

THIRUKKURAL

To understand the present study, it is necessary to know about the literary work, "Thirukkural" in detail. Hence, to begin with details are given about the author, the nature of the work, comparison of the work with the psychological theories, and its need to be applied in the mental health field.

"Thirukkural" is a collection of couplets, best known, oft quoted numerous translated Tamil classic, written by Thiruvalluvar. Thiruvalluvar was a poet and scholar, a sage and seer, and an idealist and realist at once. He produced a body of doctrines which are not only matchless as a work of synthesis in the entire literature of the world, but it has also acquired a position unique in transcending the time and space" (Thirunavukkarasu, 1988).

"THIRUKKURAL" - THE WORK

Thirukkural is believed to be written during Sangam period, post-Sangam period, etc., roughly about the beginning of AD. There is no concurrence among scholars about the period of the work. Though it is a very old literature, it still survives and is in vogue, as can be seen in the way it is quoted by many in different walks of life at present. The statement made by Thirunavukkarasu (1988) that it transcends time is justified.

The word "Thirukkural" means sacred couplet. The terms 'Thiru' and 'Kural' make the title "Thirukkural". 'Kural' means anything short. But in Tamil, the term 'Kural' is given par excellence to Thiruvalluvar's work only. And 'Thiru' is a mark of respect and thus has been given the place of prefix both for the name of the author as well as for the work. 'Thiru' also means sacred.

The 'Thirukkural' is commented, interpreted and translated in various ways. The Parimelaagar Urai (Markasahayanjettiar & Ramasamy pulavar, 1969) is one commentary which is most often suggested by the Tamil scholars and even scholars in Thirukkural. However, certain scholars like Anandan (1986), say that parimelaagar Urai is not the commentary on Thirukkural but it is Parimelaagar's own personal work. Other commentaries include Manakkudavar Urai, and others.

In addition, there are scholars now who deviate totally from the above said commentators. They have taken Marxist point of view (Anandan, 1986), and social point of view (Ilangumaranar, 1990; karunanidhi, 1981; Nedunjelian, 1991; Mohanrasu, 1994), to mention a few.

The translations are various in number and languages. In English Pope, Muthusamy, V.V.S.Iyer (1989), have given their translations. It is also translated into other Indian and foreign languages.

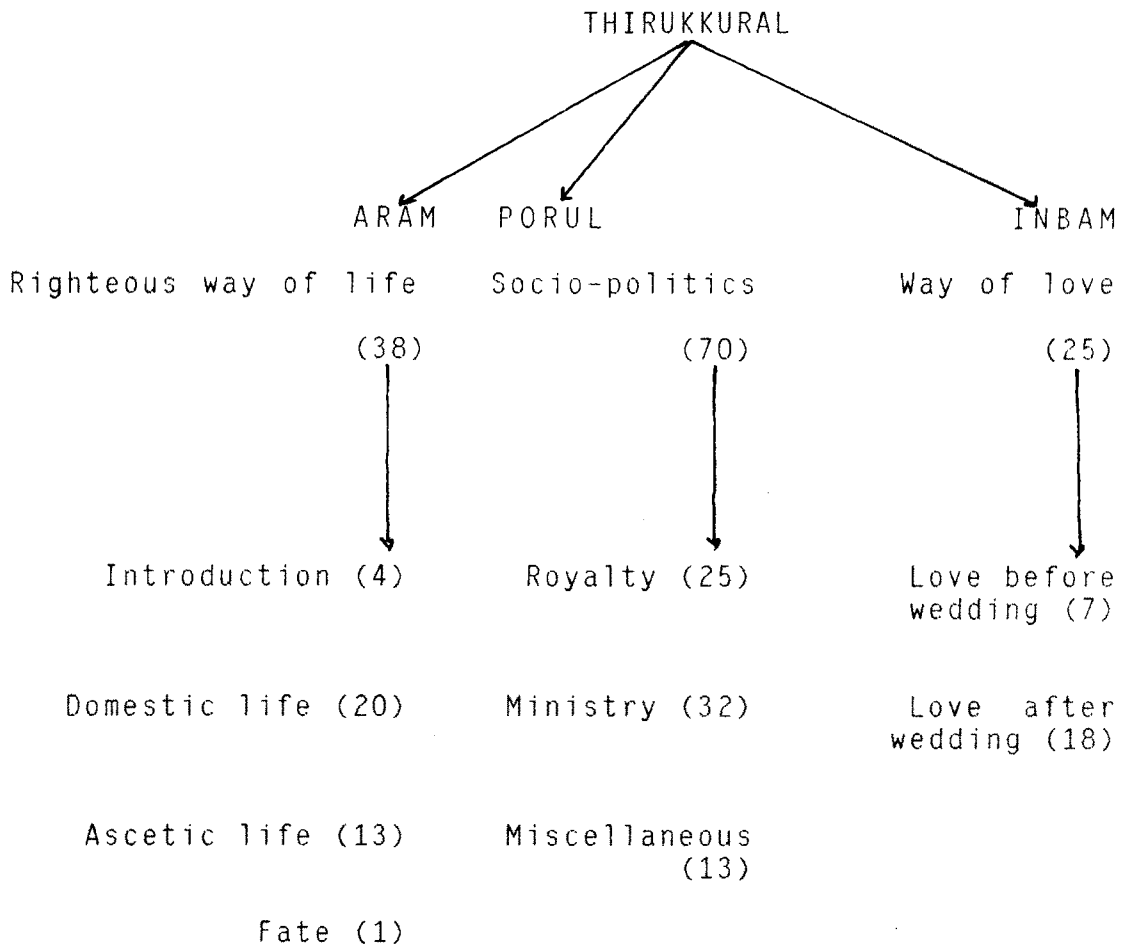
It is interesting to note that each of the commentators and translators criticise the other commentators and translators. The variability in the understanding of the Thirukkural proves its depth and universality.

At this point, Rajasingam (1987) has to be quoted. "No perfect translation of the 'kuraḷ' is possible. All person's beliefs and dogmas could be said to find significance in the 'kuraḷ' as it is of universal application. In it are found expositions which could be termed principal in every traditional civilisation. Such translations as have so far attempted to attach a system or circumscribe a set of theories depending upon the translators' predispositions".

In the present study, therefore, various commentaries and translations are read. But interpretation of the text as a whole and the 'aḍihāram' in particular are done by the investigator and the guide, the criterion being good psychological sense and elegance.

This sacred work has three main section - 'aṟam', 'poruḷ', and 'iṇbam'. These can be roughly translated into English as righteous way of life, socio-political life and way of love respectively. Usually, these three aspects are equated with the 'dharma', 'artha', and 'kāma' in Sanskrit, respectively. However, in the present study, Thirukkural is not compared with any other literature and is considered as an independent piece of work. Each of these sections is

divided into different chapters ('iyal'); each chapter is divided into different topics called 'āḍihāram'. Each 'āḍihāram' consists of ten couplets ('kuṛaḷ'). The following is the schematic representation of the quantitative aspect of Thirukkural.



(number in brackets is the number of topics)

In total there are 133 topics consisting of 10 couplets each, amounting to 1330 couplets. This is the categorisation followed by most of the scholars. However, there are scholars like Anandan (1986), who have categorised the topics in different ways. But in the present study,

only the main classification, that is the three sections, 'aram', 'porul' and 'inbam' are considered. Further finer classifications of chapters and 'adiharams' under each chapter are not considered, due to the following reasons.

Firstly, the categorisation shown in the figure does not fit into the current social system, in the sense that, we do not have the system of kingship, and the like in its active sense (second section - 'porutpāl'). Secondly, in 'araṭṭuppāl', the chapter categorisation as domestic life and ascetic life do not strictly mean that a person who is in domestic life can only follow domestic virtues and not ascetic virtues, and that a person who is ascetically oriented cannot be in domestic life. This has been said by the author of the work himself in the following 'kural':

"Aṭṭin oluki aṇaiḷukka ilvaḷkkai
Nōrpārin nōnmai udaiṭu"

-K.48

'Behold the house holder who helpeth others in the observance of their vows and who leadeth a virtuous life himself: he is a greater saint than those who betake themselves to a life of fasting and prayer'

-V.V.S.Iyer

Also,

"Malittalum nittalum vēnda ulaham
palittādu olittu vidin"

-K.280

'Neither matted hair thou wantest nor shaven head, if thou abstain from that which the world condemneth'.

-V.V.S.Iyer

These give sufficient proof that one can be in domestic life and yet follow the characteristics of an ascetic. The third reason for not following the above said categorisation is that, there is no one universally accepted categorisation and there are many controversies regarding the categorisation. If one particular categorisation is used, there may be bias.

Hence, with the support from the commentaries of Ilangumaranar (1990), Anandan (1986), Karunanidhi (1981), Nedunchelian (1991) and others, the investigator assumes that 'Thirukkural' is reflective of the social aspects experienced by people in all walks of life. So in the present study, the three main sections and the couplets under each 'aḍihāram' are considered. Each 'aḍihāram' is counted independently. Other details of classification are not taken into consideration.

Out of the three sections - 'aḥam', 'poruḷ' and 'iṅbam', only the first two are considered for the present study. The third section, namely 'iṅbam' is left out totally, because, it predominantly deals with the emotion of love ('kāḍal'); the description of the woman and her feelings of love; the description of love between man and woman before wedding; and the love between man and woman after wedding ('kaḷaviyal' and 'kaḥpiyal'). A different type of approach specifically using this section could be considered by future researchers.

Out of the two sections considered in the present study - 'aṟam' and 'poruḷ', some 'aḍihāram' are left out, the reason for which is described in detail hereunder.

'Vān Ciṟappu': The 'aḍihāram' 'vānciṟappu', ie., In Praise of Rain concentrates on the profit and loss, pros and cons of rains and no rains. It mainly talks about how rain affects the human life, in terms of agriculture and the system or order in man. Rain is a natural phenomenon and does not get included in psychology (though rain may affect man) directly. It cannot be modified or changed. A psychological interpretation cannot be arrived at. Hence, this 'aḍihāram' is not included in the present study.

'Puḷāl Maruṭṭal': Not Eating Meat, the 'aḍihāram' 'puḷāl unṇamai' is left out. Extending grounds or compassion to the animal world, Valluvar says that avoiding meat eating is as important as any other righteous behaviour. However, in the modern world many people do not subscribe to this view. Since this aspect is capable of creating a resistance in the mind of the subject being tested and too much of puritanical stand from the point of view of nutrition and modern way of living, this 'aḍihāram' is not included.

'Iṟai māṭchi': In the 'aḍihāram' 'irai ^{māṭchi} ~~vanakkam~~' (Greatness of King), Valluvar describes the qualities of a king - leader. The aspect of leadership is not dealt with in this study and hence this 'aḍihāram' is not included in the present study.

'Terinḍu Telīḍal': In this 'aḍihāram' selection and confidence, Valluvar deals with the entrepreneurial skills, where in one has to select and confide in one person who is appropriate for the job. Since the present study deals with mental health and entrepreneurial skill is not directly related to mental health, this 'aḍihāram' is not included.

'Terinḍu Viṇaiādal': This 'aḍihāram' selection and employment, is a continuation of the previous 'adiharam'. The same reason as given above holds good for this 'aḍihāram' also, and hence it is not included in the present study.

'Cengōnmai': In this 'aḍihāram' righteous rule, the kind of leadership is described. The righteous leadership is what is dealt with in this 'aḍihāram'. This 'adiharam' also has been interpreted as dealing with entrepreneurial skill. For the same reason given for the above two 'aḍihāram' this 'aḍihāram' is also not included in the present study.

'Kodungōnmai': Following the above kind of rule tyrannical rule or leadership is dealt with in this 'aḍihāram'. For the reason stated for the above 'aḍihāram', this 'aḍihāram' is also not dealt with in the present study.

'Otrādal': The nature and importance of spying by the king, during the periods of kingdoms, is what is dealt with in this 'adihāram'. Since this is not related to mental health, it is not included in the present study.

'Amaiccu': the ministry that the king - ruler ought to have, has been described. Since this is not relevant to mental health, it is not included in the present study.

'Tūdu': In this 'adihāram', the nature and duties of a spy are dealt with. Since this is not relevant to the present study, it is not included.

'Nādu': This 'adihāram' deals with the kind of nation one ought to be. This is not directly related to mental health and hence not included in the present study.

'Araṇ': The natural protection like the hills - mountains, sea, and such other aspects, for the protection of the nation from the enemies is what is dealt with in this 'adihāram'. Since this is not directly related to mental health, it is not included in the present study.

'Padai Mātcī': It means the greatness of military. Since the present study does not include the ^{li} military or national political scene, which this 'adihāram' is dealing with, it is not included.

'Padai Cerukku': It means the pride of military. The reason for not including in the present study is the same as the above.

'Pahai Mātcī': In the present study, the war between nations is not included. Since this 'aḍihāram' deals with the greatness of the enemy that one should know of in kingship, this is not included in the present study.

Pahai Tīraṇḍeridaḷ: Same as above and hence not included.

'Utpahai': The fight within one's own kingdom is dealt with in this 'aḍihāram' which is not dealt with in the present study and hence excluded.

'Marunḍu': The title means medicine. This 'aḍihāram' deals with the food habits and the way disease has to be approached. This is not relevant to psychology directly, and hence not included in the present study.

'Uḷavu': In this 'aḍihāram' farming, the importance of agriculture is included. This is not directly relevant to mental health, and hence excluded.

'Nalkuravu': Means poverty. In this 'aḍihāram', the negative aspects of poverty is included. Since this is not directly related to mental health, it is not included.

For the present study each 'kuṛaḷ' is read and analysed. The central theme for each 'aḍihāram' is brought out, which is usually the title of the 'aḍihāram'. For this an

interpretation is given. Based on the interpretation the inventory is developed. The details are dealt with in the chapter on methodology.

THIRUKKURAL AND PSYCHOLOGY

'Thirukkural' has many applications in psychology. Scholars have viewed 'Thirukkural' in psychological terms. Thirunavukkarasu (1988) in his article, has said that 'Thirukkural' is very useful in the betterment of the psychology of the people. Narayanan (1986) has said that 'Thirukkural' is the Veda of the South and it is a source in which one can find psychological concepts being dealt with. Similar views have been expressed by a few others also to the investigator during discussions with them. Dr. Mohanarasu, Thirukkural Chair, University of Madras, said that he is carrying on activities based on Thirukkural for the positive personality growth of school children. They are asked to live the life of one aspect ('adiharam') of Thirukkural, example., 'vāymai', ie., being truthful according to the 'kuṛaḷ' in the 'adiharam', for a period of one month. They are asked to write an introspective report about the way of life of truthfulness after the prescribed period. The teachers also are asked to give a report. It is found that there is a definite positive impact of this method. Also, the parents voluntarily give a positive report. He says that one can definitely bring about a change in society in the positive direction in due course of time.

Pulavar Ilangumaranar, the author of the book 'Thirukkural - Valviyal Urai' and many others works, retired as a Tamil teacher runs a voluntary organisation for Thirukkural called 'Thirukkural Thava Cālai' in Thiruchirapalli. Here he trains people who go there in developing the mind with the use of Thirukkural. This is the main aim in addition to many other aims of running the organisation. According to him, Thirukkural gives guidance in the way one has to live, which is reflected in the title of the book quoted above. He says that Thirukkural aids one to better oneself and consequently the society at large.

K.S.Anandan, who has keen understanding and great regard for Thirukkural has written an interpretation of Thirukkural titled, 'Thirukkural Unmai Poru!'. Reading this work one feels that Anandan has realised that Thiruvalluvar has contributed a great deal by giving guidance for the betterment of the society, by way of guidance for better behaviour of individual members.

Thavathiru Kundrakkudi Adigalar is a well known figure for his expertise in Tamil in general and Thirukkural in particular. It is known that he believes and preaches Thirukkural to the people, for it guides one to lead a better life.

Late Vela Rajamanickam founded an organisation called 'Kural^{aya} ~~78~~m' which is predominantly for the propogation of Thirukkural. A periodical 'Kuraliyam' is being published

from this organisation. Now the charge of the organisation is taken over by his daughter Vel. Poongodi. Pulavar Arumuganar, retired Tamil teacher is the editor of the magazine. The organisation believes that Thirukkural gives suggestions for better living of individual members and the society at large. They work for it by holding workshops and the like for common people.

Pulavar Kamaluddin is another interesting person, a Tamil teacher, who arranges competitions for school children every year on Thirukkural - Thirukkural recitation, drawings based on different themes of Thirukkural, debates on different issues on Thirukkural and the like, to bring awareness among children and the public at large about Thirukkural and consequently utilisation of Thirukkural concepts for betterment.

D.Kannan, runs a periodical for Thirukkural 'Valluvar Vali'. discussion with him resulted in the same theme that Thirukkural guides one to lead a better life. The above list is not complete. Many people are working in these lines with the strong faith in Thirukkural giving guidance for a better life.

Rajasingam has contributed a great lot to the understanding of Thirukkural and he says that, it contributes to the psyche in his work 'Thirukkural - the day light of the psyche' (1987).

Discussions with the experts and the experienced and reading books on Thirukkural, made the investigator's hunch that 'Thirukkural gives ideal norms for adaptive behaviour' stronger and made her to conduct a systematic investigation on how Thirukkural can be used. The investigator finds that Thirukkural has some similarity with that of the concepts in humanistic psychology, like self-actualisation and the list of characteristics of self-actualised person given by Maslow and the concept of full growth of personality. (The list is given in the fifth chapter). The present investigation is the result of this understanding.
