2.0. Universal Importance of the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*

The *Tirukkuṟaḷ* is a book of universal importance and it is believed to have been written about 2000 years ago in classical Tamil by a sage Vaḻluvar, though there is no adequate evidence to prove it, except for the occurrence of his name as Tiruvalluvar in the song of praise called Thiruvalluvamalai, ‘Garland of Thiruvalluvar.’ But the poet’s name and the name of his “great work are both without a name. The author himself is commonly known as Tiru-valluva-nāyanār (the sacred devotee, priest, or soothsayer of the paraya caste)” (Pope i). Scholars and sages, cutting across continents, believe that the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* is a teaching for the whole universe. “The *Kural* is believed to be the most translated of all literary works in the world, barring religious works like the Bible and the Koran. There are no less than 80 translations” (Diaz 41). And this chapter is devoted to review the translations of the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* in English, and the related books and articles on it. A review of literature on the precious work of Tiruvalluvar, its place in the Tamil *caṅkam,* “the academy formed by the pāṇṭiyā rulers who were one among the three rulers of ancient Tamil country”, its importance in the world; and a review of its translations, which are available for reference in English, and books and articles related to the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* in English are dealt with in this chapter (Suyambu 8-9).

2.1. *Tirukkuṟaḷ* in *Caṅkam* Literature

Tamil, the language of Tamil Nadu / ancient Tamil country is known for its ancient heritage and unique nature. The pāṇṭiya rulers patronized Tamil language and founded three *caṅkams* to develop and preserve it. The poems of the *caṅkam* literature were composed by Dravidian Tamil people, both men and women, from various professions and classes of society who excelled as poets. These poems were
later collected into various anthologies, edited, and with colophons added by anthologists and annotators around 1000 AD. Then, they were categorized, for the convenience of the readers and learners, into akattiyam, tolkāppiyam, patiṇemēlkanakkku, and patiṇēkīlaṅkānakku books. The Tirukkuṟṟaḷ is one among the 18 books of the patiṇēkīlaṅkānakku books; and it has the unique distinction of being celebrated through all the ages and countries as a holy book or scripture.

Though there are many stories and legends on the birth, life, work and even the names of Tiruvaḷḷuvar and the Tirukkuṟṟaḷ, it is widely accepted that the author of the book Tirukkuṟṟaḷ is Tiruvaḷḷuvar. Also the name of the author is not a proper noun. tiru is the word used before the name of a person as a mark of respect and reverence; and the word valluva is the name of a community who earns their livelihood by weaving. Details regarding the name of the text, is found in the “Introduction” of Pope’s translation of the Tirukkuṟṟaḷ entitled the Sacred Kurral of Tiruvalluva Nayanar, that it is meant as kural by the brevity of the couplets, which means “anything short . . . and is properly the name of the couplet as being the shortest species of stanza in the Tamil language” (iii). Tiruvaḷḷuvar “with the two lines of his diminutive venpā –footed kural verse” measured the universe (iii). “The laws of the venpā metre in which the kurral is composed, are very curious, and, in fact, unique in prosody” (vi). Narayanasamy opines in the Preface to his book Thirukkural with English Version that “it (the Tirukkuṟṟaḷ) is a literary masterpiece of verses with poetic excellence, brevity and crispness, rhythm and syntax, easy to grasp and remember” (ix).
2.2. The Life of Tiruvalluvar

Ancient India was known for its seers and sittās. Acharya, in his Preface to his book *Maxims of Truth (Commentary on Thirukkural)* states that Tiruvalluvar is one among those sittās, who was a miraculous child of Bhagawan Muni, an inheritor of Kumbhamuni called Agastyar (viii-ix). Pope expressed the traditional belief regarding the life of Tiruvalluvar that Tiruvalluvar was a weaver of “the pariah tribe” whose “priests, sooth-sayers, teachers, or ‘prophets’ styled Valluvar” (Introduction i). Another legend says that Tiruvalluvar was born and brought up in Mylapore, Chennai and led a life of a weaver.

Another researcher S. Padmanabhan, in his book, *The Contribution of Kanyakumari to the Tamil World*, says that Tiruvalluvar was born at Tirunayankurichy which was named after Tiruvalluvar who was known by the name Tiruvalluva Nāyanār in the Kanyakumari District. He gives evidences like the name of a kingdom Valluva Nadu; and cites the details from the first volume of the *Travancore Archeological series* (292) about the place Muttom which is found even today and the usage of certain colloquial terms like aṟṟam ‘last’ and örttu ‘think,’ which are used in the Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu are sufficient to prove his contention. He refers to yet another story which reveals that Tiruvalluvar is the name of the Chieftain of Valluwanāṭu who “renounced the world and entered the literary field as a sort of penance” (9-12).

Legends say, Tiruvalluvar is of saintly nature and his work *Tirukkural* automatically attains perfection in every way. Being saint by nature, Tiruvalluvar has a vision to write these couplets with his intuition and instinct to teach the virtues and values of life to humanity. Besides these legends, many more stories
about the miracles performed by Tiruvaḷḷuvar and his wife are told and retold by one or the other of the Tiruvaḷḷuvar scholars or researchers. But, Tiruvaḷḷuvar’s existence has been based on mostly linguistic evidences rather than archeological evidences since none such has been determined so far.

2.3. The Works of Tiruvaḷḷuvar

The *Tirukkuṟaḷ* is the only familiar and known work of Tiruvaḷḷuvar which makes him a lawgiver of the ancient Tamil Dravidian people. But, according to N. V. K. Ashraf, the books ṇāṉaveṭṭiyāṅ, navarattiṇacintāmani, pañcaratthigam, and uppucāṭṭiram are also attributed to Tiruvaḷḷuvar (6). Yet, there is no evidence anywhere else that these books are written by him.

2.4. The Age of Tiruvaḷḷuvar

Mahadevan, in his article “Age of Thiruvalluvar” offers different opinions of the scholars like G. U. Pope, Albert Schweitzer, M. Rajamanickanar, K.A. N. Sastry, M. Varadarajan and V. Kanakasabhai about the period of Tiruvaḷḷuvar and the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*. They have differed in fixing the time of the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* from the third century B. C. to A.D.1000.(107). P. Vardarajan states in his “Preface” to his book *Thirukkural: The Voice from Within*, that the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* belongs to the Final caṅkam Age, the last of the three caṅkams (v). Hence, it may be rightly said that the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* belongs to the caṅkam or post- caṅkam period when tradition, culture and ethos were at the zenith. So, one can easily understand that translating the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*, which is in the poetic form with proper grammar and diction with strong cultural heritage and grand thoughts, may not be an easy task for any translator, however well-versed, he be in both SL and TL.
2.5. Three Books of the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*

The *Tirukkuṟaḷ* is the compilation of three divisions or books namely, *arattuppāḷ* ‘Virtue,’ *porutpāḷ* ‘Wealth’ and *kāmattuppāḷ* ‘Love.’ It is known for its brevity, simplicity and clarity; and worshipped as the maxims of truth. The first book *arattuppāḷ*, translated as Virtue into English, has 38 chapters, the second book *porutpāḷ* translated as Wealth, has 70 chapters; and the third book *kāmattuppāḷ*, translated as Love, has 25 chapters with ten couplets under each chapter. It has 1330 couplets as a whole, each of which has seven metrical feet, “divided into lines of 4 and 3 feet, or 3 and 4 feet” based on the rhythm (*etukai*) of the lines. “Rhyme in Tamil is in the beginning of the line, and is strictly the identity of the second letter, the first being of the same metrical quality” and Pope considers the division of the two lines based on its rhyme (Introduction xxvi). The *Tirukkuṟaḷ* is known for its greatness of thought and fulfillment of *ceer* ‘metre.’ To him, “a *kural* is a couplet containing a complete and striking idea expressed in a refined and intricate metre. No translation can convey an idea of its charming effect” (vi).

The first book *arattuppāḷ* ‘Virtue’ opens with “the praise of God” and deals with domestic and ascetic virtues needed for domestic and social life. The second book *porutpāḷ* ‘Wealth’ is on politics and governance, the concepts of good administration and the importance of education and values such as intelligence, will power, friendship, devotion and dignity. And the third book *kāmattuppāḷ* ‘Love’ speaks of the two categories of love such as furtive love and wedded love which is “a very deep and subtle portion of the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*. None has dared to descend into the realms of sex-love in a Book of Morals as *St. Valluvar* has done” (Bharati 10).
The couplets on love and life throw much light on life, custom, moral, discipline, amusement and relationship which are the universal phenomena of all the times, races and places. Mahatma Gandhi, the man of the millennium, too affirms the greatness of the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*: “It (*Tirukkuṟaḷ*) is a text-book of indispensable authority on moral life” and “there is none who has given such a treasure of wisdom like him (Tiruvalluvar)” (www.kural.in n.pag.).

2.6. The Immortal *Tirukkuṟaḷ*

Francis Whyte Ellis who spent his life in Tamil Nadu from 1796 till his death in 1819, was the first to make an attempt in translating the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* into English; but fate could not allow him complete his task. Rev. Drew translated the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* in 1853 which inspired Pope and paved the path to the Europeans to become aware of the greatest masterpiece of Tamil language. “Once the world became aware of these compact distiches of quintessential wisdom, the *Kural* has been translated into over 60 languages across the world, including 13 other Indian languages” since A.D.1730 (www.damowords.co.uk n.pag.). But, translating a literary work of art like the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* is not merely transferring it from one language into another because it is the index of the life of the Tamils of its period. K.C. Kulandaisamy remarks on the translation of the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* in his article “Tirukkural: Deficiency in Translation into Other Languages:”

Translation of a book like *Tirukkural* is not merely translating a book from one language to another, but it is translating a treatise from one culture to another. As technical terms in Science and Technology, there are cultural terms in Social Sciences. Science and Technology are essentially universal and one may find equivalent terms; but culture is not universal. A cultural
A term in one language may not have an equivalent one in another culture.

(n.pag.)

Many are enthused to read and enjoy the couplets for their encompassed wisdom. Scholars are surprised to find such couplets enriched with full-fledged knowledge within them. M. Winternitz, a German Professor and Sanskrit Scholar, opines:

Thiruvalluvar’s *Kural* is one of the gems of the world literature. He stands above all races, castes, and sects, and what he teaches is a general human morality and wisdom. No wonder, the *Kural* has been read, studied and highly praised in the land of its origin for centuries, but also found many admirers in the West, ever since it has become known. (www.kural.in n.pag.)

Many native scholars who became masters of English language too have tried their hands at translating the *Tirukkural* into English. Rajagopalachari, a translator of the *Thirukkural* into English, remarks in his “Preface” to his translation *Kural: the Great Book of Tiru-Valluvar* that the “*Kural* is not a mere book of aphorisms. It is a work linked with the life of the people in all its aspects” (xiii). K.M. Munshi, in his Foreword to Rajaji’s translation, comments on the greatness of the *Tirukkural*:

In its essence, *Tirukkural* is a treatise *par excellence* on the art of living. Tiru-Valluvar, the author, diagnoses the intricacies of human nature with such penetrating insight, perfect mastery and consummate skill absorbing the most subtle concepts of modern psychology, that one is left wondering at his sweep and depth. His prescriptions, leavened by godliness, ethics, morality and humaneness are sagacious and practical to the core. They cut
across castes, creeds, climes and ages and have a freshness which makes one feel as if they are meant for the present times. (ix)

According to Yogi Shuddhananda Bharati, *Tirukkural* is “the Gospel of love and give, a code of soul-luminous life” (Introduction 7). He has nothing but praise for the *Tirukkural*; and opines that “Tirukkural is a Guiding Light to humanity. It leads humanity to live in moral purity, spiritual knowledge, eternal wisdom, in perfect health, wealth and prosperity.” According to him, it is a “faithful friend” to everyone irrespective of their profession and status (10).

J. Narayanasamy, a translator of the *Tirukkural* into English, admires that “the *Thirukkural* is neither a Testament, nor a Scripture, nor a Heavenly Dispensation; it is a Treatise on Social Life. It is the embodiment of enlightened wisdom; the hallmark of an ancient civilization, with a rich heritage, tradition and culture reflected in a distinctive language and diction (Preface ix). While stating about the hidden treasures like simplicity, brevity, clarity of content, precious teaching of moral values, extreme practicality and metric beauty of each couplet, Auvai, a famous Tamil classical poetess, praised it as: “The Kural contains much in a little compass. Such is the ingenuity of its author that he has compressed within its narrow limits all the branches of knowledge, as if he had hollowed an atom, and enclosed all the waters of the seven seas in it” (www.kural.in n.pag,).

Religious books like the *Bible*, the *Bhagavat Gita*, the *Quran* and many literary works of different languages have been preserved in English as translated versions. The famous Tamil literary works like the *Tirukkural*, *cilappatikāram*, *pattuppāṭṭu*, *kuguntokai* and *nālaṭiār* have been translated into English by various competent translators, since Tamil is known for its ancient heritage and “melodious and
homogenous” nature which is “rich in synonyms leaving much space for suggestions” (Fornanek148). Translations of the Tamil literary works were initially done by the foreign missionaries who came to India and learned Tamil and other Indian languages in order to do their missionary work. Translation of the *Tirukkural* into European languages, too, started with the advent of the foreign missionaries like Father Constantius Beschi (1730 Latin), A. F. Cammera (1803 German), F.W. Ellis (1812 English), M. Ariel (1848 French), W. H. Drew (1840 English), Karl Graul (1856 German and Latin) and G. U. Pope (1886 English). It was Pope’s efforts which “opened the door to the world’s appreciation of *Thirukkural*” (www.damowords.co.uk n.pag.).

2.7. *Tirukkural* in English: A Review

translators follow the commentary of Parimelalagar, as pointed out by M.S. Purnalingam Pillai (1999): “all the editors, European and Indian, have closely followed Parimelalagar’s commentary with all its defects” (Foreword 5).

It was the Italian Jesuit Missionary Joseph Constantius Beschi who started translating the *Tirukkuṟṟaḷ* into a European language, Latin. He translated only the first two books “Virtue” and “Wealth” because he might have thought that translating the book on Love would be of doing injustice to spirituality; and did not translate the third book Love. He spent forty-two years of his life in Tamil Nadu; and rechristened himself as Veeramamunivar out of his sheer love for Tamil. Pope calls him the “Greatest of Tamil Scholars” (Introduction iv). Pope printed his (Beschi’s) translated version of the *Tirukkuṟṟaḷ* in the appendix of his own translation of the *Tirukkuṟṟaḷ*.

Karl Graul (1856), another translator of the *Tirukkuṟṟaḷ* into German, came to India as a missionary in 1844, learned Indian languages, as the missionaries were expected to have sufficient knowledge of the local languages. His publication of the *Tirukkuṟṟaḷ* in 1856, with German and Latin translations, “is very valuable, though incomplete-owing to his lamented death- and has serious misprints” (Pope iv). He (Graul) expresses his great admiration for the *Tirukkuṟṟaḷ* in his introduction to the *Kural* in German as, “No translation can convey any idea of its charming effect. It is truly an apple of gold in the network of silver” (www.kural.in n.pag.). But Aiyar is of the opinion that he might have used Beschi’s manuscripts for his translations of the *Tirukkuṟṟaḷ* (Preface x).

F. W. Ellis (1812), another scholar of extraordinary ability, came to Madras for the service of East India Company in 1796. He served in various capacities like
Secretary to the Board of Revenue, Zillah Judge and Collector of Madras till his death. His love for Tamil was deep and strong and his knowledge of Tamil was adequate for composing Tamil verse. His translated version of the *Tirukkural* was published in 1812; but he translated only 120 couplets of the 1330 couplets, 69 in verse form and the rest 51 in prosaic style. He gave a commentary with “wide ranging quotations” from ancient and modern Tamil poetry (Sundaram 142).

Drew (1840), a missionary of the London Missionary Society came to Madras in the first half of the eighteenth century. He translated only 63 chapters of the *Tirukkural*. In his article “The Kural and its Translators,” Sundaram draws attention to Drew’s comments on the difficulties of translating the third book (Love) as: “it could not be translated into any European language without exposing the translator to infamy” (143). Aiyar (1961) remarks that “Drew has given but a feeble translation” (Preface xvi).

J. Lazarus (1856) was also a Missionary and a Tamil Scholar who wrote books in Tamil dealing with themes drawn from Christianity. He translated the *Nannool*; compiled *Dictionary of Tamil Proverbs*; and revised the renderings of the *Kural* by Drew. Raman admires the translations of Drew and Lazarus, as he feels that their translation “adheres reasonably well to the content of the original, but it is not very inspiring or enjoyable in style” (Introduction 13).

Pope (1886), during his long voyage from England to India as a missionary in 1839, learned Tamil; and started his missionary work in Chennai. Besides mastering Tamil under the guidance and teaching of the famous Tamil scholars Aariyankaavuppillai and Ramanuja Kavirayar, he learned Telugu and other Dravidian languages; and transferred his spiritual service into educational service.
In an article entitled “Reverend G.U. Pope: Student of Tamil,” a list of 16 works is given as Pope’s chief works. He was the one who made Tamil Grammar easier to the Tamilians; and the first and only foreigner who translated all the 1330 couplets of the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* into English. Being inspired by the work of Drew, Pope translated the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* into English as the *Sacred Kural*; and published it in the *Indian Antiquary*. Then, he published it with an introduction and highly commendable commentary in 1886.

Aiyar feels that if the style of the English Bible had been adopted for the translation of the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*, “and it would have been easy for Drew as well as Pope, who were members of the Christian Church, to have adopted such a style for the translation of Tiruvalluvar” (xii). But Pope obviously did not have the notion of adopting the style of the Bible for the reason that he wished to give it a metrical translation. Though Pope attempts to give a *metrical translation* of couplet into couplet form, he could not retain the meaning and brevity of the SL text. He even admits that, “a kural is a couplet containing a complete and striking idea expressed in a refined and intricate metre. No translation can convey an idea of its charming effect” (Introduction vi). Yet he tries to maintain a regular rhythm and rhyme scheme in each couplet. But Aiyar (1961) feels that “Pope’s verses do not at all do justice to the merits of the original but on the contrary deform its grand thoughts by giving them stilted and unnatural expression” (Preface xvi). While discussing the features of poetry, Andre Lefèvre opines:

> Translators who translate with rhyme and meter as their first priority often find themselves neglecting other features of the original: syntax tends to suffer most as it is stretched on the procrustean bed of sound similarity
and metrical beat, and the information content is almost inevitably supplemented or altered in none too subtle ways by “paddling”: words not in the original added to balance a line on the metrical level or to supply the all-important rhyme word. (71)

Sundaram and Raman affirm Lefevre’s statement, because, though most of his couplets are with twelve-syllabled lines, a few need to be stretched and fetch an assessment that “its sixteen-syllabled lines stretching like pythons across the page” (Sundaram.143). Raman (2000) observes that “the translation of G.U. Pope is rhyming, but often verbose, sometimes confusing” (13). But Popley considers Pope’s translation as “the best known” and affirms that his translation involves “some slight addition to or alteration of the meaning of the original” as Pope has “put them into rhymed verses” (Preface ix).

Aiyar (1915) is the first native who laid his hands on an independent translation of the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* into English. His translation, *Maxims of Thiruvalluvar*, is in the prose form, yet his “translation is popular among the other Indian languages for many reasons” like “its availability,” “he being a native Tamilian scholar of a very high order with excellent mastery over English, his work is bound to be the closest to the original” and “it is complete whereas Rajaji has translated only the first division” (Mahapatra 57). Bharati states, “Sri. V.V.S. Aiyar translates the *Kural* in the Biblical style” (Introduction 7). Kulandaiswamy too, affirms it in his Foreword to the English translation of the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* by S.M. Diaz, saying, “V.V.S. Aiyar’s translation published 50 years ago is yet another purposeful work, intentionally couched in Biblical style” (41). Raman is of the view that “V.V.S. Aiyar’s translation conveys the meanings of the original in reasonably good
English, even if, on occasions, it deviates from traditional interpretations” (Introduction 13). Popley opines, “V.V.S. Aiyar has certainly succeeded in giving us a very fine translation” (Preface x).

Michael (1928) initially translated some select couplets of the Tirukkural; and then the first book the Tirukkural, Virtue; and finally succeeded in translating all the couplets of the Tirukkural in verse form.

Popley (1931) translated the selected couplets of the Tirukkural into English under the title the Sacred Kural or the Tamil Veda of Tiruvalluvar. He considered the Tirukkural as the “ethical Bible of the Tamils” (Introduction 33). He regarded his translating of the Tirukkural “as a great and noble purpose to help to make more widely known the inimitable couplets of this humble Tamil sage (Tiruvalluvar)” (Preface ix). He felt that it is necessary . . . for the non-Tamilian to gain a good idea of the teaching of this book” (x). He tried “to give a metrical form to the couplets, but he has not made use of rhyme, as it seems to him to detract from the dignity of the translation.” At the same time, “he has used both vowel and consonant alliteration, which is the Tamil substitute for rhyme.” He had the feeling that “it is almost impossible in any translation to do justice to the beauty and force of the original; only a master of English and of Tamil, such as Thiruvalluvar was in Tamil could do it” (x).

Mudaliar (1933) translated the Tirukkural into English following poetry into prose method of translating. He is translation of the Tirukkural is done together with his friends B.L. Aranganatha Iyer and R. Srinivasa Desigan (xviii). According to Kumaraswami, he (Mudaliar) “has brought out, as best as any translator can, the
true spirit of the original and has not produced a mere translation of its language” (Introduction v).

Rajagopalachari (1937) translated select couplets of the first and the second books of the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* into English following poetry into prose method of translation. Sundaram is of the view that, among the renderings of the *Kural* into English by Ellis, Pope, Drew, Lazarus, Popley, Ramachandra Dikshitar, Rajagopalachari (Rajaji), Sreenivasan and Kamaliah, he (Sundaram) has been benefited most of all by Rajaji’s renderings. In his “Preface” to his book, *Thiruvalluvar: the Thirukkural*, Sundaram states that “Rajaji, ablest and wisest of India’s statesmen, brings to his translation his incisive clarity, but his prose is concerned less with Valluvar the poet than with Valluvar the thinker and teacher. Other translations are mostly pedestrian, when they are not sheer doggerel” (xx). On the other hand, Sundaram regrets saying that, “Rajaji rendered the Kural in prose, which makes the meaning crystal clear but, without the shimmer and suggestiveness of poetry” (145).

Purnalingam Pillai (1942) translated the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* into English under the title *The Kural or The Maxims of Tiruvalluvar*, adapting the method of poetry into prose translation. He followed the original text closely and tried “his best to convey to the reader the spirit of the author” (Foreword 12). Because, he was not very much pleased with the other translations of the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*, and expressed his displeasure in his “Foreword” to his *Critical Studies in Kural* (1924) as, “there is no doubt that each edition (translation) is good in its own way. But all the translators, European and Indian, have closely followed Parimelalagar’s commentary with all its defects” (v). S.N. Kandaswamy, in his article “*Tirukkural*
in English,” comments that “the translation of Purnalingam Pillai, being unique in its own way . . . with his sound knowledge in the source and target languages, has attempted to present the substance of the couplets in well-chosen words” (The Hindu, 13 Mar 2001. Web. 20 Feb 2011).

Dikshitar (1949) authored a number of books on history. His intimate understanding of Tamil texts enabled him to translate the Tirukkuṟaḷ into English in 1949. It reflects the inner meaning of the classical text (Tirukkuṟaḷ) and remains the closest to the original among many that have appeared to this day.

Balasubramaniam (1962) is a native translator who translated the Tirukkuṟaḷ following verse to verse metrical translation. But, his commentaries on Pope’s translation of the famous classic Thiruvasakam made him more popular than his Tirukkuṟaḷ translation.

Shuddhananda Bharati (1968) translated the Tirukkuṟaḷ in verse form. It is mentioned in the introduction that “V.V. S. Aiyar admired the style and substance of the work (translation of yōka citti) and requested him (Bharati) to translate the Tirukkuṟaḷ into rimed couplets.” Bharati feels that “the terse cryptic couplets of Valluvar’s Kural contain something more than what have been brought out in translations . . . .” His rhymed couplets “follow the French syllabic system” and he has made it “clear and simple as possible so that the Kural couplets can be quoted as proverbs and also sung melodiously” (8-9).

Kasthuri Sreenivasan (1969) attempted to translate the Tirukkuṟaḷ into English following rhymed translation method with the intention that “every new generation needs its own rendering to be able to appreciate it” and to “derive intellectual and emotional satisfaction” (Introduction x). She relies on
“authoritative commentators like Parimelazhagar in Tamil and V.V.S. Aiyar in English” (x). She says that “there have been minor modifications in a few cases either because of the requirements of rhyme, or because a literal translation does not make the poet’s meaning quite clear” (x).

Vanmikanathan’s (1969) translation is based on the SL text and on its commentary by Parimelazhagar. As he felt: “The Tirukkural is to the Tamils what the Bible is to the Christians, the Koran to the Muslims, the Zend Avesta to the Parsis, the Torah to the Jews, and Granth Saheb to the Sikhs,” he translated it with the intention of propagating the Tirukkural widely in the other States of India where Tamil is not used and in foreign countries (Preface 10). His aim is to bring out a translation which is “very faithful to the original” and for the translators of the Tirukkural “who do not know Tamil may confidently follow this (his translation) and not go astray from the original” (14). He believed that his “translation will serve as a long-needed and welcome introduction to a delectable work of which most of them (non-Tamilians) have only heard so far” (15).

Arulappa’s (1976) translation of the third book “Love” of the Thirukkural, entitled God: The Bridegroom, is in the form of commentary with a sub-title Thirukkural Inbattuppal Kalavial Commentary. He gives priority to the traditional yet unusual division of subjects into four according to the interests which should concern man’s life: aram ‘Virtue,’ porul ‘Wealth,’ inpad ‘Pleasure of Love’ and viṭu ‘Eternal Home’ and reflects them in his book. In this book, he personifies the lover as God and strengthens his opinion with the help of biblical comparisons and references to the couplets of the third book Love, wherever possible.
In Iyengar’s (1988) translation of the *Tirukkural* into English in verse form entitled *Tiruvalluvar Tirukkural: Lights of the Righteous Life*, he tries to “convey the sense of the *kural*- couplet in his own unrhymed couplet of ten +seven syllables” (Introduction x). Mahapatra is of the opinion:

K.R.S.I.’s (K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar) translation forms part of a ‘classics of the East’ series. It has a brief but fitting ‘Introduction’ and postscript which add to the translation’s value. It has his stamp all over his grandeur, his depth and his powerful delivery. And the third division of Kural - providing enough scope for his poetic style makes this translation a proud gift to the discerning non Tamil readers. (59)

Sundaram (1989) translated the *Tirukkural* into English following verse to verse method of translation. He is considered to be a “celebrated translator” by scholars and researchers like Ashraf and Mahapatra. Though no translation can offer the exact rendering of the SL text, Ashraf, in his “Tirukkural in English: Choosing the best among translations,” expresses that “Sundaram’s translation is by and large perfect often giving us the impression that this is how Valîvar himself would have written his couplets had he known English” (nvkashraf.co.cc 2). While discussing the translation of the couplets under the first chapter, Mahapatra observes that “Sundaram’s is an absolutely plain and direct translation and could be one of the most important and deciding points in understanding the other epithets used in the other couplets” (61).

S. N. Srirama Desigan (1991) is of the view that the *Tirukkural* is the Tamil scripture but with the Indian culture with which Tiruvaḷḷuvar intended to spread Indian culture all over the world. His (Desigan’s) English rendering of the
Tirukkural was published as a souvenir to honour his completion of 50 year service in the translation field in order to spread the teachings of the couplets of the Tirukkural among all the Indians and Indian culture all over the world (Introduction xii).

Rasipuram S. Ramabadran’s (1994) translation of the Tirukkural into English, entitled the Wit and Wisdom of Thiruvalluvar “is in the form of terse rhymed couplets, just like the original in Tamil.” They are easy to understand with its commentary on five distinct features such as the topic, summary, quotations, commentary and motto or moral in short rhymed couplets in free verse to maintain the brevity and effect of the SL text (Preface i-ii). Swami Smaranananda, in his “Foreword” to the Wit and Wisdom of Thiruvalluvar, comments that “Sri Ramabadran has translated the verses in two terse lines, like the unique two line metre employed by Tiruvalluvar” (viii). N. Mahalingam’s opinion on Ramabadran’s translation of the Tirukkural is that it “. . . is not a mere translation, but the product of a new and pragmatic approach to an ancient classic” (Foreword x). K.M. Narayanan is of the view that “he (Ramabadran) highlights the central theme of the Kural with reference to the contemporary connotations” (xv).

Kallapiran (1995) a Tamil poet, has translated the Tirukkural into English in couplet form from a Management perspective. His translation is “not only meant for foreigners or other Indians who do not know Tamil but also to the present day convent-bred younger generation in Tamil Nadu itself, who are at home with English version than with the original written in their own mother tongue” (Introduction 2). Avvai Natarajan’s opinion on the present translation is that it is
“lucid enough to read and comprehend as it maintains a silky balance between the semantic and the syntactic beauty of the Kural” (Foreword 3).

Diaz (2000) translated the Tirukkural into English “to serve a different purpose—more especially for the non-Tamil English reading public in India and abroad” (Introduction 44). His work is “in the nature of a full-fledged commentary in English with translation, explanation, interpretation, alternate readings, criticism and where, appropriate and warranted, comments on parallels etc., all in one” (42). Kulandaiswamy says that “Diaz has done a great service to make it (Tirukkural) available to the world community with a rich and scholarly commentary through this monumental work” (Foreword 30).

Varadaraja V. Raman (2000) translated the first book of the Tirukkural since he “did not come across any readily available work that dissected the couplets word by word to reveal their literal meanings” and desired to offer such a translation to the readers. He was “impressed by the English translations of the Tirukkural but not entirely satisfied” (Preface 5). Though he sensed some lacking in some English versions, he believed that “the English translations have sometimes served as springboards for casting the verses in other languages;” and it resulted in rendering his own translation of it (Introduction 12). He has pointed out the “oft-repeated elements” such as rebirth, law of karma, goal of life, control of senses, world of the gods and heno-significance of the “religio-cultural framework” of the Tirukkural (14).

P. Varadarajan (2004) translated the Tirukkural in prose form with the intention of making “the young generation of the country aware of India’s traditional wisdom, the different shades of its multi-coloured and vibrant culture,
and its personal and social value systems” (Foreword iii). He did his translation of
the *Tirukkural* into English “in order to enable the much wider section of Indian
readers, particularly students, from all the regions to know this great work of
Tiruvalļuvar, appreciate it and learn something from it” (iii).

Agamudai Nambi (2004) translated the *Tirukkural* in blank verse without
giving priority to the couplet form or rhyme scheme. Though numerous translations
have already been available in English, Nambi makes “an attempt to bring out the
Tamil text of *Tirukkural* into English in complete form with its everlasting odour
and beauty and also with the sense of sobriety and nicety, irrespective of the
number of lines or words required in order to render justice to the original” through
his translation (Introduction 25).

sub-title “A glasnost spectrum of an encrypted life guide thro’ the prism of time”.
In its “Preface,” Narayanasamy said that his “attempt to present the ‘Thirukkural in
English’ (following the original verses with interpretation in Tamil) is not a
translation but a simple rendering in a language of common usage, more in prose
than in verse, of ideas from the depths of the wisdom of a peerless Seer, whose
vision transcends time and place” (ix). His purpose in translating the *Tirukkural* is
to “have a fresh look, not shackled by pre-conceived notions of times yore; to
highlight the relevance to present day life and times ahead, of norms which can be
kept in mind and adopted day to day, to enrich our lives” (Preface ix).

Ashraf in his article “*Thirukkural: the Sacred Couplets*” in English, says
that “The *Kural* has been so far translated, either in parts or in full, into 80-90
languages,” and “the Tamils believe that the *Kural* has been translated into most
languages, next only to the Bible and the Qur’an.” He adds that “the Kural has been translated into English by more than 100 translators, both European and Indian. Translations by Indian authors alone will be more than 90” (1). Pope is the first one who translated all the couplets of the Tirukkuṟaḷ into English. Aiyar is the first native scholar who translated all the couplets of the Tirukkuṟaḷ into English.

Though many translators have translated the Tirukkuṟaḷ into English, no translator or reader seems to be satisfied with any of the translations. While discussing the translations of the Tirukkuṟaḷ, V.V. Raman says, “None of these conveys the pithy potency of the original. Indeed, no translation can” (Introduction 13). So, there is every possibility of the upcoming of more and more translations of the Tirukkuṟaḷ into English.

2.8. The Studies on Tirukkuṟaḷ Translations

Many scholars and researchers contributed their best in bringing out the indwelling wisdom of the Tirukkuṟaḷ. Purnalingam Pillai (1929) made twelve critical studies on the couplets of the Tirukkuṟaḷ entitled Critical Studies in Kural, with the intention of popularizing the “gemmy classic among the nations and races whose vernacular is not Tamil, whether in India or abroad . . .” (Foreword 6). He brings out the different categories of scholars and reformers who read the couplets of the Tirukkuṟaḷ for the first time; and discusses on the multi-names of God and His nature without mentioning any religion, the characteristics of godlike man, true ascetic, lovers, man and wife, the virtues and vices prevailing in human society, prudence and prosperity, health and wealth, and polity and administration.

K. Appadurai (1966), a Tamil scholar and linguist, author, and lexicographer made out a commentary on the Tirukkuṟaḷ and wrote a book The
Mind and Thought of Tiruvalluvar. This book deals with certain remarkable factors of the Tirukkural like "universalism and modernism" through its "silent influence over the evolution of religion and culture, thoughts and ideas of people in Tamilnadu and India in particular, and of the wider world in general." (5)

In T.P. Meenakshisundaram’s (1969) series of lectures on the philosophy of Tiruvalluvar found in the Sornammal Endowment Lectures and the book entitled Philosophy of Thiruvalluvar, he discusses the existing culture on the influence of another culture which acts as "a catalytic agent for new developments" (13). As Tiruvalluvar did not mention the name of any particular god, every religion opts to have the Tirukkural for itself.

K. C. Kamaliah (1973) made a comparative study of the first forty couplets of the Kural with the English renderings of Pope, Ellis, Drew and Beschi and discussed them in his book entitled Preface in the Kural: A Comparative Study of the First Forty Couplets of the Kural. This study of "different translations may be of help to those interested in grasping the meanings and understanding the message of Tiruvalluvar to mankind." (xxi) Among the five chapters, the first chapter gives an introduction to the "universal wisdom" of the Tirukkural with a vast collection of praises and opinions of scholars like Pope, R. C. Temple, Albert Scheweitzer and Purnalingam Pillai on the Tirukkural and its author. The second chapter is on the conception of God in different religions; the third chapter is on the role of rain in life; the fourth chapter is on "the greatness of ascetics and differences between nīttār and turgantār;" and the fifth chapter defines the term virtue and emphasizes the "efficacy of virtue" (xi).
Kamala Sankaran wrote a book entitled *Kamban’s Treatment of Tirukkural* with her findings on the impact of *Tirukkural* on Kambar, another renowned epic poet of the Tamil land who rendered the *Rāmāyaṇā* in Tamil. Her deep study reveals that “Valluvar traces the outline of an ideal life; Kamban makes that ideal concrete in the life histories of the characters who move in his epic” . . . “Kural take a living form and shape” in the *Rāmāyaṇā* (Introduction 6).

S. Maharajan (1982), in his book *Makers of Indian Literature: Thiruvalluvar*, discusses the “contemporaneous presence” of Tiruvalḷuvar besides the time of Tiruvalḷuvar and his work. The book deals with the wide international contacts Tamil Nadu had had during that period; the reputation of the *Tirukkural* in India and foreign countries; its translations; visualization of Tiruvalḷuvar; and interpretation of the *Tirukkural* (Introduction 7). He comes to the conclusion that “Valluvar evolved a commanding synthesis of the best in every religion, selecting from each, the doctrines which he found most wholesome, and dovetailing it into the Tamilian system of spiritual and ethical thinking” (15).

C. Rajasingham’s (1987) book, *Thirukkural - the Daylight*, is a project to rescue the *Tirukkural* “which has seen the light of many translations and interpretations” “from the moralistic and platitudinous approaches of the past” since it is the most valuable and significant work of the Tamils (Preface 1). He feels that “no language today can transcend Kural’s perspectives because to gather all its fountain of wisdom has taken Tamil itself a long and memorable history” (Introduction 18).

M. Karunanidhi (1989), an astute politician and statesman and former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, known for his ever-longing love for Tamil, merges the
couplets of the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* and pictures together in his *Kuralovium* as “all poetry is verbal painting; all painting is silent poetry” (Preface xviii).

E. S. Muthuswami (1994) culls out “the important and salient points of *Kural’s* cultural aspects” in his book *Tamil Culture as Revealed in Tirukkural* (Foreword i). He gives various definitions for culture and gives the corresponding Tamil word *paṇpāṭu*, explains the difference between culture and civilization, and examines the various aspects of Tamil culture “enshrined in the philosophy of Thiruvalluvar” and the threefold classification of the couplets (9). He discusses Thiruvalluvar’s concept of love, life-positivism, family life, social life, spiritual life and doctrines; and their need to be followed in one’s life, which are taught through the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*.

Kulandaiswamy (1994) makes “a new exposition of the *Thirukkural*” through his book *Vazhum Valluvam ‘Immortal Work of Vaḷḷuvar’* which is translated as *Immortal Kural*. He gives a scientific interpretation to the couplets which are “as old as human civilization” (Foreword xii). The very beginning of the book itself expresses the author’s opinion on the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* which “is still worthy of being referred to and owned with pride,” as the monumental work of Valluvar (1). The author is of the view that though “man not immortal,” he “is capable of creating things that are relatively immortal” though he is mortal (6). In such an immortal work, the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*, Thiruvalluvar “scrupulously avoids the use of names of places, objects, events and, in general, proper nouns to an astonishing degree” and generalizes his characters as the common names of gods without any particular name in the first chapter, kings but not any proper noun, speech but no particular language, and so on (23).
C. R. Acharya (1999) gives the much needed and highly interesting anecdotes on the heritage, birth, life, marriage, miracles and work of Tiruvalīḷuvār in his book *Maxims of Truth*. He believes that “one who reads the first chapter of this treatise (*Maxims of Truth*) will surely become a pious man free from ill-behaviour and lead a perfect life” (Preface 1).

The English rendering of Tamilanban’s (2002) *Salutations Valluva!* is yet another garland of verses on the incomparable magnificent power of the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*. It is a “tribute of a tributary to its source, of the present to the real past, of a revolting modern rooted in an ancient, but living tradition to his great literary ancestor who is also our contemporary” (Foreword 11).

There are many articles available on the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*, its place, its value and its translations. Vedam Venkataraya Sastry’s (1973) research paper on “*Thirukkural* and its Unique Place in Indian Literature” deals especially with its Telugu translations which insist on the importance of going deep into the text; and makes everyone feel that “the subject needs wider treatment by its very innate universal appeal” (81).

Sundaram’s (1979) article “The *Kural* and its Translators” gives a clear picture about the translators and the translations and the defects found in the translations and suggestions to be followed by the translators. He is all praise for Pope’s “introduction, notes on grammar and metre, general notes, lexicon and concordance,” but disappointed with “his translation” as it appeared “with its sixteen- syllabled lines stretching like pythons across the page” (143). He was not very happy about the translation of Rajaji too. He states in his “Preface” to his *Tirukkural* translation that “Rajaji, ablest and wisest of India’s statesmen, brings to
his translation his incisive clarity, but his prose is concerned less with Valluvar the thinker and teacher” (xx).

N. Subbu Reddiyar’s (1979) article “Thiruvalluvar’s Philosophy of Life” insists on the relevance of the trinity of the Tirukkural: aram, porul and kāmam, which is considered to be the equivalent of the “Dharmasastra Life-motif,” and Tiruvalļuvar’s vision of a family as the “nucleus of an ideal society.” Karu. Nagarajan’s (1980) article on “the Concept of Mind in Tirukkural” is an attempt to study the mind, which occupies a unique position in man’s psychic system to control the entire being, its nature, its movements and unpredictable inclinations and its strength and weakness. M. G. Ajay Ghosh’s (1991) article “The Tirukkural in Malayalam” expresses the importance of Tamil language and its ancient heritage. He points out the fact that Tamil was the language of Kerala upto the early half of the 20th century.

Balasubramanian’s (1992) article “Meaning and Structure – A Few Problems in Translating Thirukkural” brings out the problems in translating the content of the SLT into a TL without leaving the idea of its nonverbal substance as the linguistic structure of the SLT or the content of the word cannot be maintained while translating it into a TL. He opines that “the problems encountered on the selectional level centre not so much on identifying the linguistically equivalent terms in the target language as searching for (or creating within the grammar of the TL) terms that would tackle contextually generated complexities” (3). Fulfilling a specific structural norm alone will not satisfy the needs of translation; but each syntactic structure should be seen whether it performs an expressive function in the translated version.
Mahadevan (1997) tries to fix an age to the *Tirukkural* through his article “Age of *Thirukkural*.” He offers various opinions of scholars like Pope, Albert Schweitzer, Rajamanickanar, Maharajan, Somasundara Bharathiar, K.A. N. Sastry, M. Varadarajan and V. Kanakasabhai regarding the age of Tiruvalluvar which varies from the third B.C. to 1000 A.D. Pope fixed the period of Tiruvalluvar between 800 and 1000 A.D.; Albert Schweitzer holds the second century A.D.; Rajamanickanar and Maharajan believed the time is between the third and the first centuries B.C.; Somasundara Bharathiar believed that it must be before Christ; K.A.N. Sastry fixed the time between 450 and 550 A.D.; M. Varadarajan believed that it must be between 100 and 500 A.D.; V. Kanakasabhai wrote that it must be between 100 and 130 A.D. (107). Besides these, the Government of Tamil Nadu fixes the time as B.C. 32.

Ranganayaki Mahapatra (1999) lists out the translations of the *Tirukkural* in her article “Translations of *Tirukkural* into English and other Indian Languages – Some Aspects.” She feels that “the language of *Tirukkural* itself is terse enough to create problems for translation” (61). And it is a need to give explanatory notes along with the translation. “Because each word/phrase seems to have possibilities of various interpretations embedded with culturally very significant and sensitive notions very important to the people, though they are couched in an almost neutral language” (60). She concludes that “it is the most formidable task to reproduce *Tirukkural* even in Tamil again, because the magic lies not in the words, but in the unique way they have been employed, the wealth of information that is embedded to be travelled layer after layer. So those who have attempted it and achieved so much success deserve only our heartfelt gratitude” (64).
Kulandaiswamy (2005) brings out the deficiency in translating the *Thirukkural* in his article “*Tirukkural*: Deficiency in Translation into Other Languages.” He is of the opinion that “Translation of a book like *Tirukkural* is not merely translating a book from one language to another, but it is translating a treatise from one culture to another.” He brings out the difficulties in finding an equivalent word or equivalent term in the TL for a cultural term in the SLT, as in finding an equivalent word or equivalent term in the TL for a cultural term in the SLT, as “culture is not universal” (1).

S. V. Shanmugam (2005) makes a study on the syntactical style of the first 40 couplets of the *Tirukkural* in his article “Syntactical Styles of Valluvar.” The article deals with the “thematic units, types of syntactical structures and their deep structures and transformations involved and motivations for the transformations, types of coherences, cohesion relations” which leads to “make the overall observation of syntactical styles” (1).

Pathmarajah Nagalinkam (2008) brings out the principles of war such as the elements of military power, surprise and timeliness, intelligence and spy network, preparation for war, courage and valour and war planning embedded in the couplets of the *Tirukkural* through her article “*Tirukkural* on War, Defense and Foreign Affairs.”

Kulandaiswamy (2010), in his article “An Inquiry into the Sources of Immortality of *Tirukkural*,” points out the fact that the *Tirukkural* is a “secular book” (26). Tiruvalḷuvar was “progressive, far-sighted, and penetrating in his approach” in his book of every time and space which is “an essential part of the heritage, not only of the Tamil land but the country as the whole” (44).
Ashraf makes a comparative study of twenty-five different translations in his book *Tirukkural: Sacred Couplets in English*. He selects the translations which are the “closest to the original” and prefers “brevity, simplicity and clarity. He even combines translations of two translators “to produce the best reflection of the original” (1). In his article “An introduction to *Thirukkural* and its author,” he analyses the life and works of Tiruvalluvar and the translations of the *Tirukkural*. Also, he expresses the ancient heritage and importance of Tamil language that: “Tamil existed in the Dravidian south India even before Sanskrit entered through north” (2).

Felix Raj (2007), in his article “Thiruvalluvar: His Economic Ideas and Their Relevance Today” gives the details of the birth, life and work of Tiruvalluvar. He is of the opinion that “Thiruvalluvar has taken the best from all cultures and religions and put them together in Kural form” and “the sacred verses deal very much with political and social affairs of life” (1).

R. Narasimhan (2007) has made a detailed study of the select couplets which are known for their rich similes and comparisons in his article “the Beauty of Similes in *Tirukkural*” and showed how “Tiruvalluvar handles similes adeptly” (1).

Besides these English translations and critical studies and articles, there are other translations of the *Tirukkural* and criticisms and articles on the *Tirukkural* in English as well as in other Indian and foreign languages. Tiruvalluvar gives priority to listening, learning and educating and speaks of their importance in one’s life which suits everyone, every time and every place. The *Tirukkural* offers the doctrines to be followed in one’s life, rules to be followed in a government and administrative ability to be followed in an office. As a whole, the *Tirukkural* is
immortal which belongs to all and it is quite impossible for one to get or go through all translations or books or articles related to it.

2.9. Never Ending Task of Translating

V. V. Raman comments that “some of these (translations of the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*) are literal, some are faithful to the substance, some quite awkward, some in rhymes, some in long sentences, and so on” (Introduction 12). He adds that the translations of “Reverend Drew and John Lazarus adhere reasonably well to the content of the original, but it is not very inspiring and enjoyable in style” and Pope’s is “rhyming, but often verbose, sometimes confusing” (Introduction 13). Also, “Prof. Sundaram vehemently decries those who translate the *Kural* at length. He is not too harsh when he says ‘there is no English translation which is entirely satisfactory’ (Mahapatra 58). But, another translator Agamudai Nambi justifies lengthy translations saying, “translation of such dense couplets into other languages will naturally call for more words than the original text” as the couplets of the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* is enriched with “abnormal density” (Introduction 25).

Though there are too many translated versions of the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* in English and the translators succeed in rendering the translated versions, scholars and researchers are of the view that it is impossible to translate the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* into “an alien language with its richly embedded layers of cultural heritage” and it is not easy to translate the cultural terms and culture bound words from the SL (Tamil) into the TL (English) since there is lack of equivalent words in it (Mahapatra 58).

The next chapter is devoted to a detailed study on the treatment of cultural elements and culture bound words relating to the way of life while translating the couplets of the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* into English. As any literary work is the index of the life
of a race of a particular region and time; everyone accepts that it is not easy to translate the linguistic and cultural elements of one language into another. And every translator tries to translate a literary work without deviating from its linguistic and cultural aspect; and the same is the case with the translation of the *Tirukkural*. In order to transform the text into a TL, a translator ought to add or delete or substitute a word or phrase or clause or even a sentence, which paves the path to criticism. And the next chapter explains with examples, how the select translators handle the cultural elements relating to the way of life while translating the *Tirukkural* into English without deviating much from the SL (Tamil) text and at the same time, by maintaining the effect of the SLT in the TLT, though equivalent words and terms are not available for most of the cultural terms in the TL.