CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL LIFE
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T.S. Eliot, in his *Note towards the definition of culture*¹ has stated: 'It is part of my thesis that the culture of the individual is dependent upon the group or class, and that the culture of the group or class is dependent upon the culture of the whole society to which that group or class belongs'. It is but natural that Valluvar ought to have studied the Tamil society, analysed its merits and demerits and conceived a social order which would be of universal application.

The family is the primary unit of social order and with a benevolent king at its head, the society ensures peace and harmony. Valluvar has eulogised the family life in tune with the highest moral traditions.

Valluvar's conception of social order is to be gleaned from the division on 'Kudimai' and other parts of 'Porut Pal'. The modern meaning of the word 'Kudimai' is citizenship, but at the time of Valluvar, it meant 'coming from a good family'. Fortunately, even the conservative commentator Parimelalagar² has accepted good family as common to all the four castes. There may be high or low families in all castes.

And hence, in the social order contemplated by Valluvar, there is no place for the caste system.
Many foreigners are naturally surprised at this school of thought of an Indian. The Rev. Eliza Hoole D.D. says: 'we cannot but greatly admire and throughout the whole, he evinces a singular degree of freedom from many of the strong prejudices of the Hindus'.

Valluvar accords a supreme place for education in his social order. Education is not to be denied to weaker sections of society. In Sanskritic tradition, education was considered to be the monopoly of Brahmins, even though education is prescribed for the ruler, it has got an universal appeal.

In Cangam classics, we find poets from all walks of life. There are great poets like Kabilar from the Brahmin community. The astronomer poet's Kaniyan Punnukaran's universal philosophy is well known. The crowned Pandya Kings have written poetry; the humble farmer has also contributed his own mite to Cangam literature. Even the gipsie Kuramakal Ilaveyini has a poem to her credit.

It is this structure of society that must have prompted Valluvar to rise above considerations of caste while laying down his theory of social order in general and of education in particular.
However, Valluvar has advocated a casteless society but not a classless society. While surveying his contemporary society, he found that only a few were rich but many were poor, suffering intensely. Valluvar was not able to think of a plausible explanation for this social injustice. And hence, he took refuge in the concept of Poorva Punya or the good that has been done in the previous birth. Those who have done 'Tabas' are rich, and those who have not done 'Tabas' are poor (Kural 270).

The levelling influence of education and culture has been realised even at the time of Puranánúru by no less a person, than a Pandya king, Pandyan Nandangeliyan who is reported have conquered the Aryan army, has summed up his views on education in a beautiful poem.

'It is good to learn even if it means that one has to worship his teacher. When the teacher is in need of help, timely assistance must be provided. The teacher should also be given adequate financial assistance. Even if one has to strive for pleasing the teacher in all these ways, it is good to learn. Even the mother is likely to distinguish between her sons on account of education or the absence of it. The four fold caste system looses its lustre when one belonging
to the lower caste is learned, high caste people will go to him for learning and worship him'.

And hence in Puranānūru, the relationship between the teacher and the taught is likened to the deity and the devotee. Valluvar employs a different simile. The teacher and the taught are compared to the rich and the poor. Even if one has to adopt a humble posture before the teacher as the poor before the rich, it is good to learn (Kural 305).

According to Valluvar, the dignity of the educated transcends caste barriers. A learned man belonging to a lower caste is superior to an uneducated one of the higher caste (Kural 209).

Thus there is much in common between the theory of Education propounded by Pandyan king Nedugcoiliyan and Valluvar.

Just as Valluvar has not said anything about the rituals of marriage in Kāmattu-pāl, he is also silent about the system of education. Read in conjunction with the references of Saṅgam classics, there is a clear indication that the system of education was highly individualistic, and the pupils went in search of teachers. They were willing to worship a learned man
irrespective of his birth. However, there is no evidence to suggest that pupils resided with their teachers as in the Gurukula system. Nor is there any prescription of Bhramacharya for the students.

Madurai Kanakkāyar Mahānār Ākāśāranār has come very near to advocating a classless society. In his poem in Purāṇāṇāru, he rules out the distinction between the ruler and the ruled. What difference is there in food and clothing between a great emperor who has unquestioned sway over the sea-clad earth and an uneducated hunter who is keenly watching day and night to trap animals? Can the king eat more than the hunter or can he wear more than two attires at the same time? The unit for food and clothing is the same for the mighty ruler as well as the humblest hunter. In other things also, both are equal. The aim and use of the riches is to share it with others. If one wants to enjoy wealth by himself, he is likely to miss much at the end.

Valluvar also asserts that all are born equal but he has qualified his assertion that there could be some discrimination between people on account the trades in which they are engaged (Kural 972).
Valluvar has formulated three chapters relating to Education, 'Kalvi' or Education, 'Kallamai' or Absence of education and 'Kelvi' or learning by listening.

Only deserving books should be learnt; learn them thoroughly without any shadow of doubt; what is learnt should be put into practice (Kural 391).

The learning of alphabet and numerals is likened to the eyes in importance (Kural 392). Various other interpretations have also been given to 'En' and 'Eluttu'. They are considered to denote arts and sciences, humanities and sciences, logic and mathematics. 'Eluttu' has also been interpreted as Tamil literature by the learned commentator Sivagnana Munivar.

Only the learned could be said to have eyes, the uneducated are blind. (Kural 393). Learned men meet with pleasure and when they depart, there is an anxiety to look forward to the nearest opportunity to meet again (Kural 394). The more you learn the more you intelligence increases (Kural 396).

The idea that learned men can thrive at any place and time is deep rooted in Sahgal poets. We have
already referred to the catholic message of Kanian
Pungunran. "All the villages in the world are ours and
all are our kin’. Another Puranānuru poet has compared
learned men to skilled carpenters and the world to a
fine forest. The craftsman can easily cut the wood to
his size and so also, the learned can go anywhere in
the world and thrive. They can find food in whatever
direction they may go.

Valluvar sums up these sentiments and asks, why
don’t some people learn until their death, when it is well
known that to the learned any country becomes his own
and any town his own? (Kural 397).

If one learns well in this birth, his learning
will stand by him in good stead in his subsequent births.
(Kural 393). Education is a deathless asset, other riches
are not real (Kural 400).

There were only individual schools of learning,
and no formal system of education organised by the State.
When Valluvar refers to the educated, it means education
under a teacher.

Valluvar was aware of the fact that one may be
highly intelligent though not educated. But such
intelligence without education is of no use as the learned world will not recognise it (Kural 404). As soon as the uneducated intelligent person comes into contact with a learned man and enters into conversation with him, he will discover his ignorance (Kural 405). The ignorant merely exist, and are useless like chaff (Kural 406). A handsome person without education is compared to a beautiful doll (Kural 407).

Once the Cola king, Kurāppalli Tungiya Perum Tirumā Valavan was delaying the offer of gifts to the Poet Madalan Madurai Kumaraṇar.14 The poet was much aggrieved and told the king: Even if afflicted by acute poverty, we will think of the enormous wealth of one who has compassion in his heart. On the other hand, we feel very much for the poverty of intellectuals (Kural 408). The learned are real human beings and the uneducated are beasts only as they have not benefited by being human beings (Kural 410).

Much emphasis has been laid upon learning by listening by Valluvar in his chapter on 'Kōlvi'. Modern educational theory also takes note of this fact by including lectures, seminars and discussions in its methodology. But the lecture method has fallen on evil days. It is now supposed to be least effective and
should be restricted to the minimum. Psychologists also hold the view that the span of attention varies from individual to individual and that long lectures are likely to have only marginal effects on the listeners. Visual images have a better chance of creating an indelible impression on the audience.

Ancient methods were two-fold in nature, learning and listening, 'Kālvi' and 'Këlvi'. Valluvar has laid equal emphasis on both. Knowledge by listening is the supreme wealth (Kural 411). When we have nothing to feed the ears, the stomach also must be given something (Kural 412).

Those who have got ear sense are compared to the heavenly angels (Kural 413). If one is not able to learn by oneself, it is better to listen and learn (Kural 414).

There is no use of having the ear holes without gaining knowledge; by such intense listening, two holes are bored again (Kural 413). In grammatical convention of Purat-tiṉai 'Irumpal Kāṇchi' it is stated that unless accustomed to listening good things in life, the ear holes are useless and are like holes created by arrows.

In Patirrupattu, there is a reference to long and sharp listening 'Nedu Nūṟ Kēlvi'. The quality
of humility comes only to those who have learnt a lot by listening (Kural 419).

The ear is the sense through which food for thought is channelled. Some have only the tongue sense which feeds the stomach and have no ear sense. It is immaterial whether such senseless people exist or die (Kural 420).

There is no use of being a handsome person without a penetrating intellect. What is the use of a lifeless doll, however beautiful it might be (Kural 427).

The theory of intelligence propounded by Valluvar is to be gleaned mainly from the three chapters: Intelligence or Arivudaimai, idiocy (Pūtama) and assuming idiots 'Pullarivāṇmai'.

The Tamil word 'Arivu' means both knowledge and intelligence. But this chapter deals exclusively with intelligence.

The comprehensive theory of intelligence presupposes a discriminating power to differentiate the good from the evil and to guide the five senses in the right direction (Kural 422). An Aham poet has referred to the wavering mind motivated by desire.
With the help of knowledge and intelligence, we have to redeem the truant mind in tune with moral and social traditions.

Powers of judgment are included in the concept of intelligence. In Nārrināi, independent judgment is emphasised: 'in consultation with others weigh the consequences and come to your own judgement'. Valluvar underlines this idea in a different manner. Whatever may be subject matter and whoever may be the person speaking it, the function of intelligence is to find out the truth (Kural 423).

Even complicated matters should be explained in simple words; by listening to others, one must derive the benefit of subtle ideas - that is the true sign of intelligence.

Befriending the world and adjustability with its ways are also considered as aspects of intelligence (Kural 425, 426).

Taste is included in intelligence. Intelligent people know how to deal with every situation (Kural 427). To recoil from evil is the hallmark of intelligence; not to be afraid of evil is the sign of idiocy (Kural 428).
Foresight is also included in intelligence. To foresee and prevent the impending danger is the shield provided by intelligence (Kural 429).

To sum up, intelligence according to Valluvar means and includes power of discrimination, judgement, open mind not imperious to learn from others, adjustability with the world's ways, tact and foresight.

Modern psychologists are of the view that intelligence consists of two factors: G and S. The G factor means the ability to comprehend things in general. 'S' factor means special abilities like skill in numerals, painting etc.

Valluvar's theory of intelligence indeed refers to the 'G' factor in unmistakable terms.

It is in the conception of the nature and development of intelligence that Valluvar sounds so modern. No doubt learning increases intelligence. The more you learn, the more intelligent you become. Just as more water spurts with more and more digging of the sand well of a river bed, learning nurtures and develops intellect (Kural 273).

Nevertheless, there are certain limitations to the growth of intelligence. Learning can only bring
the latent talents to the fore; each one has a potential for the development of his intelligence; and there are limits beyond which there is no scope for development.

'Nunniya Nūlpala Karinum marruntan
Uumai Arivē Mikum' (Kural 373)

It is this clear perception that is the original contribution of Valluvar. Even though Parimēlalagar has given a fatalistic interpretation, psychological interpretation suits better.

Valluvar also recognises the fact that there may be idiots among the educated people. Some are good at learning books and even succeed in teaching others but fail to control their senses and hanker after illegal wealth and pleasure. They are the most idiotic of the lot. (Kural 834).

The attributes of idiocy are the following: leaving beneficial things and choosing harmful alternatives, craze for following the evil path, shamelessness, indifference, incompatibility, and negligence (Kural 831 to 833).

If such an idiot begins to act, he is likely to damn himself for all the subsequently births also.
He will land himself in trouble and will be found guilty of fabrication and fraud (Kural 835, 836). If by any chance, he is blessed with wealth, his near and dear ones will be left to wallow in poverty and hunger while strangers will enjoy his wealth. A wealthy idiot will behave like a mad man intoxicated with liquor (Kural 837, 838).

This sort of absolute idiocy is to be clearly distinguished from the pretensions to intelligence. Presumptuous idiots belong to a different category. Not even their enemies will be able to inflict so much harm upon them as they themselves are capable (Kural 841). It is the presumption of intelligence; they will pretend that they know things which they really do not know with the result that others will suspect them even on subjects which they happen to know well (Kural 845).

By himself an idiot is incapable of knowing what is good for him. Nor will he heed the advice of others. He is a bane upon society (Kural 846). Such incorrigible idiots are beyond redemption. Having a negative attitude towards life, he is inclined to deny whatever is axiomatic to the world (Kural 850).

cāṇgam classics and their learned commentators frequently refer to the subtle and
penetrating intellect, 'Mun mañ Mulai Pulam'. Valluvar was the first to examine its true nature, to determine its relation with learning and to bring out its scope on development and the limitations on it.

In our social behaviour, we are apt to find fault with others frequently, but the key to social harmony lies in the realisation of one's own faults (Kural 191).

The English proverb: 'tell me your friends, I will tell you who you are' is only too true. According to Valluvar, our intelligence and nature is affected by our friends, just as water acquires the quality of the earth on which it stands or flows (Kural 453).

Kurumetogai22 has laid down the dictum 'Action is the soul force of all men'

'Vinaiyē Adavark Kuyirē'

The action oriented philosophy of Valluvar derives its strength from Puram traditions. He has prescribed numerous rules for men of action. Here the most salient features of his dictums are surveyed. Think well before beginning to act and it would be degrading to think after launching the programme of action (Kural 467).
The positive and negative aspects of action, omission and commission are recognised in Kural 466. Before embarking on a plan of action, the pros and cons must be weighed; loss or gain must be assessed. Troubles in the middle must be anticipated (Kural 461). Another golden rule of action is that even while doing good, wrongs may be committed unless it is done in accordance with the nature of those to whom such good is done (Kural 469).

All this shows Valluvar's deep insight into human nature and stands eloquent testimony to his utilitarian and pragmatic approach towards the formulation of his philosophy. The proper time and place for the execution of action is also to be taken into consideration (Kural 484).

In human relations, it is impossible to find people who are perfect in everything. By nature, human beings are imperfect, they have their merits and demerits. Valluvar offers the most practical counsel. 'Examine the merits and faults of an individual; judge the predominating element and if merits are more numerous than faults, accept him.'

"Kuran Nādi Kurramum Nādi
Migainādi Mikka Kolal": (Kural 504)

What is the touchstone of greatness or smallness? One has to be judged by one's own acts (Kural 505).
Stress has also been laid on having good relations with relatives in the chapter on 'Curram talal'. Even though it is meant for the king, it will equally apply for other citizens. Forgetfulness destroys one's fame and hence, it has to be avoided at all costs. The evil that accrues on account of forgetfulness is codified in the chapter on 'Puccāvāmai'.

The quality of mercy has been praised in the chapter on 'Kannottam'. In the Drama, merchant of Venice, by Shakespeare, Portia compares mercy with the manna from heaven. Valluvar says that the survival of the world itself depends upon this graceful quality of mercy (Kural 571). Mercy is considered as a quality of the eyes and hence, it is called as 'Kannottam'.

The highest sign of individual culture is described in Narviñai. If our closest friends offer poison and ask us to drink, we should comply with their request. Valluvar also says that cultured people cannot refuse to take the poisoned drink offered by close friends and even while accepting such drink, they will continue to show friendly feelings towards them (Kural 580).

In the action-oriented and positive way of life of the ancient Tamils, they had two words testifying
to their hard working nature. 'Muyarci' or 'trying' and 'Unarrulal' or striving hard. And that too, one has to aim at high and noble things only; it does not matter if by chance there is failure to achieve (Kural 596).

The indomitable will in pursuit of high things is frequently referred to in Sangam works as 'asaivil Nontal' 25 tireless effort. Lethargic attitude towards life has been assailed in the chapter 'Madi Inmai'.

The planned structure of Kural is itself a clear indication that Valluvar wanted to project the positive aspects of life. The first major division dealing with ethical rules contains only 34 chapters, the first four being introductory. Among the 34 chapters, 20 chapters deal with family life and only 14 chapters are allotted for ascetic way of life. This led Dr. Albert Schweitzer 26 to remark that life negation is a distant cloud in Kural.

On the other hand, 70 chapters are devoted to political and social structure in 'Porut Päl'. As many as eleven chapters deal with plan of action, selection of personnel management, overcoming hurdle's and tireless efforts.

In sharp contrast to the fatalism of Hindu, Jain and Buddhist schools of thought, Valluvar has laid
down that even destiny could be overcome by constant and tireless efforts.

'Ulaiyur uppakkam kanbar ulaiviru
Talatu ughatru pavar' (Kural 620)

Even when the fate stands against getting benefits, hard work earns it due wages Kural 619. Lack of luck is not a disgrace, but lack of will in taking efforts is (Kural 618).

One should not lose heart, thinking of the uphill task, as greatness can be achieved by striving hard (Kural 611). Abandoning a task in the middle should be avoided, as the world will abandon such weak persons (Kural 612).

The fact that if one wants to be of help to others, one should be of an enterprising nature, has been stressed in three couplets. Tireless effort leads to accrual of wealth; lack of effort brings in poverty (Kural 616 and 617).

The sturdy bull which braves the hurdles in its path has been an ideal for the ancient tamils. It pulls the cart hard in the sandy region with such force that any stone that comes across it is broken into
pieces and scattered in different directions. Nor is it afraid of the ups and downs in its path. Madurai Kānci27 and Puranānārā28 refer to the simile of strong bulls. Even the brave kings have been compared to the sturdy bull. In Čāngān classics, the simile of bull to strong men was considered as dignified, even though at a later age29 it was considered as too low for comparison with human beings.

Valluvar also adopts this simile and asks us to be brave in facing difficulties and hurdles (Kural 624). When you are facing hurdles, please smile as you will meet with success next time (Kural 621). Even if we have to face a series of difficulties, we should brave them (Kural 625).

However, Valluvar has emphasised that all actions should be based on ethical considerations. In his chapter on purity of actions, he declares that poverty is no excuse for wrongful acts committed. Even to satisfy the hunger of one’s mother, one should not commit wrongs (Kural 636).

Čāngān poets30 have cautioned against doing things which we may later on regret. Valluvar also cautions against doing regrettable acts, after having committed wrongful act, refrain from regretting next time (Kural 655).
Acute poverty is preferable to wealth by unlawful means (Kural 657). Trying to amass wealth by unlawful means is like pouring water into an unbaked mud pot (Kural 663).

A positive command to amass wealth is a rare thing for a moral philosopher to do. Even though it is addressed to the king primarily, it applies with equal force to the society in general. The attitude of a moralist is to emphasise the fleeting nature of material wealth and to enjoin us to share our wealth with the needy before it is too late. We may loose our lives or our wealth if we dilly-dally.

Valluvar is most emphatic that there is no place in this world for those who have no wealth just as the other world is denied to those who have no grace or mercy in their hearts (Kural 247).

The Uraiyur poet Madukangan Cātanār while singing of the praise of the Cōla king, Nalaṅkīllī, has emphatically asserted that money can confer worldly benefits as well as providing means to the other world. Worldly pleasures or 'Inban' material welfare or porul and Dharma or 'Aram' all these could be derived from wealth.
However, it was left to Valluvar to bring out the true relationship between wealth and other moral concepts. Love or 'अनुभु' with whom we are connected is the most fundamental concept - charity begins at home. Love is the mother of mercy or grace which is love shown to people with whom we have no connections. Wealth or 'Poru' is the foster mother who alone can usher in both these qualities. Without the aid of the foster mother, wealth, there is no scope for the growth of mercy (Kural 757). This idea is also reiterated in a different manner in Kural 760.

Highest traditions of friendship have been set up in Tamil Society in ancient times. There is the classical instance of the poet Pisir Andaiyar and the Cola king, Kopperuñ Čalan who developed an intense form of friendship without seeing each other but by hearing about each other. When the king decided to lay down his life by fasting due to an accidental wound, he received at his back, Pisir Andaiyar felt so much that he also wanted to give up his life along with his friend. For the first time they met when Pisir Andaiyar went to communicate his desire to die along with him.
This ideal friendship between a poet and a king has inspired the thoughts of subsequent ages. Deriving inspiration from this, Valluvar has defined, that true friendship does not even need introduction nor opportunity to move together (Kural 785). Friendship between good men is like the waxing moon, and that of bad men waning moon (Kural 782). The more one moves with good men, the more one's friendship increases just as the ever increasing pleasure one derives from a good book (Kural 783).

The object of friendship is to point out the faults when a friend goes astray and not to laugh with him by cracking jokes (Kural 784). There is a reference in Kuruntogai and Kalittogai also to this effect.

Despite precautions indicated by a friend, if disaster befalls him, one should share his friends misfortune (Kural 787). Just as the hand hastens to set right the slippage, garment, one should hasten to remove the difficulties faced by a friend.

Having laid down the highest and noblest traditions of friendship, Valluvar cautions that we should be careful about the choice of our friends. He has devoted three chapters to this aspect.
'Nāṭpu Ārāṭal' deals with the method of choosing friends. 'Ṭī Nāṭpu' expatiates on the ills of bad friendship. 'Kūda Nāṭpu' is a kind of feigned friendship by enemies for tactical reasons. This applies to political affairs more than to human affairs.

Valluvar has thought about the other extreme of friends taking undue advantage. In his chapter, 'Pālamai' it is laid down that long association of friendship should not become an excuse for trespassing the limits. Parimōlaṉagar in his interpretation of Kural 301, has explained well what such overacting means. He says that friends however close should not be taken for granted; without consulting them, one should not act on their behalf. Taking things without asking and lack of courtesy or humility should be scrupulously avoided.

It is easy to say, but difficult to perform (Kural 664). Puranāṉāṉu also refers to the ill edges and vows taken by small men are likely to be forgotten sooner than expected.

However, the tongue was a formidable weapon in those days in political, diplomatic and social spheres. Valluvar has formulated a chapter on
the ability of exposition. The speaker's ability to communicate should be such as to attract even his enemies and to cement the ties of friendship of well wishers (Kural 643). An Aham poet has also spoken of the ability of speech that could win over even enemies. Brevity of speech is also emphasised in Puranānūṟu. Diversity of knowledge coupled with brevity of speech. Valluvar goes a step further and asserts that only those who are incapable explaining a few things with clarity are fond of multiplying words (Kural 649). Scholars who are devoid of the ability of communicating by means of speech are like bouquets of flowers without fragrance (Kural 57).

The speech must be suitable to the audience to whom it is addressed. Valluvar has laid down the rules for the study of audience in his chapter on 'Avai Arital'. Among a group of fools, we should not try to show our intelligence, only before an enlightened audience, we should attempt at an exhibition of our intellect (Kural 714).

Warning against stage fear has been given in the chapter on 'Avai Aṅñama$. A scholar should have no hesitation in speaking on what he knows. Only such a person can be accepted as a true scholar (Kural 722).
Of what use, is the sword to cowards? Of what use, is the bookish knowledge to those having stage fear? asks Valluvar (Kural 726).

Prudence is the better part of valour. One should not cross swords with more powerful people. Inviting trouble and courting destruction should be avoided (Kural 392). The chapter on 'Periyārai-p-nilayāmai' has more political than social implications even though the lesser is common to both.

The status of women in society in the order of things envisaged by Valluvar is in tune with the spirit of the times in which he lived. He has sung of the glory, of the chaste woman in 'Illaravigal'.

'There is no one greater than a woman provided she is chaste' (Kural 54).

Birth of male child was considered as a must for salvation while the birth of a female child was not considered as such an indispensable thing. And hence the glorification of womanhood in Kural is beset with severe limitations.

The most controversial chapter in Kural is 'Pen valicēral' in which Valluvar has cautioned against
listening to the advice of wives. The very same Valluvar who has glorified womanhood in Illaraviyal and asserted that success of married life depends entirely upon a suitable wife, has taken up cudgels against those who always toe the line of their wives.

While explaining this concept 'Paṇ valicēral', Parimēlaḻagar has averred that instead of the wife obeying the commands of the husband, the husband obeying the wife. This is a fault which originates out of sexual passion and is to be clubbed with prostitution. Manakkudavar has further explained the ingredients of the concept. To be afraid of one's wife, To do whatever at her bidding and to be so addited to sex life as to forget his moral and social obligations. In short, Valluvar deals with hen-pecked husbands in 'Paṇ valicēral'.

Valluvar was willing to grant more or less on equal status for women in 'Illaraviyal'. Of course, this was severely restricted because a chaste woman was expected to worship her husband even in preference to Gods. Dr. M. Varadarāsanār has attempted to give a far-fetched interpretation to this chapter so as to bail out Valluvar from the strictures of not having given equal status to women. He would have us believe that
Valluvar is cautioning against the advice of women who want to promote family prosperity at the cost of public life. It is quite clear that Valluvar held the view that it was obnoxious for a man to be governed by his wife and that he has ridiculed such hen-pecked husbands in unmistakable terms in this chapter.

Hen-pecked husbands are incapable deriving the benefits of Dharma. Nor are they likely to be men of action in pursuit of wealth (Kural 901). It is referred to as a shameful affair in Kural 902 and 903. There is no scope for salvation for them in the other world also (Kural 904). All victories in the battle field are of no avail if one is afraid of one's wife (Kural 906). It is better to be a woman with modesty than to be a hen-pecked husband (Kural 907). They will not be able to redress the grievances of their friends, nor will they be capable of doing good things (Kural 908). Valluvar concludes this chapter by saying that it is idiotic to be governed by one's wife.

căṅga classics are free from references to the notion that it is idiotic and shameful to be governed by one's wife. It is only the later day works that such stipulations are to be found - Don't listen and heed the advice of woman in 'Āṭṭigūḍi'.39 for instance.
Dr. K. Meenakshisundaram has among others holds the view that the degradation of the status of women is the result of Jain influence. It is quite obvious that the pattini cult in which a chaste woman is worshipped is itself a sign of the deteriorating position of women in society, since the Tamil word for chastity, 'karpu' is scarcely applied to a man. The duty of a chaste woman, as in the case of Kannagi in Cilapatikaram, is to put up with the unchastity of her husband. The rebellion of Madavi in 'Kānalvari' is a sure sign that she was not willing to be a silent spectator when her love Kōvalan made love to other woman, be it in poetry or in reality. The deterioration in the status of women went on from bad to worse from time to time until the renaissance in Tamil, when Bharathi asserted that chastity is common to both sexes. Even today, there is only an acceptance of Bharathy's conception in theory atleast, but in practice only the women are expected to be chaste and to bear with their husband's pranks in seeking extra marital pleasure.

Valluvar's attitude to prostitutes also reveals a similar drawback in his social outlook. He has got several unkind epithets while referring to the prostitutes in his chapter on 'Vaiyavinakalir'. Only
women are to be blamed for being prostitutes and men are cautioned to be beware of them.

Some historians of Tamil literature are of the view that prostitution was an accepted way of life in the Cañgam Age. It is true that prostitution was widely prevalent and that there were three classes of prostitutes - Royal prostitutes of a high class (Vēṭṭial) the common prostitute (Poduviyal) and the permanently kept concubines, 'Kamakilathi'. In Madurai Kañci the nature of prostitutes is described. They tell all sorts of lies to deceive the wealthy youth and feign happiness while embracing. As soon as their wealth is dried up, they abandon their lovers as the bees leaves the flowers after drinking all their honey.

But the permanently kept concubine stands on a different footing in Aham poetry. They were living in peaceful co-existence with the legally wedded wives as hinted in Kuruntogai.

The total impression one gains from a perusal of Aham poetry is that concubinage was an accepted factor in the Cañgam society.

However, the notion that prostitution was not considered as obnoxious in Cañgam Age is wrong. The
Cola king, Nalapkilli, while having a vow to conquer his enemy Neduakkili, swears that if he were to fail to subdue his enemy, he should be considered to have committed the despicable act of having intercourse with the prostitutes. And hence, it is evident that cohabiting with a prostitute was considered as obnoxious and reprehensible.

The modern sociological view that prostitution is a social evil mostly born out of poverty and that instead of castigating them, we may do well to rehabilitate them is to be found nowhere in Caṅgaṇa classics or in Kural.

Valluvar blames prostitutes for not having a real love in their desire and words but for money and other consideration (Kural 912, 913). The hypocritical union with prostitutes is likened to embracing an orphaned corpse in a dark room (Kural 914). Those who seek the salvation in the other world, who are wise and who are keen on establishing their fame, will not seek pleasure with prostitutes (Kural 914, 915, 916). The evil habits that are destructive of wealth are the following: Prostitutes, Drink and gambling (Kural 923).

Valluvar's chapter 'Kal Unnaṇai' is indeed a radical departure from the Caṅgaṇa tradition in which
drinking toddy was a normal way of life. The presence of an open toddy jar and slaughtering the sheep was considered as a sign of prosperity. In fact, a poet has blessed a king to enjoy himself everyday with cups of Roman wine served by lovely damsels in golden cups. Perhaps due to Jain influence, Valluvar has grown more moralistic and prohibits drinks as a social evil and as an individual weakness.

Liquor addicts will lose their name and fame and their enemies will fail to regard them (Kural 921). Good men will abhor drunkards (Kural 922). Even their own mother will hate them and what about other gentlemen? (Kural 723). There is not much difference between sleep and death; drunkards are like senseless people who take poison as they are devoid of common sense (Kural 926). And drunkards will soon become a laughing stock in their locality (Kural 927).

An incident depicted in Purananuru reveals that a Chola prince, Mavalattan and the poet Tmarppal Kannaan were engaged in playing chess and upon a sudden quarrel and in a fit of passion the prince threw the chess coins in his face. This gave birth to a poem upon hearing which, the prince felt ashamed. Perhaps this was merely a past-time and not gambling in the sense of the word as the poet could not have had much
to wager. This is also confirmed by another reference in Puranānūra in which it is referred to as the past time of grey-haired old men.

Such innocent games ought to have deteriorated into home-ruining gamblings. There are no overt strictures against gambling in the caṇḍam classics. Valluvar saw the disastrous nature of gambling and proscribed it in a separate chapter.

The tempting aspect of gambling is that at the beginning, some marginal gain is registered and it is only a ruse for greater loss (Kural 931). The balance sheet in gambling according to Valluvar is 1:100 gain and loss (Kural 932). Many gambling dens called as 'Kalāgam' were prevalent. The net result will be poverty, loss of good qualities, necessity to tell lies, and loss of fame, education, food and dress (Kural 934 to 939).

Not even the famed poet physician Puranānūra Vraiyur Maruttuvan Tāmotaranār, has said anything about medicine, but Valluvar has chosen to formulate ten couplets on medicine. It is surprising to find Valluvar has devoted a major portion of his chapter on a proper diet. It should be neither excessive nor deficient.
Only after digestion, next course of food should be taken. Food that suits one's constitution alone should be taken. Over eating breeds many diseases. The first seven couplets deal with and reiterate these aspects (Kural 941 to 947).

The method of treatment is spelt out in the last three couplets. The diagnosis part is the most important. The disease must be identified first and then its causes analysed. The remedy should be properly chosen and it should be administered in time. The learned physician should bear in mind the dosage for the particular patient in commensurate with the stage of development of the disease at the proper time. The patient, the physician, the medicine and the nurse are the vital factors in the treatment (Kural 948 to 950).

It is evident that books on medicine ought to have existed at the time of Valluvar as he refers to the 'learned physician 'Karrōn' Parimēlalagar thinks that Valluvar refers to the Ayurveda system of medicine.

The last part of 'Porut-pal' contains thirteen chapters and is called as 'Olipiyal'. 'Kudiyal' is more appropriate as it deals with the social obligations of a good citizen.
It is but natural that the high priest of family should glorify, birth in a noble family. 'Kudimai' or 'birth in good family' has nothing to do with caste. Even the conservative commentator Parinēlalagar has stated that Kudimai is common to all the four castes. When a person is found guilty of obnoxious conduct, his birth in the family is suspected. The poet Tāmappal Kannan doubted the birth of the prince Māvalattān in the Cēla family as his predecessors have never offended brahmans. 51 Valluvar endorses his viewpoint in Kural 958.

Impartiality, sense of shame, ethical behaviour, truthfulness, humanitarian conduct with sweet words and welcoming looks, incorruptible nature, not loosing one's good nature even in poverty, humility in words and deeds - these are the qualities associated by Valluvar with one born in a good family (Kural 951 to 960).

In caṅgam tradition, 52 the tiger is credited with the habit of not eating its prey if it falls after its assault on its left side. Next time, it will attack its prey with greater force so as to make it fall on the right side. Valluvar behoves us not to do anything beneath our dignity even if it means losing heavily (Kural 961).
Heroes of Puranānūru willingly laid down their lives rather than losing their honour. The Chera King Kanaikkal Irumporai in captivity laid down his life lest he should lose his honour by drinking the water indifferently provided by his enemies. The Cōla King, Kopperuṅ Cōlan also has made the supreme sacrifice as he was wounded at the back by an accident.

Valluvar reiterates the concept that honour is more valuable than even one's life in four couplets (Kural 967 to 972). Further he refers to the peculiar variety of deer which is presumed to die even if it loses its hair.

In his chapter on the greatness of an individual, Valluvar stresses the principle that by birth alone no one can claim greatness (Kural 972). Nor is greatness gauged by the position one occupies. One may be occupying a throne and another sitting on ground (Kural 973). Really great people are capable of doing great things (Kural 975). In his definition of great men also, Valluvar has already stated that the sign of greatness is the achievement of rare deeds (Kural 26).

Tamil tradition has always laid much stress on humility as a sign of greatness. Widely learned
scholars invariably possess the quality of humility as indicated by the phrase of Pisir Āndaiyār. 55

'Anṟu Avindā Adākkiya Kolakai
 Ĉān̄rōr'

The juxtaposition of ideas in Kural 978 brings out this aspect vividly. Humility is the sign of greatness, the lack of it of pettiness and smallness.

The concept of a gentleman 'Ĉān̄rōr' is deeply rooted in Tamil culture. Pisir Āndaiyār has already stated that old age has not affected him as many learned gentlemen lived in his village. Kaniyan PUĀgunan 56 has already outlined the cosmopolitan outlook of a gentleman who considers all the villages in the world as his own and all human beings as his relatives. The far-sightedness of the gentleman enables him to view things in their proper perspective so that he does not wonder at great people, nor do they cavil at small men.

Valluvar views the idea of a gentleman as a personification of all good qualities of head and heart (Kural 981). He shines by his character and character is not something that could be included in any of the other qualities (Kural 932). Universal
love, sense of shame, flexibility and adjustable nature, mercy and truthfulness are the five pillars of gentlemanliness (Kural 983). Refraining from killing is in tune with Dharma and not speaking ill of others is the sure sign of a gentleman (Kural 984). Enlisting the help of able men who can do things is the right way to deal with one's enemies (Kural 985). The touch-stone of gentlemanliness is to accept defeat at the hands of even small men (Kural 986). What is the use of calling oneself a gentleman unless one does good to even those who have done harm? (Kural 987). Poverty is not something to be ashamed of if gentlemanly qualities are present (Kural 988).

Valluvar’s idea of a gentleman compares favourably with cardinal Newman’s classical definition of a gentleman. The concept of a gentleman or 'Cârânu' is deep rooted in Tamil classics. Valluvar has given a new dimension to this idea. The idea of doing good even to those who have harmed us is similar to the injunctions of Jesus Christ. This has even led to the speculation that Valluvar might have been indebted to the Christian ideals imbibed through a legendary missionary St. Thomas who is reported to have lived near Madras.
Besides enumerating the qualities of a gentleman, Valluvar has devoted a chapter on individual culture. Puranānāru\textsuperscript{57} has already proclaimed that it is because of highly cultured men that this world exists, otherwise it would have been demolished as it does not deserve to exist without them. Valluvar has also endorsed this view in Kural 996. Individual culture springs from universal love and birth in a good family (Kural 992). There is no use of resemblance with human beings in form, but real resemblance must be in human culture (Kural 993). Justice and fair play make them useful to others (Kural 994).

Valluvar has used a term 'Makkat panbu' or human culture. In the last four couplets, he has denounced those without human culture. The catholicity of Tamil culture lies at the basis of the human culture proclaimed by Valluvar.

Purposeless amassing of wealth is denounced by Valluvar in a separate chapter. The underlying theme of reiteration is that such wealth is of no avail to himself and others. Unproductive wealth is likened to a beautiful damsel who becomes old without being courted by any one (Kural 1007).
Just as women are expected to have a sense of modesty, men also should have a sense of shame that shuns wrong doing. Shameless people are like life-less dolls (Kural 1360).

The main characteristics of Caṅga classics are its secular nature and its positive, even a militant attitude towards life. Valluvar's philosophy of life assertion is intimately connected with the main springs of ancient Tamil culture.

In Kural, the strident voice of life-assertion is nowhere so self evident as in his chapter on 'betering one's family' 'Kudi Ceyal vagai'. Valluvar has enjoined us to constantly try for the betterment of our family. There is nothing greater than the vow to strive hard and not to rest until the aim of bettering one's family is achieved (Kural 1021). A clear intellect with untiring efforts is needed for such achievements (Kural 1022). Even the Gods will hasten to the aid of those determined to raise the statues of their families (Kural 1023).

In day to day life, it is seen that only some take the responsibility while others do not. Valluvar observes that responsibility is placed on the shoulders of those who can bear it. In war only a few are able to withstand the onslaught of the incoming army (Kural 1327).
The able hands on whom responsibility is placed should not think why they alone should strive hard while others in the same family are not doing anything. Nor should they be afraid of adverse seasons like winter and summer (Kural 1028).

Kārīkkāṇṇār of Kāviripoopattinam has employed the simile of the Banyan tree, which sends out its young shoots which take root and prolong the life of the tree when the original trunk decays and dies, to bring out the fact that younger generation must take the responsibility when the older ones pass away. Valluvar adopts a variation of this simile to teach the same lesson. The axe of sorrowing decay will break and pull down the family tree unless there is some one in the family who can shoulder the burden of maintaining it.

It was then an agriculture based economy and there was hardly any industry worth the name. Many arts and crafts flourished. The supreme position occupied by agriculture is asserted in the chapter on 'Ulavu'. Of all occupations, Agriculture is the best despite the hardships inherent in it (Kural 1031). In the next five couplets, Valluvar sings the praise of cultivators. According to Parimēlālagar, cultivators
are of two types: one consisting of direct cultivators and another consisting of land lords who cause cultivation. There is no internal evidence in Kural to support this theory of owner supervisor. In all instances, Valluvar speaks of only direct cultivators. Perhaps, Parimelalagar's interpretation reflects the social conditions of his age.

The salient features of the process of cultivation are also mentioned by Valluvar. Deep ploughing and allowing the land to dry well is emphasised (Kural 1037). Manuring is more important than ploughing just as plant protection is more important than irrigation. Kural 1037. All this is not enough – the owner cultivator must visit his field daily, otherwise the land will not give its yield. In this, land needs as much attention as is due to one's wife (Kural 1039).

Valluvar's ideas about poverty, begging and alms giving are to be studied together. Poverty was accepted as an aspect of life. There was no movement for the abolition of poverty. It was considered as a duty of the kings and chieftains to remove hunger and mitigate the sufferings of poverty. Valluvar thought some are born rich due
to their good deeds in previous birth and many are born poor due to their bad acts in their previous birth (Kural 279). Helping the poor is good in itself even if there were no heaven (Kural 222).

In his chapter on poverty, Valluvar brings out its tragic effect in the first five couplets. Learning and philosophy are of no avail under the tragic impact of poverty (Kural 1046). Even a mother looks down upon the poverty of her son if it is not for the sake Dharma that poverty was caused (Kural 1047). Poverty is worse than fire and death. Valluvar advocates renunciation of worldly pleasures as a remedy for poverty (Kural 1050). As Kural has enjoined upon family people to feed the saints and sadhus who have renounced worldly ties, Valluvar thinks he has found a solution to poverty.

The modern notion of reduction of disparities in income and wide dispersal of the wealth of the society was alien to Sangam classics and to Kural as well.

There are two seemingly contradictory chapters in Kural one enjoining begging and another prescribing it. Sangam poets, musicians, dancing girls were always on the move in search of patron
kings and chieftains. In the form of literature 'Aruppadai' the methodology of praising the patrons is also laid down. This sort of seeking gifts cannot be called as ordinary begging as it is in return for services rendered, for poems recited, music offered, and dances performed that gifts were sought. Connoisseurs of arts willingly gave away whatever they had like Valpâri, but others who had no artistic sense and who were of a niggardly nature refused to part with anything.

As a last resort, Valluvar permits poverty stricken people to beg for sustaining their lives. It is not a mistake to beg people who think it is their duty to help the poor (Kural 1053). In fact, Valluvar thinks that it is good to have needy beggars, otherwise the avenues of showing munificence would be closed (Kural 1059). In Puranânuṟu also it is laid down that it is the duty of the rich to give and that of the poor to receive.

In another chapter, Valluvar cautions against begging even before people who gladly part with their possessions to help the needy (Kural 1061). Valluvar gets angry with the creator who has ordained
begging as a way of life for some people. Such a cruel creator must undergo the ordeals of beggars and die miserably (Kural 1062). It is a literary convention of the Āgama Age to find fault with the creator for the ills of the society. In a rare statement in the first person, Valluvar begs all beggars not to beg from misers who refuse to give anything (Kural 1067).

On closer examination it will be seen that there is no conflict between the injunctions of Valluvar in 'Iravu' and 'Iravasam'. Normally begging as a mode of living is not encouraged by Valluvar. Only under exceptional circumstances, begging may be resorted to in order to keep the body and soul together. And that too, willing patrons only are to be approached. Hard hearted misers are to be avoided at all costs.

Another set of patrons are a class by themselves they are willing to part with their money in order to secure for themselves a place in heaven. Puranāṇūru has spoken of merchants of Dharma 'Arañalai Veṅikar'. Valluvar has not openly referred to such merchants as it will be against his theme of persuading people to part with their money. He has tried to enlist the non-believers also in his concept of philanthropy by advocating that irrespective of the existence of heaven it is good to be helpful to the
have nots. Valluvar has advocated 'Aram' for its own sake. There is immense pleasure in relieving the sufferings of the afflicted. In his introductory chapters of Pāyiram, he has wondered at the clouds which give rains without seeking anything in return. Indeed caṅgam poets were fond of comparing their patrons to the clouds in their munificence. In the system of values propounded by Valluvar, a similar trait is seen.

Valluvar concludes his thoughts on society by issuing a strong warning to be beware of bad men in society. Only in form, bad men resemble human beings, but they are unparalleled in doing mischief. (Kural 1071). They have none of the fear and anxiety of good men to do evil. In this, they are better placed than good men (Kural 1072). Just as the sugar-cane yields its juice only when it is crushed, only under duress, bad men oblige. A word of request will be enough for good men (Kural 1073). Bad men will not hesitate to sell themselves at the time of crisis (Kural 1087).

Valluvar has thought about a wide range of social problems and has devoted more chapters to society than to other aspects of life. There have been strag
thoughts in Cañgan classics. Valluvar was the first systematic thinker on all topics under the sun. It was he who was the first social reformer who wanted to do away with social evils like drink, prostitution and gambling. On the positive side, it was he who codified the views on education, agriculture, medicine etc. Expanding the action oriented philosophy of the ancient Tamils, Valluvar laid down the methodology of action in several chapters. The main contribution of Valluvar is the development of life assertion into an unified system of philosophy.

Thiru N.D. Sundaravadivelu, former Vice-Chancellor of Madras University and an eminent educationalist has said well:

"Tiruvalluvar is not an arm-chair philosopher sitting in an ivory tower and issuing moral edicts for the edification of laymen, but is eminently a practical social philosopher who lays down the guide lines for men to direct their action towards social good. A study of Valluvar will reveal how he is more a fundamental thinker and less a traditionalist. The validity of Tirukkural arises from the fact that he was speaking to a free society whose conduct is governed by reason wherein there is no room for
dogmatism. Nowhere does he quote an injunction because his observations are based on a sense of value (Arama) which is not circumscribed by rigid codes and conventions.

It is true that Valluvar does not quote any authority for his rules of conduct but he has cited numerous works in support of his injunctions without naming the authors. While discussing the eclectic tendency of Valluvar we have already noted that there are several references to 'Nul' and 'Nulor' works and their authors. The same argument will hold here also in bringing the hold of tradition on Valluvar. Further, while defining concepts, Valluvar has used the world 'enpa' it is said 25 times and Parimelalagar has interpreted it 'as stated by men who know things' or 'Arigtor Kiruvar'. This clearly indicates that Valluvar not only drew his material from extant works but also from the practical wisdom of men around him. "Arakai vitirar kayavar" (Kural 1777) has become a proverb in a modified form. No doubt Valluvar has contributed something to the Proverbs in Tamil. It is equally true that he ought to have been benefitted by the
proverbs of his race. The subject-matter of Kural is so vast and stupendous that it could not be otherwise and he should have made optimum use of the collective wisdom of his people. Our finding is that Valluvar is as much a traditionalist as he is a fundamentalist thinker.

Valluvar has extracted the numerous and stray moral thoughts from the vast literature that he had before him, codified them as positive and negative rules of conduct, discarded regional peculiarities, refined their ingredients so as to have an universal appeal and classified them under several chapters which were never known before. In plan as well as execution, Valluvar is most original but most of the raw material is taken from tradition.

The fundamentalist thinker in Valluvar is revealed most when he differs radically from the Kama Śāstra of Vatsayana in preferring a psychological approach to a physiological one in the portrayal of sex, when he fundamentally differs from the Arta Śāstra of Kautilya in choosing a value-based political order rather than a result-oriented
Machiavellian code of political tactics, when he enunciates an universal code of ethics appealing to the conscience of mankind in sharp contrast to the caste based ethical rules of Dharma Sastras of Manu and others and when he presents a refined version of the Tamil concept of love and other Tingal Turai traditions.

Kunrakkudi Adikalar认为Valluvar has not accepted the superiority of ascetic life over family life as in the case of Jain and Buddhist conventions. Nor has he ordained family life as something higher than ascetic life. Adikalar feels that he has struck a balance between these two extremes as one renounces the worldly ties only after enjoying the worldly pleasures. If these two ways of life are to be considered as two different stages in life, there will not be any substance in the controversy. However, there is every reason to believe that Valluvar has advocated renunciation under conditions of utter poverty (Kural 1050). Only destitutes and other frustrated people give up worldly ties and adopt an ascetic way of life. The renunciation of Siddharta, the Prince, is an exception, and only a few take to ascetic order of life in search of absolute truth.
As we have seen in the foregoing pages, pattu-pattu and Etatu-t-tokai had a decisive role in moulding the thought and philosophy of Valluvar. More pointedly, the poets of Puranānūru have contributed a great deal in shaping the mind and art of Valluvar.

In the overall evaluation of Tirukkural, there is a perfect balance of tradition and individual talent; the solid foundations of Valluvar's philosophy are to be found in Tamil tradition and culture, although the superstructure built by him is his own.

The versatile scholar, K. Appaduraiyar, thinks that the thought of Valluvar represents an ancient wave of culture which contained such progressive ideas that the subsequent generations wanted to suppress it. He suspects that there had been a conspiracy not to recognise its validity. That is reason why Kural and its author were not given due recognition. Whatever may be the historical setting in which one would like to see the light of Kural and its message, eminently progressive nature of Kural never failed to attract the hearts of scholars from different parts of the world.
NOTES

2. Parimolalagar, Commentary on 'Kudimai'.
4. Kabilar *Kurunchi-p-pattu* and other poems, Colophon to *Kuruncippattu*.
11. Sivagnana Munivar's Commentary on *Tolkappiyam Payira Virutti*.
17. Pattirruppan, *7, Patikam*.
18. Ahanamuru 236.
23. Shakespeare Merchant of Venice, Act IV Scene I
27. Maduraik Kānkei, 259-60.
30. Ahanānūru 263; Puranānūru 10.
32. Puranānūru 216.
33. Kuruntogai 53.
34. Kalittogai 3, 45.
35. Puranānūru 178.
36. Ahanānūru 66.
37. Puranānūru 305, 360.
41. Āsilapaṭikāram, Kanalvari 1.
42. G. Subrahmanya Bharathi, Bharathiar Padalkal, page 273.
43. Dr. G. Balasubramanian, Tamil Ilakkiya Varalaru, page 76.
44. Maduraik Kānci, 579–574.
45. Kuruṇṭogai 8.
46. Puranāṇūru 73.
47. Puranāṇūru 115.
49. Puranāṇūru 43.
50. Puranāṇūru 52.
51. Puranāṇūru 43.
52. Puranāṇūru 190; Ahanāṇūru 29.
53. Puranāṇūru 74.
54. Puranāṇūru 192.
55. Puranāṇūru 184.
56. Kaniyan Poongunran, Puranāṇūru 192.
57. Puranāṇūru 182.
58. Puranāṇūru 58.
59-A. Tolkāppiyam - Purattinai Iyal, 87.
59-B. Purattinai 240.
60. Puranāṇūru 174.


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