CHAPTER VI

SPIRITUAL LIFE
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The classical Age of the Tamils was one of religious tolerance. There was peaceful co-existence of religions like Saivism, Vaishnavism, Buddhism and Jainism. Festivals of different religions were celebrated without any conflict. The State, even though it is very difficult to be described as secular in the modern sense of the word refrained from imposing its views on its subjects. The three crowned kings worshipped their own gods but did not compel their citizens to follow suit. This non-interference of the State in individual worship seems to have been the main reason for the religious peace and harmony that existed then.

As for the religion of the Tamils, it was a combination of nature worship and polytheism. With its five-fold classification of land, Kuruvi, the hilly region, Mullai, the forest region, Marutam fields in the plains, Neital, the sea shore and Palai, the drought-sticken conditions of the hills and the adjoining forest, as they are no deserts as such in Tamil Nadu. The God of the hills was Murugan; the presiding deity of the forest was Kannan; Plainsmen worshipped Veydan; the sea-shore had Varuna as its god; Palai or desert region was
guarded by 'Korravai' or 'Kādu Kīlavōl'.

With the intellectual infiltration of Aryans in the South, to borrow a phrase from Dr. Caldwell, not physical conquest as it was in the North, Murugan was identified with Subramaniya and his vehicle changed from elephant to Peacock; Kannan with Krishna and his local consort Nappinnai substituted by Radha and Bama; 'Veṇḍan' with Indra; 'Korravai' with Kāli. Vedic rites and rituals have already been brought into Tamil Nādu by Brahmīn priests who were held in high esteem in fact they were regarded as sacred as the cow. The Tamil kings were even persuaded to perform yagnas. The Brahmīn poets were held in esteem by the kings and were meat eating in their food habits. In the Sangam classics, with the exception of 'Tirumurugāṟṟu-p-padai' and Paripādal, there was no religious literature. The main thrust of the Sangam works was description of life and not singing the praise of God. Buddhism and Jainism have also entered into Tamil Nādu but the total impression one gains from Sangam classics is that Vedic religion got mixed up with the local religion and held sway over the whole of Tamil Nādu.

Such were the religious conditions in which Valluvar lived and he might have also read the religious works of various denominations of his times.
That Valluvar accords a high place for spiritual life is perfectly clear from 'Payiraviyal' 'Turavaraviyal' and numerous other references thought-out his work; and strained attempts to put an atheistic interpretation into 'Kadavul Vālttu' by poet Bharathi Dasan6 and others have failed to carry conviction. Equally unconvincing are the claims of many religions that Valluvar belongs to each of their creed.

Among others, the late lamented freedom fighter and Tamil scholar V. O. Chidambarampillai7 felt 'Payiraviyal' was not written by Valluwar. On a comparative study of the concept of God in 'Kadavul Vaitttu' and 'Meiyunartal' he felt that both these chapters could not have been the work of the same author. Similarly, he held the view that views expressed in 'Nāttar Perumai' are in conflict with 'Turavu' and that both chapters could not have been the product of one author. It is difficult to subscribe to this view for two reasons; one is that Kural is the only popular book in Tamil which has been handed down from generation to generation without much variations in the text and that the tradition that Kural contains 1330 couplets is too strong to be denied. Another reason is that as life itself is something of a paradox, it is quite
often found in Kural maxims of a paradoxical nature like the one asking to take to begging and another warning against the same. Paradoxical nature is no sufficient proof for questioning the authorship as the diction is the same in all the 1330 couplets.

The Jain scholar Sripal has claimed that Valluvar belonged to his religion, Jainism. God as the conquerer of the senses is very near to Jainism, it is claimed. Again Valluvar’s injunctions against killing, drink, prostitution and other moral precepts of the like belong to the area Jain philosophy. Then, what prevented Valluvar from specifying the name of Aruga Deva as his God in Kural?

The intention of Valluvar is clearly against any denominational religion. Further, his positive assertion of God is against the neutral attitude adopted by Buddhism and Jainism. However, it is unmistakable that Jain philosophy has made a deep impact on Valluvar, Prof. K.A. Nilaganda Sastri in his 'History of India' held the view that 'Jainism was prominent in the Tamil country, and tradition associates the name of Vajrānandī with a new Sangha in Madura (C.A.D.477). Some of the minor ethical treatises in Tamil, including the celebrated Kural of Tiruvalluvar were produced in this period'. The main
there is intense life assertion and also of God assertion
is alien to Jainism and nearer to the life in the Cau gan
Age and hence Kural cannot be clubbed with the other minor
ethical treatises in Tamil. Dr. G.U. Pope who trans-
lated Kural and Maladi, a Jain work has vividly brought out
the difference between Kural and Jainism. 'In fact, his
creed (Valluvar's) is not a Godless creed like that of
the Jains and Buddhists. In this respect, there is
disparity between Maladi and Kural.

On the other hand, Prof. A.L. Basham in
Karas Memorial lectures has claimed that Kural is the
product of Hinduism. He remarks 'As it progressed,
Hinduism assimilated many elements ... It gave birth to
the most subtle schools of philosophy ... It produced
works of very high ethical content such as the Bhagavat
Gita and the Tamil Kural'.

Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan has stated that the essence
of Indian philosophy is given in Kural in the chapter on
'Meyunpurtal' or realisation of truth. Knowledge gained
through our five senses is inadequate and sometimes
misleading. Only by spiritual enquiry, truth can be
discovered. Spiritual knowledge can be gained only through
a teacher. Renunciation and meditation lead to realisation
of truth. Further Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan has pointed out that Kural contains all the three ways of attaining God, Gdana, Bhakthi and Karma Yoga. Gdana Marga is contained in 'Turavaraviyal' while Bhakthi cult is described in 'Kadavul Vattu'. The rest of the work deals with Karma yoga.

Tamil-aperum Pulavar, Kaniyar E.M. Subramania Pillai\(^1\) in his article on the religion of Tiruvalluvar in Tiruvalluvar Day souvenir claims that the fundamental tenets of Saiva Siddhanta are to be found in Kural. Both God and soul or pati and pasu are immortal. The path of salvation lies in removing the curtain of desire, self importance, and illusion, i.e. 'Pasam' that stands between Pati and Pasu.

Dr. G.U. Pope\(^2\) saw the influence of Christianity in Kural even though he did not claim Valluvar to be a christian. He wrote 'we may fairly picture Valluvar walking along the sea-shore with christian teachers and imbibing christian ideas, tinged with the peculiarities of the Alexandrian school, and day by day, working them into his own wonderful Kural'. Rev. Dr. J. Lazarus\(^3\) has given a fitting reply in his article on Kural in the Tamilian Antiquary' that 'none of the ten epithets by which the Deity is described in the opening chapter on Kural
have the remotest connection with Christ or God, that is to say, as they are designated in the Bible and that the Kural betrays no traces of distinctly Christian ideas or ethics such as may be ascribed to Christ or his apostles alone. This clear cut statement has not deterred recent attempts by Pulavar M. Deivanayagam to claim Valluvar as a Christian by giving unprecedented and far-fetched meanings to several key phrases like 'Cānror ḍu pirappu, 'Nādir' etc.

Even though Dr. G. U. Pope has fondly claimed Christian influence in moulding the thought and philosophy of Valluvar, he was very clear in his mind about the religion of Kural. The religion of Valluvar is a standing puzzle. He bases morality upon theology. A good or evil action is a passport to heaven or hell. Even his invocation of the supreme being does not give us a clue to his religion. His theology must therefore be only natural theology, and his religion only natural religion. Can it be otherwise with the bard who said that death is but sleep, and birth but awakening from it? No, it cannot be otherwise.

Whatever may be the historical veracity of Tiruvalluvar mālai, none can gainsay the statement of Tiruvalluvarmālai poet that Valluvar specifically refrained from laying down his philosophy in accordance with any of the denominational religion.
Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the illustrious statesman philosopher, has also endorsed this position in his 'Religion and culture'. The fact that the Tamil classic Tirukkural is claimed by different religious sects indicates its catholicity. It is called 'potumurai' or common scripture.

We have to bear in mind that Valluvar has assiduously avoided any specific reference to denominational religion. If he willed, he would have made it clear. It would be futile to read into his verses what he did not obviously intend.

The religious tolerance of the canonic Age is well known and Valluvar not only imbibed this rare sense of religious tolerance, he also went a step further in hailing the oneness of God without specifically naming him. Perhaps what he sought was to unify various religions into one, discarding the mythological and superstitious elements. Unlike Akbar, the great, he has not given a new name to his religion. Very often, the philosophy of Valluvar is hailed as the religion of the Tamils.

What is depicted in Kural is a kind of theology and not religion as such. It could better be described as the spiritual life rather than as religious life.
Valluvar's attitude to Vedas is a crucial factor in determining his mental predilections with regard to religion. He can by no means be described as anti-vedic, event though he is against yagna. Speaking of the ills that could overtake the country in event of a despotic rule, Valluvar says that the milk of the cows will dry up and the Bharmins will forget their Vedas (Kural 561). While emphasising the importance of righteous conduct Valluvar says that for a brahmin Vedas could be relearnt if forgotten, but his status according to birth will go down if he is guilty of immoral conduct (Kural 134). Valluvar grants that mere knowledge of Vedas will not entitle one to high esteem unless it is matched with purity of action and righteous conduct. At his times, some vedic scholars might have gone astray and hence there arose the need for the warning. In Kural 543, there is another reference to Vedas. The sceptre of the king regulates Dharma and Vedas and hence is more important than either.

In order to drive home the greatness of ascetica, Valluvar alludes to the Puranic story of Indra (Kural 35) who was cursed by a Hindu saint for seducing his wife. It also becomes evident that Hindu saints were held in high esteem by Valluvar.
There is a reference to the creator, Brahma (Kural 1062). If begging has been ordained by Brahma as a profession he deserves the same misery as punishment. In Kural 1197, Mammathan is referred to as one who incites sexual passion. There are several references to the God of death, 'Kurraman'.

Lord Vishnu is said to preside over a world of pleasure (Kural 1103) and his consort Lakshmi[^2] is also referred to as a personification of beauty and wealth. Goddess earth is mentioned in Kural 1049 as a benevolent one.

Numerous are the references to Devas and their king, Devendra.[^21] Heaven is copiously mentioned. Nectar or Amrta[^22] is also frequently alluded to.

The dark world of hell[^23] is waiting for wrong doers and is frequently used as a deterrent against wrong doing.

The total impression gained by this analysis is that Valluvar's attitude to Vedas, Hindu Gods and customs is not one of aversion but of assimilation.

However, Valluvar took up cudgels against Vedic rituals and yagnas and stated that instead of
doing a thousand yagnas by killing goats, it is better not to kill any living creature and refusing to eat it (Kural 254). The buddhist influence might have coloured his thoughts while making this constructive criticism of Vedas.

Valluvar's concept of God is also a positive assertion of God in 'Kadavul Valitu' (Kural 1-11). Just as 'A' is the first original sound of the alphabet, God is the originator of the world. He is the personification of pure intellect. He dwells in the hearts of his devotees. He has no likes or dislikes. He has extinguished the desires of the five senses. He has no equal. He is the ocean of Dharma and mercy. He has eight-fold characteristics. He is eternal. He is beyond desire. He is the resting place for all souls. He has regulated that according to one's deeds, one shall enjoy the proportionate benefits or suffer.

According to Parimelalagar, the eight-fold characteristics of God are mentioned in the Saiva Agamas and are as follows: independent nature, purity of body, Natural realisation, omniscience, freedom from passions by nature, personification of mercy, omni-
potence, limitless pleasure. This is also in accordance with Sanskrit traditions.

A dissenting commentator, Kāliṅgar has interpreted 'En kurattan' not as eightfold characteristics but as inclusive of all qualities that could be thought of. The theory of God propounded by Valluvar seems to be a mixture of Hindu and Jain concepts. The concept of God as one who has renounced the pleasures of the senses is very near to the Jain Saints.

Another question that requires our attention is whether Valluvar was an idol-worshipper. Mostly abstract qualities are attributed to God in Kural. However, Valluvar has mentioned the feet of God in Kural. And hence, he might have had an idol in his mind but he has not specified its name nor has he described other features so as to make it possible for the identification of the same.

God is free from the effects of good and bad deeds and hence is beyond the concept of Papā or Punyā (Kural 3). Man is affected by both.

Valluvar subscribes to the cycle of birth theory. The end and aim of life is to break this
vicious circle and to go back to our original home. The Tamil word 'Vīṇa' means 'salvation' in one sense and 'house' in another. Other world 'Ammai' signifies eternal pleasure. While the pleasures of this world 'Immai' are of a transient nature, it is a state of no return to this world (Kural 356).

The ordinary ideal is to attain 'Mukti' or salvation after death, but the greater aspiration is to attain Mukti along with this body. This supreme ideal is mentioned in ancient caṅgaś classics as well. In Porunār Arruppadai the ascetics who without renouncing their body have attained salvation are mentioned. In Madurai-k-kaṇai, there is a description of holy men who without deviating from the path of Dharma by their kind hearts have attained the eternal pleasures of the other world in this world. This ideal is known as living salvation or Jeevan Mukti.

Valluvar has incorporated this ideal of Jeevan Mukti in Kural. Renunciation of pleasures and desires leads to instant salvation in this world itself (Kural 369). Again it is stated that if the unquenchable desires are renounced, instant salvation or 'Perā Iyarkkal' is attained. Parimōlaḷagar while
interpreting 'Perā Iyarkkai' has explained that it is indeed the ideal of Jeevan Muki.

After offering prayers to the Almighty, Valluvar extols the munificence of rain. The rains come down from the heavens and is very much like the nectar of the other world. (Kural 11). If the rains fail, daily worship of the Gods will be endangered (Kural 18). The fact that the existence of this world depends upon water has been stressed in Nārimāi. The very same phrase is utilised by Valluvar (Nārimāi Anaiyā Tulaku' in Kural 20).

The chapter on 'rains' nearly amounts to rain worship. In Tolkāppiyam also, the rain bearing clouds are mentioned along with Gods. 'Kodinilai', 'Kandali', 'Valli' signify 'rain bearing clouds', God and respectively. Valluvar's 'Pāyiraiyiyal' resembles the tradition mentioned in Tolkāppiam.

Later on the Sun and the moon were also added to the list and the invocation songs in Ālavatikāram worship Sun, Moon and rains in the order arranged above. Freedom-fighter and Tamil Scholar V.O. Chidambaram Pillai thought that no useful purpose would be served by singing the praise of rains.
However, as there is a tradition in Tamil literature enlogising the graceful munificence of rains, it is very difficult to doubt the authenticity of these chapters.

The reasons for including a chapter on the greatness of saints in the introductory part itself Nāttār perumal in Pāyiraviyal - are not far to seek. He enjoins family people to provide food and shelter to the ascetics who have renounced the ties of this world. Since those who have given up worldly pleasures depend upon the charity of family people for their very existence, Valluvar has given pride of place to the greatness of saints and has incorporated a chapter on them in the introductory part itself.

The eclectic tendency of Valluvar is reflected once more in this chapter. Pārimēlalagar has rightly noted that even though religions differ in their concept of God and the ways of attaining salvation, all are agreed that due reverence must be shown to the saints. And Valluvar has chosen this point for elaboration in Pāyiraviyal. Further there is a reference in Paramanūru 30 attesting the greatness of saints who have renounced this world. Those who are able to
control the five senses are sure to attain salvation (Kural 24).

Valluvar subscribed to the old theory that the entire universe is composed of the five elements or 'Pance Butan', viz. the earth, sky, fire, wind and water and that all our knowledge about the universe is gathered through our five senses, sense of touch, sight, hearing, taste and smell (Kural 27).

Never before Valluvar, the concept of Aram or Dharma has been dealt with separately and such pre-eminence given to it. To Valluvar, the concept of Aram is an all pervading one. Resources have to be gained only through just methods. Pleasure is to be enjoyed only through lawful channels. The Government of the country has to be based on Justice and fair-play. In order to indicate the pre-eminent position, that Valluvar wants to assign to 'Aram' in all departments of life, he has included a chapter emphasising 'Aram' in Pāyiraviyil itself.

Kural is not only the first but also the foremost among didactic works in Tamil literature. In later works, daily habits and routine matters were prescribed as in 'Acaṟak-k-kōvai', but Valluvar was mainly concerned
with mental refinement as we have already noted. And hence, his simple but clear-cut definition of Aram is that the essence of Aram consists in the purity of heart and all others things are irrelevant (Kural 34). It is axiomatic in Indian philosophy that righteousness is to be shown in thought, speech and deed (Smṛtaśāstra) Valluvar has emphasised purity of thought as from thought, speech and deed originate.

Valluvar cautions us to refrain from expatiating about the path of Dharma. If the concept of A ram is taken to be a palanquin, one who acts according to Dharma is the rider and those who wax eloquent about Dharma are its bearers (Kural 37). Another common interpretation those who did Dharma in their precious birth are the palanquin riders and those who did evil are its bearers is not in consonance with spirit of Kural which always lays emphasis on deeds.

The didactic element was present in caninam Literature, especially in the literary convention called 'Cevi Aṭiyuru' or advice to behave properly. It was not a dominating force as in Kural. Nor was it having a separate existence. The didactic advice
was interwoven with incidents. Advice, sometimes unpleasant to ears, was given in accordance with the needs of the occasion. Although moral thoughts were not alien to Tamil culture, Jain influence must have been primarily responsible for the birth of pure didactic literature in Tamil. Valluvar, as already pointed out seems intent on absorbing everything good in Jain thought and philosophy.

Valluvar denotes but a few chapters to ascetic life or 'Tiravaraviyal' — ten chapters for, observance of certain principles or viratam and four for realisation of truth, 'gananam'.

Parimēlalagār holds the view that the ascetic life prescribed by Valluvar refers to Vanaprasta or retirement from family life and not to celibacy or permanently living a single and unmarried life. The legend of Valluvar's life, whatever might be its historical veracity refers in unmistakable terms to Valluvar as a saint in family life. This strengthens the hypothesis of Parimēlalagār that Valluvar's 'Tiravaraviyal' means and deals with retirement from family life.
after fulfilling one's duties and not to ascetic life relating to celibacy.

'Anbu' is affection shown to dear and near ones, while 'Arul' is mercy shown to all forms of life according to Parimelalagar. The Christian ideal of universal brotherhood of man is a laudable one. The concept of 'Arul' is an improvement upon it as it enjoins love to all forms of life. The command of Christ is 'Love thy neighbour as thyself.' Valluvar commands us to love all forms of life as we love ourselves (Kural 244). Money is found even among mean minded people, 'Arul' is the real wealth (Kural 241).

In the Cauvery literature, even Brahmin poets like Kabilar were meat-eaters. Vegetarianism was almost unknown to them. Valluvar advocates abstinence from meat eating for ascetics. This is a clear instance where Jain influence is unmistakable. How can a meat eating person, Valluvar asks, be capable of the noble quality of mercy? (Kural 251). The argument that they are not killing any life but only purchasing it will not hold good as there will be no killing if everyone refuses to eat it (Kural 256). It is in
this chapter that Valluvar assails the Vedic rites of yagna in which goats were slaughtered (Kural 239). Lord Buddha led the revolt against the yagnas performed by Hindu priests.

Valluvar’s definition of Tabas is two-fold in nature, non-violence or 'Ahimsa' and bearing personal sufferings (Kural 261). The strength acquired by penance is capable of destroying enemies and lifting up friends (Kural 264). The astute commentator parimēlalagāgar is quick to point out that for ascetics there can be no friends or enemies and that this refers only to exceptional cases. Valluvar also subscribes to the common notion that wealthy people are few as only a few do penances and that poor people are many since the majority do not perform any penance (Kural 270).

Frandulent ascetics also existed and deceived the world by acting like saints. Valluvar severely condemns them in the chapter on 'Kūdā olukkam' what is the use of growing a beard or tonsuring heads unless it is coupled with moral behaviour (Kural 280).
It is interesting to find that Kural proscribes theft for ascetics. Probably antisocial elements roamed about in the garb of ascetics as it is common now. Otherwise, it would be strange to ask the ascetics who have renounced everything to refrain from committing theft.

Absolute truth 'Vāymai' is different from truthfulness in speech 'Vāymai'. This concept of Vāymai as speaking nothing that may have harmful effects is far advanced (Kural 291). Valluvar goes a step further and asserts that even a beneficial falsehood should be considered as truth (Kural 292). The categorical interpretation of Parimēḷalagar that speaking harmful truths is prohibited has attracted the attention of a legal expert Thiru M. Shanmugha-subramanian who has established that the above couplets as interpreted by Parimēḷalagar are surprisingly in tune with the most modern legal concepts of our time.

Tendering false evidence was considered as a heinous crime by Kaṅgam Poets. Valluvar warns that after uttering falsehood, his own conscience will revolt against him and will give him pain (Kural 293).
Anger is to be avoided by the ascetics. As saints were in the habit of cursing anyone who offends them, this advice might have become necessary. Valluvar has already alluded to the curse suffered by Indra.

Puranānūra has already warned people not to do evil if they were not able to do good. Valluvar exhorts ascetics in particular and all others in general that the policy of retort and revenge must be avoided. Jesus Christ asked his disciples to show the other cheek if an opponent slaps on their face. Valluvar goes several steps further and advocates that we must put our opponents to shame by doing some good to them in return for the harm done to us (Kural 314). This is indeed an original contribution not only to the Indian thought but also to the history of human thought.

Refraining from killing any creature is another principle for observance by the ascetics. The highest Dharma is to refrain from killing any form of life. This is also a Jain thought related to abstinence from meat eating.
In Puran tradition, there is a literary convention 'Mōri', wherein the fleeting nature of this world is stressed. Once it is realised that human life is transient, philosophical thought springs.

Valluvar falls in line with this trend and has dealt with the fleeting nature of this world in a dignified manner in sharp contrast with the musing manner in which this theme has been handled by later day Jain saints as found in Nāladiyar and other works.

With the passing of every day, our life-span is being progressively shortened. This fact must be realised (Kural 334). 'Yesterday one was alive, today he is no more'. This is how the transient nature of this world is to be talked about (Kural 335). The relation between one's soul and the body is that which exists between a chick and the egg. When the time comes, the chick brakes open the egg and goes out (Kural 338). Some commentators interpret the simile as the bird and its nest. But this is unsuitable as the bird while leaving its nest has the intention of coming back home. Another poignantly beautiful simile is handled by Valluvar while philosophising on birth and death. Death is but like sleep and birth like waking up (Kural 339).
The realization of the ephemeral nature of the world leads to renunciation of worldly ties. The more one renounces, the more one is free from sufferings (Kural 341). The five senses must be conquered, and all that is dear must be given up (Kural 343). We must be attached only to God so that we may detach ourselves from all other ties (Kural 350).

Afterwards, true nature of this world dawns upon us. Whatever may be outward appearance of the objects. We must be able to shift truth from illusion (Kural 355). Once all illusions vanish and truth realised, the end and aim of life is to attain supreme bliss of avoiding re-birth (Kural 356 to 358). Lust, anger and illusion must be given up and then only freedom from sufferings could be attained (Kural 360).

Desire must be constantly killed by self realisation. Escape from re-birth is the only gift that could be prayed for from God (Kural 362). Jeevan Mukti could be attained by giving up the unquenchable desires of this world (Kural 370). 'Pērā iyarkkai' is eternal bliss - that could be attained even while living.

That philosopher poet Kaṇṭhaṉ Pūṅgunārāṇ who proclaimed the universal kinship of man has
stated that just as a log is drawn in the direction of the stream, the soul sails with the current of destiny. And hence, this world is neither a thing for rejoicing nor an abode of pain. One should not wonder at great men, much less cavil at small people.

Valluvar has devoted a full chapter to the doctrine of destiny. In christian theology, the doctrine of preordination by God is not held to be in conflict with the Doctrine of Free will. Man has a free will to choose the good or bad path, but God has ordained everything in detail before hand.

So, too, is the case with Valluvar’s doctrine of destiny which is certainly not in conflict with his action oriented attitude towards life in general. Favourable destiny brings in undaunted efforts while an unfavourable one ushers in laziness (Kural 371). Even the intelligence is blunted or sharpened as the case may be (Kural 372). Even a study of intellectual works will bring forth only the latent talents and will not be able to add anything new (Kural 373). One may amass wealth in crores but will be able to enjoy life only in the way in which God has ordained (Kural 397).
There is no greater force, Valluvar asserts, than destiny. Even if one conspires against destiny, it will prevail in the end (Kural 390).

In sharp contrast to this assertion, Valluvar has stated in the chapter on 'Alvinai Udaimai' that by constant and tireless efforts, destiny could be overcome (Kural 627). Again he avers that even if destiny is against yielding results, if we strain hard and make efforts, it will yield results (Kural 619).

What Valluvar wants to drive home is that irrespective of destiny we should not rest content but strive tirelessly towards the betterment of our family and discharge our duties towards the nation. Further we should not lose sight of the fact that the chapter on destiny finds place only in the part dealing with ascetic life. As rightly observed by Albert Switchzar, 'life negation is only a distant cloud in Kural.

Thus it is seen that Valluvar's religion and philosophy is a fusion of vedic and Tamilian culture. A strong Jain element is also apparent.
Further by promoting a nameless creed, Valluvar wanted to establish a new all embracing religion like that of Akbar or Vallalār but failed to attract followers as his eclectic tendency, his strong point elsewhere, failed him. His efforts to found a broad-based religion including all the good elements of all religions proved abortive. Although Kural is hailed as the Veda of Tamils and Valluvar's religion is spoken of as that of Tamils, Valluvar remains only as the most oft-quoted author in Tamil but has failed to be a founder of a religion or even a distinct school of philosophy.

According to the traditional classification there are six religions - all of them have enough material to claim Kural as their own. This is how Kural is referred to in a verse found in K. Dandapani Desikar's Edition. Further Kural is said to transcend the Vedas and āgamas. And hence, what Kural unfolds is a sort of super-religion.

It is a great pity that the precious life of the oriental scholar Francis Whyte Ellis was an unfinished poem very much like his unfinished commentary on Kural. His interpretation and appreciation, replete with scholarly dissertations
knows no parallel. On 'Kādvul Vaḻtu' he goes to interpret in his easy and subtle vein:

"The praise of God 'Malar' from 'Malartal' to blow as a flower and figuratively a glad heart, a rejoicing mind, thus 'Avanul Malartatu' his mind or God blew as a flower, that is rejoiced ... 'coradiing thought' this but faintly expresses the meaning of the original. The author says not merely that there is none like the deity, but there is no similitude, by which he can be described, no figure of speech by which his nature can be expressed".

Of the eight attributes of God, mentioned by Valluvar - the independent, the ever pure, the intuitively wise, the infinitely intelligent, the immaterial, the most merciful, the infinitely powerful, the infinitely happy - Ellis finds that six of them could be found in Christianity. Most of them are common to all religions, and none of them could be claimed as an ingredient belonging to Christianity alone.

Prof. K. Subramania Pillai, the first systematic historian of Tamil literature, has opined 'vān cirappu' really sings of the power of 'Sivasakti' and has compared 'Van cirappu' with Tiruvempavai of Tiruvacakam wherein the powerful grace of God is
compared to the gentle rain that drops from the heaven. We have already seen that 'Vān cirappu' is in tune with Tamil tradition and does not fit in with any other mystical interpretation.

Prof. T.P. Meenakshisundaram has attempted to give a spiritual interpretation to 'Kāmattu-p-pāl' of Valluvar. On Kāmattu-p-pāl he has the following remarks to offer:

'Tiruvalluvar makes use of this part of his Kural, 250 speeches, suggestive of 250 dramatic situations of ideal love. In reality, we are having here 250 short stories each in two lines of verse - of ordinary life, giving expression to the Advaitic relationship of idealised love. Tiruvalluvar has so sublimated and deified sex love that the Alvars and Mayanmars of the next generation made use of the self-same idiom in the outpourings of their heart to their lord'. The interpretation of Kāmattu-p-pāl as consisting of 250 short stories is an exaggeration, to say the least of it. In one Kural, the hero is stunned by the beauty of the heroine, wonders whether she is an angel, a special version of peacock or an earthly damsel and in another he concludes that she is only a damsel of this world. How can any one see
different stories in 'Takaianahkuraittal'? There is a continuity of narration and verisimilitude of characterisation which has prompted us to put forward the hypothesis that it might well be the story of a single couple. Further, the type of love depicted by Valluvar is purely human love Kāmattuppāl is intensely human. Kural's Kāmattuppāl might have inspired Alvars and Nayamars to write spiritual poems of Nayaka Nayaki Bava, but it is no proof for giving any spiritual interpretation to Kāmattuppāl. There is no sublimation of the sex instinct as claimed by Prof. T.P. Meenakshi-sundaram, but only a refinement of the traditional mode of treatment.

The name of the chapter 'Kadvul valttu' has been questioned as there is internal evidence in Kural to suggest the usage of it. However, as pointed out by Thira G. Varadarajan, the world 'Kadavul' has been used by Tolkāppiar himself and therefore, there is no justification for giving an atheistic interpretation to Kural.

T.R. Seshar Iyengar thinks that Valluvar's religion is of Dravidian origin.
"Valluvar's religion is the religion of the Dravidians. Valluvar systematised the ethics of the Dravidian community and as well built up a system for them. His system is a high water-mark of excellence ... Valluvar described God by the terms 'Cemporul' (good being) Vilatu (the Existent) 'Meypporul' (True being). According to Valluvar, no amount of learning is of any good, unless a man believes in the existence of God and worships His feet in all love and truth. The references to the deities, Indra, Vishnu, Siva, Lakshmi and Brahma would seem to argue Valluvar's faith in symbology, despite his alleged aloofness from particular creeds. Even though confirming Valluvar to the Dravidian race will not be appropriate, there is much truth in the foregoing statement projecting 'Valluvar as a codifier of the ethics and religion of his community. Both scholarship and personal observation have given birth to the noble code of Kural. Another concept that becomes clear from this discussion is that Valluvar has proclaimed the oneness of God in 'Kadavul valltu' and that the deities he has referred to elsewhere are only spoken of in a symbolic manner.

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NOTES

2. Tolkäppiyam, Akattînai Iyal Nîppâ 5.
6. Tirukkural - Bharatidasan Urai, Kuyil Italkal, 8.11.59 to 7.2.61.
18. Ĉītalaie Ĉūtana, Tiruvalluvamālai 11.
22. Kural 11, 64, 720, 1196.
27. Tolkāppiyam, Purattinai Iyal 85.
31. Tolkāppiyam, Purattinai Iyal, 87.
35. Puranāṉūru 193.
36. Tolkāppiyam, Purattinai Iyal, Kancheittinai, Mūrţi 76.
37. Kaniyan Pūṅgunran, Puranāṉūru 192.

39. Kalattur Kilar, Tiruvalluvamālai, 44.


41. Francis' Whyte Ellis, Commentary on Tirukkural, page 5, 10-11, 1955.

42. K. Sivachandar, Tamil Sahithya Varadarun Vot I, page 32.


44. T.R. Seshasayyan, Ancient Dravidians, page 173-175, 1925.