to his Capital along with his armies. On the way, he met the great man, Valluvar. As soon as he saw him he came down from his chariot and paid his respect to him. Valluvar also blessed him. "Oh King, How was the war you fought against your enemies?" Before Valluvar could complete his question, the king gave him the news of his victory and began to explain how he and his soldiers fought in the field in order to achieve such a victory:

> "We cannot belittle the magnitude of the strength of the army of our foes. The sight of the elephants of both sides was like the fighting clouds clashing with each other. The attack of the battalions of chariots was like the hills tossing and fragmenting each other. The horses did not simply jump and fight - they flew up and fought in the air. The soldiers carrying spears and swords lined up and faced each other creating a spectacle with the fury of the waves of the sea (volcanic) fretting and fuming.
>
> At one stage - that was the final phase - my counterpart and I met each other in a personal combat. When the spear he threw at me flew towards me, I would have embraced the hero's death, even if I had waited for a moment. But I not only obstructed it but also killed him with this spear. The moment he succumbed to my spear his army got shattered into pieces, our soldiers hoisted up the triumphant flag. Great Sage, please look at the tip of this spear. It is drenched in the blood of the enemy-and now dried up."

The King who was intoxicated with victory showed Valluvar - his spear. But the latter did not even touch it. He looked at him and said. "Oh King, I praise your victory. I admire the strength of your army. I don't deny the fact that this spear is the symbol of your victory over your foes. It is also true the kings cannot avoid war. But don't forget one thing. But what gives a king the world acclaiming victory is not the spear that vanquishes his foe, but the sceptre that protects his people. That sceptre should not swerve. May you acquire eternal

triumph by establishing a proper Government for the welfare of the people.

The King, whose heart was won by the ripe wisdom of Valluvar's words, threw away his spear, bowed to him, ascended his chariot and left for his capital. Valluvar stood smiling. He inscribed the following couplet in his heart with the aid of his thought-pen.

Not lance gives kings the victory,
But sceptre swayed with equity.

Chapter 35 *Kingship* *Kural 546*

21

She is a living painting, a finely structured woman with the complexion of a peeled - off lily stem. Her radiant face could stand in comparison with one thousand moons neatly ordered together in one's imagination. She is a mixture of many a beauty distilled and rolled into one. She is gold precious! Diamond rare! A peacock in happiness! A nightingale amiable to ears! A walking golden bee! A dancing star!

She sleeps happily on a bed made of soft down feathers of swans. Why does her hips, in the shape of elephant trunks, sway in such a way? Why does nectar gather onto her red lips? Why does her own lips taste that nectar in their sheen? Why does her cheek turn into such colours that would put in shame the ruby? How is it? Oh, what bright delight in her smile? Is it the smile of *mullai* blossoms? Is it the vision of full-moon? Happy rays of endless extension draw happy *kolams* on her face--How and Why?

Whom could we ask for an explanation? We should ask only Valluvar.

"Brother! Now she's awake. You could better ask her."

She now talks to herself and her words fall into our ears. Listen:

"In my dream my lover visited me and we were together locked in love. With delightful love of dear satisfaction I derived happiness. My lord who was with me unseparated in my dreams has been driven away from me by a cruel one called wakefulness."

The woman weeps and chides her wakefulness.

It seems she had by her side her lover in the dream. She wakes up and feels sorry. Learn of her sorrow in Valluvar's words and derive pleasure:

And if there were no waking hour, my love
In dreams would never from my side remove.

Chapter 123 The Visions in the Dreams Kural 1216

22

"He smiled - I smiled; He touched me - I burned him; He embraced - I avoided; He advanced--I responded; He left - I remain yet."

The maiden thus talks through the eyes of her affliction. Another maiden, in her anxiety not to break her waist, holds on to the shoulders of her friend. "Both love and shame, with my life as the porter's pole, weigh me down from either end; What can I do?" --thus wails another maiden of peacock beauty.

My soul, like porter's pole, within my wearied frame,
Sustains a two-fold burthen poised, of love
and shame.

This Kural reveals well her agony. If such was her suffering, my position is worse--claims another maiden showing her eyes of raining tears. Do you know what she said when the lover wanted to leave her?

"Tell me if you don't want to go; if you want to talk of your speedy return, tell it to those who would be alive then."

Thus she intimidated her lover. Alas! she cannot conceal her love from others, nor can she describe in detail her pangs of love to her lover in person. The maiden with fragrant flowers over which bees hover around was in a dilemma.

I cannot hide this pain of mine, yet shame restrains
When I would tell it out to him who caused my pains.

The lovely lady who looks like a beautiful statue made of colourful gems grieves thus: "He did not wait till the sandal paste on my body became dry. He asked me to sing for him; and at once he asked to close my lips. 'Is my music sour to you?' angrily I asked. 'No, your lips are sweet,' he replied. 'Put it off,' I said pointing the lamp by our side. He at once put me into his hands. He made wet each of my life cells in honey. I moved from him a little. And at once a pallid hue spread all over my person. I

could not bear separation even for a while; how could I tolerate this loneliness now?"

I lay in his embrace, I turned unwittingly;
Forthwith this hue, as you might grasp it,
came on me.

Chapter 117 *Complainings* *Kurals 1163, 1162*
Chapter 119 *The Pallid Hue* *Kural 1187*

23

When the great hero looks at the edge of his spear which had been blunted by use in the battle-field where he has annihilated the entire army of his enemy he is reminded of the spear-like eyes of his beloved which would have lost its lustre consequent on long waiting, he only half heartedly participated in the prize awarding function arranged by the king to honour him. He unconsciously strokes his cheeks which are to receive the prizes from her. He hastens towards his home. She does not seem to know his having come or called her endearingly. She was so absorbed with her eyes fixed on the way and stirring the waves of the sad music of pangs of separated love.

She is taken aback only when she heard the sound 'tsk'. She realises that it is none other than the monarch reigning over her mind - and then no words.

That night both of them sing hymns in praise of the majestic Moon floating in the sky. In the bedroom both of them jointly play the amorous game of love. They drink the very juice of bliss - by dragging other's body close and bringing the lips together. To make this feast of bliss perfect Valluvar also adds another rare fruit through the Book of Love. That fruit is sweeter than the trinity of sweet fruits in the Tamil tradition - it is the primal perfect fruit prior to even the fruit of kiss. That fruit of love is the basis of the fruit of pleasure of physical union which will also enhance the joy of the mind.

The name of that is the fruit of lovers' quarrel. Young lovers are supposed to get dizzy with rapturous joy only after they taste this fruit. Even though the joy sought without the flavour of this is tasty, it won't have that perfection, according to Valluvar. And this is also corroborated by the book of experience based on the lives of those who have found companionship.

In the bed-room the husband and the wife indulge in pleasant lovers' quarrel - why - to be united again. For lover's union. It is beautiful and true - though comically so. This is affectionate quarrel - then separation one or two seconds pass.

But without having patience even for that duration both try to look at each other in the dim light. Both feel ashamed simultaneously when their eyes meet and then come closer to each other. Their hands collide - "Please don't touch me" - in a tone of pretended harshness she says. Then she puts her hand, touching his. "Why are you touching me?" – His mock anger displayed.

"Why did you touch me, then?" - Thus she speaks with some sense of belonging. "Alright, you can touch me and I will touch you," – such is the competition of love which results in a flood of excitement which culminate in union. Valluvar emphasises the importance of this mock-quarrel in the following couplet.

A 'feigned aversion' coy to pleasure gives a zest;
The pleasure's crowned when breast is clasped to breast.

Chapter 133 *The Pleasures of Temporary Variance* *Kural 1330*

24

"Tom-Tom Tom-Tom"

"What is hereby informed to everyone is ..."

After beating aloud his drum the drummer proceeds to pronounce his public message to the people. Is it good news or bad news?--she did not care about it. She just looked outside through the main door which was kept ajar and viewed him for a while. She heard the sound of the drum too. But her mind did not go out to listen to his message. She shut the door and entered into the hall and sat down. Her mind was engaged for a while on the act of the drummer. He passes the information to everyone in the town. And immediately she thought of the nature of her eyes.

"My eyes are also like this drum. A drummer passes on public messages only; but my eyes announce to everyone in the town my sufferings which should have been kept secret from others. There is no difference between the drums in the hands of the public drummer and the eyes on my face."

It is not hard for all the town the knowledge to obtain,
When eyes, as mine, like beaten tambours, make the mystery plain.

"Like the beaten drums are my eyes. It is not difficult for the people of the town to understand the secrets of love pangs from the eyes of maidens like me."

Thus, while the maiden of *talambu* complexion was talking to herself, her friend *Tokai* came towards her from out of the garden gates. The maiden welcomed her and then said:

"*Tokai!* Your eyes seem to be weary. Perhaps your lover failed to visit you last night. And you remained awake all night waiting for him?"

Tokai replied:

"You mad lady! Don't you know this: While I wait for him

my eyes remain wide open fixed on his path expecting him. Even while he is present they do not sleep. In either case there is no sleep for mine eyes. How can my eyes remain without weariness?"

The maiden felt ashamed by *Tokai's* reply, for she was younger than *Tokai!*

When he comes not, all slumber flies; no sleep when he is there;
Thus every way my eyes have troubles hard to bear.

Chapter 118 — *Eyes Consumed with Grief* — *Kurals 1180, 1179*

25

A lovely woman visiting a beautiful garden is quite natural. Whenever she comes there the flowers in the garden shun her sight. For there was no flower around the place that would stand equal in beauty to the charm in her eyes. Hence the bright flowers immediately would hang down their heads in shame. But the flower-eyed maiden stopped visiting the place for two or three days for reasons unknown.

Today she comes there. But in her gait there is no energy. Her walk used to be like the dance lesson of a creeper learning the art of *Bharatha Natyam*. Something has happened to her now. The flowers no longer shun her sight or look away from her side. A reversal situation! Her eyes in turn look weak and weary, and they are ashamed of themselves as if they were a warrior who chose to run away from a battle-field showing his back to the foe.

We may perhaps know of the truth if we care to listen to the talk of these flowers. Let us listen to the words that are spilled away from these swaying petals:

"Why do her eyes, which in the past put us in shame, now seem wasted like a withered flower?"

Another one answers the question in detail:

"Don't you know the reason? Her lover took leave of her two days ago. He is yet to return back to her. Her eyes shed tears repeatedly out of misery and have become weary. So we have now defeated her eyes in splendour."

Perhaps the maiden listened to their conversation. Immediately within her mind the voice of Tiruvalluvar is heard in a tender tune: Since my lover has left me in misery my eyes weep for him and have grown dim; so they are in a position to shun the sight of radiant flowers.

Thine eyes grown dim are now ashamed the fragrant flow'rs to see,
Thinking on him, who wand'ring far, leaves us in misery.

As the voice of this couplet echoes into her heart she hears her lover calling her, 'Oh, My Dear One!' A lightning strikes! The lovers are in embrace. They become one as *veena* and *swara* in harmony. The flowers which witnessed this scene had sudden sweats! And the creepers and plants around held the breeze towards them and fanned themselves. The cool breeze that entered into the flower bunches found its path through the lovers in embrace. The maiden who would not let even the breeze into them when she embraces her lover is afflicted by pangs of separation for a while by this intrusion by the hostile breeze. Her eyes which grew radiant and beautiful by the arrival of her lover, unable to tolerate the little intrusion by the gentle wind, now become pallid and sallow! She should embrace him tight without any gap for the breeze, or else she could not withstand any such separation for a while!

As we embraced a breath of wind found entrance there;
The maid's large liquid eyes were dimmed with care.

Unable to bear with separation even for a little while the beauty of women goes wasting away. This portrait of Tiruvalluvar is unsurpassed in the love literature of the world!

Chapter 124 *Wasting Away* *Kurals 1231, 1239*

26

"My dear friend! Listen to me. You seem to be very eager to know what happened last night. I would rather tell you what happened the previous night. He had left me in the dead of the night when the whole town was in slumber. 'My beloved, wait for me near the water-falls in which bright white sheets of water rise and move like silver sheets in the moon-shine. I'll meet you there by any means, dear,' he gently told me and disappeared leaving his lovely tooth-mark beneath my neck. Had it been left anywhere else, in the visible parts of my person, a battle would have taken place in my house. My father would have thrown up his axe to break my head! Since my lover was aware of this pretty well he had touched me in all softness as he would handle *mullai* blossoms and made me happy. And yet marks of love-play left by him on my person shone like looking glasses and enchanted me. I waited for him at the appointed hour by the rocks and by the falls. It was a long wait. Even the moon had become tired of planting kisses on the water in the falls, and covered its face in a blanket of clouds. I waited leaning my body against the *nochi* tree nearby. My eyes had grown weary. The cock in my house announced the hour of dawn. In my anxiety that I should return home unseen before my parents were awake and before the town got up from its slumber to bustle into its routine activities, I rushed my home and shut myself in. And all through the day, yesterday, I walked on fire, I slept on fire, and perhaps the sun knew of my misery, it went away into west ending its duty.

"The same rocks! The same falls! I waited in the same place under the *nochi* tree. The music of the running water, the rustle in the leaves of the trees, the flutter of the birds on the boughs--everything excited my senses. There was a sign of his arrival at a distance. Yes it was him! The man who had tormented me the whole of the previous night."

"My darling friend: I decided to teach him a good lesson. I was determined to do it with a stout heart. From the type of my feigned quarrel with him he should learn that he should not fail in his promise."

"My life! My delight! I won't disappoint you like this hereafter! Pity, your legs should burn waiting for me all the night, may I touch them and relieve the pain? --thus he should beg and bend, kneel and plead; I would not look straight into his face before that. I was ready to wage my feigned quarrel against him with a steady mind. He was also almost near me. I could read in his face a sense of fear for me. The fear was for the disappointment he had granted me the previous night, the fear for feigned quarrel."

"He was very near! I looked on him. I stood still. By that time treason was done. The traitor was none other than my heart! Before I could begin my quarrel with him my hasty heart pushed me aside and had embraced him! Where is then the place for feigned quarrels? I ran towards him and embraced. The quarrel could not put up its head. The siege by embracement became strong. What can I do when my own heart had betrayed me? My mother and father had agreed to our marriage. He told it himself. Then, should I describe our pleasures in embrace?"

Knowing her happiness, her friend was all the more happy.

'I'll shun his greeting'; saying thus with pride away I went;
I held him in my arms, for straight I felt my heart relent.

Chapter 126 *Reserve Overcome* *Kural 1259*

27

Is her brow a bow in the hands of the great Chera King? Are her eyes the arrows in the hands of the warrior? Is she then a statue of magnetic charms providing a feast to one's thoughts?-- thus one would think of her. She is a beauty inimitable for any painter and she is now found, not before any mirror in any seven-storeyed palace, not in the midst of nature's splendid bounty in any park in the evening hours, but in her kitchen squatting on the floor. Why? – such a question would arise in any one's mind.

The silk-smooth maiden is cooking for her lover *pittu*, a rice delicacy. Her parents had given her in marriage to a handsome youth. He went away with raised sword to fight the foe in a battle. Though she prayed him with folded hands not to go he would not listen to her. The days rolled on; she turns the pages in her heart. She counts the marks that have been made on the wall. They are not the marks for milk or curd supplied to the house. They are her life lines--her account of the days of his absence. She makes a sigh looking at the walls. Will he return today and delight my heart? Or will it be another painful night?– thus the maiden with breasts like lotus buds pines and takes a deep breath. She feels sad that her handsome husband would not come and eat the *pittu* she has made for him. Tiruvalluvar mischievously adds that even her fingers have gone weak and small by repeatedly counting the marks on wall made each day during his absence.

Here is the Kural:

My eyes have lost their brightness, sight is dimmed;
my fingers worn,
With noting on the wall the days since I was left
forlorn.

Chapter 127 *Mutual Desire* *Kural 1261*

28

The assembly was convened: the eyes of thousands of people were anxiously fastened on the central platform. They had heard so much about the person who is going to lecture that day. Not only was he proficient in several languages, but also he had done research on the grammar of those languages. It seems when he wakes up in the morning the first thing his eyes will look at are only books.

Having been awake late in the night perusing books, his eyes will gently close as though they merged with the books. It was said that his house itself looked like a library. There was practically not a single book on earth which he had not studied — unless someone enters new books now. His learning was so comprehensive and thorough.

When the news spread that an eminent scholar well-versed in various branches such as literature, historical writings, research compilations, epics, *Puranas*, astronomy and geology would address the gathering it is not surprising that people came there in such large numbers to listen to him.

He also quickly walked upto the elevated place and took his seat, without making the audience wait too long. The organiser of the Association stood up and said a few words of praise as by way of introduction of the speaker:

> What has been studied is only a handful of dust;
> What is to be studied is as vast as the world.

But what to-day's speaker has studied is as vast as the world, whereas what he has to study is only a handful of dust. A man of such vast learning has come to impart wisdom to our Assembly. He will speak." After this announcement of the organiser, there was a thunderous applause, like the roaring of the sea. The guest - speaker began to address:

"Most eminent and loving gentlemen," after addressing the audience he cleared his voice. His speech was replete with several literary quotations, and historical evidences were also

abundant. The talk went on and on. But within a few minutes, one fourth of the audience had left the hall.

Still, he continued his speech.

He spoke as if he was reading aloud from a book. Before he completed his speech, three-fourths of the audience had dispersed. The organiser stood and pleaded with the dispersing crowd: "Kindly be seated and listen to the rare ideas. 'If we want to show our regard for the speaker, at least those who are in the hall must stay on and listen to him.'" As if to oblige him, those who were seated in the first three rows stayed on. But they made all sorts of bodily (grimaces) signs of their exhaustion and indifference to the speaker. Some slept - and even began to snore. The speech at last came to an end. Those who were 'locked' in the hall left it for home with a great sense of relief.

The organiser of the Association felt remorse in the heart. He felt a sense of shame as he thought that he had been responsible for the degradation of the great scholar by inviting him to speak.

Hence he said to the speaker humbly: "I beg you to forget all that has happened. The people of this place have not realised the magnitude of your scholarship and accorded you the due respect. Kindly forgive me for that."

The speaker smiled and spoke thus:

"Dear friend: That is no fault of the people of this place. That is only my fault. I had studied a lot. But I don't have the capacity to present them in the proper way. According to Valluvar, the world will hasten to obey the command of those men who have the capacity to weave their thoughts or ideas into a harmonious blend and say them in a sweet manner. Not only that. Do you know what he has spoken about me? I am like a flower which has bloomed ... but does not spread fragrance. That is to say, Valluvar's conclusion is that those who cannot convey effectively to others the thoughts they have culled from various books are like such a flower."

After consoling the organiser the speaker took leave of him.

Swiftly the listening world will gather round,
When men of mighty speech the weighty theme propound.

Like scentless flower in blooming garland bound
Are men who can't their lore acquired to others' ears expound.

Chapter 65 *The Power of Speech* *Kurals: 648, 650*

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29

A sculptor who can transform stone into living art, and a painter who can create pictures which are eloquent even in their dumbness were strolling along the hill side enjoying the beauty of nature. The clouds were scattered over the sky and they gave the appearance of the dark elephants and the white horses walking majestically over the peak of the hills. Those two were very happy that the spot rich in natural beauty was most congenial for them to talk to each other about their wonderful artistic creations. One of them proudly spoke of his having painted the portrait of a silver cascade which appeared to be like the silvery hair of an old woman dancing in the strong wind; and the sculptor said with joy, "See there, a deer is standing looking at a dancing peacock. A similar sculpture I had chiselled on the stone only yesterday."

While they were thus engaged in their conversation the painter suddenly stood stunned and said with a sense of wonder, "Ah, who's it? It looks as if someone who is the very embodiment of beauty coming towards us." The sculptor also turned his eyes in that direction. He knew who it was coming. The painter began to describe the 'portrait' of beauty coming towards them.

"Dear friend! I have never created with the help of my brush, such an efflorescence of beauty."

"O, Painter, what we see is not a colourful parrot, but a handsome youth--a bull like man with a well-built body--don't you see?"

"Yes, I see it clearly, I am only sorry that there are no poets nearby to sing in praise of this handsome young man. I marvel at his majestic gait. He is now coming closer, what a radiant charm on his face! Like the curved edge of the colour brush, his moustache is beautifully shapęd. Did Mother Nature take the petal of the red lotus to provide his body with such a skin! O Sculptor, I have read about innumerable men like Arjuna, Manmatha, Kanna and Muruga as well as drawn pictures of

those figures. But I am of the view that they cannot equal the beauty of the man whom we see today."

The sculptor who calmly listened to the painter's song of praise, began to speak with a smile:

"Your appreciation is quite apt. But one thing--the beautiful figure which you see is not a man--but a doll made of sand with extraordinary skill." The painter was flabbergasted to hear of this.

"Are you joking? I am not a stupid fool to accept all that you say. Can a doll walk like this? Is he not progressing towards us? Oh, a small channel on his way--and how he crosses it with a jump over it! How can you say that it is only a doll! A big joke, indeed!"

"O, Painter, it is not a doll in reality--only a man. I know him well. But one thing, whoever else may accept him as a human being, Valluvar is not willing to do it."

"O, Sculptor, Could you make your meaning more clear and explicit to me?"

"Valluvar says that one who lacks the intelligence to investigate anything with a sharp mind, is equivalent to a lifeless doll, however charming he may be. This man is the right illustration for this idea."

While they were thus talking, that handsome youth had come close to them. The sculptor greeted him, "O beautiful Youth, how are you?" He then introduced him to the painter.

"O, are you a painter? Have you ever drawn a handsome youth like me? I don't think you have."

"When his words reached his ears, the painter looked at the sculptor and said: "What you said is cent percent true."

Who lack the power of subtle, large, and penetrating sense
Like puppet, decked with ornaments of clay, their beauty's vain pretence.

Chapter 41 *Ignorance* *Kural 407*

30

Our mouth waters at the very sight of a lemon fruit, even before it is tasted. And we feel at once its bitter taste. The same is not the case with alcohol. Though by nature it intoxicates and throws us out of balance, the 'kick' of the drink don't prevail us when we eye upon it. After consumption the drink affords giddiness, some energy or a sense of delight. It is also claimed that lemon is a good antidote to drunkenness. Lemon can win over alcohol, it puts an end to the rule of alcohol, and unlike toddy it produces a bitter taste in the mouth at its very sight!

'Love is also like lemon'--Valluvar seems to say. A youth thinks about the beauty of a woman who is not before his eyes, thinks about the beauty of her waistline, the sweetness in her lips, the coolness in her eyes and he may feel delightfully excited. A woman's very person before his eyes would enhance his sense of delight. Alcohol has no such quality. The pleasure that a woman provides is two-fold, delight of perception and delight on retrospection too. This is very well portrayed by Tiruvalluvar.

Hence the comparison, 'She is like a lemon'. Both excite at the very sight! The lemon which excites senses at its very sight wins the alcohol. That lemon is in turn won by women who provide delight in perception and retrospection.

Here is the Kural:

Gladness at the thought, rejoicing at the sight,
Not palm-tree wine, but love, yields such delight.

Chapter 129 *Desire for Reunion* *Kural 1281*

31

That was the time when Valluvar used to teach Tamil grammar to his students regularly. The flood of his thought which had accumulated in his forehead was radiating through his lustrous eyes. At that time a lovely little doe shivering with fear, with double swiftness that is natural to its tribe, ran into the hut of Valluvar for asylum. Before the compassionate look of the author of Kural fell on the young deer, a hunter armed with a bow and arrows swiftly came and stood before him. "A deer came running in this direction. Did you see it? If you had seen it, please tell me. That deer had just escaped my arrow. Perhaps, it has gone into your house."

Valluvar replied calmly: "A deer! It did not come this side. I think that it went galloping in the other direction."

The hunter on hearing this said, "Did it?" and began to run in the direction indicated by him. The student with all humility asked Valluvar:

"Most eminent Sir, You have dwelt upon on so many occasions on the evils of falsehood and said that it is a great sin. Today you yourself have told a lie. Is it proper?"

Valluvar replied smilingly: "Even a lie which can produce good, free from any stain, can acquire the status of truth. Won't that deer have lost its life if I had told the literal truth to the hunter? Eventhough what I uttered was false, as it had resulted in good, it will be equivalent to speaking truth."

After this explanation Valluvar took his palm-leaf and writing-nail. The following Kural was composed:

Falsehood may take the place of truthful word,
If blessing, free from fault, it can afford.

In continuation of that, he thus spoke to his student: "Young man, taking advantage of this explanation you should not reduce your life to a series of falsehoods. If a person suppresses a truth perceived by his heart and utters a lie either to save himself or to harm others, the conscience of that person

himself will torment him like fire. To bring home that idea I have written another couplet:

Speak not a word which false thy own heart knows,
Self-kindled fire within the false one's spirit glows.

The student who was overwhelmed with joy on hearing such rare ideas of Valluvar simply worshipped the feet of his great teacher and shouted joyously, "Hail Valluvarism!"

32

A man did harm to his wife. What could be the biggest wrong done to her? At the hour of separation he might have promised to return to her next day, but might have failed to do so; Or he might have failed to kiss before the last one had lost its wetness; Or, he might have lost himself in the beauty of the moon, and she might have posed him the question, 'You think the moon fairer than me?' and he might have replied, 'Yes, your beauty has something less', having in mind the dark spots on the moon's countenance, and she might not have got his point in 'something less'. Such may be the way he would have wronged her. Whatever may be his fault she forgives him, no, she forgets his fault, oh, no, she sees not his fault. At what time? when the man is nearer her person! Tiruvalluvar gives an example for the mood of the woman. The pencil that paints is visible to the eyes when it is in the hands. When the hand takes it to paint the eye, the same pencil is not seen by the eyes. Nearer to the eyes it is invisible.

Likewise, whatever may be the faults of her husband, his faults disappear once he comes nearer to her person.

"Let him come, I'll chide him severe!"
"How could he attend that function unaccompanied by me?"
"I won't leave him who pained my heart to go unpunished!"

Such words she may speak and fortify herself to begin a feigned quarrel with him. But when he walks towards her all her anger is forgotten, all accusations fly away, she finds herself transported into a new world. His faults too go unseen, like the pencil that paints no longer seen by the eyes.

Tiruvalluvar finely explains her mood in the Kural:

The eye sees not the rod that paints it; nor can I
See any fault, when I behold my husband nigh.

Chapter 129 *Desire for Reunion* *Kural 1285*

33

A man went abroad and was engaged in overseas trade. He had a close friend. Both were business partners and earned huge wealth through a proper conduct of their trade. Both of them had a desire to return to their homeland. They took most of the wealth they had earned there and sailed home in a ship. When they reached their homeland, it was midnight. In their money bag they had more than 50,000 gold coins. Hence they decided to stay in a rest house in the harbour town itself for the night and go home next morning. Accordingly they went to a rest house. The owner of the lodge was well versed in the art of speaking and behaving very pleasantly so as to attract anyone to his side. Somehow he had understood that the box containing the gold coins was with the elder one. He provided all facilities to the elder one and the younger partner began to suspect him. The owner also allotted a good room for the elder partner to stay. Later he displayed his gift of eloquence to the elder one:

"In this rest house even our Prince stayed once. On another occasion the Princess took rest here. At that time the jewels she was wearing as well as the garlands were in my custody. All the big trade monarchs who come to this harbour for export or import will leave their valuables with me. You can sleep here without any kind of fear."

The speeches of the lodge-owner strengthened the feelings of trust in the elder partner. Even when the elder partner went near the bed for sleep the owner would not leave him there.

"One small thing. I want to speak privately with you." The elder partner responded and they went to another corner.

"May I know who your companion is?"

"He is my friend. We are partners in our business."

"Is he a trustworthy person?"

"Of course. We have done this business together for such a long time."

"You shouldn't get angry with me. In the very same room of this lodge an accident took place sometime ago."

"What was the accident?"

"Like you, two friends stayed in the same room with huge money. In the morning one of them was found dead and the other had disappeared with the money bag."

"Really?"

"That is why I am saying this. You had better be cautious."

"How?"

"You sleep in this room with the money bag. Let your friend sleep in another room."

"That seems to be a good suggestion."

When this conversation was over, the elder partner said to the younger one, "You sleep in the next room. It will be comfortable for both of us." The younger one was a bit surprised, but accepted the suggestion and went to the next room. When both of them were in sound slumber, the owner of the rest house quickly came through the back of the room and took hold of the bag near the elder partner. But the elder partner woke up immediately and seized him. The owner of the lodge suddenly stabbed at his chest with a sharp knife. In this hubbub the younger partner also woke up and obstructed the owner from running away and tied him to a pillar. As he saw his friend struggling for his life he shed tears.

"My dear friend! My young partner, I had acquired your friendship only in absolute clarity of mind after due consideration and contemplation. In spite of that, suddenly I began to doubt your integrity. This wicked man had corrupted my mind. Not only that, I began to trust this man without proper scrutiny. Now I suffer the consequence. Please forgive me. Valluvar's couplet,

Trust where you have not tried, doubt of a friend to feel
Once trusted, wounds inflict that nought can heal.

has come true in my case."

Thus saying the elder partner breathed his last. The eyes of the younger man were welled into tears.

To repose faith on one who has not been examined, and to entertain doubt regarding one who has been chosen will cause irremediable sorrow.

Chapter 51 *Selection and Confidence* *Kural 510*



34

She sat inside the hall. Her forehead was like a bent crescent moon, her eyes like a fine-edged lance, and cheeks emitted the red radiance in *khum khum*. She was lovely like Tamil.

She might be sixteen. The bounteous charm of maidenhood ruled on the top of her person keeping aloft its standard. Her looks seemed to devour the vast infinity of the sky. Her silks fluttered lightly in the gentle breeze.

She could hear her mother speaking from the threshold. She was chiding her ten-year old boy, the younger brother of the lovely maiden.

"Marutha! Where did you go out and play?"

"To my pal Thenappan's home on the next street. I played with him mother."

"I see. Everyday you run to his house like a dog. You play with him. He never visits you. Why should you go to him everytime, why you visit one who has no respect for you? Look, if you go there again, I won't be a soft woman. You got it?"

"Yes, Ma. I won't go hereafter."

Why does the maid listen to this conversation with such interest? Oh! what a change in her countenance! Suddenly she runs into her room and throws herself on the bed. Tears roll down her cheeks. Again and again the words of her mother seem to torment her heart.

"Always you go to him! Why not he visit you?"

Why does the maid weep for these words? Her heart enquired, "Why do you weep?"

She thought of the answer and wept:

My heart! I tell you also what my mother told my brother. Maruthan runs to Thenappan's house to play, but Thenappan does not return the visit, and prefers to remain at home. Oh my

heart! When my lover's heart does not go after mine why should you run after him as Maruthan does?"

What can her heart reply to her words?

"My darling! I won't obey as your brother did. Eventhough your lover's heart does not come in search of you I won't refrain from going after him!"

Tiruvalluvar presents an imaginary portrait of the mood of the maid:

You see his heart is his alone:
O heart, why not be all my own?

Chapter 130 *Expostulation with Oneself* *Kural 1291*

35

A person who seems to have a body made out of sandal wood walks towards us. He holds a staff in his hand with which he touches the ground in all its softness as though he was afraid that it should not hurt the floor. His face radiates compassion. His eyes overflow with tenderness; the petal-like lips of his toothless mouth wears a smile. Though he is surrounded on all sides by hundreds of people they all seem to be like the stars of the day-time sky while he alone shines like the Sun. He is the embodiment of truth, an incarnation of Love. He is none other than the Sea of Love, Saint Gandhi.

Righteousness was his path. Whenever he had to fight against injustice he would march towards the battlefield ready to lay down his life for the cause. For the sake of the liberty of Indian soil he plunged himself into the purgational flames of sacrifice. And he emerged out of it like pure gold which remains untouched by fire. Wherever he saw subjection and slavery he would rush to redeem. He held aloft his standard of protest to cut at the roots of the evil of untouchability which banned a man the bodily touch of another man. Wherever riots and unrest happened he would not eat his food or go to sleep till they subside. He led a life like Buddha, like Mahavir, like Tiruvalluvar who preached:

The sunshine scorches the boneless, so does
The Righteousness the loveless.

Here comes the great man. It was the time when the Sun was sinking in the West. The tender breeze gently goes up and encircles him. He is going to sit on the dais and sing the prayer song. With him and with the feelings of his heart the good people of that assembly are going to join and sing the prayer. He has arrived as a feast to the hungry eyes that waited for him; he has come as a medication that drives away any illness of the heart. He has just arrived — feasting the hungry eyes that awaited his arrival.

Then the hands of those present come together - 'as if the roses should shut and be buds' again. He also greets them

similarly and the audience felt as though it was a blessing. A watch was winking beneath his waist. A man comes forward pushing aside the teeming crowd. Before anyone could think about the purpose of his going near him, he kneels before him as if to pay homage to him. Gandhiji's pure heart pours love on him. Alas — an instrument of death lay hidden in his praying hands. That hand-pistol suddenly disturbs the peace of that place. The noise of the bullet *raided* on that peaceful situation — like a tiger leaping on a cow quickly asleep.

The peace vanished. Darkness descended. Blood gushing forth from the sides of his heart, that simple figure, that beconlight of hope of the poor, fell flat on the ground. The weapon hidden in the hands that worshipped had sucked the life of the Father of the Nation. What an amazing insight Valluvar had which helped him to foresee this event!

In hands that worship, weapon often hidden lies,
Such are the tears that fall from foe-man's eyes.

When men of malice bow before us, their hands may hide an instrument of death, the tears they shed are also like that.

Does not the tragic end of Gandhiji bear witness to the truth of this Kural?

Chapter 82 *Undesirable Friendship* *Kural 828*

36

Right from ancient days it was believed that we sneeze when somebody thinks about us. Tiruvalluvar uses this belief to portray a lovely scene of lovers: In the green grass of the groves wearing their milk-white dress a lover and his beloved piped on the happy lute of pleasures. When they were locked in deep embrace the black locks of the moon-faced lady brushed against his nose, which made him sneeze. Immediately she said: 'Long life to you!' And quickly a thought came to her mind and she asked him, "At the thought of whom did you sneeze?" and began to weep endearingly.

She hailed me when I sneezed one day;
but straight with anger seized,

She cried, 'Who was the woman, pray,
thinking of whom you sneezed?'

When someone sneezes the people around greet him. This is an old custom. Tiruvalluvar uses this well for beginning a lovers' quarrel and to end their quarrel as well.

A woman with lovely redness all over her mouth was on the nuptial bed, deeply embracing her lover. But a quarrel, a feigned one, soon came up. Perhaps he kissed her only eight times, after a promise "I'll kiss thee nine times!" Or perhaps she dodged his kisses; Or perhaps after praising her as a sweet sugarcane he was late to taste her! Or perhaps he was angry thinking, "Why she asked eight kisses exactly, and why was she hesitant to accept without any count?" Whatever be the reason for their quarrel they remained sulking for some minutes in silence. The lover sneezed suddenly and his beloved, completely forgetting their quarrel, greeted him, "May you live long!" He cried in delight, "You are defeated!" She blushed in shame and embraced him again. The sneeze had ended the quarrel.

He might have sneezed casually. But his beloved told her friend with pride the next morning complimenting her lover for his tact:

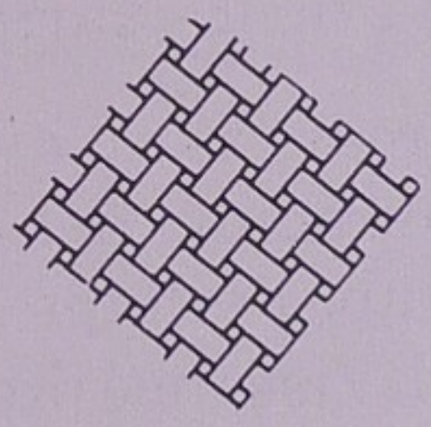
"I started a feigned quarrel with him last night. He deliberately sneezed and without thinking I greeted him, Dear!"

She spoke thus touching her pained cheeks. Here is the Kural:

One day we silent sulked; he sneezed:
the reason well I knew;

He thought that I, to speak well pleased,
would say, 'Long life to you!'

Chapter 132 *Feigned Anger* *Kurals 1317 and 1312*



37

The old man was slightly deaf as well as deficient in vision. His grandson was accompanying him as an aid while he was walking. As he had not lost his power of seeing fully there was no need to lead him by taking his hand. However the grandson was walking very close to him as a support.

Hundreds of people had assembled in a short distance. There was a platform in the midst of the crowd. A man was standing on the platform. To the old man the fact that he was standing on the platform surrounded by a crowd could be seen as shadowy pictures by him--without much clarity. The old man asked the youth: "What is the crowd after?" The young man applied his eyes also in the direction and after listening to the thing with sharp ears for sometime replied to his grandfather:

"Grandpa, there in a grove, a man is plucking and eating unripe fruits preferring them to the ripe ones. The people are watching that scene with amused mind."

The old man was surprised to hear this. He brought his hands close to his forehead and looked with a sharpened and deepened perception.

"What, Boy! Are you ridiculing me? I don't see any grove at all. There is only the crowd of people. Someone is moving his hands up and down. There are no trees; neither unripe fruits nor fruit. You have made me totally a blind man!"

The grandson laughed when he heard the grandfather's reply. Hoping that this grandfather will get a clarification from his reply if he comes closer to the crowd, he took him there. What the man standing on the platform spoke loudly could be heard by the old man also:

"Gentlemen! You must understand one thing. Our enemies are devoid of knowledge. I have my doubts about even their parentage and birth. They would say, 'Let ideas clash with ideas.'--It is necessary only swords have to meet swords. We must chop the heads of those sons of dogs and throw them into

the sea. I consider all those who speak opposing my views as dirt and vermin."

The grandfather and the grandson listened to this lecture. Though his hearing power was blunted, he covered his ears with his hands and murmured: "What a pity! What a debased vocabulary! Have seminars come to this low level?"

"Grandpa, you were wondering where the trees and unripe fruits are. Do you now see them?" The grandson spoke smilingly. As if it was not clear to him, the grandfather asked him:

"What? Are you joking? Someone is speaking. That is all. Is he eating unripe fruits in preference to full ripe fruits?"

"Grandpa, this morning our teacher explained a couplet of Kural. Using harsh and low words, ignoring the pleasant ones when there are so many of them, is equivalent to plucking the unripe ones and tasting them, when there are sweet and ripe fruits. This meeting is an illustration of that idea."

When the grandfather heard this he simply showered kisses on his grandson. He was happy that his future will be in accordance with the path of Valluvar.

When pleasant words are easy, bitter words to use,
Is, leaving sweet ripe fruit, the sour unripe to choose.

Chapter 10 *Utterance of Pleasant Words* *Kural 100*

38

Darkness was enveloping the Earth. Dame Nature was turning her radiant face from the world, and offering a spectacle of the beauty of her dark hair, made the living beings get dizzy and indulge in novel dances of pleasure as well as get tired and go to sleep: in between she was also laughing in such a way that the stars of her teeth were visible to the world. Off and on the noisy cry of a bird was piercing through the musical orchestration of the leaves which were dancing to the tune of the soft wind. Whenever that bird's noise was heard, the other birds sleeping in the branches of that tree raised their wings a bit, and fluttered by raising their small legs forcefully, and then became calm and quiet.

The owl was extremely happy seeing that the entire bird community was shivering with fear hearing its voice and was conceited with the idea that the many-coloured parrots, countless doves--why, all birds, — were all its slaves having no strength or vigour to oppose it, and went on crying! The owl was jubilant at the very sight of the birds getting frightened by its noise. Two crows perched on a branch at a lowly bough below the peak branch on which the owl was sitting talked to each other, thus:

"What is this? Can't we put an end to this tyranny of the owl?"

"Be patient. Such a time is sure to come."

"When is time going to change? When will our woe come to an end?"

"Foolish woman! Is there not a ripe season and time for everything?"

"Oh, Dear--you are not bold enough. Which astrologer are you going to approach to find out the right time? You don't have the courage at all to control the fierceness of this wicked owl."

When the crows were engaged in conversation, the owl howled from the top of the tree: "Who is it there?" Hearing the authoritative voice of the owl, the crows kept mum. But in their

eyes there was a glow of anger. Then there was perfect silence. After a long pause, the male crow whispered in the ears of its mate: "See, the time I spoke of, is fast approaching."

The morning star began to shine. The rising sun rose up extending its arms of light. Everywhere the sun had lit the clouds with gold. Flood of light everywhere! Saying that the time it spoke of had come, the male crow flew up to the top of the tree and dashed towards to the owl. The owl which was assulted by the crow fell down unconscious. The crow was triumphant. That success was due to an attack which was made in the right moment.

According to Valluvar, time and place must be calculated for defeating the enemies. When Hitler's army had marched upto Moscow, did not the Soviet people win the war by waiting till winter? This couplet illustrates the rare value of the right timing:

A crow will conquer owl in broad daylight:
The king that foes would crush, needs fitting time to fight.

Chapter 49 *Knowing the Fitting Time* *Kural 481*

39

"Little Sister! Where do you go?"

"Elder Sister! Why do you ask? I go to fields where our uncle works from the morning."

"Oh I do blabber! Here I have just cooked food for him, and you are about to take it for him. I know this well, but why then I am confused?"

"Sister! I know it. You can't remain at home lonely without him. You become mad in his absence."

"You mischievous little one! Why do you mock at me thus? Do you forget you talk to your elder sister?"

"I am only a little girl, Sister! Why I speak mocking words? You would not shun any talk about your darling husband. You pretend not to like it, don't you?"

"Alright, alright. Rice and sauce will become cold. Take them quick to him. Tell him to return once the work is over."

"Shall I tell him to fly back to you? Or, give me two wings if you have, and I'll tie them to your darling husband so that he would come flying to you."

The little girl took the lunch bag into her hands and started leaving. Then the elder sister heard from inside the sound of her crying aloud. The baby-boy crawled towards the doors crying 'Dad, dad.' She took the child and called back her little sister. "Why do you call me back?"--she asked returning.

"Take this boy also to his father. He devours me crying 'Dad, dad!'"

She gave the boy to the girl and the baby's face brightened with delight. They went towards the fields.

A woman living in the opposite house was watching this scene. She also heard the words of the elder sister. She was a woman pining for her husband's return.

Like the little girl who takes food to her uncle, the heart of the woman seemed to go in search of her husband! Like the baby

boy who devours his mother with the refrain 'Dad, dad', her eyes too adamantly willed to see her husband. So she prayed to her husband thus:

O rid me of these eyes, my heart; for they
Longing to see him, wear my life away.

Chapter 125 *Soliloquy* *Kural 1244*

40

That Jewel of Medical Art, *Maruthuva Sihamani*, is one of those men who constantly give up their principles like the monkey which jumps from branch to branch. But in truth he was not a *Sihamani* (jewel) of medicine. That was only his name which was appended to his profession and then he was called *Maruthuva Sihamani*, the Jewel of Medicine. He was also involved in the trade of manufacturing and selling medicines. He was using a cheap trade trick to impress on others the high quality of the medicines prepared by him. That is, he was indulging in a false propaganda to the effect that all the other medical merchants were dishonest, and they were playing with the lives of their customers by selling adulterated medicine.

If one is quick in finding fault with others on something or other, much ahead of others, the people may think that such a person is like pure gold. The 'Pearl of Medicine' belonged to that category of people.

He had a longing to occupy a position in the Government and become famous. He cultivated a friendship with a comedian of the Court and planned to achieve his aim through him. He made him convey his desire to the King. That comedian asked for job--not only for the 'doctor' but also for himself. That moment itself, the comedian was sent home.

The Government was also watching closely the activities of Sihamani. One day a huge crowd of people had gathered in front of his medical shop. The Government officials were examining the medicines in the shop. The raid was carried out as he was caught red-handed when he was selling adulterated medicines. The people were speaking:

"What a noble person and gem of character he appeared so far! Now the truth has come to light."

"He has been living all these days finding faults with others, mainly to hide his own. I have seen with my own eyes how he spoke from the platform with undammed eloquence and later drank toddy."

Thus when so many in the crowd were exchanging their views and news an old man intervened to say:

"Have you forgotten the adage of Valluvar that there are people in this world who shine in their outward life as the scarlet bright of the *Kunri Mani* (Kunri berry) but whose inside is black as the nose of that *Mani*. This Sihamani is only an example to illustrate it."

Outward, they shine as *Kunri* berry's scarlet bright;
Inward, like the tip of *Kunri* bead, as black as night.

Chapter 28 *Inconsistent Conduct* *Kural 277*

41

He had a broad fore-head, manly eyes, strong shoulders, and a gait that tells of his determination. He was her lover. Since many weeks they had not met to sign the testament of mutual love, she by her sideway glances and he by his magnetic eyes. The summer heat called 'separation' was against the cool wintry days known as 'embrace.' Both were very eager to meet each other unseen by anyone.

There was a palm-grove by her house. Moon was pouring milky light onto the earth. Her mother, father and brothers were all asleep. She alone felt sleepless as though she were lying on a bed of nails. She got up and the flame on the little lamp by her bed splashed its tongue in the wind. It seemed to tell her, "Look, everyone is asleep; and you can go to him." She opened the back door and walked breathless till she reached the *mullai* shrubs in the garden.

Then she walked towards the palm-grove. She was sure that she had conveyed to him by the signs of her eyes that they should meet at the groves that night. The palms stood with grown up coconuts on them and seemed to her like the potters going to market carrying their pots on their head. Her lover was yet to come and draw her onto his laps. She leaned herself on a bent palm and watched the moon in the sky.

For a moment she thought that the palm, in a surprise development, had acquired hands and that it was embracing her tight. After a little while she realized that it was not the palm, but her lover who had come. They exchanged no words. Their hearts got excited.

"None saw you coming here?"

"No, my Dear. Did anyone see you?"

"No, none but my little lamp in my house and the little heart in my breast know of this."

"How do you say? What about this palm tree, and that one, and this moon?"

"None of my family, nor anyone in the town know of our love. Perhaps anyone knows of it from you?"

"Certainly none will learn from me."

Their conversation changed. The moon was ashamed to see them and hid itself behind the clouds.

It dawned. Their love was known to everyone in the town. Her friend approached her and told that some women were talking about their love near the public hall at the street end. The lady replied:

"I met my lover only once--Alas! this news is known to everybody just as the lunar eclipse is known to everyone."

It is said that eclipse is caused when a snake devours either moon or sun. Astronomers have told us that they are caused when earth and moon come to a particular position. We have had scholars in the past who could read the movement of planets and predict the eclipses. Eclipse when it comes is known to all the people in the town and likewise the lovers' tryst was also known to everyone. Here is the Kural:

I saw him but one single day: rumour spreads soon
As darkness, when the dragon seizes on the moon.

Chapter 115 *Announcement of Rumour* *Kural 1146*

42

A thick forest. A terrain of thorny bushes. Though it was day time, trees provided shelter in such a way that the sunlight could not enter it. A doctor who had to go beyond that forest to his place had no choice but to walk in that way. The doctor felt happy that journey was also useful in a way. The reason was that the green leaves, shrubs and roots which were useful for preparing medicines were available there in abundance. He was enthusiastically filling his bag with them and we may say that in the entire region there was no doctor comparable to him. He will give treatment to the sick and even without getting any fee.

His legs used to hover in and around the areas in which the poor people lived. He was able to support his service to the poor with the money he got for his medical work in the houses of the big land-lords. Because of that the people of the region came together and unanimously conferred the title 'The Medical Genius' on him. The garlands of praise which were heaped around him testified to their belief that there was no disease that will not disappear if he gave medicine. Moreover, those who brought up animals at home also sought his help when they fell ill.

Such an eminent doctor was he. He was walking along the forest fast thinking of the services that lay ahead of him in his future.

Then there was heard a roaring voice from somewhere. He was not frightened. He listened with rapt attention turning his eyes towards the direction from which the noise was heard. That roaring did not smack of any malice or have any tinge of fierceness. It was only soaked with pain. However, he could see that it was the noise made by an wild animal.

The intensity of the noise was slowly decreasing. Whatever it may be the doctor decided to go closer and find out. It was a painful noise--but coming from a tiger! He looked at the animal with compassionate eyes. The tiger was lying on the ground. A sharp arrow had pierced its paw. The doctor could understand

that a hunter had bent his bow having that animal as his target. Then the tiger should have jumped up to attack him. His arrow had pierced its paw before the animal could attack him. The arrow-stricken tiger had been running for quite a distance and had made the arrow's edge sink deep into its paw. It has fallen down unable to bear its pain.

The good natured doctor did not waste even a minute. He went near the animal and gently touched its back, and patted on its head. Eventhough it was pleasing to the animal, it lay calmly. Then the doctor gently applied the juice of the leaves on the injured foot. That juice helped him to remove the arrow without paining the animal. He threw away the arrow and applied medicine on the animal. Then the tiger stood up.

The doctor also rose up with a sense of fulfilment. He had the satisfaction of having helped in his life even a wild animal.

Suddenly there was the terrifying noise of the roaring animal. That animal pounced upon him. It tore his chest, snapped his legs and broke his feet to pieces and thereby appeased its hunger. The animal which sometime ago was struggling for its life found happiness in killing the person who had saved it.

Have we not heard the song, "The doctor who cured the disease of the tiger." Tiruvalluvar has only enshrined in a couplet two thousand years ago the truth embodied in the song. Even doing good will have disastrous consequence if we don't assess everyone's nature and do things befitting the receiver's character.

Though well the work be done, yet one mistake is made,
To habitudes of various men when no regard is paid.

Chapter 47 *Acting after Due Consideration* *Kural 469*

43

"This moon scorches me! Oh cruel moon, you are called cool moon. Why then you heap fire on me?"--thus women who found their lovers leave in misery after a close embrace used to chide the moon.

"Harsh moon! Don't stop before me! Fade fast away!"--thus some will scold the moon through their tears when they suffer separation.

Here we find a woman who does not chide the moon though she suffers the misery of separation. She was also not angry with the moon. Instead she makes a plea. What's it? Her eyes had left her face and they are gone in search of her lover in the dark of the night. Perhaps they might not see him if it were very dark even if he was very near. So they need a torch to help them on their mission. They need a torch in the sky. Hence, if she drives away the moon in anger crying 'Don't torment me! Go away!' how could then her eyes find out her lover beneath the moonless sky, in the dark? So she pleads the moon thus:

"Moon! May you not disappear! You should shed light from the sky so that I find out my lover who had left me in misery. So may you not fade or wane! Longlife to you!"

Here is the Kural for this portrait:

Set not; so may'st thou prosper, moon! that eyes
may see
My love who went away, but ever bides with me.

Chapter 121 *Sad Memories* *Kural 1210*

44

In a palace there were two bosom friends holding high positions. Their names given here are imaginary - they will be useful to tell the story as well as bring home a truth. One was called "One who attained clarity" (*Telinthan*) the other was called "one who who will bend his body" (*Nelinthan*). Both were married. The wives of both of them vied with each other in beauty.

In spite of their close friendship, evil thoughts regarding the wife of Telinthan began to sprout in the mind of Nelinthan. But his friend had not understood that such a foul idea was brewing in the mind of his friend. His wife also was free from wicked or evil thoughts. She had not deciphered the signs of lust in the look of Nelinthan. But Nelinthan was yearning to get his desire fulfilled by hook or crook.

One day it appeared to be most propitious for his attempt. His friend Telinthan had to go to another place on an official work. That day Nelinthan went to the house of Telinthan. Telinthan's wife asked him to sit in the front room and enquired affectionately. "Would you like some drink?"

"I don't need anything," said he with eyes emitting a violent passion. "How can you go away without taking anything in our house?"

"There is milk. I will bring it." She said. "No, No, do you know the third aspect of *Tirukkural*?" "What are you saying?" "The milk of love," saying this he ran to her and embraced her. For a moment, she was stunned. There she became a volcano - or a roaring sea. With all the strength in her hands she gave a blow, on his cheeks. Nelinthan began to bend, in accordance with his very name. He tried to run away. She spoke loudly, "You are asking me about the third book in *Tirukkural*. You read the first book - which deals with ethics. Then you will understand.

Of all those degenerate from virtue,
There is none worse than those who seek other people's wives.

Do you know the meaning of this couplet? I will tell you. Of all those who went astray on evil paths no one is more wicked than those who stand at the gates of other people desiring their wife. Yes; there are no worse immoral idiots than they."

Nelinthan became dumb: and stroking his swollen cheeks, and with the head downcast, he came out.

More trifle! saying thus, invades the home, so he endures
A gain of guilt that deathless aye endures.

That is, "Even when such a thing can be done easily if any one misbehaves with the wife of another person, he will be subject to eternal ignominy."

The joy of that damsel with the dark hair knew no bounds while listening to the couplet and the explanation given by her husband.

Chapter 15 — *Not Coveting another's Wife* — *Kurals 142, 145*

45

"My dear heart! Should I call you my dear one? You bear with many sufferings bravely but you have no strength in this matter. You recognise him as your own; why then you suspect him? Are you steady and strong in picking up a feigned quarrel with him? What do you do once you see him? As I begin a quarrel after listing his faults he touches my hands; Oh heart, why should you then disappear into somewhere? He embraces me and begins writing poetry of love. I give myself fully to him, with no mind to stop his advances. In the car festival called lovers' union my feigned quarrel is lost like a coin that has no worth. When he attempts to placate my anger by offering himself to me you should intervene and make him stop his advances. But my heart, you don't do it. You disappear from the scene, but when he is not here you would jump into the air in anger."

Thus a parrot-like maiden chides her heart in one of Tiruvalluvar's portraits:

My heart, false is the fire that burns; thou canst not wrath maintain,
If thou thy love behold, embracing, soothing all thy pain.

Chapter 125 *Soliloquy* *Kural 1246*

46

"My dear" he called.
"My life!," she said.
"My manna!" he complimented.
"Shall I pour you some?" she enquired.
"Why not?" he concluded.
"You are gold to me!" she said.

"You are diamond set in gold!" he said and took her into his hands.

The water in the sweet falls coming down from the rocks with delightful music seemed to sprinkle on them the lotus essence. A crowd of cuckoos perched on the boughs amidst the flower plants and sang to the tune of the lovers' games. The tender shoots of the plants tossed up in the breeze and seemed to fan the lovers so as to dry the pearly sweat on the fore-heads of the lovers sleeping below. The withered leaves that lay under them were proud that they got the boon of forming the bed for the lovely couple, and rustled in the wind.

The dance of love had staged its first performance accompained by the music of the bangles in her two hands and the tender sound from their four lips (should we explain more in detail?) in a fitting manner.

The pleasures of love is like the sweet jack-fruit and when one enjoys it, a medicine called 'quarrel' is handed over to him for enhancement of pleasures. I call medicine that which provides delight! No, Valluvar says so.

A man takes delicious food. If he goes on eating without any break can he derive any sense of pleasure? Can he enjoy his food? No, some time is needed for the food to be digested. Digestion of food is far more important than taking food, says Tiruvalluvar. It is by itself a medicine. Likewise it is claimed that the pleasures of love are sweeter after a quarrel than before.

Is it not good and praiseworthy to eat food after feeling the hunger, which comes on after the digestion of food taken already?

Here is the Kural for this portrait:

It is sweeter to digest your food than it is to eat;
In love, than union's self is anger feigned more sweet.

Chapter 133 — *Pleasures of Temporary Variance* — *Kural 1326*

47

A man fell down and broke his nose. Everyone around the place laughed at him. He could not bear with their mockery and decided on a plan. One day he came out of his house in the morning and with folded hands raised towards the sky he shouted piously, "Oh God! God!"

People curiously gathered around him and enquired, "What's the matter?"

"I could see God over there," said the noseless man.

"We don't see anything?" said the people of the town.

"You should cut off your nose first. Then you can see," replied the man. No one was ready to do it.

After sometime four or five people cut their nose and looked into the sky. There was no God. They could see only some black clouds. They were ashamed of themselves and shuddered to think of the insults of others for their senseless act. Hence they did not show their distress but danced with simulated joy shouting, 'Yes, Yes, there is God! Oh what a sight! Glorious! Glorious! We feel great, great!'

Soon everyone of them who desired to see God thus damaged their nose and in the end the whole town became noseless.

Such people who lose their faculty of reason in a thoughtless fashion belong to one category.

Another man was the master of a town. Everyone should obey him. If anyone defies, his head will roll down on the earth. One day when he went around the town mounted on his horse he saw a woman 'lovely like a creeper'. Next moment a warrant was passed that the woman should be brought to his house. The men entrusted with the mission met her and revealed to her their master's pangs of love of her. The woman chaste like gold stamped her feet in anger and told them, "Now I kicked not the floor. Take it for your master's head. This you can tell him."

The armed men became panicky. They could not stand up to face her fiery eyes and ran back to their master. The master

roared in anger, like a hurt tiger. He convened the assembly of the town. He levelled false charges against the woman who had refused to comply with his desires. The lovely lady was also summoned to the court of the town.

The big man asserted that she was a chasteless woman. He called her a whore. The people who had obeyed him till then could not tolerate his words for they knew very well that she was pure. No one took his libellous words to be truth. The big man grew into anger and raised from his seat with his sword drawn. The people of the town rose up with their hands raised into the air and their words, 'Don't make false charges' rent the air.

What could the big man's sword and his men do against the united power of the masses? His game was lost. His pride was hurt. He returned to his house with his head down.

So, we have two stories. In both, an attempt is made to cheat the people of the town. In the first case the whole town was duped. In the other the whole town wakes up.

Whatever is heard by anyone from anyone, what is told, should not be taken as truth but its veracity should be well thought over. That is wisdom.

Though things diverse from diverse sages' lips we learn,
It is wisdom's part in each the true thing to discern.

Chapter 43 *The Possession of Knowledge* *Kural 423*



48

Mavenko plans to go overseas on a business venture. But he had to struggle to give effect to his plans. You think he is short of funds for the journey? No, Gold earned by the elders of his family is heaped like little hills in his house. His hesitation and confusion are centred around his beloved wife Mankani. He knows well that he cannot part her company; and he also knows that she cannot live without him. In the meantime his business friends spoke to him on the glory of earning wealth in the distant lands. Coerced by them, he agreed to go with them one day.

He went home thinking of getting Mankani's consent that night while on bed.

Mankani kissed him and took the weariness away from his face.

She called him to dine. She spread a plantain leaf and the varieties of delicacies on the leaf. He sat down and looked on the food without eating it. His peacock-like wife saw his disinterest in eating food. She took his face with her *kantal* red fingers and put the food into his mouth, parting his lips. Mavenko completely forgot himself and lay on her laps. She fondled him like a child planting her kisses on his fore-head.

They walked onto the bedroom holding each other like a lute and its music. Mavenko placed a bunch of *mullai* flowers on her head. She gave him back a garden of *mullai* blossoms in her smiles!

"You want the lamp to burn?" he asked her.

"I want no lamp, but I want your explanation for the sorrow in your face. What's the matter, dear?"

"My face is bright like a lily, for you sit by my side like a moon. Why should it look sad?"

There was no light in the room, and no sound of words too! The moon took the cloud into its hands. The breeze took the garden into its hands and embraced deep. The drops of dew on the blades of the grass danced to the tune of the breeze.

"Darling!"
"Mankani!"

The paintings on the bed-room began to express themselves into words:

"I will demand something from you. Will you grant it, Mankani?"

"I gave you till the brim of this dawn, and you are not satisfied!"

"I ask you now something bitter!"

Her lips remained still. Tears trickled onto her eye-lashed brows like dew on the leaves of the grass.

"I go on a tour of foreign lands for the sake of business. Just one trip. Please bid me farewell."

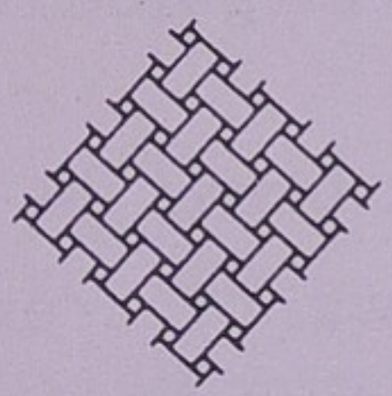
"Tell me if you don't go. If you think you must, tell it to one who might live to hear it! I won't be alive when you return."

After such a reply could he go away from her?

Here is the beautiful Kural which portrays well the sufferings of separation:

If you will say, 'I leave thee not,' then tell me so;
Of quick return tell those that can survive this woe.

Chapter 116 *Separation Unendurable* *Kural 1151*



49

An elephant gets down into a river to drink water. Then a crocodile takes it into its hold. The elephant makes out a desperate cry. It is unable to disengage itself from the crocodile. And at last it chants loudly, 'Narayana! Narayana!' Suddenly Mahavishnu Narayana presents himself on the spot and releases the elephant from the hold of the crocodile. This is the story of *Gajaendra Moksha,* spoken at length by the Puranic scholars.

The elephant in spite of its mountainous size loses to the crocodile when it touches water. In the same way the crocodile which is no match to the elephant on the earth becomes powerful enough to drag the elephant into water when it is in water. This is very well depicted by the imaginative Puranic scholar. But he rounds off the story by presenting Gajendra Moksha, by bringing into the scene an elephant that cries for help and the Lord in Eternal Slumber, Anatha Sayanan, who redeems the elephant from its distress.

The Puranic elephant got down into the river, put its leg into the mouth of the crocodile, called Paranthama for help and got redeemed.

Here Tiruvalluvar shows another elephant for us.

A warrior marches forward with a spear in his hands. He is challenged by an elephant. It was a gallant fight between the two. Was he not a Tamil? Wasn't it his heritage not to show his back to the enemy in the battle-field?

As he pounced upon the huge animal with a stout heart and aimed spear, the elephant puts up its tusks and lifts him up piercing his stomach. The valiant youth with his spear still in his hand makes out a cry of agony. It was a heroic cry too. As it pierced and killed the warrior, the elephant begins to run here and there in an angry mood. On its course it runs into a fen and it cannot lift its leg away from the mire. The huge animal's every effort to release its legs from the mud gets itself still more down into the mire. It is a great struggle. And then happens an interesting thing!

A fox happens to see the elephant in its struggles. It thinks that it is the most opportune moment to make the elephant its prey. The fox pounces upon the elephant immediately and begins to tear up its body with its teeth and nails. It drinks the blood and eats the flesh. The poor elephant cannot fight with it. If it is not entrenched in the mire the elephant can make a syrub of the fox simply by stamping its one foot on the little fox. But now it is a great feast for the fox. A feast that it cannot imagine of even if it makes a gallant search all through the forest.

An elephant that sweeps a warrior into the air, when entrenched in the mire, is easily killed by a fox. This truth is neatly presented as a beautiful incident by Tiruvalluvar in a Kural. The Puranic scholar weaved a yarn, the *Gajendra Moksha,* an incredible one, taking up the example of elephant and crocodile. But Tiruvalluvar with the example of an elephant episode beautifully hands out useful advice to the ruler of a State:

However powerful a State may be, by one small weakness on its parts, it can be pulled down by its enemies.

To drive home this point Tiruvalluvar shows us a tableau peopled with a mighty elephant that becomes tame on a miry ground and a little fox that overpowers the mighty animal.

Famous men of wisdom and great heroes of this earth have been defeated, corrupted by a little flaw in their nature.

The great warrior of Maharastra, Shivaji, bowed down to Kokapatta, a leader of Brahmins for he stepped into the mire of superstitions. In the same way the great lamps in the history of the world, Caesar and Antony, could not protect their citizens and were brought to dust because they had found themselves caught up in the mire of pleasures, Cleopatra.

Thus Tiruvalluvar's message of righteousness is intended for all the States in this world. An elephant that kills an armed warrior, when caught up in the mire, is destroyed even by a weak fox:

The jackal slays, in miry paths of foot-betraying fen,
The elephant, of fearless eye and tusks transfixing armed men.

Chapter 50 *Knowing the Place* *Kural 500*

50

"If a contest is held for all the women in the world she is certain to win it. None can equal her in beauty. And in intelligence, good manners, in the way she dresses herself and in her poise, she has no equal in this world. I would not, even as a compliment, call her as 'my deer,' or 'my peacock,' 'my parrot,' or 'my dove' for nothing is worthy of comparison with her. I love her! I always think of her. I gladly worship her in my heart!"-- thus my friend adored her, of course, when we were alone.

"Alright. She loves you?" I enquired.

"I don't know of it. I didn't care to know about it so far. She visits me in my dreams. She delights me in my waking thoughts too! If I happened to close my eye-lids, immediately she presents herself in my vision, and smiles at me. I don't know how I could have her as my own." My friend replied with a sigh of amorous desire.

"Right, you take *kavadi* then to her," I said.

"What? *Kavadi*? If I carry *Kavadi* to her house won't people mock at me? People would laugh at me. Then why do you want me to carry *Kavadi?*" My friend asked me in an angry tone.

"Look! You see a *Kavadi* in the corner. Bring it to me," I said pointing to a *Kavadi* kept by my relatives of old fashioned beliefs. It was intended for carrying to Palani temple for an offering.

As he placed the *Kavadi* before me I explained it to him:

"My friend! If you want to succeed in love you should carry a *Kavadi* like this. This is what Tiruvalluvar says!"

"Who said it? Tiruvalluvar, you mean?"

"He wants you to look at it attentively."

"But, why?"

"Let me explain. Please listen to me. The feelings of love, if they happen to grow not mutually but found in either the man's heart or the woman's heart, would only bring pain. The weight placed on the ends of the poles in a *kavadi* is found to be equal so

that they are counterpoised well, and likewise love should be found equally in the man's and the woman's heart. Love that swells only in one end would bring no happiness but pain. Love that blossoms in both the hearts alone would bestow delight to the concerned people like beneficient rains."

My friend in surprise demanded me to quote the Kural and here it is:

Love on one side is bad; like balanced load
By proper porter borne, love on both sides is good.

Chapter 120 *The Solitary Anguish* *Kural 1196*



51

'My dear citizens of Athens'--thus the old man would call them all. Immediately the people of the city, the young and the old, the men and the women, would come by his side in hundreds and thousands. The old man's beard rolled down to his chest as though it was a pointer testifying to his stout heart. His forehead lay wide and broad describing him a thinker. His eyes that seemed to look into the future were quite attractive and prominent. Though he had a weak voice his words were well articulated and they flowed out of his mouth smoothly as waters race down the falls. His body was slightly bent and looked like a bow in stretch just before fixing an arrow on the strings. It was his nature to be busy and eager to remain always in the midst of people. What did he tell them who flocked around him? 'Know thyself'--were his words. 'Never be cheated by impostors!', 'Lose not thy faculty of reason!', 'Revolt by posing intellectual questions, Why? What for? How?'--These were his message. He wished to take up his message to all corners of Greece. The beauteous streets and the thresholds of houses on the street sides were the podiums from which he carried on his intellectual compaigns.

His opponents could not reconcile to his popularity. They made him climb up the steep - steps of the court halls. They drew him there and accused him of guilt.

'This old man Socrates carries on a poisonous compaign and spoils the people of our State; especially he confuses the youth.' This was his opponents' charge against him in the court. Maeletus led the opponent's camp. Arguments were made and heard, and the hearing came to an end. The judgement was made. By a margin of a few votes against him Socrates was found guilty. He was sentenced to die by consuming poison. The old man entered like a lion into the gaol with a smile on his lips. His wife and children were in tears. But he took his punishment as a gift for his ideals. When the cup of hemlock was handed over to him he took it into his hands with a cheerful face. He drank the poison with a smile on his lips. His legs could not

stand for long. He fell down over his bed. When he was about to die he summoned his friend and managed to tell him, 'I owe a chicken to my neighbour, Pay him back.' He left the world with a sense of calm and peace. The men who took him to the court and argued for his death were the people very well known to him. He said no words of ill-will about them when he died. This Kural suits very well to the life of Socrates:

They drink with smiling grace, though poison
interfused they see,
Who seek the praise of all-esteemed courtesy.

Chapter 58 *Outlook* *Kural 580*

52

Love is like the moon. It rains its shine not in palaces alone but on the mud huts too! There by the side of the river, near the banyan tree, is a hut which shines in the moonlight as if made of silver roofs. Inside the hut a handsome youth is pacing up and down. He is Venkai, a young farmer who feeds others by his profession as he gets his food. A descendent of a lineage of farmers who were very proud about their profession. Now he waits for the return of his wife. She has gone to the river for a bath. Now she is seen returning home and she seems to walk fast not wishing to keep in wait her husband for long. She always loves a bath before she feeds him with supper!

He has a special delight to feed on her clean body! Her wet clothes showed him the curves and bulges of delight on her person and seemed to throw him out of balance. More than this excitement his mind was being tossed by another thought of sadness. They were married for a year. And the youthful delights of love still remain unsatiated.

"You are back home! I'll feed you in a minute," she said and went inside for a change of dress. She entered into the room where a little lamp was burning in a corner, pulled down the screens at the door-step and began to change her dress. The light from the little lamp fell on her person, and her silhoutte was seen on the screen. Venkai was surprised to think that even her shadow could tilt him out of mind.

The moon seen on the waters of a pond, even if it is an image, is a beautiful sight to see. So he was happy to see her person as a silhoutte as a shadow on the screen. He felt sweet all over his eyes.

She was dressed in spotless clothes and then she made her up. Then she laid on the floor a plantain leaf and served the dishes for him. She also sat down by him. With taunts of love-play the supper was over. She cleaned the floor and went upto the doors to close it.

"Don't shut the doors! My Darling! My friend Veeran will come now in his cart. We have to go out this night. I'll return

tomorrow night," said Venkai. She was taken aback. She poured out thousand words of protests and prayed him not to go. Her dreams of a happy and sweet night with her husband were shattered! "Darling! I can't be alone this night. My lips were ready from the morning to wage a war with yours. I thought this night we should embrace each other so as to give shame to the God of Love. But you leave against my wishes. Is it right or just? Tell your friend that you are not coming today, and come to quench my thirst. Or else I'll be burnt by the fire of lust," she did not say all these words, but her heart wanted to speak those words. In her coyness she could not talk. How did she then express her feelings?

She remained looking at him. He was also looking on her. What she could not speak were spoken by her eyes. Instead of her mouth, her.eyelids, brows and lips moved and conveyed her thoughts. The pupil of her eyes expressed her anguish of love.

In brief, her eyes begged him for her sake. When she expresses her anguish of love by means of her expressions in the eye rather than by her words, according to Tiruvalluvar, her feminine excellence is found on the increase:

To show by eye the pain of love, and for relief to pray,
Is womanhood's most womanly device, men say.

Chapter 128 *The Reading of the Signs* *Kural 1280*

53

It is a garden of flowers, in the midst of which is seen a decorated hall; and inside the hall on the bed a woman lovely like a creeper is lying. As she is like a creeper it is no surprise that her body is in a dangling movement.

She attempts to close her eyelids; but in spite of her eye lids, her eyes have gone out in search of him. As the blockade of eyelids is of no avail, the woman decides to keep them open. She thinks of putting off the little lamp by her side which seems to devour each and every atom of her beauteous person. The words 'put off' wakes up in her mind feelings of thousand hues. She has drawn a portrait of her lover. The cheeks of the image are wet, and yet her longings and desire for him don't end. Placing her silken feet on the floor she paces up and down inside the hall for a while. Then she again climbs up her bed and lies down in such a manner that the lotus buds of her breast heave up. The night seems to be very long and is in no haste to pass away quickly as she would wish.

When her lover was by her side and as they in deep embrace drank deep the juice of sweet delight the nights seemed to be unfairly in a hasty mood running fast like race horses. She used to chide the night for its haste then. Today the night seems to drift away in a leisurely pace as if it is a turtle that can't run.

More cruel than the cruelty of him, the cruel one,
In these sad times are lengthening hours of night I
watch alone.

She is angry with the night that the long night is far more cruel than the heartless lover who tortures her.

Poor night! It shudders at the anger of this parrot-worded beauty. After a while the woman feels pity for being harsh to the night. She withdraws her words, 'cruel night.' She feels compassion in her heart for the night.

She considers herself as the only woman in the world who suffers the wretched pain of lover's separation. Why should she care about others? A place where she is in the company of her

lover is her world. Without him she feels to be in a cruel land deadlier than the harsh *palai* lands.

Hence she suffers like a tender plantain leaf that has been thrown into the burning flames. If one has no food to eat it is natural to feel hunger and pain; but here, it is the food that feels the pain longing for the one who could eat it!

This agony makes to scold the night but after a while the anger turns into pity for the poor night:

"Oh night! you make everyone to sleep. But except me, there is none to keep company with you. Your state is really piteous!"

Thus she conveys her sense of pity for the night. Had she also slept, instead of remaining awake with pain, the poor night would not have had any company. The woman thus expresses in a beautiful manner her sense of suffering:

All living souls in slumber soft she steeps;
But me alone kind night for her company keeps!

Chapter 117 *Complainings* *Kurals 1169 and 1168*

54

After that typhoon and the torrential showers people had come out of their abodes to see what had happened. Big trees lay uprooted here and there on the ground. The reeds that bend at the winds to save themselves were seen thrown off along with bunches of earth that tied them together. The metal decoration at the temple top had been thrown a mile away by the winds. Some cattle lay without breath. The old people were sleeping on the pyols covering up their shivers with blankets around their persons. Boys in crowds were seen playing in the puddle of rain waters in the street. With gasped breaths the peasants stared at the paddy crops floating on water. It was very calm after the typhoon. In its calmness was heard a sad note. In the heart of the village ran the river like the parting line on the heads of women. The waters in the river ran down in a frenzied haste. The river was in spate. Leaves and withered plants, the branches and twigs of the trees, the carcass of lambs and goats sped away riding on the water.

The village officer and his assistant walked over the banks of the river looking at the pace of the waters. Suddenly they saw a strong built young man on the other bank. He was staring at something in the waters. He was seen tense. The village officer pointed his hand towards him and showed him to his assistant. He got his doubts about the identity of the man cleared.

"Look, is he not Singan of our village?"
"Yes, Lord. It is him. And your staunch enemy too."
"Why does he stare at the waters like that?"
"Sir, Sir, there in the middle is a little deer. It is struggling for life." While the two were thus engaged in discussion, Singan who was on the opposite bank plunged headlong into the waters. And he was not seen surfacing up for sometime. The village officer's happiness knew no bounds at this.

"Look, Look! My enemy has been swept away by the river!"
"Sir, Sir, wait, He can swim," said his assistant.

Singan surfaced up with the little deer in his hands. He tried to swim towards the bank. But he had to struggle against

the dangerous pace of the running water. The officer interjected:

What powers so great as those of Destiny? Man's skill
Some other thing contrives; but fate's beforehand still.

"This dictum of Tiruvalluvar cannot be a lie. Look! Nothing is more powerful than Destiny. Even when you choose some other path to avoid it, Destiny will present itself beforehand. Here stands Destiny mightier than the efforts of Singan! There he struggles! His hands are tired! See, he has the burden of the deer on his shoulders. How can he swim with it? Is it that easy? Yes, he is dead!"

Thus the officer spoke and jumped into joy. His assistant preferred to explain:

"Sir, that Destiny cannot be overpowered is quite right. When something wins over us we say Destiny has won. On the other hand when we clinch a victory we again say that it is given to us by Destiny. Hence Destiny is the reason we attribute to a result. This is Tiruvalluvar's message."

The officer was simply astounded by the exposition of the Kural by his assistant. Singan had by then managed to overcome the whirlpools and reached the banks with the little deer in his hands. It was a great surprise for the officer. For a minute he forgot his enmity for the young man and began to praise his courage, determination and sense of compassion. He ran towards Singan and hugged him in joy.

"How could you cross this terrific floods?"

Singan answered him with a quotation of a Kural:

"Sir, Men of tireless efforts would overpower even Destiny."
Here is the Kural:

Who strive with undismayed, unfaltering mind,
At length shall leave opposing fate behind.

Chapter 38 *Destiny* *Kural 380*
Chapter 62 *Human Effort* *Kural 620*

55

"None in the world is as shaken as I am," thought the beautiful maiden and shed tears which rolled down her cheeks like droplets of dew trickling down mango fruits.

"He said, 'I would remain with you unseparated like the heart beat of yours.' How did he go away, and how is it my heart still beats?" the woman sighed.

"You are my breath," he said to me. "But here I exhale my breath and yet how do I live?" The lover kissed her at day break and left promising to return the next night. The woman who smiles like the blossoms of palm trees could not wait till the next day, and pines for him.

All through the day she felt fire after fire was heaped on her. At last evening also arrived, and it came in the person of a woman. She looked at the maid Evening which you know would not be very bright as it comes with the light and darkness of day and night interfused and diffused.

"Why do you look dim and confused?" the woman asked Evening, "I suffer like a withered creeper because my lover is separated. What happened to you?"

The maid, Evening, did not answer but grew still dark.
The woman herself helped with an answer:
"Perhaps you too suffer a similar pain like me."

Evening parted her lips sadly and spoke through sorrow these words: "I danced in glee with a radiance from morning till now. My companion, Sun, was holding me in embrace. When I was excited in the zenith of my delight he gently dropped me down, and placed me on the earth, and left towards the east. Won't it be suffering to me? Tell."

Thus saying the Evening touched her on the shoulders. The woman gently caressed the hair on the head of Evening and asked: "Poor maid of the Evening! I thought my lover alone was cruel. Your companion too is like him, a cruel lover!"

Her words should have given a healing touch to the grieved heart of Evening.

The two as they console each other chide their companions harsh and cruel. But by their very words of scolding they express their deep love and affection for their lovers.

The Evening that handed over grief to the woman is not by itself happy either! Hence with a sense of heartburn the woman greets the evening thus:

Thine eye is sad; Hail, dim hour of eventide!
Of cruel eye, as is my companion, is too thy mate?

Chapter 123 *Lamentations at Eventide* *Kural 1222*

56

What we call as 'Good Snake' is the most poisonous one. Hence the proverb 'When a snake is seen even an army goes panicky.' During the course of its movement a snake takes up everything that comes as a check to its progress, as a challenge and danger to its life. It hisses out and strikes them with its poisonous teeth and injects its venom. The victim may be either an animal or a human. A snake very often strikes a target for the primary purpose of defending its life. A lady who walks with her cotton-smooth feet may place her feet on a snake that lies on tender grass in a garden. But the snake immediately would react striking on her person its venomous tooth.

I would like to tell you an incident that happened in the life of my beloved father Muthuvelar. Like me he was also tormented in life by a battery of sorrows. One day he was attending to some work squatting inside his tiled house. The loft that is usually found in many farm houses was right above his head. The vessels, mats and the beds lay there dumped.

A cobra that had entered into the loft somehow descended down a slit in the loft. It fell down right on the shoulders of my father. Had he reacted immediately and attempted to push it off his shoulders the snake would have bitten him instantly. Somehow it did not happen. He realised that the thing was a snake and it also occurred to his mind that he should remain motionless and peaceful and should not try to push the snake off his person. He was aware of the nature of the creature. He remained still like a statue and showed no sense of shock as the reptile coiled and moved on his person. The snake slowly descended to his thigh and from there fell on to the floor. And quickly it moved away from the place. Many a time my mother Anjukam Amma would tell this incident to others.

Sorrows may strike us like flash floods but if we know the nature of the hardship that strikes us, however potent it may be, we would remain intact and safe from any danger. Tiruvalluvar's maxim is this: "A wise man when struck by hardship strong as flash floods, if he chooses to bestow his best attention

to the essential nature of the hardship, he would immediately be relieved of its pains." That is, an understanding of the nature of one's hardships would act upon the sorrow and spoil its effect.

The danger from the snake was averted not merely by the knowledge of the nature of the snake but also by keeping in memory its nature at the time of the trial.

Though sorrow, like a flood, comes rolling on,
When wiseman's mind regards it, - it is gone.

Chapter 63 *Not Despairing in Distress* *Kural 622*



57

Clouds gather on the sky. The maid, Earth, looks above and lies with a bright face of satisfaction. She had not met her lover for a long time. Delight swells up in her heart when the signs of rain are seen on the sky. The Rain, the lover of Earth, comes down and takes her into an embrace. When the rain and earth are mixed together can they be separated easily? *Tirukkural* says it can't be done. *Kuruntokai* works upon this idea in a polished style. The mixing of water and earth is compared in Tirukkural and *Kuruntokai* to the union of lovers' hearts.

We see a pair of such lovers there in the midst of the mango groves who seemed to be locked into one body, one life and one mind!

The cuckoos sing from the trees and the leaves of the mango trees dance to the direction of the wind, the dance-master. The lovers happily watch this performance staged in the court of the lovers.

Such lovers should have separation, says *Tirukkural*. For it is the ultimate in the pleasures of love. What type of delight is it? Tiruvalluvar makes the lovers to speak about it. Let us listen:

"Darling! Why do you sulk sometimes when you have nothing to complain against me, Why, my delight?"

"Darling! Even if you haven't done anything wrong I profit by my feigned quarrels."

"How do you say? Please elaborate."

"When I quarrel and leave you your love for me increases. Your handsome hands long to touch my fingers. I too wish to hug you tight. Now you understand the secret of my feigned quarrels?"

"You have spoken about your secret; and yet, our pleasures of love especially after a quarrel will not be diminished."

"Darling! Is the heavens, as they call it, a happier place than this earth where we live united into one like rain and earth? I don't think so."

The cuckoos in the groves stopped singing. They sought their mates, thanks to the lovers!

Here are the two Kural couplets for the portraits:

Although there be no fault in him, the sweetness of his love
Hath power in me a fretful jealousy to move.

Is there a bliss in any world more utterly divine,
Than 'coyness' gives, when hearts as earth and water join?

Chapter 133 *The Pleasures of Temporary Variance* *Kurals 1321 and 1323*

58

King Kumanan is forced to live in the forest due to the conspiracy of his younger brother. But the latter who thought that even leaving him alive in the forest was dangerous to his kingship announces that a golden treasure will be gifted to the person who brings his brother's head.

This news reaches the ears of Kumanan also.

Troubles don't come to an end even when a king who had lived a luxurious life in a palace with winged chariots, and other paraphernalia had to be wandering in the wilderness. It took the shape of haunting Death.

Eventhough death was acceptable with a smile by soldiers in the battlefield, Valluvar has not failed to compare the sorrow of death with other afflictions.

There may be people who had the strength even to accept that calamity with equanimity. But death is always tinged with sadness. There is nothing sadder than that, according to Tiruvalluvar. But even that becomes a pleasure on one occasion, says he. What is that occasion? Let us go back to Kumanan.

Kumanan expects the torture of death to embrace him some day — very soon, as per the orders of his king. Eventhough death is an inexorable fact and man has to become dust one day and even if someone offers to embrace death voluntarily, the pain caused by death on this occasion is not lessened by it. A poverty-stricken poet went to King Kumanan who lived in the forest awaiting the arrival of that affliction.

His name was Sattanar. Kumanan felt unhappy when he saw the poverty afflicted condition of Sattanar.

There was one thing which pained him more than his poverty. What was it? He is sad over the fact that he is not in a position to offer anything to the poet in a barren condition.

Those days you didn't come, O poet of rare creativity
You came to me only now in destitute state.

You can take my head and place it at my brother's hands
And take its price to remove your poverty.

So he said to the poet.

Eventhough there is no pain greater than death, even that becomes a delicious experience when one is unable to give anything to the poor. Hence he asks the poet to be relieved from poverty by taking his head to his brother and accepting the reward. He comes forward to cut his head himself.

Valluvar is of the view that even death which is most painful becomes a pleasurable experience when one is unable to help the poor. The saga of Kumanan's life is a fitting illustration of this noble idea.

The bitter pain to die! It's worse to live
For him who nothing finds to give!

Chapter 23 *Giving* *Kural 230*

59

The southern lands of this nation were fertile field for valour. If one winks his eyes at a lance that is hurled onto him, he is considered a coward. This is the voice of the Tamils' battle legends.

Once two soldiers of two great nations met. One of them told the other with pride:

"Our king wears not a metal-proof guard on his back."

The other soldier replied angrily. "Yes. Our king hits not a running warrior. Hence your king wears not a guard on the back!"

Tamil heriosm was always talked about in places of meeting and feasting. Running away, showing the foe the back, or wounding the foe on his back were considered base acts according to the battle legends of the Tamils.

It was a battle-field. Two armies clashed against one another. The elephants fought against each other. There was blood on the ground running like flood waters. Swords and lances dazzled in the sky accompanied to the hearty laughs of the soldiers. The warriors who fell down to the ground in the battle field embraced death with grace. The warriors drew the swords darted into their chests and kissed them before they died.

Here is an incident from such a battle-field:

A brave warrior hurled his only weapon, a lance, onto an elephant. But he was attacked by another elephant at the same time. He had no weapon to fight with it. He looked around for a sword or a spear. Suddenly he remembered the lance that had plunged into his chest. Gladly he plucked the lance on his chest and tried to hurl it onto the elephant.

Do you know who this warrior is?

He is the battle hero we find in Tirukkural.

Here is the 'heroic' couplet:

At elephant he hurls the dart in hand; for weapon pressed,
He laughs and plucks the javelin from his wounded breast.

Chapter 78 *The Pride of Army* *Kural 774*

60

Alar, in Tirukkural, is explained as 'giving something to the knowledge of many people.' That is, it is a way of passing on information after adding something more to the news. In public places, in the temples, or in the banks of the tanks, among the festival crowds, in market squares we find many people talking about a man or woman who has fallen in love. The term, *kauvai*, found in Tirukkural is annotated by Parimelalakar as *alar*. *Kauvai* means libel. Other commentators of Kural do not seem to disagree with Parimelalakar. *Yetilar* means 'people who are not related with some happening', people not concerned with.

If a young woman fell in love with a young man and if they used to meet in groves beneath the pleasures of the moonshine, some people who have nothing to do with them (Yetilar) talk about them, gossip about them. This is presented from several angles in *Tirukkural.*

A woman was happy with her lover and returned home with marks of love on her person left by her lover. Sitting at home the woman thought of what had happened and smiled gently. Her friend entered in and told her in a mocking tone, "My lady! Can't you both keep your love as secret? The whole town now knows of it, and they talk *alar* of you. What'll you do now? You have to keep your desires tied by bands."

But the woman who was lying happily on the bed just smiled at her. Her friend who sat by her side saw on her person the love marks in ruby colours and felt a sense of pity for her. At that time they saw fire burning in the cooking stove brighter than necessary and the friend asked her to put off the fire. The woman walked towards the stove and poured some ghee over the fire. "Are you mad? How can you extinguish fire by pouring ghee on it?" asked the friend.

The woman replied: "By adding ghee fire can't be extinguished. So you know, the *alar* talked about me can't extinguish the fire of love that burns within me! Instead they make my love flourish."

Here is the Kural:

To say I'd extinguish fire with ghee
Is like extinguishing love by rumour.

Chapter 115 *Announcement of Rumour* *Kural 1148*

61

The flood runs in full spate washing the banks of the river. Her eyes derived a kind of satisfaction at the sight of waters. They plunged into the river and swam unseen and unknown to the woman.

"Where are you my eyes?" she cried and the eyes failed not to reply. "We can't remain without seeing him. So we go in this flood of tears searching him," they replied and a bright smile flashed upon the face of the woman.

For a moment her mind pictured the scene of their meeting wherefrom he left her: as the evening threw upon its face the blanket of darkness he and she got underneath it. They thought that none could see them and they climbed up the zenith of delight. The pearly rows of teeth touched each other; their red lips exchanged the story of their union; they put their faces together, got their hearts together, and got their happiness together.

A *pasalai* creeper embracing a strong-built palm tree is a rare sight! She embraced him like that.

When the dawn came it was torture to her. She was afraid that he would leave her saying 'good bye' for the sake of his business. When he said 'good bye' she kissed him twice the number of the letters in his words.

The sound of those kisses still echo in her ears. Her pleasures of the day still hum in her heart like the humming of the bees. But in her eyes alone tears swell and fall down like floods. Her eyes go swimming in the waters of the flood. She tells her eyes:

"Oh, my eyes! Were you stout enough, as my heart is, to follow back my lover, you need not thus swim in the flood of tears." This portrait is got from the following Kural:

When eye of mine would as my soul go forth to him,
It knows not how through floods of its own tears to swim.

Chapter 117 *Complainings* *Kural 1170*

62

There was no moon-shine that day; only the stars flickered in the sky. *Poonkulali* waited in the groves with a shudder in her heart unable to control the strange sensation in her body. He had asked her to meet him there. A week before, in the same mango groves, they had met. The trees too which had witnessed the sight of their happy union now wait for his early arrival rustling, "When'll he come? When'll the next scene open?"

She leaned herself against a mango tree recounting in her mind the pleasures of the earlier meet. Time passed, then it seemed to run. "He should come in a while. He won't make me wait for long. He would take me into his hands, and shower me kisses like rains," with such thoughts she stood and touched with her golden fingers the surface of the young mango tree on which she was leaning. The other trees nearby got excited by her action and they threw glances on her envious of the fortune of the young tree. They sighed that the sandal complexioned statue-like beauty had not leaned on them. Her eyes were set on the path expecting him.

There! There! In the dim light his image is seen. He wears his usual dress, a shirt that covers upto his wrist. On his head is wrapped a fine towel. Her heart jumped at his sight with delight and she cried aloud 'Darling!' Oh, what agony of love in her voice!

He stood before her without speaking. "You are late, my dear," she said and before he could answer anything she ran upto him and hugged him. They fell down onto the ground. "Oh what urgency?" he asked laughing aloud. Poonkulali was frightened. For it was the voice of a woman!

The woman was Eniyaval, her friend. Poonkulali stood up confused and embarrassed. Eniyaval apologised to her for her disguise. After a while they exchanged words!

"What can I do? Though he remembers me not, this foolish heart of mine forgets him not. And I too join hands with my heart in utter disregard to my modesty," said Poonkulali to her friend.

Eniyaval mocked at her gently: "Yes, when I saw you flying to embrace me I saw how you forgot your goodly virtue called modesty."

Fallen beneath the sway of this ignoble foolish heart,
Which will not him forget, I have forgotten shame.

Chapter 130 *Expostulation with Oneself* *Kural 1297*

63

The earth was beautifully dressed in the green silk. Even after the cows and calves and the bulls had had their stomachs full of grass, the plenty of the earth was in no way diminished.

As though they had had enough for the day the cattle stood on the pasture land with their heads upright. The shepherd who had taken them for grazing prepared to take them back home. The sharp-horned bulls and the jumping little calves marched towards the village meekly obeying his voice.

He wore a *vetti* on his waist and had folded it above his knees. A towel was wrapped as a headgear. He carried a staff in his hand. A chain hung from his neck and a dollar decorated with tiger-nail was seen tied to the chain. In his thin moustache and radiant face there was a look of strength and calm.

The youthful shepherd was called Amuthan. He had a woman for his fancy, Amuthavalli. They had given themselves to love which was yet to blossom in full shape.

When he returns back to the village with his cattle Amuthavalli and her mother used to come by the way. They went everyday to the neighbouring villages to sell milk, curd or ghee and returned by the dusk.

For Amuthan who worked all day in the scorching sun it was a heartening experience to see her in the evening. He would look on her with desire, but she would walk past him very casually.

She was also in love with him but was afraid to express it even by means of a glance as her mother was by her side.

That day Amuthan unusually got some courage to talk a few words to her mother. "How is your business today?" he asked. If Amuthavalli's mother opened her mouth she knows no stop to her talk. Amuthan did not care to listen to her reply but turned his face towards Amuthavalli, studying her person mischievously.

Fortunately Amuthavalli's mother was walking before her daughter. Amuthavalli cautioned him with her eyes to look up

to his mother's face, lest she would know of his intentions. The mother was pouring forth her torrent of words and Amuthavalli followed her mother casting a seductive glance on his side.

The cattle had gone too far beyond him thinking he followed them. But Amuthan stood still. There was a new warmth in his blood and nerves. His face emitted now a ray of confidence:

"Ah! In my lover's stealthy glance is mixed the medicine that cures my love! I'll be cured of my disease now!" he said to himself. This Kural describes this:

The secret wiles of her with thronging armlets decked
Are medicines by which my raising grief is checked.

Chapter 128 *The Reading of the Signs* *Kural 1275*

64

Very often we employ the words 'fool' and 'foolish'. We use some words without much caring about the exact meaning of those words. We do not evince much interest in them for the words have come to stay in popular usage. When we are angry with someone we say, "Leave him. He is a fool." We get an excellent understanding of the meaning of this word from Tiruvailuvar's verses.

Tiruvalluvar points out that foolishness is a quality which accepts evil and neglects good. To be brief, foolishness is a state in which the difference between the good and the evil is not perceived. So we cannot claim that fool has a sound mind. It is also Valluvar's opinion that the fools prefer to take to bad habits by nature. Valluvar describes their state with a simile.

A mad man was blabbering in the street. Boys gathered around him and began to mock at him. The man raved: "I am the King of this village. Where is my sceptre? Call the minister! Why were the castle walls not painted? What does the commander say? Is he sharpening his sword? Find them all and tie them in the stable. Feed them with fodder! Which is my palace? I am building it in the sky." A mischievous youth in the crowd went up to him with a cup in his hand and said humbly, "King of Kings! You are very tired. Have this milk." The man took the cup and drank the milk. It was the milk got from the tree, toddy! Already he was mad. What will happen to him if he is also drunk? The intoxication joins with the madness. Such a man is taken for a comparison. With whom is he compared by Tiruvalluvar?

A fool gets a thing of wealth. His state, after acquiring the thing, is like the state of mad man intoxicated with toddy. Here is the Kural:

When folly's hand grasps wealth's increase, it will be
As when a mad man raves in drunken glee.

Friendship with such a fool, Tiruvalluvar goes on to assert, is great and sweet. This is very strange! A man who knows not good from the evil, a man who follows not the path of decorum, a man who on getting a thing of wealth is like a mad one drunk — how could such a man's friendship be great or sweet? Is this not something strange?

"Friendship of fools is a very pleasant thing" — yes, Valluvar says friendship of fools is pleasant.

How and Why?

"Parting with them will leave behind no sting." When such a friendship is parted it does not hurt us. When the fool's friendship withers away, our mind does not grieve for it. So it is pleasant. When our friendship with men of wisdom, men of action, and men of virtues comes to an end, when we part with such men, it gives us pain. In the case of fools we are not hurt on parting. So the friendship of fools is sweet and great.

Tiruvalluvar neatly presents a great truth in a tableau of humorous touch and our heart goes out to acknowledge his art!

Friendship of fools is very pleasant thing,
Parting with them will leave behind no sting.

Chapter 84 *Folly* *Kurals 838, 839*

65

Valluvar has referred to sneezing three or four times in the third book of *Kural*.

To say that someone sneezes when his close relative bound by love with that person thinks of him was one of the beliefs of the people of those days. There are people even today – who cherish that belief. There is nothing equal in poetic beauty to those couplets which Valluvar has composed based on this belief.

The lover sneezes while he was embracing his sweetheart, on the cot. The moment she heard the noise of the sneeze, by instinct, she blesses him to live for a hundred years. Immediately suspicion flashes in her mind. "Because of whose thought did you sneeze? Who is it?" She aks, and begins to sob, forgetting her blessing. After painting a beautiful portrait of this scene, Valluvar unfolds before our eyes a few more interesting scenes.

A beautiful lass is sitting in the moonlit courtyard with the pangs of separation from her lover. She longs to know, whether he will think of her in the midst of his endless duties. That yearning grows into a question. Then she gets the symptom that she may sneeze. Yes, she is about to sneeze but the sneeze simply subsided. Hence she could not bear that agony.

"Oh! There was a sign of a sneeze coming but it did not come out. What could be the reason? Perhaps is it because that my lover was about to think of me, but did not think of me?"

That paragon of beauty is sad with such thoughts.

A fit of sneezing threatened, but it passed away.
He seemed to think of me, but do his fancies stray?

The Tamil word *Cinaithal* meaning budding i.e. the sneeze was nipped in the budding stage itself, because the lover had given up thinking of her, even in the embryonic stage.

Another scene of love. There this male lover has a fear. Due to what? He has the sensation of going to sneeze. He wants to

control it somehow - because if he sneezes his sweetheart will become jealous immediately and ask him "Who thought of you now?" Consequently there will be a pouting or feigned quarrel. Why this ado? Better suppress the sneeze. But the lady could see through it. "Why are you trying to suppress it? Are you not attempting to hide the fact that some other woman is thinking of you? What an amount of difficulties he must have endured to dispel her doubt?

And so next time I checked my sneeze;
She forthwith wept and cried
(That woman difficult to please,)
'Your thoughts from me you hide'.

Here is another sweet couplet which uses sneezing as a simile to show how another young lover is afflicted with love - "What can I do, my dear friend! I try in all possible ways to keep my love for him hidden within myself. But that does not disappear as per my wish, but comes out on its own — like a sneeze." Our great poet of the honey of Tamil uses sneezing even as a simile in a most appropriate manner to bring home the truth the passion of love brooks no confinement.

I would my love conceal, but like a sneeze
It shows itself, and gives no warning sign.

Chapter 121	*Sad Memories*	*Kural 1203*
Chapter 132	*Feigned Anger*	*Kural 1318*
Chapter 126	*Reserve Overcome*	*Kural 1253*

66

Valluvar was strolling along the bund of a lake one evening. Wrapped in thoughts he used to stand for a while and then proceed. Two men who passed by him commented about him:

"Who is this man? He is all the time wandering on a lake bund, a tank bund or on the hill side. He looks up at the sky, then on the ground and frowns thoughtfully. Who is this?" asked one of them.

The other replied scornfully, "They call him Valluvan but not a mere Valluvan but Tiruvalluvan. He has the reputation of being a thinker and writer of a moral treatise. The madcap! One more to the list of lunatics!"

Valluvar's thought-current snapped. Their volley of abuse reached his ears and he turned to look at them. They went away mocking at him. At that time some men were at work in the fields close to the lake. On one side some were digging the ground; on another side some were ploughing the field and some others were digging a well. Valluvar's observation of these activities provided for him an appropriate imagery for a Kural. And he told himself, "Doesn't Mother Earth bear on her shoulders those who wound her and dig into her? Hence foremost among the marks of culture is the capacity to put up with those who talk scornfully of us." And a Kural was born!

As earth bears up the men who delve into her breast,
To bear with scornful men of virtues is the best.

After conceiving this Kural in his heart, he darted these words at Mother Earth:

"You tolerate and bear on your shoulders those that harm you. Following your example I put up with the persons who spoke scornfully of me in my presence. But a doubt arises in my mind. Leaving alone those who fling words of scorn directly at us, are there not some who scorn and ridicule others behind their back? Do you think it is your sacred duty to bear on your

shoulders even such backbiters and slanderers?" Even this question assumed the form of a Kural:

It is charity, I ween, that makes the earth sustain
their load
Who, neighbours' absence watching, tales or slander
tell abroad.

Chapter 16	*Forbearance*	*Kural 151*
Chapter 19	*Not Backbiting*	*Kural 189*

67

I went to see a fesival. I enjoyed the various activities during the festival in the company of my mother. Those vendors who sell multicoloured clothes carrying on their shoulders were hovering round the section where ladies had gathered. My mother had perceived that my glance fell on a green coloured saree. She bargained on its price and got it for me.

The dances of those who had dressed themselves as tigers and demons as well as the songs of the urchins who were selling sugar pudding, shouting "Pongal, Pongal" delighted everyone. There was a bangle-shop which looked as though a thousand rainbows were reduced in size and put together. My mother asked me affectionately whether I wanted to have bangles. "No mother" I said. My eyes which were so long fixed on the bangles now turned towards the bangle-seller.

Though I told my mother that I did not want the bangles, I did not leave the entrance of the shop. Yes, his beauty did not allow me to leave that place. That youth who was selling the bangles was one of the boys of the village who played with me in the streets during my childhood. Then his family had moved to the townside. Now he is appearing before me like a beautiful statue, comparable to Kovalan of *Cilappatikaram*. What to do? Perhaps, he has his Kannaki! Without thinking of all these things I stood dazed like Madhavi.

He also embraced me with his eyes. He was scanning every inch of my beauty with his eyes. And my eyes refused to move from him to see the festivities. My mother squeezed my shoulder and dragged me from that place. Here were so many varieties of fun! But my heart was not involved in any of them. When the festival was over, I returned home. I was lying sleepless on the bed, refusing to eat even a handful of rice.

The beautiful youth of the bangle-shop has been engraved as a portrait in my heart. My eyes shed tears, uncontrollably: "What a strange thing! Only because these wretched eyes showed him I am suffering now from an incurable sickness of love. And why did these eyes which subjected me to the illness

now weep?" The following portrait of Valluvar only speaks of the yearning of a lovely lass who thus darts questions at her eyes:

They showed me him, and then my endless pain
I saw: why then should weeping eyes complain?

Chapter 118 *Eyes Consumed with Grief* *Kural 1171*

68

Anbumani and Inbamani were friends from childhood. As there was no school in their village, they used to walk every day to a school in a village four miles away. Inbamani was the only son of a very rich man. Anbumani was also the only son of his parents, but he belonged to a middle class family.

On their way back from school, the friends used to stop at a way side refreshment stall and have some snacks. Though this was their daily practice, it was Anbumani who paid for the snacks on all occasions. Inbamani never paid; he was so economical.

The school days of these boys and their playful days passed by. Anbumani went towards the metropolis in search of a job. Inbamani migrated to a coastal city, which was also a port, to start a big industry there with the property accumulated by his father. One day, when Inbamani was returning home cheerfully from the harbour after sending by out-going ships a lot of goods produced in his factory, he suddenly met his boyhood friend Anbumani in the bazaar. Both were happy about the meeting and they hugged each other warmly.

Anbumani said that he was working in the office of the Police Department in the capital city and that he came to the harbour on an important official duty. Then he got Inbamani's residential address and promised to meet him there.

On reaching home, Inbamani attended to all the enquiries connected with his business and asked his wife to serve him food. The lady spread the leaf, served the food and asked her husband to have his meal. Just then Anbumani entered. Inbamani who was not prepared to host his friend was rather lukewarm in greeting him. Anbumani, who did not notice it, cheerfully remarked, "Well, I seem to have come at the right time! You may ask for another leaf to be spread for me."

These words brought about a change quite unconsciously in the face of Inbamani who was a stranger to hospitality, and which even he could not conceal. Anbumani who noticed this

was shocked and he withdrew from there saying, "O, I had promised to meet another friend on the way and forgot all about it. You may have your meal without waiting for me."

Inbamani looked at his wife. She who knew his inhospitable nature uttered the following Kural quite modestly but in the hope that it will appeal to his good sense:

The flower of *Anicha* withers away,
If you do but its fragrance inhale;
If the face of the host cold welcome convey,
The guest's heart within him will fail.

The 'anicha' flowers will fade even if they are inhaled. Similarly the guests will be sad even if we welcome them without a joyous face.

Chapter 9 *Cherishing Guests* *Kural 90*

69

Beauty, beauty, beauty. That poet would only see beauty everywhere, in everything. He was a lover of Beauty. He had created a lovely lass through his poetic imagination culling and bringing together the beauty of the entire world.

A bunch of red lotuses! A bundle of the mullai buds! The flood of the light of the dawning sky! The delicious sweetness of the soft breeze of the evening!

That lovely lass who was a compound of all these qualities was lying on the lap of that lover, tasting the flavour of his kisses and also returning his acts of love, in the beach.

The gift of kisses which his lips showered on her was like the milk flavoured with honey to overcome her feeling of tiredness in the dizziness of embrace. Her eyelids closed slowly and she began to sleep. The poet looked at the sky, stroking gently the hair of that embodiment of beauty. The moon showering the rain of light was not there. But around it there was light. Wondering how there could be the showering of light without the moon, he saw all around.

The Moon was coming towards him in the shape of a woman. His eyes widened. He realised the fact that the Lunar woman was coming towards him. She has come very close to him. Then she sat separately in the silver sand by his side.

"O, Moon! Where are you coming? What do you want?" The poet asked. "My Love poet! When I am there, and there is honey in my lips, is it proper for you to love her?" the Lady Moon asked with mild anger. The poet first looked at the face of the lass sleeping on his lap, and then at the face of the lady Moon.

"O Moon! I don't deny that you are the treasure of Beauty. But do you know, why I prefer to love this woman, leaving you? There is nothing like the stain on your face in hers. Have you forgotten that Valluvar has written:

In moon, that waxing waning shines, as spots appear;
Are any spots discerned in the face of maiden here?

There is no use in your grieving over my loving this living portrait without any blemish whatsoever," replied the poet in a pleasant tone.

But the Beauty of Moon bowing to him with her hands raised, begged him with tears in her eyes:

"My dear poet! Then don't I have the right to love you?"

The poet laughed softly and then said, if only you can emit light like the face of this beautiful girl lying on my lap then you can also claim the right to my love. Don't you know that Valluvar has composed a couplet even on this? Here is that Kural:

Farewell, O Moon! If that thine orb should shine,
Bright as her face, there shouldst be love of mine.

"The face with a blemish could not compete with the brightness of the sweet-heart's face, to such an extent that it cannot gain the love of the poet."

On hearing this explanation the Lady Moon bent her head down overcome with shame and went away. Without taking leave of him, she flew up to the sky and hiding herself behind the blanket of the black clouds, shed tears.

Drops of rain fell on the face of the lady sleeping on the lap of her lover. She got up, and then he got up. Both left the shore and walked quickly towards their home. Until they reached home, the lass of the sky, the Moon, dared not show her face in the sky.

Chapter 112 *Enquiries of Love* *Kurals 1117, 1118*

70

His eyes were red and speech was incoherent. Intoxication was mounting. Why? Was he worked up against a bitter enemy? No! Was he feeling bitter that some cut-throats had come up to work against his principles? Not even that! Then why? The fact is, he is a drunkard, an addict. Nothing was more valuable to him than drinking toddy.

Tottering along the road, laughing and trying to sing simultaneously, and dancing in the company of other drunkards — these were daily occurrences. Neighbours laughed at him — of course, behind his back. Some even uttered words of praise for him. He accepted the words laughingly and this laughter alternated with sobbing. When he reached his home, his wife invariably got a beating; her back and face bore witness to that. If his parents interfered, they were abused. The children who cried in fright at his conduct got trampled.

In his absence when the village assembly met, many regretted his behaviour. They said that he brought disgrace not only to his family but to the village as well. Some vehemently declared that the disgrace should be put an end to. "Why should we not drive him out of the village?" asked one emotionally.

One person confidently declared, "I can reform him." At that time a peal of laughter was heard. All the people turned in that direction and found Valluvar there. Addressing the man who offered to reform the drunkard, he said, "You can't do that."

"I can definitely do that," asserted that person.

Calmly Valluvar said, "If anyone has a gold coin, let him throw it into the tank over there." On hearing the words one person threw a coin into the tank.

"Can anyone dive into the tank and find the coin at the bottom?" posed Valluvar now. A young man immediately plunged into the water. Now Valluvar called the man who offered to reform the drunkard and asked, "Can you say in which part of the tank that young man is at this moment?" He

replied that he could not. Then Valluvar said, "Go into the water with this lamp and seek that young man." That person laughed in scorn and remarked, "How can you use a lamp to look for a man who is under water?"

Valluvar now said, "Equally impossible it is to use reason to bring an alcoholic addict to his senses," and uttered a Kural:

Like him who, lamp in hand, would seek one sunk beneath the wave,
Is he who strives to sober drunken man with reasonings grave.

Chapter 93 *Not Drinking Palm Wine* *Kural 929*

71

A beautiful lamp was illuminating that house. I was a witness to the fact that someone was wanting to see when that light will be extinguished. Who is that person? One who hesitates to enter the house when there is light must only be a thief. Otherwise he must be a secret lover who is yearning to embrace his sweetheart in darkness so that none can see him.

But the person whom I saw does not belong to either of these categories. He was neither a thief nor a secret lover. If so, who is that person anxiously waiting outside for the extinguishing of the lamp?

Shall I mention the name? It is none other than "darkness."

Darkness is waiting to enter the house and establish its rule the moment the light of the lamp goes. This is only Valluvar's novel way of showing the fact that if the lamp is extinguished, darkness will descend with intensity. He says that darkness is waiting for light to lose its lustre.

We can have the satisfaction of having fully enjoyed the literary beauty only if we see the event with which he compares or associates this conceit.

Just like darkness waiting for the light to be put off to enter the house — there is another person waiting and Valluvar compares one with the other.

Do you know who the other person is? He is named *Pasalai* (the change of body colour into feverish yellow)! The darkness has an excuse — it waits for the light to go off. Why does '*Pasalai*' wait? It waits to spread over the person of a woman. And what is the way for it?

The hero is embracing the heroine. Suppose we make a wax figure of a man and a woman in tight embrace and then introduce a flame in between you can imagine how the figures will melt and merge into each other. Such was the intensity of passion with which they embraced each other. But *Pasalai* colour is longing to spread over her body. Only if the light goes, darkness can enter. Similarly if there is some gap in time or

space in the lover's embracing his sweetheart, then *Pasalai* will be on its wings to reach the damsel and pervade on her person. It is enough that the heroine, who is in her love episode of heartful embrace, is left alone for a little while and immediately *Pasalai* will spread over her person.

Only for that — like the darkness that waits for the extinguishing of the lamp — *Pasalai* seems to be waiting for the brief pause or rest the hero may snatch between his embraces. In that joyous union, even if there is a little lull, *Pasalai* will invade on her and attack her.

What a beautiful work of imagination! Darkness waiting for the disappearance of light, and the *Pasalai* waiting for a pause or a moment of exhaustion in the lovers' embrace — are very well juxtaposed in comparison, here in this Kural:

As darkness waits till lamp expires, to fill the place,
This pallor waits till I enjoy no more my lord's embrace.

Chapter 119 *The Pallid Hue* *Kural 1186*



72

The charming housewife got up at dawn and aroused her husband reminding him of the work awaiting him in the fields. When he was ready she sent him to the fields with an affectionate kiss. The man, accustomed to unstinted labour in order to get from the earth golden grains, rushed to the fields like a warrior speeding to the battle-ground.

While starting to work there, he proudly told himself, "The ploughman's life is the most honourable; he is the one who feeds the men of all other professions." Removing the thorn from his foot, he again reminded himself that, however beset with all kinds of difficulties, the ploughman's job is the most worthwhile job:

However they roam, the world must follow still the plougher's team
Though toilsome, culture of the ground as noblest toil esteem.

The ploughman's wife was proudly humming these words as she was coming to the field after sometime with her baby on the hip and the food-basket on the head.

"Vanji," he called "What's there for the tummy?"
"*Kanji,* of course," she said fondly.

"Oh, is it only gruel (*Kanji*) even today?" he remarked as he wiped his sweat and sat under the shade of a tree. Then he looked alternately at her and the little pot of *Kanji*.

"Only this?" he muttered while his eyes watered. She turned her face away; she did not want him to see her tear-filled eyes!

What a wonder!

Suddenly the thin gruel turned into nectar! He took the little pot and drained it in a minute. "Nectar! Nectar! Have a little yourself!" he exclaimed and gave the pot to her.

How did the gruel become nectar?

Their dear offspring put its hand into the pot. The touch of the beloved has caused the transformation. Valluvar has given us a Kural about this transformation.

Than gods' ambrosia sweeter far the food before men laid,
In which the little hands of children of their own have play'd.

Does gruel become nectar? Or, does this Kural which gives us this message have the quality of nectar? Oh, yes! The very thought is sweet. It is this Kural that is nectar!

Chapter 104 *Agriculture* *Kural 1031*
Chapter 7 *The Obtaining of Sons* *Kural 64*

73

Mankani and Poonkulali were bosom friends. They were born in adjacent houses and grew up together, until they reached their sixteenth year; moving closely right from the days of infancy, becoming friends so intimately that people praised that they were one soul in two bodies.

Poonkulali's marriage was over, thanks to the efforts of her parents. As her husband was the very fountain of love she was jubilant over the good luck and was praying that her friend Mankani should also be happily married like that and lead a good life.

After Poonkulali's marriage Mankani could not meet her often and was unhappy over that. Five or six months passed. Mankani's marriage was also fixed.

Since Mankani could not get a husband in her home town itself like her friend, she had to go to a far off place.

The friends were separated. But the pangs of separation was alleviated in the case of Poonkulali because of the love showered by her husband.

Mankani's husband was also handsome enough to attract her. To that handsome man she became virtually a sweet mango-fruit (as her Tamil name indicates).

After a few days, Mankani and her husband came to her birth-place. Her husband did not agree to her request that they may stay for a few days. Mankani went to see Poonkulali in the evening. Both embraced each other.

Mankani spoke with a sigh: "Poonkulali, what if I told you! In physical union my husband takes me to the land of pleasure itself. But my mind somehow refuses to be content with that physical pleasure. I expect from him something more than physical pleasure. In that I have only disappointment. You only can show me the way to perfect my happiness."

Hearing this Poonkulali smiled and also suggested a way smilingly.

"Mankani! Valluvar says that love at times become useless like an over ripe fruit or like an unripe fruit. Do you know when it will be like that? When there are no quarrels, big or small, in life. That is why, Valluvar wrote 'feigned aversion is the joy of love.' Perhaps you are leading your life of love mechanically without feigned quarrels.

Love without hatred is ripened fruit;
Without some lesser strife, fruit immature.

Don't forget those words of Valluvar! You try to practise what I said, and tell me tomorrow."

Mankani returned home determined to act according to Poonkulali's advice.

Next day Poonkulali was waiting for Mankani's arrival. As she did not come, she herself went to her house. Mankani was lying alone — with tearful eyes. Poonkulali was very anxious to know the reason. She said:

Poonkulali! At night he dragged me to his side and covered his body with mine. With the view to pick up a quarrel, I moved away. He pulled me towards him and in a gentle way I pushed his hands away.

"I expected him to enquire, 'Why dear are you angry?' But he grew angry and shocked. I went near him and embraced. But he pushed me aside and left for home — alone. Your advice of feigned quarrel has led me to this torture. What a couplet you said!"

Poonkulali tried to soothe Mankani who was angry even with Kural. "Mankani! Valluvar has also written another couplet. Even water becomes delicious only if it is close to the shade. Similarly feigned quarrels too will yield pleasure only if it is practised with loving hearts.

Water is pleasant in the cooling shade;
So coolness for a time with those we love.

According to this Kural it is clear that your husband is devoid of the quality of love.

Taking leave of Poonkulali, Mankani left for the place of her husband with a decision that it is alright to live there somehow.

Chapter 131 *Feigned Anger* *Kurals 1306, 1309*

74

In our younger days we have heard the story of a tiger entering a herd of cows, wrapping itself with the skin of a cow (a tiger in sheep skin entering a herd of sheep) and fed itself to its heart's content. Though it is only fiction, it was devised to caution people not to be deceived by evil persons who pretend to be good. Even in a play we find a remark like, "There goes a tiger in a cow's skin!"

For the purposes of deception, it is but natural for a wild beast to be clothed in the skin of a gentle animal.

But the faculty of Valluvar's creative power provides a different version of the fable and takes us by great surprise.

An old man who owned a small plot of land and was proud of cultivating it true to the spirit of the Kural,

Who ploughing eat their food, they truly live;
The rest to others bend subservient, eating what they give.

was living in a small village. Benefitted by his labour, his land rich with green crops looked like a beautiful young maiden clothed in valuable green silk.

The green crops made the mouth of the farmer's cow water. It decided to feast on the luscious crops to its heart's content. There was also the fear of the consequent punishment from the farmer. It started thinking hard on how it could deceive the farmer and feed on the crops.

One evening after attending to his work at home, the farmer walked towards his field to see if everything was all right there. The luscious crops pleased his eyes. Suddenly he cried, "Alas, the day!" and ran desperately to the village shouting, "My crops are all gone! A tiger is feasting on them!"

"Even a hungry tiger won't touch the crops!" commented an elderly person.

"But my crops are gone!" lamented the farmer. The villagers ran towards the field and found the tiger eating the crops.

The tiger raised its head and stared at them as if to frighten them. The men were terrified and said, "Let it feed on the crops. One animal can't eat all the crops." But the group was not devoid of daring men; they threw their spears at the animal. The alarmed tiger ran into the field, slipped on the slimy mud and fell down. The daring men pursued it and found to their surprise the farmer's cow sprawl with a tiger's skin near it! All were amazed at the cunning of the animal. The farmer, however, got very wild and gave the cow a good beating. An elderly person remarked: "How clever of the animal! If we find a tiger in the field we will not interfere with it thinking that will not eat the crops. And even if we see the tiger eating the crops, we will be afraid to come near it. Knowing all this, this cow has put on a tiger's skin and tried to fool us all."

"This is exactly what some pretentious men do. In order to screen some disgraceful actions of theirs, these men put on saffron clothes like hermits," remarked another.

Though this is a fictitious story, is it not like an original story? It is the central idea of this story that the following Kural reflects:

As if a steer should graze wrapped, round with tiger's skin,
Is show of virtuous might when weakness lurks within.

Chapter 104 *Agriculture* *Kural 1033*
Chapter 28 *Inconsistent Conduct* *Kural 273*

75

It was harvest time. The sight of the bright golden corn everywhere made one think that the contents of a gold mine were spread all over the fields. Bearing bundles of harvested crops on their heads, pretty dames were, along the borders of the fields, swaying their hips like dancers learning the art without a master.

A hefty young man receives small bundles of crops from a maid and vigorously thrashes the corn. The heaps of golden corn swell into little mounds.

When all fields are rich with golden corn, a tiny bit of land alone has faded stalks. It should have been long since the stalks had tasted water or manure. The cracks all over the field proclaimed its dry condition. Why should darkness cover one little lamp when hundreds of lamps around shed resplendent light?

The owner of the field was the adopted child of indolence — one who found pleasure, not in hard work but in slumber. He never turned towards the field after formally sowing the seeds.

He neglected his wife as he neglected his field. When he returned home after loafing with his friends he could only see a flushed face — flushed, not with love but with anger.

One evening when he came to the doorstep, his wife peeped out, not to look at him but to see the sight of cart-loads of harvested grain moving along the road! She could not control her feelings. She looked at him with fierce eyes. Her eyes seemed to reproach him; they seemed to say:

"Are you a man? Though you neglected the wedded wife, could you not have tended our field at least? The neglected field is going to starve us all throughout the year."

A neglected wife may resent the husband's attitude and become harsh. But there is a chance of her relenting sometime or other. But a neglected field takes severe revenge on the farmer; she may ruin his life.

That is why Valluvar says that the resentment of a neglected field is harsher than the resentment of a neglected wife:

When master from the field aloof hath stood;
Then land will sulk, like wife in angry mood.

Chapter 104 *Agriculture* *Kural 1039*

76

That day she was alone at home. No one to keep company. The house was close to the forest. The terrifying noise of the wild animals were frightening her. She checked more than once whether the bolt for the door had been put properly. After having seen whether it was placed tightly and putting it properly, she lay down on the cot and tried to sleep. But she could not; it looked as if the door was oscillating slowly. With a bowl-shaped lamp in the hand she looked at the door carefully. There was no movement in the door. She realised that it was the result of her own fear and went to the cot again, with a sigh. She rolled over the bed.

Some thoughts! — the pulse-beats of the spring of youth — she is a virgin, a pure flower. Considering that even some thoughts will be injurious to her chastity she closed her eyes blushingly and fell prostrate on the face and front of the body. Then there was a sudden noise. The door had broken into pieces. The axe that broke it entered the house and fell down close to her cot. She got up with a huge cry and tried to escape through the broken door. What a surprise!

When she went near the door, it was closed; the latch was in the proper place. Her body shivering as if she had bathed in a waterfall, her heart spoke to her thus. "O Lass! — Sweet Virgin as dear as the eye!. However much you may try to shield the door of chastity with the bolt of modesty, the axe of love will one day break it open." When she heard the voice of the heart, in her mind's eye there was the vision of the event that took place that evening.

The lover dear to her heart grasped her hand in the mango grove. But she, out of modesty, came away with a view to safeguard her virginity. Eventhough her lover then let her go, her passion would not leave her alone now. That had taken possession of her by breaking open the door of 'chastity'. She was lying awake throughout the night having decided to cling to his shoulder before he touched her in the mango grove.

Of womanly reserve love's axe breaks through the door.

Barred by the bolt of shame before.

Chapter 126 *Reserve Overcome* *Kural 1251*

77

Poverty is often compared to scorching fire. History has recorded many cases of revolutions resulting from widespread, acute hunger. Valluvar hás depicted in a Kural that prolonged hunger is in effect far worse than fire in its destructive effect.

There is a big dilapidated choultry *(chatram)*. Perhaps it had fed wayfarers once. Now it is only a sheltering place for wayfarers and the helpless unemployed. Cattle move about here and there inside the building and monkeys are tinkering with the tiles on the roof. Hens wander about with their brood. A few boys are roasting a dead rabbit over a fire in a corner.

Alas, suddenly fire spread over the building and reach the roof. Those who were resting in the building, the cattle and the hens that were moving about inside the building, cleared out in no time.

In a short time the building was enveloped in flames. People in the neighbourhood were helpless and did not know how to put out the raging fire. Just then a little girl who came that way with a begging-bowl in her hands dropped the bowl in alarm and cried out desperately, "Please save my father, save him — he is inside," and tried to run inside.

On hearing her words, a young man stopped her and dashed inside the building and brought the father of the beggar-maid out. The emaciated beggar appeared dazed, as if unaware of what had happened.

When people questioned him why he did not run out of the building when it was on fire, he said: "For you, the fire is wild and destructive. The starvation I have undergone for years is far worse than the wildest fire. It was owing to exhaustion that I had slept away. During periods of poverty and starvation even sleep dodges a person. When I was having that rare blessing for a while, you disturbed me. The fire would have given me eternal sleep. Now I will have to live and endure poverty and hunger

eternally." So saying he wept bitterly. It is his feeling that the following Kural reflects:

Amid the flames sleep may men's eye-lids close,
In poverty the eye knows no repose.

78

Alagan was a five year old boy. He had lost his parents even in his tender childhood and brought up by his uncle. Though the uncle was extremely fond of him, his aunt hated him bitterly. She could not bring herself to treat that boy on a par with her three sons. She would feed him only after her sons had taken their food. The hungry child would eagerly swallow the food given by her unwillingly.

Whenever his tender heart lamented its lot and pined for maternal affection, the uncle comforted him with words of affection.

One day the uncle had to go to a neighbouring place on business. The four children were playing in the street. One of the items of the evening was a running competition among the four boys. Alagan came first and one of his uncle's sons had a fall when he was running and suffered a bruise. The boy went into the house crying and told his mother about the competition. That woman somehow implicated Alagan in her son's minor injury and branded him on his forearm with a red-hot iron. Unable to bear the pain the boy cried bitterly. Sharper than the red-hot iron came her bitter words. "It is my lot to bring up along with my children the brat of a prostitute," she hissed.

Those words tormented the little boy. When all the neighbours referred to his mother very affectionately and called her the best of women, how could the aunt call her a prostitute? His sensitive heart would not allow him to look at that woman's face again and he walked out of the house.

Nobody knew where the boy had gone. The uncle's sons grew up, got married and settled down in different places. The uncle fell ill and was bedridden. The sons did not care to visit the sick man.

One day when the sick man's wife was shedding tears thinking of the hard-hearted nature of her sons, she heard someone call her, "Aunt!" A young man in military uniform stood before her and said, "I heard that my uncle was not well and immediately came on leave."

The joy of meeting the long lost nephew made the uncle feel that he was no longer ill. The aunt also received him affectionately and said, "you must forgive this sinner for branding you like that. I don't know how long it took for the wound to heal."

The young man quickly replied, "The burn healed quickly, Aunt. But the wound you inflicted in my heart by referring to my mother, a goddess of chastity, as a prostitute — that wound is still green!"

These words brought tears to the uncle's eyes. He hugged his nephew and said, "My dear boy, you must forget the past and forgive your aunt." The aunt was in tears as she grasped his hands most affectionately and buried her face in them.

In flesh by fire inflamed, nature may thoroughly heal the sore.
In soul by tongue inflamed, the ulcer healeth never-more.

79

Lovely Luna, I consciously enjoy the blissful sight of your plunging into the waters of lake and dancing joyously with the ripples of water. I do not want to raise my eyes and gaze at the far-off heavens. If I do so, I get the feeling that you are at a distance from me — like my sweetheart.

That is why I have come down into the lake to lift you with my hands and embrace you as you are dancing in the waters. Why does your radiant body shiver like this? Where did you go slipping through my hands the moment I embraced you?

The treasure of a golden body, with tender limbs of ambrosial sweetness, the fountain of joy, my peerless living pictures, she also used to go away from me — when I tried to embrace her leaping like fish and jumping like deer! O Moon, I am standing erect in the tank, responding rhythmically to your dance on the waves with my heart beats! Come, Moon! O White flower, Silver peacocks, please come.

Have you come, O great beauty! Yes, what is that on your face! Wait a minute. Let me look at it with a keen eye. O, Is it the scar left by the kiss which I implanted on your face sometime ago? Me? Did I implant anything? No. No. — I have unwittingly revealed to you the pleasantry that happened between me and my sweetheart. How many days have passed since we were separated? Will the kiss which I implanted on her when she left also shine like this when she comes back?

O, Moon, why don't you stop your dance for a while and see my plight! The sky has no beauty without you. I have no life without her.

It is not correct to compare you with her. Her face is much more bright (radiant) than you. You are a silver disc — she is a golden Moon. The face of my sweetheart as sweet as Tamil is like a lovely picture in which two fish are flashing. Her gentle smile is suggestive of pearls peeping through the cover in a case of diamonds. Even if you perform penance for a thousand years no God can grant you such a boon.

Even if I want to find substitute gratification by looking at you instead of her, there is no possibility for that also as you are pouring the heat of burning passion on me. You are showering only the joyous memories of her.

Who are those that are standing on the banks of the lake and laughing? O, the youngmen in the town? Don't you see that they are ridiculing me by clapping their hands and laughing at me insensitive to the tortures of a lovelorn soul like mine?

Let them laugh. They might even think that I am a madcap.

Valluvar was quite right; because they had not suffered tortures like me; those stupid people stand before me and laugh at me. Had only they also suffered like me, they would have known this?

This was the agonised cry of a lover.

This couplet translates that sorrow into sweet poesy:

Before my eyes the foolish make a mock of me,
Because they ne'er endured the pangs I now endure.

80

Two friends, Nallan and Vallan were travelling through a dense forest. To keep their minds free from the fear of wild beasts, they were singing merrily some ballads. They were also walking fast to reach their village before nightfall.

Quite unexpectedly a great danger faced them. When they were walking along a footpath, after crossing a hill, suddenly they found a bear in front of them. On seeing, the friends locked their hands together and began to run; the bear followed them. Then Vallan asked Nallan, "Can you climb a tree?" When Nallan said that he could not climb, Vallan remarked bitterly that owing to his friend's want of that skill, both were in danger.

By that time the bear had come very near and the friends ran into a bush. When the animal came near the bush, Vallan left his friend and climbed up a tall tree. The bear was looking all around in search of the men. On seeing that, Vallan shouted to his friend, "You fellow, run away somewhere else. Otherwise, after spotting and killing you, it will look for me and find me." Nallan replied that he had no hope of escaping from the bear and that therefore he would remain where he was.

Then Vallan shouted, "You cursed fellow, if you don't go away from here, my life also is in danger. If you have no hope of escape, why don't you go somewhere else and get killed? That way you can save my life!"

By that time the bear was very near the bush. Immediately Nallan held his breath and lay down as if he were dead. The bear came near him and examined whether he was alive, by putting its snout near his face. Because he was holding his breath, the animal thought that he was dead and went away.

This is a story for the young, and it is taught at school. We shall attach a Kural to it and modify the story a little.

When the bear was gone, Vallan climbed down the tree and addressing Nallan as his dearest friend, asked him, "What did the bear whisper into your ear?" Smilingly, Nallan said, "The bear cited a Kural and also gave a comment on it."

"My dear friend, What is that Kural?" asked Vallan. Nallan repeated the Kural:

Ruin itself one blessing lends:
It is staff that measures out one's friends.

Is that so? What meaning did it give?"

Nallan said: "Even an evil can bring us a blessing. That evil gives us the yardstick to measure the nature of our friends."

Oh hearing those words, Vallan bent his head in shame.

Chapter 80 *Investigation in Forming Friendship* *Kural 796*

81

At the end of a street there is a water tank. Beautiful young women used to come there with pots to collect drinking water. At a fixed time water will flow into the tank from a tap. Until that time the women will wait after leaving their pots in a line.

Just at that time some young ruffians would assemble near the water tank, making merry. The young women would be highly irritated by their behaviour. Unmindful of their feelings, the young fellows would laugh at them and joke at their expense using obscene words.

One day an elderly man passed that way. He felt deeply hurt at their improper behaviour, and said, "My dear young men, it is not proper on your part to wound the feelings of these young women. Would you allow a stranger to tease your sisters by using undignified language? Would you not shout, 'I'll cut that fellow's tongue' What do you gain by ridiculing or laughing at others?"

The words of the elderly man only irritated them. They surrounded him, pushed him this side and that and laughed at his plight. Then they took the towel from his shoulder, twisted it round his neck and pulled the ends of it.

The elderly man put up with the wild actions and offensive words of the young fellows. He did not lower his dignity by trying to hit the ruffians. The young women pleaded with them and begged them not to trouble the elderly person. The young fellows did not pay heed to their appeals and continued to torment the aged man.

In a little while some policemen came that way by chance. At the very sight of them the young ruffians trembled with fear. They realized that there was no escape for them.

The elderly man could have taken revenge on them, but he did not do so. Being a man of perfect culture, he appealed to the policemen not to take the playful actions of the boys seriously. He said, "They are all my dear grandchildren. They are used to

this kind of playfulness. They should not have behaved like this in the street. I apologize on their behalf. Please forgive them."

His noble words touched their hearts and they bent their heads in shame.

They thought within themselves: "What a noble and patient gentleman we have troubled and have trifled with! It is a disgrace for us. Though we tormented him, he sheds only tears of pity for us. Just as gold only becomes purer and more valuable when melted in fire, his noble qualities stand forth in their splendour after we had subjected him to harsh treatment. He has gone to the extent of defending us. We can never find parallels to his patience and forgiving nobility."

These thoughts made them shed tears profusely. See how great Valluvar pictures this scene:

Who wreck their wrath as worthless are despised
Who patiently forbear as gold are prized.

82

Ilamathi was a young goldsmith. Tirumathi who was the beautiful damsel who married him, was sitting by his side where he was busy polishing golden bangles.

Impelled by the desire to make her husband work without getting tired, she stood before him with a glass of butter-milk. While receiving the glass he gently pressed her fingers with his fingers and looked at her with a smile. She also responded to it with her eyes and sat beside him.

She teasingly said to him, "Please do the work with full attention on it. It looks as though your attention is wandering elsewhere."

"Nothing else, my dear. Who won yesterday in our feigned quarrel, I was just thinking of it."

"What is the doubt? Victory was only mine," she said.

"How can you say that you won?"

"I asked you not to touch me and was sleeping a bit away from you. You only came closer and pulled me out and embraced. Hence it was you who embraced defeat also."

"Yes - I embraced you - then, would you agree that thy name is Defeat?"

"Don't try to win me by verbal jugglery. Last night, you only got defeated in pouting."

"In pouting only those who embrace defeat are victorious. Don't you know it?"

"Your explanation is rather funny."

"It is not mine but Valluvar's and my experience also confirms that."

"Oh, has Valluvar himself said that in pouting only the vanquished are the victorious heroes?"

"Yes. In pouting only the defeated can be said to have won, according to *Kural*. This truth can be seen in the state of embracing of the lovers after the feigned quarrel. I know that by

surrendering at your feet pretending to accept my defeat, I became victorious because I obtained all the bliss I wanted to have from you. What do you say? Shall I embrace defeat to-night also?"

"Go away, please." Tirumathi ran away from that place immediately, covering her blushing face with hands.

Comparing the golden hue of the polished bangles with that of her body, Ilamathi was inwardly happy saying to himself Valluvar's verse:

In lovers' quarrels, it is the one that first gives way;
That in the bliss of union is seen to win the day.

Chapter 133 *The Pleasures of Temporary Variance* *Kural 1327*

83

The Ramayana discourse went on in a grand manner. The Bagavathar's description of the coronation of Rama was unique. The countless devotees were expressing their admiration for the discourse by nodding their heads. The audience consisted of men and women from affluent higher castes.

The Bagavathar's musical recital of the fourteen years' secluded life of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana and the coronation of Rama on the return of the three, sent the joy and excitement of the audience to airy heights.

The concert ended by midnight. The Bagavathar returned to the residence of his host who was a very rich upper class man. The lady of the house and her servant-maid, who belonged to a lower class, were among the audience for the recital. They returned home a little before the Bagavathar and his host.

The guest was given a convenient room upstairs. The maid servant was commissioned to clean that room and spread the bed before the guest finished his supper. When the Bagavathar came to his bedroom with sandal paste all over his body, he found the maid at work there. Passion blinded his eyes and he flattered the maid with the expressions he had used in describing Sita, and tried to caress her. The maid flew into a rage and ran downstairs, after flinging words of contempt at him.

A few minutes later, the rich hostess came into the room with a cup of milk. On seeing the saddened face of the guest, she wanted to know why he appeared dejected. "It's just physical fatigue after the recital," said the Bagavathar. "I shall massage your limbs," volunteered the lady. The Bagavathar was not in a mood to refuse. The lady started the massage and fell into his trap and his wish was fulfilled.

The upper class lady accepted a situation scorned by the lower class maid. The artificial communal differences, by no means, indicate differences in character.

The only indication of upper class, is principled life. Unprincipled and immoral people, whoever they may be, are

the lower class people. By the yardstick provided by *Kural*, the maid was upper class and the rich man's wife was lower class! Here is the *Kural* for it:

Decorum 's true nobility on earth;
Indecorum 's issue is ignoble birth.

Chapter 14 *The Possession of Decorum* *Kural 133*

84

"Your face that is said to be like the lotus that had not unfolded itself as the Sun has not come, like the lily that had not opened waiting for the Moon, will have the spring of a smile. Not only did the Prince pursue, and defeat the foe who had stolen the bulls, but he brought him tied to the wheels of the chariot, and the entire capital is wearing the look of festivity to welcome him. When you were worried whether he will meet with success, did I not tell you that he is the Tamilian in the tradition of the *Purananuru?* He will surrender, succumb only when you bend your brows like the bow and shoot the arrows of your eyes, and not runaway showing his back to the foes in the battle field. Will my prophesy fail? Having broken the backbone of the enemy who stealthily entered in darkness, he is returning with the flag of triumph kissing the sky. I came only to give you this good news. Hereafter you can get ready to receive him. After bathing in the water sprinkled with rose water, put on your new clothes. I know that your hands which have become weak and slender, such that even the bangles will fall down because of your thoughts on his separation, will now get new strength. He is coming as a support to your hip which is visible only when you walk. Alas, I have nothing but pity for this cot interred with pearls. Poor dumb things! How much are they going to suffer this night!"

Speaking like this her mate went downstairs with a mischievous smile. The person who chased the foe-who left her to suffer the pangs of separation so that *Pasalai* spread over her body and her heart trembled — her joy could overflow the entire world.

She bathed. Every inch of her body quivered with joy at the thought of the 'feast' she is going to enjoy soon. Standing before the mirror, she put on the garments and the jewels. She wore a thick tilak of khumkhum so that it could stick on his body.

In the mirror her figure was not visible. Only his figure was seen. The legs would not stick to a place. The trumpets blew to

announce of the entry of the victorious army into the city. Now comes her big problem:

"My dearest husband will come here in a shortwhile. On his arrival what to do? Should I indulge in pouting for his having made me to suffer due to his separation? Or to embrace him? Or to enjoy the bliss of union with him?"

This was her dilemma. If she indulges in pouting, that will mean the loss of union for those few minutes. Even continued embrace will delay the joy of union. Her mental struggle makes her suffer.

The following couplet portrays the predicament of a lass who could not find an answer to this 'trinity' of questions:

Shall I draw back, or yield myself, or shall both mingled be,
When he returns, my spouse, dear as these eyes to me.

Chapter 127 *Mutual Desire* *Kural 1267*

85

Nettilingam grows to a great height like the teak. It has dense foliage. The leaves are popularly used in festoons on festive occasions and these festoons are tied to welcome-arches and pillars.

I had arranged for a conference of students for the propagation of Tamil language and literature. And I associated myself with my friends in making all arrangements for the conference, from distribution of brochures among the public to the decoration of the specially erected *pandal*. Collecting *Nettilingam* leaves happened to be one of the items of work. My friends and I reached a *nettilingam* tree on the banks of the river taking with us a man who could climb the tree.

The man was drunk. He climbed the tree quickly and went on dropping twigs with bunches of leaves. We were collecting them all in one place. He climbed up to the top of the tree and sent down leaves in plenty. We were happy that he was able to give us a lot of leaves in a short time. Just then we heard his voice. When we turned our eyes to the top of the tree, he said: "Look how high I have climbed. I am going to climb higher still!"

We cried out in alarm: "You have climbed to the very top. You can't go higher. Please climb down." He was under the influence of drink and did not pay heed to our appeal. He repeated his intention to climb higher still.

If he had carried out his words, he would not go up, but would be down under the earth as a corpse. Somehow, we managed to get him down. Bundling up the leaves we came to the conference pandal.

Who daring climbs, and would himself upraise
Beyond the branch's tip, with life the forefeit pays.

When we think of the incident, how very appropriate the Kural appears! When a man has reached the top of a tree, further upward climb will end his life.

This Kural teaches us that in walks of life aspiration should be within reasonable limits. Limitless aspiration or ambition hastens the down-fall.

Chapter 48 *The Knowledge of Power* *Kural 476*

86

That was a humble family, but in every way it showed a progressive trend.

The housewife was quite a beauty and was full of bright and healthy thoughts. She wanted that her family too should be, like her, bright and healthy, and that it should be like a flower-garden, winning the admiration of all.

The house was small, but she kept it spotlessly clean. She was always cleaning it, adding to its lustre. She wanted everything, dress or bedding, to be artistic; she was careful about keeping everything clean.

But one of her sons was a wilful boy. He was a stranger to cleanliness.

Though he could not keep himself clean, he found delight in speaking about the shortcomings of others; in fact, it was his hobby!

Bearing loads of dirt on his body and dress, he would magnify a particle of dust found on another.

One day on return from his school, he went to the bedroom and stood on the bed in order to take something from a height. Hearing the sound of his movement, his mother peeped in and was shocked to find him standing on the bed. Leaving her work abruptly, she ran into bedroom. By that time the boy had got off the bed. But the spotlessly clean bed bore the dirty marks of the boy's steps.

She cried, "My boy, should you not have a trace of responsibility? Why have you made the clean bed dirty and ugly? How many times have I told you that you should wash your feet before you enter the house! Why do you refuse to mend your ways?"

Just then her husband entered saying: "What is the use of all your advice? He has not mended his ways in the least. Valluvar has not omitted mention of such people in his Kural. He has compared a man who enters a bedroom with dirty feet and soils the bed by treading on it, to an ignorant fool who

enters an assembly of wise and learned men, pretending that he is equal to them in learning. This Kural says that no stupid action is comparable with that behaviour. Let us hope our son will give up such stupid behaviour very soon."

Like him who seeks his couch with unwashed feet
Is fool whose foot intrudes where wisemen meet.

Chapter 84 *Folly* *Kural 840*

87

Two great Tamil scholars of two different nations met at an important conference. Both of them addressed the conference. One of them pointed out that the three letters — *Tha, Mi* and *Zh* — which form the word, *Thamizh,* come from the three groups *(Vallinam, Mellinam* and *Idayinam)* into which the Tamil alphabet falls. The other scholar pointed out that the three groups of the Tamil alphabet may be compared to the three best fruits — jack fruit, banana and mango — available in Tamil country.

The two scholars developed love and respect for each other and spent their time in friendly conversation. In the course of their conversation after the farewell feast, one of them asked, "How is life in your country?"

The other answered, "We have regular and adequate rain at the proper season. Poverty has been banished forever. Love of the mother-tongue and love of arts are dominant in every bosom. Agriculture and trade flourish." He further asked in return, "What about your country?"

The first speaker answered sadly, "The situation in my country is just the opposite of that obtaining in your country, in every particular. After a long period, I derive a little comfort on finding happiness and prosperity at least in your country."

"What about your King?"

"Oh, he is a strong ruler. No one can interfere in his affairs."

"Is that so? Our ruler listens to the words of even ordinary citizens. Your King seems to be entirely different."

"That is true. None would venture to criticize or advise our King. Not even a very important person in our country enjoys the privilege that the ordinary citizen in your country has."

"What a pity! I am really sad that the administration in a neighbouring country is so bad. But, of this be sure, no enemy need come forward to destroy your King; he will seek his own destruction."

"How do you say that so firmly?"

"Have you forgotten what Valluvar has said? Has he not said emphatically: 'A King who has no wise men to safeguard his position through criticism and advice, will seek his own ruin.'"

The conversation between them ended. The recollection of the relevant Kural was illumining their minds!

The king with none to censure him, bereft of safeguards all,
Though none his ruin work, shall surely ruined fall.

Chapter 45 *Seeking the Aid of Great Men* *Kural 448*



88

I considered him as my very life. I had a strong faith that no force can separate him and me — and on this score I was even proud of myself. Even if I had to drink poison so that he should live, I was ready to do that also.

That his love for me was limitless was known not only to me, but all those who knew us knew it, and spoke highly of it. He was in the frontline in the war to regain the land of his birth. The struggle which was expected to last only a few days went on for years.

Even the news of the exact whereabouts of him did not reach me. A couple of letters came and then abruptly all contact stopped. A few heroes who returned home maimed in the battle-field only told me that he was steadily progressing, having vanquished his enemies.

My heart began to melt when I thought that he forgot even me because he was embraced by the Great Lady of Triumph.

One day, news came — that he was dead with heroic wounds received on his chest.

Then came another news. It was true that he fell receiving a spear on his chest. But he was not dead. His foes have imprisoned him and are demanding his apology. Failing which, he was threatened with death punishment. He did not write to me even about this.

I heard that he had spoken to the enemies thus: "I shall die in the prison or I will accept with a smile if you order that my head be chopped. But words such as kneeling or asking forgiveness have no place in my dictionary." This was the heroic declaration of my dear lover.

Eventhough he did not show enough compassion towards me so as to come back alive, when I hear the words of praise of the world around, that he is not ready to surrender before the enemies, I simply forget even his separation and my ears brim with joy over that.

"Even if the dear lover won't come back to make love, it delights my ears to hear the words of praise by others." Here is the couplet which portrays the fact that the heroine is able to endure the pangs of separation by thinking about his heroism — or hearing words of praise on that.

Though he my heart desires no grace accords to me,
Yet every word of his praise is melody.

Chapter 120 *The Solitary Anguish* *Kural 1199*

89

A well-built and bright eyed man of middle age informed Valluvar of his decision to renounce the world. He asked with his head reverently lowered, "May I have your advice on that?"

Valluvar replied: "Only that person who has given up all attachments deserves that exalted position. I will not concede that position to those who pretend to have renounced the world. The number of people who give the impression of having renounced the world, only in order to deceive credulous people, is on the increase. I hate such people and pity those who allow themselves to be deceived by such cheats. Renunciation does not depend on external appearance; the mind should be fully prepared for that first."

The visitor said, "That is why I seek your guidance. Kindly enlighten me on how I can prepare my mind."

With a smile Valluvar replied, "Don't attach yourself to attachments. If you do that, difficulties will take hold of you firmly." Then he cited the Kural which expresses this idea felicitously:

Who cling to things that cling and eagar clasp,
Griefs cling to them with unrelaxing grasp.

On hearing the Kural the visitor bowed to Valluvar and said: "O, the enlightened master! This Kural is enough to safeguard my code of renunciation. May I take leave? I am determined to give up all desires and attachments."

As the new Sanyasi was leaving, Valluvar's words, 'Get attached' reached his ears as parting message and he stood puzzled. "It was just a while ago he advised me to give up all attachments and now he says 'Get attached'. Why this contradiction?" he ruminated.

Then Valluvar explained: "In order to give up all worldly attachments, you must get attached to some one who has succeeded in renouncing the world. Such attachment alone will

help in your renunciation. And he recited a Kural expressing this truth!

Cling thou to that which He, to Whom nought clings,
hath bid thee cling,
Cling to that bond, to get thee free from every
clinging thing.

Chapter 35 *Renunciation* *Kurals 347, 350*



90

Ponni was heaving a deep sigh, looking at the sky.

Tamarai came towards her, asking "What, have you lost yourself in the sight of the majestic procession of the heaps of clouds?"

The smile that Ponni had preserved in her face with great pains disappeared like the flash of a lightening.

Tamarai asked her: "How many *'Nazhikai'* (the equivalent of 24 minutes in the Indian system) are there in a day?"

"Four hundred and twenty," replied Ponni without any hesitation whatsoever.

Tamarai's surprise increased. "What Ponni, are you telling a puzzle! Only on this, there was a dispute between me and Alli sometime ago. She said, 'A day has fifty *'Nazhikais'*, and I said 'sixty', and I think I am right. I just wanted to ask you to get it reconfirmed from you. But you go to the very extremity and say that there are four hundred and twenty *Nazhikais* in a day."

Ponni smiled, a smile mixed with profound grief. "In your system, a day means sixty *Nazhikais* — but as far as I am concerned, only my arithmatic is correct."

Tamarai did not understand what is meant. She wanted to get more clarification from Ponni. "You seem to be saying an arithmatic which no one has said so far. If one says that a day consists of 420 *Nazhikais* people will only wonder whether such a person has any mental derangement."

When Ponni heard this, she put her hand on Tamarai's shoulder, and resumed her speech with a sigh. "Tamarai! Have you read Kural? Has not Valluvar written to say that to a sweetheart waiting at home and longing for the day of return of her lover, one day is equivalent to seven days. That is my condition. To me who is yearning for my hero who has gone to a distant foreign country, one day seems to last for 420 *Nazhikais* — i.e., seven days."

Now there were tears in Ponni's eyes. Tamarai consoled her thus:

One day will seem like seven, to those who watch and yearn
For that glad day when wanderers from far return.

Chapter 127 *Mutual Desire* *Kural 1269*

91

I have a very mischievous friend. It is but natural for happiness and unhappiness to come alternately in human life. I am not ignorant of the fact that acceptance of both happiness and unhappiness with equal cheer is worthy of a strong mind.

My friend knows my nature well. He has always been with me during periods of trials and difficulties. Still, as I have mentioned, he is mischievous by nature.

One day he came and sat near me murmuring a Kural verse. I listened carefully to know what the verse was. He was repeating a Kural which praises the virtue of close relatives to be attached to a man even when he is in adversity, mischievously substituting the word *enmity* in the place of the word indicating attachment.

I asked him if he was composing a new Kural. He said, "Yes, when I observed some people around you, I felt like modifying Valluvar's Kural a little." According to his version the nature of close relatives or associates is to show enmity when a man is in adversity.

I laughed and said, "Are all my friends and relatives so bad? Are there not people like you?" As I uttered these words, my eyes filled with tears and I hugged him fondly.

Then I told him, "I don't think I am in adversity. To face adversity one should have a natural endowment, and that is strength of mind. And that endowment I have in ample measure. See how your mischievous substitution of a word has distorted the spirit of the original Kural. The Kural verse speaks of the value and nature of true friends like you. Please forget your modified or distorted verse and recite the wonderful, original Kural." And he recited the Kural:

When wealth is fled, old kindness still to show,
Is kindly grace that only kinsmen know.

Chapter 53 *Cherishing One's Kindred* *Kural 521*

92

In the course of a battle, an army is weakened and defeated. Taking advantage of this situation the king of the victorious side subjects the defeated army to limitless hardship.

It is a scene of total revenge! The plan is to destroy the enemy's army completely. The captured soldiers are severely beaten up. The king issues orders to starve them to death.

Many poets compose verses glorifying the courage and valour of the defeated king. The victor issues orders that only verses glorifying him should be listened to; and he puts in prison all poets who have praised the defeated king. He also bribes some poets to sing his praises.

The Generals of the defeated army are murdered mercilessly. Finding that his treatment of the defeated army has not met with approval from neighbouring countries, he does not hesitate to blame the defeated king of many evils (atrocities). He unleashes wild animals and drives them to the place where the defeated king is staying with his soldiers.

The defeated king and his soldiers accepted all these with a smile. The defeat and the death of many soldiers have not forced them to surrender to the victorious king. Though the victor, intoxicated with victory, is putting them to great difficulties, they show extra-ordinary courage and patience in such difficult circumstances.

What is the reason for such austerity? The defeated king's army is traditionally glorious, and it will not lose heart at a defeat or at the diminution of its strength.

Valluvar says that such steadfastness can be seen only in a traditionally glorious army. Such an army wins glory even in defeat. The following Kural expresses this idea!

In adverse hour, to face undaunted might of
conquering foe
In bravery that only veteran *host* can show.

Chapter 77 *The Excellence of an Army* *Kural 762*

93

The waves of the sea were tossing on the beach without much noise. The rising sun was spreading its golden rays in the East. The fishermen who would go far into the sea to catch fish were getting their catamarans (rafts) ready. Those rafts which were kept near the seashore were seen to kiss the blue sea and dance rapturously with the waves.

"Has not Mukilan come back?" the question arose among the fishermen.

"He can come only if he is allowed to," came a reply amidst laughter.

Even two months had not passed since he married. Those youthful hearts of the two desired that they should only be the delicious dish for mutual delight. However, only if the profession continued their family can survive.

"Give me leave. I will return before the sun-rise, tomorrow." Thus Mukilan begged Mullaikkodi who had dragged him close to her and was weeping.

Mullaikkodi was sobbing over the fact that the cruel monster of Dawn had interrupted the period of night when they were rapturously lost in love.

But even that sob had a beauty of its own - a kind of beauty which only enchanted him towards her and made him embrace her again. He imprinted the insignia of his love on the lip which was like a shell protecting the pearls. The drops of tears flowing from her eyes drenched his lips. But they were only sweet, not salty.

Mukilan had to use utmost strength to get himself freed from her body which was almost glued to his.

The community of fishermen welcomed him with an ironic smile. His raft also began to float on the sea.

Mullaikkodi stood at the gate of her house and was gazing, even without winking her eyes. The raft had gone very far into the sea - and disappeared from the sight.

She did not worry about her lunch that day. Not even dinner, she took. Her 'feast' will arrive only the next-day morning in the raft floating on the sea.

Her blue eye-lids which had been awake too long, began to gently close. She slept. That sleep was also a delight to her.

She dreamt - as if to alleviate her sorrow. Who else will come in the dream? Only Mukilan came: "Mullaikkodi," he whispered. "My dear," she replied. Showers of kisses followed. The bliss of love came with the fury of a flood. A brief pause - even then clinging to her shoulder, he was pressing against her beautiful back his chest. A new joy consequent on the satiation of love!

Suddenly she woke up – the dream dissolved. She spoke to herself thus: "He who appeared in my dream while asleep and delighted me by leaning on my shoulder, where has he gone, now that I am awake? To no other place! As soon as the dream dissolved, he hastened to come to dwell in my heart." Here is that Kural which contains this picture:

And when I sleep he holds my form embraced;
And when I wake to fill my heart makes haste!

Chapter 122 Communicating the State of Dream Kural 1218

94

One day when I was just getting ready to go out urgently, my friend entered laughing hilariously.

"Why this unusually merry laughter?" I asked.

Continuing his laughter, he asked, "Is Moodevi elder or younger to Sridevi?"

I replied, "Don't you know even this? Of course, she is the elder sister."

My friend said amid uncontrollable laughter, "My view is that they are both non-existent. But my friends declared that both the sisters exist and that the only point of dispute is about who is the elder. Their conviction provoked my laughter and it was in that condition I came to your house. But you are challenging my rationalistic stand by asserting that Sridevi is the younger sister and that Moodevi is the elder."

I patted my friend on the back and said, "Come with me. I shall show you how Sridevi and Moodevi look and where they live."

Overcome with surprise he asked, "I say! Where do they live? Do you know even their address? Do they live in the main street where chariots are driven or in humble cottages by the sea-side?"

By way of reply I only said decisively, "Come with me. I shall show you where they live."

We walked along crossing many streets. At one place we saw a blacksmith's forge. There one person was giving heavy hammer-strokes to a red-hot iron; another was working the bellows to supply air for the furnace; a third man was turning the red-hot iron this side and that. All of them were sweating profusely; still unmindful of that they continued their work.

"Look at this scene at the forge!" I said. He stood absorbed for sometime watching the concentrated work of those men.

Then we moved out of the place. We found a beautiful building on the way. The marble structure was a fascinating

sight. But spiders were busy spinning cobwebs everywhere. Wasps were building their mud cells here and there. Bats had littered the floor with their refuse. There was garbage all around. On an inner pial a well-built young man was just getting up from his sleep with a yawn.

"My friend, look carefully at the building and the man," I said.

"You must tell me what this building is intended for."

"This is a memorial structure raised in honour of a great man. That young man has been entrusted with the duty of safeguarding it," I explained.

"O, he is looking after it well, the lazy fellow," remarked my friend with a grunt of pain.

As we continued our walk, I asked him if we could return home. He said, "What about your promise to show me the dwelling places of Sridevi and Moodevi? You have deceived me!"

"But I have shown you the places where they live."

"When?"

"Just now."

"Where, I say?"

I explained: "Did we not see the men at the forge going on with their work unmindful of their fatigue and sweat? Sridevi lives in their hearts. On the other hand, we saw also the lazy care-taker who has converted a beautiful mansion into a place of dirt and refuse. Moodevi has chosen his dark heart for her dwelling!"

"What a wonderful idea!"

"This is not mine. This is what Valluvar has said," and I quoted the Kural:

In sluggishness is seen misfortune's lurid form, the wise declare;
Where man unslothful toils, she of the lotus flower is there!

Chapter 62 *Manly Effort* *Kural 617*

95

There was a meeting between Tinkal and Chevvai. They were not simply the names of the days of the week – but those of two beautiful damsels. The parents called the tender lass with a cool face, Tinkal. The girl with lips red as cherry was called Chevvai by her parents (Tamil word '*Tinkal*' means Moon, and *Chevvai* means 'Mars' as well as 'a red mouth').

What could be the problem between Tinkal and Chevvai?

"What, Tinkal! your face looks as if you are ready to curse someone." Speaking thus Chevvai came closer.

"I am not cursing any one. I am cursing only the sickness which was stuck to me. The sickness of love which gained control over my body in collaboration with my lover has gripped me with great intensity and become so tyrannical as to suggest that I should also go after my lover who has gone away from me!" Speaking these words, she shed a few pearls of tears.

The lips of Chevvai instinctively remembered and murmured the Kural:

My grief, how full of grace, I pray you see!
It seeks to follow him that hateth me.

"O, my dear mate, Tinkal. Has not he left you, giving you the sickness of love? You give him a punishment for it. When he comes tonight you continue your feigned quarrel until he begs you saying, 'I will not go away from you hereafter, forgive me, please, please.' Then only he will behave better. You must follow my advice without fail if you do not want to be afflicted with the sickness of love and pangs of separation. Is it alright? Will you indulge in pouting to-night?"

Clinging to Chevvai's shoulder, Tinkal replied, with her head cast down, "I too have planned on many an occasion to make him languish for me by quarrelling with him for long. But the moment I see him my heart begins to melt like the fat put in fire. People with a heart like mine cannot have the courage to indulge in pouting."

Listening to the words of Tinkal, Chevvai smiled, a smile of ridicule. She also recalled another Kural:

'We'll stand aloof and then embrace'; is this for them to say,
Whose hearts are as the fat that in the blaze dissolves away?

'Tinkal and Chevvai parted. The full Moon rose in the sky. But the sad Moon (Tinkal) was waiting with eyes directed towards the path of her lover.

He also comes as it were on wings, after a long wait. He lifted the 'parrot' with intense passion – and putting her on his shoulder, undressed her. He closed the gate himself.

"Does your justice vary from person to person?" she asked.

"You can yourself take action against that injustice – Yes, take action." He replied.

The milk from which cream has been removed was getting cold – near the cot.

But the hero and the heroine bloomed as one flower – with the honey of love brimming. His fingers played on every inch of the harp of her body. The wires quivered with the melody of passion. Four lips made four thousand varieties of sounds. She simply merged into his being. That pouting which was advised by Chevvai dared not raise its head and prevent her from embracing him.

Then her feminine nature quietly confessed: When the lover, impelled by the passion of love, does amorous acts which are dear to you, you seem to forget that very quality called 'modesty'.

This Kural only paints the nature of Frailty, whose name is woman:

No sense of shame my mind betrays
When he, impelled by passion, does amorous acts.

Chapter 126 Reserve Overcome Kurals 1256, 1260 & 1257

96

He was a highly imaginative poet. He was called Ezhini. He had produced verses and songs that had inspired patriotic warriors who had fought for the independence of his country, Vala Nadu.

The ruler of neighbouring Kolli Nadu who was determined to reduce the importance of Vala Nadu, bribed one or two of that country's Generals to desert their country and come over to his side.

It was Ezhini, who had once written patriotic songs, who now decided to betray the interests of his own country and help the ruler of Kolli Nadu. He was responsible for the Generals of Vala Nadu going over to the neighbouring country.

When all people came to know of his activities, he migrated with his family to Kolli Nadu.

The ruler of that country was proud that a great poet from the enemy country had become his subject. When the court met, everybody expected the refugee poet to sing in praise of their king. Soldiers, poets and common people crowded into the court-hall to hear the new poet.

Ezhini started reciting his compositions. There were just one or two verses in honour of the ruler of Kolli Nadu. The rest of the compositions consisted only of invectives against the king of Vala Nadu. If he had avoided singing in praise of the country of his birth, upbringing and prosperity, people would not have minded it. But no one in the court assembly could tolerate the poet making an uncultured tirade against his country, the only theme of his songs and verses.

The poet was absorbed in singing his verses, that he closed his eyes and went on and on. He was entertaining the fond hope that the king would appreciate his utter hatred of Vala Nadu and give him the foremost place in the court of Kolli Nadu.

When the poet opened his eyes, he found that the court hall was empty. All those who had assembled there had left in

disgust. At last the King too left the hall and went to his bed chamber.

Ezhini was naturally disappointed greatly. On coming out he found people standing in groups, commenting on his performance in the hall and laughing. Among some of the remarks that reached his ears were the following:

"Did he come to sing in praise of Kolli Nadu or to degrade his own country?"

"Did he play-act so disgracefully hoping to win the favour of our king and win a high position?"

"The man who has been responsible for the enmity between Vala Nadu and Kolli Nadu, comes here to play-act. The ungrateful wretch!"

"I betrayed my country and sought refuge here. What meets me here is contempt, not honour!" murmured Ezhini as he walked along crest-fallen, heaving a sigh of distress.

One who talks words of bitterness all the time will be held in contempt not only by his enemies but also by his neighbours and allies:

Words without sense, while chafe the wise,
Who babbles, him will all despise.

Chapter 20 The Not Speaking Profitless Words Kural 191



97

The lovely lass looked like a withered plant.

The events of the harvest-ground near the paddy field came in rapid succession like the film inside the camera of her mind. The golden hued crops, unable to bear the ripe corn, looked like a bride with her head cast down. They were cut and put together in several bundles.

Kali is one of the young 'doves' involved in this work, only the name is a bit odd. She was a treasure of beauty – a source of bliss to Kadamban who found pleasure in embracing her. Her rows of teeth shone through the lips which were like the moon cut into two and then combined together. She had such beautiful eyes which seemed to proclaim that no physical valour could match the power of her mighty eyes.

She was a bit dark in complexion, but she could give him the sweetness of the sugarcane abundantly. While the harvest was on, their eyes were attracted towards each – like iron and magnet.

As if the heat of the Sun was not enough – they were also burning within – with thoughts of the feast they are going to enjoy that night.

Evening also came. The harvesting was over. Everyone returned home. It was Kadamban's turn to be the watch man of that place during that night. He had asked Kali to go over there where darkness descended.

How could she refuse it? She was cursing darkness that it had not come so far.

Darkness came so suddenly as if it was afraid of her. Kali went stealthily like a thief-cat. But that maid who went like a cat in the midst of the paddy heap and the haystack stood like a flower. Kadamban, like a beetle, drank the honey of the human flower. Neither the dirty soil of that place nor the irritation caused by the hay was an obstacle to their rapturous love-making. They did not seem to belong to this world. He was on

her hip, and she was on his shoulder, the only sound was that of the kisses.

Throughout the night the two were lost in their total enjoyment of love which was delicious as the synthesis of the three sweet fruits drenched in honey. If the night had been endless, their joy also would have continued for eternity.

The next day, Kadamban went to another place on an urgent assignment given by the landlord. He was expected to return only after six or seven days.

Now don't we see why this vine of a woman is shrunken? Women will develop some unwarranted anger towards their lovers who had left them. That is natural, possibly the consequence of the passion generated by separation. Kali had only such an anger. Her heart spoke to her thus: "Kali, Kadamban who went away causing your agony, is now returning. When he comes, tell him categorically that you have nothing to do with him!" Kali laughed - with a tone of anger. She said, "My heart! though you belong to me, you yourself deserted me to accompany him and are coming back only now. When you forget our kinship, there is no great mistake in his having gone away from me."

Thus Kali scolded her heart and called her lover who had gone away as 'alien' with a tinge of anger.

Immediately Kadamban ran to her and embraced her. The word 'alien' had lost its meaning and the girl was lost in the web of love.

A trifle is unfriendliness by aliens shown,
When our own heart itself is not our own!

Chapter 130 Expostulation with Oneself Kural 1300

98

A long march of 200 kilometres from Madurai to Tiruchendur started on the morning of 15th February, 1982. For that long March (padayatra) undertaken by Kazhaham to condemn the Government's neglect (abandonment) of justice I took up the leadership. The march which started with fifty thousand men included two lakhs of people in eight days and reached Thiruchendur on foot.

Some people doubted if this march could gain its object of getting justice from the Government. The object of the march was to open the eyes of the Government to the atrocious murder of an innocent official of the Government by a gang of wicked men belonging to the ruling party. To suppress their crime they branded the innocent victim as a thief. The magistrate who tried the case declared that the man was innocent and that those who branded him as a thief had killed him. The Government ignored the judgement. Reacting against this perverse attitude of the Government this march started from Madurai, which had witnessed the rule of the upright King Nedunchelian who sacrificed his life when he discovered that he had unknowingly swerved from justice. This march reflected the conviction of the general public that the murdered man was really innocent.

In the face of doubts about the success of the march, in the minds of those who undertook the long journey on foot, the words of Valluvar's Kural resounded meaningfully:

The man of energy of soul inflexible,
Good fortune seeks him out and comes a friend to dwell.

"Constructive energy will find its way to a man of untiring industry." This idea was enough to encourage the people to undertake the historic march. The marchers had to face so many difficulties, troubles and illness.

Unmindful of all the obstacles the people completed their march and won my everlasting affection. At that time the following Kural stood luminously in my mind:

Like bullock struggle on through each obstructed way;
From such as one will troubles, troubled, roll away.

Chapter 60 *Energy* *Kural 594*
Chapter 63 *Hopefulness in Trouble* *Kural 624*

99

Karmeham was sitting near his field with his towel wrapped round his head. He was a well-built young man. A canal full of water was nearby. Still, his field was completely dry with cracks on the surface. Owners of neighbouring fields were irrigating their fields by taking the water from the canal.

On seeing Karmeham sitting alone and idle, an elderly man, whose body having patches of mud on it, showed that he was working in his field, came to him and asked him why he looked sad. He also asked, "I heard that you are going to be married. When is the marriage?"

The young man replied dejectedly, "How can I get married? Should I not have money for that? I am a pauper."

The elderly man was moved, and he remarked, "Youth is the time for pleasures. What a pity, your poverty is standing in the way of your happiness!"

At that time a gurgling laughter was heard behind them. Both of them turned back but could not find anybody. The older man asked in a loud voice, "Who is laughing?" Pat came the reply: "I am the Spirit of the Earth (World) and I am laughing to myself. Do you know why? Even in your old age, you believe in hard work and you are prosperous. Your hard work brings a rich harvest and your family is above want. Look at this young man. He has sturdy limbs and yet he is a victim of lethargy. As a result, when the neighbouring canal is full of water, his fields are dry. He is not prepared to irrigate his fields, reap a rich harvest and improve his life. I am prepared to provide everyone with all facilities for prosperity. Unprepared to benefit from my bounty, he lives a lazy life. And to you he says that he has no money and that therefore he is not married. Thinking of this funny young man, I am laughing to myself."

The words of the Spirit ceased; the laughter was heard no more. The elderly man was looking with concentrated attention on the young man. Karmeham got up with a brisk shrug of his shoulders, took a spade which was lying in a corner and said, "Sir, after hearing the words of ridicule uttered by the Earth, I

won't be like a lazy worm any more. See, I have started to do active work." In proof that, he began to direct the canal water into his field. The elderly man patted him on the back with a smile and said, "Dear young man, I shall make my own daughter your partner in life." The following Kural is the basis of this imaginary anecdote:

The earth, that kindly dame, will laugh to see,
Men seated idle pleading poverty.

Chapter 104 *Agriculture* *Kural 1040*

100

There was an extremely proud and vainglorious man in a village. He boasted that nothing was impossible for him and that there was nobody to equal or excel him. The villagers believed in his words and praised him sky-high and called him a lion among men.

At a distance from the village there was a high and precipitous rock. It did not have a slope on any side. A number of people attempted to go to the top of the rock and failed. This proud and boastful man proclaimed that he would go to the top on a certain day. The villagers assembled around the rock on that day. Addressing them he said, "I offered to go to the top of the rock, but did not tell you how I would achieve it. An achievement needs not only courage but wisdom too. Now, I want four men to form a human ladder by standing close to the rock, on one another's shoulders."

When the four men formed a ladder-structure close to the rock, this man climbed on their shoulders and from the shoulders of the fourth man, he reached the top of the rock easily. The villagers were thrilled and they expressed their admiration for his achievement, in many ways.

The four men who had served as his ladder reminded him that he was able to go up only with their help. He laughed contemptuously at them and said he would have done that even without their help. Those men felt nettled and warned him against insulting them. He did not care for their words and said from the top of the rock, "I don't need anybody's help. The world knows my valour. Do you realize where I am? I am at an elevated place and I am looking down on you. I am at a height and you are all down below."

On hearing these offensive words, all people, including the men who had helped him to go up, moved away from there. Standing at a distance, they wanted to see how he would come down. He shouted from the top: "You said that I climbed up with the help of others. Now I shall provide proof of my extra-ordinary valour and strength of mind. Look, I am jumping

down!" So saying he jumped down with a somer-sault in the air. His head lay in bits and his body was found in a little pool of blood. Thus ended the life of an empty-headed and vainglorious man. The following Kural is a warning to such men:

Who not agrees with those around, no moderation knows,
In self-applause indulging, swift to ruin goes.

Chapter 48 *The Knowledge of Power* *Kural 474*

101

She could not sleep. Delicious fruits as well as hot milk did not make her hungry. Her silken feet were scanning her bed-room. All the tongues of the fire of the five petalled standing lamps were only burning in her direction as if expression of her desire. Since her feet, with the complexion of the tongue of the flames, became red like that of *Semparuthi* (hibiscus) as she had been walking. She stood with her hips against a wall adjacent to the courtyard in the front. Supporting her Luna-like face with her, flower-like fingers she stared at the sky and admonished the Moon: O! Moon, moist but radiant, why are you buning me alone?"

At that time a sound arose near the courtyard and then subsided.

The heart of that great lady was anxious to know what it was. She looked at the direction from which the sound came. A youth had jumped on the branch of a tree close to the courtyard and was coming towards her. Yes - he is none other than the person she had met by the side of the mountain spring. She had gone to bathe in the fountain. He had also come there. When she was bathing with eyes closed in the flowing water, that fountain itself was performing several mischievous tricks both on her dress and her body. He was standing at a distance blessing the fountain. After bathing, drying her moist hair a while, she was walking nonchalantly without adjusting her dress properly on her, as she thought that there was no one there. Just then, he had come out of that flower pot.

Her hands automatically set right her dress - is that not the sign of true womanliness?

She looked at him - as if he was an army of the enemy. She asked him angrily. "Is this act worthy of a heroic man?" He stood stunned - unable to reply. Then he gathered strength in his limbs and took to the heels.

Not only by the fountain side but also in other places she had seen him. He also had seen her. He knows the family to

which she belongs. But meeting by the fountain-side was quite unexpected. What an intimate meeting - in a strange way!

He was the very same person who jumped from the tree to the outer courtyard. Hiding the sudden shock quietly, with an angry tone she asked him so softly that it could reach only his ears, "Who is it? What business here - at this time?"

"Don't you know? It's only me!" Saying this he came and stood by her.

"How audacious are you! This evening you behaved in an uncivilised way by the fountain. Now, are you going to continue that story?"

"O lass, that story deserves to be continued. Can you continue it? May I touch you?"

"You don't know me. I will become wild. Please go away."

"I have understood you, I know you won't be nasty - but only not hasty in your words. You don't want to speak out your heart?"

"You came to the bathing place. That itself was mischievous enough. And hiding behind the bush..."

"Why? Blushing out that?"

"Now, it is irritating."

"Really?"

"Did I not look at you with fiery eyes after your adventure in the river-side and spoke words of fire! How dare you come again, after that?"

"The words are furious - but there is no real enmity behind them. The look may suggest a burning posture - but the thought behind is not that destructive. Eventhough outwardly there is the look of alienation, but it is only the symbolic language of love - Valluvar has written thus and have you not read it? Only with faith in the words of Valluvar I jumped into this place - even after the fiery words you showered upon me by the fountain. Because you have sweet love, you used sour words - didn't you?"

She stood dazed. Her eyes swarmed around him - as if desirous of swallowing him.

"My golden lass," he said and touched her. No resistance. He embraced her, but she tried to slip through his hands. Modesty invaded her.

"I shall make a hue and cry so that everybody comes." She said softly with her lips close to his ears. Is it not the first sign of seal of love? The five-petalled standing lamp turned its attention in another direction.

The slighting words that anger feign, while
eyes their love reveal
Are signs of those that love, but would their
love conceal.

Chapter 110 — *Recognition of Signs of Mutual Love* — *Kural 1097*

102

One day a teacher was teaching a lesson on the Kural verses under the chapter heading, *Realization of Strength*. In the class there was a comparatively dull boy. The teacher explained that Kural verses were deep and learned were able to give different interpretations from different angles for the same verses, and that therefore the readers should study the verses closely and get at their meanings. Then he asked the dull boy the meaning of the chapter heading. As usual he stood silent with a vague look.

The teacher was angry and saying, "Nothing gets into this thick skull!" he gave a knock on his head.

"Now I understand, Sir!" cried the boy.

"What do you understand?"

"You gave a knock on my head. The pain is unbearable. Now I realize your strength. This is what Valluvar has explained under the heading *Realization of Strength*.

In despair the teacher gave himself a knock on the head.

Very knowingly the dull boy quickly remarked, "Sir, now you also realize the strength of the blow. This is *Realization of Strength*.

The boy was the son of a local magnate and the teacher might have to face the consequences of the given blow, the next day. So he left the boy alone, he began to explain the chapter to the students. He said: "Manakkudavar and Pariperumal have both explained that before launching on an action a man should weigh carefully his own capabilities and those of others; at the same time, though the action contemplated is a good one, the man concerned should make sure, before starting it, whether he has the strength or the ability to complete it. In politics, and administration, the word 'strength' should be taken to mean, not only the strength of the armed forces but the

financial strength of the administrators. That is why, *Kural* warns thus:

Who prosperous lives and of enjoyment knows no bound,
His seeming wealth, departing, nowhere shall be found.

The meaning of this Kural is that, by the hurried action of a man, the finances of a country might appear to be promising but finally everything will end in disaster. This is the interpretation that the great Tamil scholar Mr. Varadarajanar has given to this Kural. This Kural also comes under the chapter *Realization of Strength*.

Any plan of action of a Government must carefully weigh the resources on hand, the resources that would actually and assuredly come to the treasury, before the action is initiated. Without doing this and without the capacity to make this preliminary assessment, some people will vigorously start an action, for attractive propaganda, and then fail in their endeavour without the wherewithal for completing it. This is very clearly stated by Valluvar in the chapter *Realization of Strength*. The Kural,

Ill-deeming of their proper powers, have many monarchs striven,
And midmost of unequal conflict fallen asunder riven.

points out clearly the evil resulting from the inability of some people to realize their strength.

After this explanation, the teacher turned to the dull student and asked, "Do you now grasp the meaning?"

He replied angrily: "We must prevent the varied interpretations of Kural from different angles or view-points. If I come to power, I will enforce a prohibitory order against the publication of any interpretation of Kural."

His words provoked loud laughter from all the students in the class.

Chapter 48 *Realisation of Strength* *Kural 479, 473*

"Ah, Ezhini! Are you returning from the Monday-shandy only now? But you don't have anything in your hands. Didn't you buy anything? I saw you going out for shandy in all eagerness for shopping, and now I see you come back all tired. Anything wrong?"

He did not say anything in reply to Eniyan. He stood dazed as though his mind had gone out after something.

Eniyan shook him by his shoulders and asked, "Ezhini! What's the matter? You stand quite shaken as if your thoughts had gone scattered out like the cotton bursted out of the *ilavam*. Why, what happened?"

"Nothing, Eniyan. I come here after meeting *Yama*," replied Ezhini in all calmness.

"*Yama*? Where? And how's he? Are you sure you met *Yama?* Or you mean to say you have escaped from any accident?"

"No, I come here after meeting *Yama*."

"Is it true? Hence you look shocked! How was he? Was he seated on his buffalo? Did he hold on his hands the rope with which he pulls the lives out of the people? Was it like the hangman's noose? How did he look like? Dark, like the new moon? Had he fiery eyes? His moustaches, were they like the two axes joined together? His laugh, they say, used to be like the sounds of thunder! Oh, Ezhini, you excite my curiosity. How was *Yama*? Please tell me."

"Eniya, my friend. You and I have heard of what is identified as *Yama*. *Yama* comes not seated on his buffalo carrier! He has no ţerrible shape either! He did not sport any rope that pulls up the lives out of people."

"Then Ezhini, What did you see then?"

"*Yama* was no man at all!"

"Then..?"

"It was beauty personified! A wonderful creation! It was moonshine melted and moulded into a human shape! The face was the very lotus flower! And its buds were the bosom! Golden lips that shine with a smile! I saw in the shandy a maiden lovely like a flower! Quite unexpectedly two darts plunged into my chest! I accepted defeat and ran here. Eniya, now I hope you make out what I say. I didn't know so far what *Yama* was. I saw a sandal-complexioned maiden in the shandy. After seeing her I understand the meaning of *Yama*. *Yama* is of feminine nature and that which fights with men with the weapon of big eyes."

"Oh, You are hurt now of the darts of lovely eyes! It seems that the rope that takes the lives out of people has been thrown on you by those eyes! Now I have no doubt. It is true you met *Yama*!"

"Eniya, I want to meet that *Yama* everyday. Why should the shandy be convened only on Mondays? Can't we have it all days?"

Eniyan took hold of Ezhini and burst into a laughter, and promised him, "Don't worry. I too have met such an *Yama* and after everything that happened now we live together with two children. On the next Monday shandy I will see to it that the *Yama* you met belongs to you forever."

Death's form I formerly knew not; but now 'tis
plain to me;
He comes in lovely maiden's guise with
soul-subduing eyes.

Chapter 109 — *Mental Disturbance Caused by the Beauty of the Princess.* — *Kural 1083*

104

"Grandpa, who is that person walking so unsteadily over there? He looks well-built, but why is there such unsteadiness in his walk?" So asked the grandson.

The grandfather replied, "O, that man! He is not merely strong; he has also read books of wisdom. But he is unsteady because he is carrying too heavy a burden."

The boy did not find the reply convincing. So he continued, "What is it, Grandpa? You say that he is carrying too heavy a burden, but there is no load on his head."

"You are too young and you cannot realise that he is going on the wrong track. I know why he follows the unrighteous path avoiding the righteous one."

"Grandpa, do tell me in clear and simple terms. What is the burden? And why do you say that he carries it unnecessarily? I can't see any burden."

"The burden he carries cannot be seen by the eye. It will be clear to the mind. It is natural for a man to like something or desire to possess it. But if he is prepared to adopt any unfair means to take possession of it, he loses the respect of society. Such unfair desire sits as a load on the concerned man's head. That man bears such a load. Sensible people expressed surprise that this man should choose to lose his self-respect for the fulfilment of his desires. The anger that he felt at their surprise got out of control and became a great burden. He abused those who sympathised with his lot. Those words that he hurled against others formed another burden on his head. With all these burdens on his head, how can he walk along the right path? That is why he is following the wrong track and is miserable."

"Grandpa, alas! That man has fallen into the river! He is struggling in the water, unable to swim! So he is sinking under water! Now I can't see him; the flowing water has carried him away."

"Do you know the river into which he has fallen? That is envy. Those who have fallen victim to that cannot escape. Those who fall into any river can escape but those who have fallen into this river of envy have never survived."

"Grandpa, what is this envy?"

"That is the feeling that a man develops when he is unable to bear the fame another man wins, his courage, his wisdom as his firmness. That is why Valluvar has said that a man can easily walk along the path of righteousness, if he is free from the four burdens — envy, greed, anger and harsh words."

The boy's eyes sparkled with wisdom on hearing the grandfather's words.

It is virtue when, his footsteps sliding not through
envy, wrath,
Lust, evil speech-these four, man onwards moves in
ordered path.

Chapter 4 *Assertion of the Strength of Virtue* *Kural 35*

105

"Your Majesty! More than a thousand citizens are standing near the gate of the fortress, emotionally worked up."

"Sentinel! What is the reason? Why did you allow these donkeys to come up to the gates of the fortress?"

"They say they are hungry and have starved for many days."

"Who prevented them from eating food?"

"They have no food; so they are starving."

"Is that so? What is the reason for their being without food?"

"No work! So no means of income. It seems starvation is killing them."

"They are howling! You have come here to say this! You people don't want to leave me in peace!"

"Those crowds are agitating that they will express their grievance to the ruler directly and will go only after that."

"They will agitate! Then they will even speak of war! Today I have the function at which a prize is to be awarded to the court dancer. So tell those lazy people that they can't see me and chase them out."

"Kindly give a considered answer. If our watchmen literally carry out your order the creatures who stand at the gates with tears in their eyes may turn into balls of fire."

"Are you insulting my courage with your warning? You can't please yourself even with a story of a group of rats overcoming a tiger. It is their fate to wander about without work. It is the will of God."

"It seems they complained to their employers that their wages were inadequate to meet their needs. And those employers seem to have chased them out saying that they had no right to complain. If Your Honour intervenes their fate can be changed and their proverty removed."

"They are arrogant fellows! The dogs that complain against the man who feeds them have no right to be in our country. I can't see those indisciplined fellows. Tell them this. Go immediately."

The crowd refused to go back. Policemen surrounded them and attacked them. Then the six young leaders of those men were accused of trying to kill the ruler of the land.

The court awarded them death sentence. The news spread like wild fire.

The condemned were led to the gallows. The public rose like an angry sea. The compound-wall of the prison was smashed and six men were released.

The next target of the angry panthers was the palace. The crowd flooded into the palace but the king was not to be found there; he had run away somewhere. The people were jubilant and their shouts of victory reached the sky.

Even a bar of iron is weakened and cut by a file. Likewise, the rule of those who depend entirely on harsh language and award of indiscriminate punishments is also found to grow weak and fall. This is what Valluvar teaches in the following Kural:

Harsh words and punishments severe beyond
the right,
Are file that wears away the monarch's
conquering might.

Chapter 57 *Absence of Terrorism* *Kural 567*

106

"No guilt of mine! It's the guilt of my eyes!"

"Now I undergo the agony of the guilt. I was walking along the narrow path by the fields with a bundle of cut-grass on my head. How could I expect that my aunt's son, Oliyan, who had been tending the waterway would come up right opposite me on the path? He had just tried to move sideways to give me way. And suddenly skidded on the muddy mound on the path. He fell down on his back into the mud of the field. I am a maiden. How could I make a dart for him and hold him up? My modesty held me against it. I stood still like a statue. But my eyes didn't fail to go up to him and measure his handsome form from top to bottom."

"Oh, my heart, these are cruel eyes! They are the guilty ones! Oh, one or two won't suffice to speak the beauty of Oliyan's handsome form."

"I saw his broad chest. If I cover my face into his chest I would not know what goes outside in the world, even if the world breaks into pieces. His shoulders are like two hills. If I hold tight onto his shoulders and brush my tender lips against those of his rough ones, a delight unequalled would be on this earth! His eyes are big and bright, true to the merit of his name, Oliyan. I wish I could just lie down by his side and just caress those eyelides of his! Our marriage has been settled by our parents. But the damned calendar had babbled that it should be postponed by a year. How could one wait for a year? Yes, it is written on my head, and I wait. But why should these eyes of mine arrange for a meeting like this!"

"You know what he did on getting up from the mud? With a smile on his lips, he patted me and pinched me, and was gone. The pinch was on my cheek, and the pat was, oh, don't ask me of it. But the emotions kindled by the touch of his hand torment me like anything. The anguish of undying love — like the fire — has caught me into its folds."

"Was it my guilt? It was that of mine eyes. And as a punishment my eyes are dry now after shedding down all the tears."

"The eyes that caused me unquenched pangs of love are justly punished to weep till they are dried out of tears."

Thus a maiden who had seen her lover suffer, now suffers of her pangs of love.

Thus is the Kural that portrays her pangs:

Those eyes have wept till all the fount of tears is dry,
That brought upon me pain that knows no remedy.

Chapter 118 Eyes Consumed with Grief Kural 1174

107

"I must earn the enmity of that Narithalayan(Foxhead) at any cost. That alone will give me unlimited happiness."

So said King Arimanenjan (Lion-hearted), the ruler of Kayal Nadu, to the scholar-poet who used to compose verses in praise of the King. Narithalayan had the good fortune of being the intimate friend of the king. He used his crooked brains to weave elaborate schemes to create bitterness in the mind of the King against his close relations and friends and thus succeeded in driving them away. The King had refused to listen whenever the poet had tried to warn him about Narithalayan's nature. So the poet was now greatly surprised to hear the King's words.

And he said with a smile: "Is it really the King of Kayal Nadu who utters these words? What is the cause of this sudden rage? You refused to listen to me whenever I warned you about him. Now he does not have any feeling of enmity towards you. What is the use of suddenly making him your enemy?"

The King replied: "When you warned me, I turned a deaf ear to your words. I was deceived by his show of friendliness. I did not know that he is a treacherous fox. From certain recent activities of his, I have understood his real nature."

The King's eyes dimmed with tears as he spoke. Anxious to comfort him, the poet said: "You put your trust in anybody easily. You gave him an honour he cannot get from others. Giving him the foremost place in your company may be compared to applying a fire-brand to an itching scalp. Now you wish to win his enmity at any cost. It is this idea Valluvar has expressed beautifully in his Kural. I am happy that Valluvar's words have opened your eyes at least now."

The King embraced the poet warmly and requested him to recite the Kural. Here it is:

Unseemly are his deeds, yet proffering aid, the man draws nigh:
His hate — 'tis cheap at any price — be sure to buy!

Chapter 87 *The Might of Hatred* *Kural 867*

108

That youth was languishing in prison under a seven-year sentence, for a crime he had not committed. Though he was inwardly agitated at the unjust punishment meted out to him, he was adjusting himself to prison life and was mentally preparing himself for the seven-year ordeal.

He showed great interest in discharging the duties allotted to him as a prisoner and in making use of the library in the prison. One of the prison officials developed an unaccountable hatred for him, though he followed the discipline of the prison-house strictly and was obedient to all the officials.

He delighted in helping other prisoners to solve their problems and serving those who fell ill. That particular official hated this noble aspect of the young man's character and deliberately subjected him to frequent ill-treatment.

He would summon the young man using harsh language and then insult him. On some days he would give the youth a blow with his baton for no reason. Whenever he asked why he was beaten, he was locked in his cell and given more blows and denied food.

Two years passed thus. On an appeal filed by him praying for reconsideration of the undeserved punishment given to him, the court went into the case again and acquitted him. When he was released, he started towards his village to meet his parents. On the way he was shocked to find the cruel official lying on the road with bleeding injuries all over his body.

The young man laid him on his lap to see if he was conscious. The man opened his eyes and groaned that he was thirsty. The youth went to a nearby tank and fetched him some water. After drinking the water, the officer said with tears in his eyes that a mad bull attacked him and reduced him to that state. The youth carried him to a hospital and attended on him for five or six days until he fully recovered.

When he took leave of the official, the latter took the youth's hands in his and asked him, "How was it possible for you to

forget the ill-treatment I gave you for a long time and be of service to me?" The young man answered with a smile: "Sir, I have forgotten the ill-treatment given by you and also the help I have done to you. Valluvar has instructed us to forget the wrongs done to us and put the wrong-doers to shame by helping them in an hour of need. The message of the Kural is not for sages alone but for all people." On hearing his words, the official embraced him with gratitude and asked for his forgiveness.

To punish wrong, with kindly benefits the doers ply;
Thus shame their souls; but pass the ill unheeded by.

Chapter 32 *Not Doing Evil* *Kural 314*



109

"Here I pine always thinking about him. But he doesn't seem to think about me." Thus a maiden is sad.

"When he thinks not of me, how is it that he fades not from my thoughts?" Thus worries another maiden.

Both feel sorry that their lovers have not bestowed any thought on them. How could they ascertain if their lovers thought of them or not? This accusation is born out of their desires that the lovers—who had gone out on separation should fly back to him.

A beloved who has been suffering the pangs of separation wants to speak ill of her lover. The maiden's agony — that she is always thinking about him, but her lover thinks not of her — is beautifully portrayed by Valluvar in a couplet.

The beloved seemed to have gone out to occupy a palace, that is his heart. The lover posted a sentry at the entry and stopped her from entering in. Hence she could not gain entry into his heart.

But at the same time the lover continues to gain admission into her heart freely. She chides him for entering into her heart very often without any sense of shame.

This portrait of Kural gives a new focus of perception to describe that the beloved lives always in the thoughts of her lover, and that the lover seems not to think of her. He who has imprisoned her in his soul seems not to be ashamed of entering incessantly into her heart.

Here is the Kural:

Me from his heart he jealously excludes:
Hath he no shame who ceaseless on my
heart intrudes?

Chapter 121 *Sad Memories* *Kural 1205*

110

In 1947, India freed herself from British domination. Refusing to live in India as its citizens, Muslims formed for themselves a separate nation. As a result India became a little smaller.

That separate nation is Pakistan. The Muslim leader responsible for the formation of that nation died after an illness. After a lot of confusion, Yahya Khan became the country's Dictator and during his regime Bengal became independent of Pakistan. Bhutto gathered the support of the people against dictatorship, removed Yahya Khan from power and took charge of the administration.

The question of choosing the Chief of the Armed Forces became quite a problem because there were seven or eight people qualified for the post. Prime Minister Bhutto ignored the claims of all of them and appointed Zia as the Chief of the Armed Forces. Bhutto who was capable of devoted and selfless service for his country went wrong in the choice of Zia for that great office.

What was the consequence of that? There was a popular agitation in the wake of a general election. Using it as an excuse Zia put Bhutto in prison and came to power. He did not stop there. He implicated Bhutto in a murder case and without a proper enquiry, he was awarded death sentence.

Representations came from most of the governments of the world pleading that Bhutto should not be hanged. Zia did not yield.

Bhutto did not plead for mercy: "I shall have the end of a martyr," he declared.

The ill-treatment to which Bhutto was subjected in prison, the humiliation that was meted out to him whenever he was brought to the court would move even stony-hearted people. Zia rewarded his friend and benefactor in this way.

One morning the sad news that moved all the people of the world came. That was the news of Bhutto's hanging.

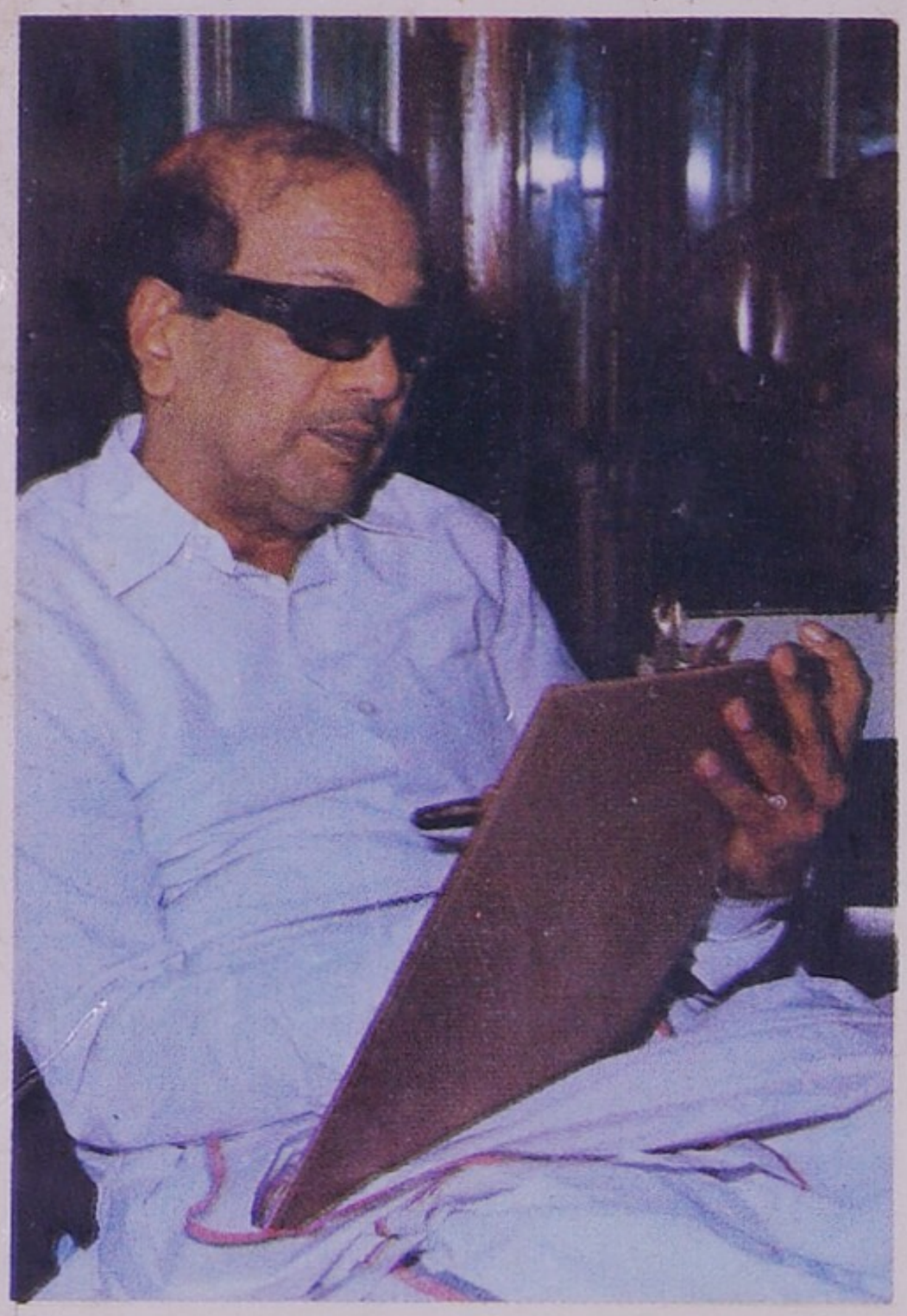
Bhutto should have cried inwardly for choosing a bad man as a friend without carefully examining his character. But, without showing any such feeling outwardly Bhutto met his death cheerfully.

"A friendship that is not based on a thorough examination of a person's character is found to be suicidal." Valluvar expressed this truth two thousand years ago in his Kural. The friendship which Bhutto had for Zia without examining his character serves as an illustration of the truth of this Kural.

Alliance with the man you have not proved
and proved again,
In length of days will give you mortal pain.

Chapter 80 *Investigation in Forming Friendship* *Kural 792*





Dr. M. Karunanidhi, popularly known as 'Kalaignar' is an unequalled Orator, Novelist, Playwright, Editor, Publisher, Parliamentarian, Administrator, Poet and Statesman. He was born at Thirukkuvalai in Thanjavur District on 3rd June, 1924. His father is Muthuvelar and mother Anjugam Ammaiyar.

Inspired by Periyar and Anna, he entered public life at the age of 14 when he was at school.

He is the founder of the first Student Wing of the Dravidian Movement called "Tamilnadu Tamil Manavar Mandram." He is one of the Founder-Members of the D.M.K.

His powerful oration and writings attracted the educated youngsters to the D.M.K., and his sacrifice for the party, undergoing all trials and tribulations, has led him to the present position of being the matchless leader of the Dravidian Movement.

He was imprisoned more than twenty times—during anti-Hindi agitation, for the cause of the Sri Lankan Tamils and for his active participation in various agitations for the cause of the people.

When he was imprisoned, more than twenty persons committed self-immolation, out of whom fifteen persons succumbed.

He is a well-known author of more than hundred books in prose and poetry.

Prominent among his books are: *Romapuri Pandian, Thenpandi Singam, Vellikizhamai, Nenjukku Needhi, Kuralovium, Sanga Thamizh,* and *Ponnar Sangar.*

His stage-plays full of fiery dialogues are: *Thookkumedai, Kagithapoo, Udayasooriyan,* and *Silappathikaram.*

He has written script for more than 50 motion-pictures and his *Parasakthi* revolutionised the film-world.

Some of his popular films are: *Mandiri Kumari, Manohara, Malaikallan, Rangoon Rådha, Rajah Rani, Kanchi Thalaivan, Poompuhar, Needhikku Thandanai,* and *Paalaivana Rojakkal.*

He was elected to the Tamilnadu Legislative Assembly in 1957, and he has been Member of the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council for more than 30 years. He has won all Assembly elections contested from 1957 to 1989. He was a Member of the Legislative Council from 1984 to 1986.

He joined Anna's Cabinet in 1967, as Minister for Public Works.

He became Chief Minister of Tamilnadu in 1969, after the demise of Anna, and administered the State till January 1976.

He was elected again Chief Minister in January 1989.

It is notable that he resigned his post of the Member of the Legislative Assembly 1983 for the cause of the Sri Lankan Tamils.

He lives for Tamil and the Tamils and his name throbs in the hearts of Tamils a over the world.