3.0. Culture as Way of Life

“Culture is the treasure of people’s creative activity, the spiritual heritage that one generation leaves to another” (Bhatnagar 17). It is a “way of life,” “sweetness and light” and “activity of thought and receptiveness to beauty and humane feeling” as assumed by Thaninayagam Adikal (www.tamilcanadian.com). While presenting the intimate relationship between culture and the literary works, Muthuswami (1994) brings out the relationship between the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* and culture through his explanation of the word *panṇāṭu* ‘refined culture’ which is the preferable Tamil equivalent to the word culture, in his work *Tamil Culture as Revealed in Tirukkural*. He strengthens his points related to the literary work and the culture with the help of the definition of culture derived from other sources too. Krishnamurthy is of the view that “culture is no more and no less than the art of living an enlightened life and the actual and joyous fulfillment of the daily responsibilities to oneself, one’s family and country in the right spirit and the correct perspective.” In the words of Matthew Arnold, culture is “the art of acquainting ourselves with the past that has been known and said in the world and thus in a way with the human spirit” (Muthuswami 3). And hence it is understood that culture is the compilation of refined factors such as civilization, tradition, customs, social structure, social norms, social institutions, languages, land, climate, flora, fauna, region, religion, games, music, entertainment, belief, ideas, attitude, cuisine, clothes, folklore, style, values and recreation a race follows to lead a happy life that differ from country to country. Language is the index of life which reflects all these aspects or factors of its contemporary period.
In discussing the literary translations in her article “Culture-specific items in literary translations,” Esmail Zare-Behtash states that “translating culture-specific items in literary translations seems to be one of the most challenging tasks to be performed by a translator” (1). The Tamil literary work *Tirukkural* is enriched with culture-specific items, which pose real problems to its translators. And this chapter is devoted to a detailed study to the trans-cultural problems faced by the translators of the *Tirukkural* and the methods they pursue to preserve the content and the form of the SL text while translating the culture-bound words and terms of the couplets of the *Tirukkural* which are relating to the way of life from its SL into TL.

3.1. Cultural Significance of the *Tirukkural*

As far as a literary work is concerned, along with its literary concept, it reveals the life style, social institution and political condition, traditional and cultural background, moral, religious and ethical codes of the people who live in the particular region, at the particular period of the particular literary work. The Source Language Tamil is known for its ancient heritage, tradition, beauty and purity and is admired down the ages. The Tamil classical work the *Tirukkural*, which the literary scholars and experts believed to be of the caṅkam or Post-caṅkam period when tradition, culture and ethos were in climax; reveals the life style, social and political order, beliefs, values and decorum of the ancient Tamils, though it goes well with every time and every religion and every race. And most of the translators of the *Tirukkural* have not given enough importance to the cultural aspects and grand thoughts couched in the *Tirukkural* while translating it into English which is expressed in the words of Kulandaiswamy (2005) as:
The translators of *Tirukkural* from the very beginning have missed rather badly to bring out the broad cultural significance of such terms as *Aram*, *Porul* and *Kamam*, which constitute the titles of the three Parts of *Tirukkural*. *Aram* has been translated as virtue; *Porul* as wealth and *Kamam* as love. It is extremely simplistic and inadequate translation, misleading and even doing injustice to Tiruvalluvar. (2)

This is true because, in the *Tirukkural* “we come across terms that are unique to Tamil culture and represent the heritage of the Tamils that has come down the ages” (2). So, translating the *Tirukkural*, which was written with strong cultural heritage and grand thoughts may not be easy for any translator, however well-versed he / she be in both the Source Language (SL) and the Target Language (TL).

A translator has to maintain equivalence in form or structure as well as in content or meaning while translating a work of art from its SL into the TL. In the words of Nida and Taber, “a conscientious translator will want the closest natural equivalent,” if one wants to render an effective translation (13). Also, translation is “not simply a matter of seeking other words with similar meaning but of finding appropriate ways of saying things in another language” (Thriveni 1).

In the process of translating the *Tirukkural* into a TL, cultural deviations due to lack of equivalent cultural terms or culture-bound words in the TL are quite natural, since the SL and the TL belong to two extremely different races, region, and time. And any translator who involves in translating the *Tirukkural* ought to undergo a lot of trans-cultural problems such as finding equivalents, selecting words closer to the SL words, substituting right words and expressing them properly in the TL. But, it may not be easy for any translator to select the exact
equivalent according to the context to the SL word which has many synonyms or substitute a new word for the cultural terms and culture-bound words for which the equivalents may not be available in the TL. For such cultural items, the translator ought to use the transcription or transliteration along with descriptive or explanatory notes or descriptive translation closer to the SLT and give proper notes while he translates the cultural elements of the SLT into another TLT where every cultural aspect differs from that of the SL.

3.2. Cultural-specific and Culture-bound Words

In this chapter, the problems of the translators in translating some of the cultural elements like culture-bound words, cultural terms, beliefs and customs relating to the way of life, such as the names of the three books of the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* like *arattuppāl* ‘virtue,’ *porutpāl* ‘wealth,’ *kāmattuppāl* ‘love,’ food items like *amiḻtu* ‘heavenly food,’ *kūḷ* ‘cereal,’ *kāṭi* ‘fermented rice-soup,’ *purkai* ‘gruel made from the grains of a grassy crop,’ certain words with multi-layers of meanings like *eccam* ‘children, descendants, the rest, and others,’ *panivu* ‘politeness,’ the names of traits like *nāṇam* ‘shyness’ and *panivu* ‘humility,’ traditional custom *madalēṟutal* ‘mounting a horse made of the leaves and stalks of the Palmyra tree,’ the names of ornaments like *toṭi* ‘an ornament worn around the arm,’ *toṭalai* ‘a string of globules to be worn around the hip,’ *kūḷai* ‘ornament worn on the ear,’ *kalal* ‘ankle bracelet made of the gold extracted from the diadem of the vanquished to be worn in the legs of the victor as a sign of their bravery,’ recreations like *vaṭṭāṭṭam* ‘a game played by the adolescent girls on checked squares with pieces of terracotta or stone tablets,’ *cūṭāṭṭam* ‘gambling,’ *araṅku* ‘playing court,’ religious element like *kāvaṭi* ‘a method of ceremonial worship where the devotees carry
balanced weights on their shoulders’ and legends on lunar eclipse etc., used in the couplets of the Tirukkuṟaḷ and how the select translators translate them with the content of the SL text into the TL text are discussed.

As seen in the previous chapter, the very title of the book Tirukkuṟaḷ is an abstract noun by nature and not a proper noun, as it is the combination of two words thiru ‘reverence’ and kural ‘brief.’ So, translators prefer to keep the name of the text as it is in the Source Language Text (SLT) and most of them transliterate it for their translations. The names of the three books arattuppāl ‘Virtue,’ poruttaḷ ‘Wealth’ and kāmattuppāl ‘Love’ of the Tirukkuṟaḷ are also to be dealt with while the problems of translating cultural terms from its SLT into the TLT are taken for study.

3.3. Translating the Titles of the Three Books

Translating the titles of the three books of the Tirukkuṟaḷ, arattuppāl ‘Virtue,’ poruttaḷ ‘Wealth’ and kāmattuppāl or inpattuppāl ‘Love’ creates problems to the translators, since they are the names with strong cultural heritage. It may not be possible to find natural equivalents for them in a foreign language due to the difference in culture and language. And if every translator transliterates these titles instead of translating, it will be a grand success and justice to the SLT and its translations.

3.3.1. arattuppāl ‘Virtue’

The first book arattuppāl is translated as Virtue by all the translators though it is not the English equivalent of the term, and many more English words are found to mean the term but not the exact meaning. Virtue can be considered as one of the elements of aram. In the words of Kulandaiswamy (2005), “Aram deals
not only with Virtue but also with a number of other topics;” also he stresses his points by quoting the meanings of *aram* from the Tamil Lexicon such as “moral or religious duty,” “performance of good works according to the Sastras,” duties to be practiced by each caste,” “merit,” “that which is fitting,” “excellent,” “religious faith,” “wisdom,” “feeding house,” “fasting,” “letters or words in a verse which cause harm,” “Goddess of virtue” and “Yama” (god of death) (2). It is noteworthy to observe that most of the translators translate the term *aram* as *Virtue* and few like Rajaji and Ramabadran borrow the term *Dharma* from Sanskrit and use that term in their English translation; but the problem is that it is not an English word at all. Rajaji says that “*aram* is the Tamil equivalent of the Sanskrit word *Dharma*, for which there is no single word-equivalent in English. Duty, virtue and other such words do not really cover the full import of either *aram or Dharma*” (Rajaji 1).

### 3.3.2. *porutpāl ‘Wealth’*

The title of the second book *porutpāl ‘Wealth’* which is *artha* in Sanskrit, has 27 meanings according to the Tamil Lexicon, and is translated as Wealth which is not the lone meaning of the Tamil word *porul* ‘matter or thing.’ Kulandaiswamy (2005) cites the various meanings of the word *porul* in his article “*Tirukkural: Deficiency in Translation into other Languages;*” and some among them are: “thing”, “matter”, “entity”, “meaning, as of a word”, “sense”, “signification”, “subject”, “subject-matter”, “essence, as of a treatise”, “true object or significance”, “object/ affair”, “essential principle”, “Immutability/ reality/ verity”, “learning/ knowledge”, “virtue”, “fruit/ result”, “final bliss”, “God”, “property/ wealth/ riches/ treasure”, “gold”, and so on (3). Yet, all the translators except Rajaji use the word “wealth” for the word *porul*. Rajaji translates *porul* as “worldly affairs” which is
certainly a vast improvement over wealth; however, it is too general and even vague” (Kulandaiswamy 4).

3.3.3. kāmattuppāl or inpattuppāl ‘Love’

Regarding the title of the third book, it is variously called kāmattuppāl and inpattuppāl in Tamil which is mostly translated as “Love or Pleasure of Love” in English. inpam is the Tamil word for the Sanskrit kāma which means the “love or fondness or sexual relationship between lovers or husband and wife.” Since the Tamil word inpam has many synonyms in Tamil, the word kāmattuppāl is widely used to mean the third book of the Tirukkural. But as there is no equivalent word to the word kāmam in English, the word “love,” the general term to express different types of love such as love, liking, affection, attachment, fondness, adoration, devotion, dedication, desire, longing etc., can be used for any kind of love between persons which need to be explained according to the context. Owing to these reasons, the translators use the word “love” as the substitute for kāmam of the SLT. As pointed out by Kulandaiswamy (2005), “the terms such as aram, porul, kāmam, akam, and pugam must be written in transliterated form and the meaning that each term carries must be briefly explained in a footnote” (4).

3.4. Food Habits

As Tiruvalluvar sings of the virtues and values of life, and life, being intertwined with culture and customs, his couplets are enriched with many cultural elements such as food habits, social relationships, traditional customs, dress code, ornaments, religious elements, myths and legends, recreations, games, geographical and environmental elements of his time in his work the Tirukkural which results in the form of culture-bound words and cultural terms. For the translators of the
Tirukkuṟaḷ, these usages cause critical problems as the cultural elements are special in every way as they belong to a particular region, race, time and language.

3.4.1. *amīḻtu* ‘heavenly food’ and *kūḷ* ‘porridge’

Tiruvaḷḷuvar compares rain to *amīḻtam* ‘the heavenly food’ in the second chapter; and the precious taste of the *kūḷ* ‘porridge’ (a semi-solid food prepared with the flour of the grains harvested from any grassy crops) when played with one’s children’s little hands to the blissful food *amīḻtu* in the seventh chapter.

\[ amīḻtinu māṟra viṉīṭe tammakka ]

\[ cīrukai aḷāviya kūḷ. \] (64)

(The gods’ ambrosia sweeter far the food men laid,
In which the little hands of children of their own played. [Pope])

(Sweeter verily than ambrosia is the gruel soused and spattered by the tender hands of one’s own children. [Aiyar])

(Sweeter than nectar is the gruel displayed,
In which their children’s hands have played. [Sreenivasan])

(For parents, food touched by children’s hands tastes
Sweeter than nectar itself. [Iyengar])

(Sweeter than nectar is a man’s food messed up
By his child’s small hands. [Sundaram])

The translators use different words for the SL words *amīḻtu* and *kūḷ*. For the word *amīḻtu*, the select translators use two extremely different words such as *ambrosia* and *nectar*. The word ambrosia can be considered as the equivalent word to *amīḻtu* as both mean heavenly food, while the word nectar is the precious honey found in the fresh flowers of plants. Pope and Aiyar succeeded in handling the apt
equivalent “ambrosia” to \textit{amīltu}; and on the other hand, Sreenivasan, Iyengar and Sundaram substitute the word “nectar” for its rare availability, in order to bring out the extraordinary sweetness of the \textit{kūḷ} to the parents of the children who messed up it with their tiny hands. While translating the word \textit{kūḷ}, the select translators except Aiyar and Sreenivasan use the common word “food” for \textit{kūḷ} which is not even near to the SLT term. \textit{kūḷ} is a particular kind of nutritious, semi-solid food, prepared in Tamil Nadu/India, from the flour of any one of the different kinds of millets or grains, for the easy digestion of everyone, from infants to aged people for which the equivalent is not available in the TL English. Aiyar and Sreenivasan being familiar with the food habits of Tamil Nadu, substitute the word “gruel,” the equivalent of the semi-solid food prepared from the broken grains but not from the flour and quite common in every ancient Tamil household, to be more appropriate than “food”; as it too is semi-solid in form. Though “gruel” differs from the \textit{kūḷ} in preparation, quality and form, Aiyar and Sreenivasan feel it more appropriate than the word “food” because of the lack of equivalent in the TL. Hence, it would be more appropriate and useful to the readers, if the translators transliterate the Tamil word \textit{kūḷ} with explanatory notes to keep the effect of the SLT in the TLT.

In the 75\textsuperscript{th} chapter under the title \textit{araṇ ‘fort,’} the word \textit{kūḷ} used in the meaning of “food” in the 745\textsuperscript{th} couplet, is translated differently by the select translators according to the context.

\begin{verbatim}
koḷarkaritāyk koṇṭakālt tāki yakattār
nilaikkeḷāt nīra tarāṇ. (745)
\end{verbatim}

(Impregnable, containing ample stores of food,

\textit{A fort, for those within must be a warlike station good. [Pope]}")
Impregnability, facility of defence for the garrison, and abundance of provisions inside, these are the essential requisites of the fortress. [Aiyar]

(A fort with ample food is hard to win,
And easy to defend, for those within. [Sreenivasan])

(Well-stocked with food and easy to defend:
Such a fort cannot be stormed. [Iyengar])

(A good fortress is hard to seize, well supplied
And suited to those within. [Sundaram])

Though the word kūḻ stands for a particular kind of food preparation, the word was used in ancient Tamil country to refer to “food” or “storage of food stuff” in general. Here in this context, the word kūḻ is used in a general sense and gives the general meaning “food” which is translated exactly as that of the SLT. From this, the readers or the researchers can understand that the cultural elements can also be easily translated without deviating from the SLT in some contexts like this. Also the same word kūḻ is used in different contexts with different meanings like “grain or corn field or crops” in the 550th couplet and “wealth or substance” in the 554th couplet by the author.

3.4.2. kāṭi ‘soured rice-soup’

Like the usage of the Tamil word kūḻ, translating the word kāṭi ‘fermented rice-soup’ too creates problem to the translators while translating the 1050th couplet from its SL into the TL, since the particular type of drink was used in ancient Tamil country and is used even today by the Tamilians.

\[ tuppura \text{ villār tuvarat turgāvāmai } \]
\[ yuppirkuñ kāṭikkun kāṟru. \] (1050)
(Unless the destitute will utterly themselves deny,
They cause their neighbour’s salt and vinegar to die. [Pope])
(The one way open to the indigent is to renounce utterly- their lives: their
not doing so is but death to salt and rice-water. [Aiyar])
(Unless the poor ascetics’ garb assume,
Their neighbour’s salt and gruel, they consume. [Sreenivasan])
(Rather than live upon their neighbour’s alms,
The poor might give up their lives. [Iyengar])
(The destitute who will not die themselves
Are a death to others’ soup and salt. [Sundaram])

Pope uses the lexical equivalent “vinegar” which is mostly used with salt in food
preparation for kāṭi. But the first native translator Aiyar uses the word “rice-water”
for kāṭi as he is familiar with the drink which is made by the process of
fermentation of ‘rice water.’ But Iyengar deletes the term uppirkuṇ kāṭikkum in his
translation. Though the lexical meaning of the couplet is lost in his English
rendering by the deletion of the words uppirkum and kāṭikkum in his translated
version, the contextual meaning of the couplet is brought out in his translation and
the readers can grasp the content and teaching of the couplet. At the same time, the
deletion of the term uppirkuṇ kāṭikkum may not be a justification to translation
even if a literary work can never be translated on word-to-word translation method.

3.4.3. purkai ‘gruel made from the grains of a grassy crop’

In the 1065th couplet, another cultural word purkai, which is the gruel
prepared from the grains of a grassy crop, familiar in ancient Tamil country creates
problems to the translators.
teṇṇir aṭupukkai yāyinum tāḷ tantatu

unuṇali ṭukkiniya til. (1065)

(Nothing is sweeter than to taste the toil-won cheer,

Though mess of pottage as tasteless as the water clear. [Pope])

(Though it is only gruel thin as water, nothing is more savoury than the food that is earned by the labour of one’s hands. [Aiyar])

(Gruel though thin as water neat,

With one’s own labour earned is sweet. [Sreenivasan])

(Be it watery gruel. It’s nectar, if hard labour has earned it. [Iyengar])

(There is nothing sweeter than even the watery gruel

Earned by one’s own thews. [Sundaram])

As given in K.V. Jagannathan’s Tirukkuṟaḷ Arāyccip Patippu (Thirukkural-Research Edition), the meaning of the term puṟkai is the pullaricik kūḻ, that is the porridge prepared from the rice of a variety of grass (635). The select translators are not able to render the exact translation to the word puṟkai since no equivalent is available in the TL English. Pope translates it as “pottage;” and all the other select translators use the term “gruel.” Though the source from which the pottage or gruel is prepared is given in the SL couplet, it is neglected in the translated versions by all the select translators. They avoid translating the prefix from the word puṟkai in their translations due to lack of equivalent word to each and every prefix or word of the SLT in the TL. Each translator renders his or her translation in his or her own way, obviously hoping that his or her translation is the nearest to the original. But a careful re-reading of the SLT helps a translator to render the translated text closest to the context of the SLT.
3.5. Multi-polarity Semantics

Translating the polysemic words which have multiple meanings too creates problems to the translators in translating a literary work from its SL into a TL; because their contexts should be identified before translating them. While translating such words with multiple meanings, the importance should be given to the content and the context of the particular couplet.

3.5.1. *Eccam* ‘offspring or what is left behind’

In the following couplets, the word *eccam*, which has several meanings such as “offspring,” “what is left behind,” “leftovers,” “after effects” and “otherwise,” is used in different contexts with one or the other aforesaid meanings, of which it is quite common to find out certain misinterpretations of the word in the TL text.

\[

cceppam uṭaiyavaṅ ākkam citaivinri
\]

\[
yeccattir kēmāppu uṭaittu. (112)
\]

(The just man’s wealth unwasting shall endure,
And to his race a lasting joy ensure. [Pope])
(The prosperity of the just growth not less; it endureth even unto their remotest posterity. [Aiyar])
(The just man’s fortune, without waste,
His successors in comfort and taste. [Sreenivasan])
(Justly won wealth endures undiminished
and with the progeny too. [Iyengar])
(The wealth of a just man stays, and passes intact
To his posterity. [Sundaram])
The word *eccam* in the 112th couplet (chap. 12) means “the offspring” or the successors or descendants; and it is translated as it is meant in the SL text by all the select translators. Though the word *eccam* has various meanings, in this context, what the author seems to imply is not just the “offspring” but “whatever is left behind” which includes the “offspring” too. These beliefs are rendered in the translations in the backdrop of the cultural moorings and the era of the translators.

*takkār takaivilar enpatu avaravar*

*eccattār kānap paṭum. (114)*

(Who just or unjust lived shall soon appear:

By each one’s offspring shall the truth be clear. [Pope])

(The worthy and the unworthy are known by their offspring. [Aiyar])

(The just and unjust, both are known

By each one’s offspring, truth is known. [Sreenivassan])

(Posthumous fame shows whether one had lived

a just life on earth or not. [Iyengar])

(The just and the unjust shall be known/ By what they leave behind.

[Sundaram])

*maṇṭūyārk keccamnan rāku miṭṭūyārk*

*killai naṟṟākā viṇai. (456)*

While translating the word *eccam* of the 114th and 456th couplets, Pope, Aiyar, and Sreenivasan translate the word *eccam* as “offspring” and “posterity”, and Iyengar translates it as “posthumous fame” and Sundaram as “what they leave behind.” Pope, Aiyar and Sreenivasan’s translations of the word *eccam* as “offspring” may be based on the cultural belief of the Indian social system that one’s real wealth or
treasure is one’s own children. Parimelazhagar, in his commentary too, offers the meaning of the word *eccam* as the “nature of one’s offspring’s life” (whether they lead an honest life or a dishonest one) and not “whatever is left behind” (36). It is also the belief of the Tamil social institution that a man who lives in this world leaves whatever he earns and possesses to his descendants, when he leaves this world or dies. Again it is apt to remember the social belief which is a part of the social system in Indian or Tamil culture, that, all that a man leaves behind when he leaves for eternal bliss, are the *virtue and vice* he earns through his way of life while living. Muthuswamy (1994) too supports this view through his words: “The end and aim of life on earth is the name and fame, one leaves behind oneself” (64).

And Iyengar and Sundaram evidently tune themselves with this belief and render the meaning “what they leave behind” and the “posthumous fame” which one leaves in this world even after one’s death. The *Thirukkural* commentary of Subbu Reddiyar offers the meaning of the word *eccam* as the *virtue and vice* and “the fame that remain after one’s death” in the 114th and the 456th couplets (24&94). But Parimelazhagar’s commentary offers different meanings as “the sincerity or insincerity of one’s children” for *eccam* in the 114th and 456th couplets (36&148).

### 3.5.2. *Eccam* ‘after effects’

*viṇaipakai eṇviraṇṭiṇ eccam niṇaiyuṇkāl*

*tīeccam pōlat terum.* (674)

(With work or foe, when you neglect some little thing,

If you reflect, life smouldering fire, ‘twill ruin bring. [Pope])

(Unfinished work and enemies that are left unsubdued are like
unextinguished sparks of fire: they will grow betimes and overwhelm the perfunctory man. [Aiyar])

(Of what is left of work and foes,
If you reflect, like smouldering fire it grows. [Sreenivasan])

(Half-done works and foes unsubdued are sparks that might blaze forth and destroy. [Iyengar])

(Aggression or enmity left half-way/ Is fire half put out. [Sundaram])

In the 674th couplet (chap.68) the word *eccam* means the “after effects” and the select translators succeed in rendering their translations closer to the SLT.

\[
\text{eccamen reṇṇuṇiū kollō oruvarāl}
\]

\[
naccap paṭāa tavaṇ. (1004)
\]

(Whom no one loves, when he shall pass away,
What doth he look to leave behind, I pray. [Pope])

(The man who careth not to earn the attachment of his neighbours, what doth he hope to leave behind him when he is dead? [Aiyar])

(When he should die, what does he think is left?
A miser, who is by all, of love bereft. [Sreenivasan])

(The miser who cares not for his neighbours in this life will die unloved. [Iyengar])

(What does he think will survive him / Whom none loves? [Sundaram])

In the English renderings of the 1004th couplet, the word *eccam* creates problem to the translators. Pope and Aiyar translate it as “that one leaves behind” while Sundaram substitutes the word “survive”. Sreenivasan and Iyengar do not bring out the lexical meaning in their translations and substitute the word “miser” which has
no place in the SL couplet at all. Though the equivalent to the word miser is not used in the SLT, the intended meaning, according to the interpretations of Parimelazhagar, is “the one who does not earn anyone’s love by his charitable deeds” (123). The couplet is about the one who is never loved by anyone due to one’s distant behavior towards one’s neighbours.

3.5.3. Eccam ‘the rest or others’

unuṭa eccam uyirkkellām vēralla
nānuṭaimai māntar ciṟappu. (1012)

(Food, clothes, and other things alike all beings own;
By sense of shame the excellence of men is known. [Pope])
(Food, clothing, and progeny are common unto all men: it is the sensibility to shame that they differ from one another. [Aiyar])
(Food, clothing and the rest are common to the race,
But modesty is mankind’s special grace. [Sreenivasan])
(Food, raiment, children are the marks of all;
modesty is a rare gift. [Iyengar])
(Food, clothes and the rest are common to all-
Distinction comes with nicety. [Sundaram])

In the 1012th couplet, the word eccam means “the rest or others” which Pope translates as “and the other things”; Sreenivasan and Sundaram as “the rest” while Aiyar translates it as “progeny”, and Iyengar translates it as children, both of which mean “offspring.” But, according to the context of the SL text, the word eccam means “whatever one has except food and clothing” which includes shelter, name, fame, offspring, friends, relatives, virtue and vice. And the select translators except
Aiyar and Iyengar use the common linguistic contextual equivalent to the word *eccam* in translating this couplet unlike Aiyar’s and Iyengar’s translating it as “offspring” which embraces one of the contents of “the rest or others.” Since “progeny” or “children” is one among the “rest” (*eccam*) mentioned in this couplet, the usage of the terms “progeny” and “children” will not be adequate to bring out the exact content of the couplet of the SLT into the TL.

3.5.4. *Eccam* ‘except that or otherwise’

In 1075th couplet also, Tiruvaḷḷuvar uses the word *eccam* in the contextual meaning of “except that” or “otherwise” (Reddiar 218). As the words with various meanings in the SL cause problems to the translators, translating the word *eccam* into a TL too makes no exception and results in either deletion of equivalent word or substitution or explanation.

*accamē kīḷkaḷatu ācāram eccam
avāvunṭēl unṭām cīgitu. (1075)*

(Fear is the base man’s virtue; if that fail,
Intense desire some little may avail. [Pope])

(Fear is the only motive force of degenerates: if there is any other at all, it is appetite, and it availeth just a little. [Aiyar])

(The conduct of the mean is based on fear;
If not, it’s based on some desire. [Sreenivasan])

(Fear motivates the actions of the base; / or else, egoistic push. [Iyengar])

(Fear is the base man’s only code- / And, on occasion, greed. [Sundaram])

According to Pope’s translation, one may consider that, out of fear alone the people of low status maintain *ācāram*, i.e. the disciplined manners, and if one has no such
fear, one may have a disciplined manner because of one’s desire to be so. Pope uses the term “if that fail” for the word *eccam* and “virtue” for ācāram which come near to its SL meaning even if it is not the exact meaning. Aiyar uses the term “if there is any other at all” for *eccam* and “motive force” for ācāram; Sreenivasan and Sundaram use one or the other synonym like “conduct” or “code” or “creed” for ācāram. While translating the word *eccam*, Sreenivasan uses “if not” and Sundaram neglects the word. On the other hand, Iyengar substitutes the word “actions” for ācāram and uses “or else” for *eccam*. As the word *eccam* is a polysemic word in the SL, every translator tries to find out an exact contextual equivalent word for it from the TL; and it leads them to follow one or the other method of translating the cultural terms in their own way.

Ācāram means the good habits or manners followed in Hinduism. Though no translator translates this term as it is considered in Hinduism, they substitute one or other word or words which are closely related to the actual meaning of the word ācāram. Being the word ācāram is a culture-bound word, an equivalent word in the TL is not available to this. Even if a dictionary offers various meanings to this word, the actual meaning of the word ācāram cannot be confined in a word or few words as it comprises a lot of practices which include religious, moral and social. Hence, transliterating such culture-specific words along with explanatory notes will be more effective in translation than that of substituting closer or nearer equivalents.

3.6. Culture as Quality of Life

As the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* is the Tamil scripture, it teaches the traits to be followed by one in order to lead a disciplined life in its time. The men and women of ancient Tamil Nadu were expected to have some manners along with bravery and
intelligence in general. But at the same time, ancient Tamils fixed certain qualities for their women without which they won’t be respected in society. The traits of the woman of those days were mentioned as “accam ‘fear,’ maṭam ‘modesty,’ nāṇam ‘shyness or coyness’ and payirppu ‘disgust or shyness’” and the traits of man were given as “taṇmai ‘good temperament,’ nirai ‘intelligence,’ ōrppu ‘merit or chastity’ and kaṭaiṭ ‘follow or pursue’” (http://www.periyakaruppan.com). And Tiruvalluvar entitles most of his chapters under any one of the important traits, values or virtues like modesty, humility, truth, nobility, compassion and so on. While translating such virtues and traits, it is quite impossible to find an equivalent word for all such words; and the select translators use some phrases or clauses closer in meaning to such traits and virtues.

3.6.1. Nāṇam ‘modesty’

There is a chapter under the title nāṇuṭaimai (102) which brings confusion to the translators since it is one of the characteristics or traits of Tamilians. As it is a culture-bound term which is familiar to the particular Tamil race, it is not possible to find an equivalent word in the TL English or any other western communities. So, the select translators substitute a word or phrase which is close to the meaning of the SL word. Pope substitutes “shame;” Aiyar uses the term “sensitiveness to shame;” Sreenivasan uses the word “modesty”; Iyengar uses “Sensitivity to shame” while Sundaram uses “nicety” for the word nāṇuṭaimai. The word “shame” has various synonyms such as disgrace, infamy, dishonor, humiliation, indignity and so on, like the SL word nāṇuṭaimai. In the context of the title, Tiruvalluvar uses the term in a broad sense as “the shame causes due to some evil deeds,” while in the
couplets under it, he uses the word in the meaning of “sense of shame” which is compared to an ornament, modesty, and hedge.

The word nāṇutal of the first couplet is used in two different contexts. The first one is the “shame caused due to the evil deeds”; and in the second context, it means the “sensitivity of shame” which results in “virtuous flush.” The words “modesty” and “shame” are used in different contexts with different meanings of the SL word nāṇam. In the 1012th couplet, the same word nāṇutaimai is used in the sense of good conduct and character of human beings.

3.6.2. Paṇivu ‘humility’

In the previous paragraph, the equivalent word offered by Sreenivasan for the SL word nāṇutaimai is also “modesty.” While translating the 95th couplet, the translators translated the word paṇivu as “modesty.” As nāṇam ‘modesty’ and paṇivu ‘humility’ are two different but essential qualities, it creates confusion to the readers and the researchers to find the sole word “modesty” for both the SL words.

*paṇivuṭaiyan iṇcolaṭ āṭal oruvarku*

*aniyalla marrup piḷa.* (95)

(Humility with pleasant speech to man on earth,
Is choice adornment; all besides is nothing worth. [Pope])

(Modesty and loving speech, these alone are ornaments to a man,
and none other. [Aiyar])

(True modesty and kindly word combined,
He is a jewel; the rest are not refined. [Sreenivasan])

(Fair speech and modesty are man’s only
jewels; the rest are nothing! [Iyengar])
(Sweet words and humility are one’s inborn jewels; 
All else are foreign and none. [Sundaram])

Pope and Sundaram translate the word *panivu* as “humility” while Aiyar, Srinivasan and Iyengar translate it as “modesty.” There is no doubt that “humility” and “modesty” are two different qualities needed for humanity to lead a peaceful and contented life. The problem lies in translating the words *nāṇam* and *panivu* as “modesty” by the translators Iyengar and Sreenivasan which create confusion to the readers. But, as a translator translates a literary piece for those who are ignorant of its SL, they may not consider it as a problem at all. All these qualities are interrelated with the Tamil culture and the Tamil’s life, where the men and women are expected to follow certain pleasing manners and behaviour within the family as well as society.

3.7. Customs, Tradition and Convention

Tradition and customs are inseparable elements of a culture. Each country has its own culture which includes the traditional customs like family and community and their rituals, society and its norms, religion and its rites, politics and its constitution. Tiruvalluvar points out many such traditional customs in his couplets.

3.7.1. *Viruntōmpal* ‘hospitality’

*Viruntōmpal* is about the custom of hospitality followed in ancient Tamil country. The term *viruntōmpal* does not mean “hospitality” as translated by all the select translators and it is something more than that. The word *viruntōmpal* is the combination of the two words *viruntu* which means “feast” and *ōmpal* which means “caring.” It is the inseparable virtue and custom of the ancient Tamil’s
family and life where the guests were not one’s relatives or friends but those who visit them unexpectedly without any prior intimation. Pope translates it as “Cherishing Guests” along with the explanatory notes that it is “not entertainment of friends, but the affording of food and shelter to wayfarers, mendicants, and ascetics” (211). Usually, one is expected to show hospitality towards one’s own relatives or friends. But, from Pope’s notes, one can understand that virūntōmpal of ancient Tamilians was not receiving friends or relatives warmly, but welcoming and treating strangers and visitors warmly with love and care, by providing food and accommodation, whether they are known or unknown to the hosting family. Since the habit or custom belongs to the Tamil/Indian culture, it may not be easy for a translator to find an equivalent word in a western language.

3.7.2. Maṭalēṟutal

In the 114th Chapter of the Tirukkūṟaḷ, nāṇutturavuraiyattal, an ancient social custom called maṭalēṟutal, which was followed traditionally in the ancient Tamil country, is referred to in six couplets. The title of the chapter nāṇutturavuraiyattal is translated as “The Abandonment of Reserve” by Pope and Sreenivasan, “Overpassing the Bounds of Decorum” by Aiyar, “Beyond the Bonds” by Iyengar and “Unabashed” by Sundaram. The title itself creates problems to the translators as it is not a common custom followed in every society or community or culture.

Muthuswami, in his Tamil Culture as Revealed in Tirukkural, gives the details of three types of marriages which were followed by different communities and classes of the people of the ancient Tamil Nadu such as ghandharva marriage, love marriage and arranged marriage. Tiruvalļuvar mentions two kinds of love such as kaḷavu and karpu which are translated as “pre-marital love” or “ghandharva
marriage” and “post marital love” or “wedded love.” Though the *ghandharva* form of marriage and *kaḷavu* are of the same concept, *ghandharva* form of marriage is followed in Sanskrit tradition where “the lovers fall in love at first sight, exchange rings or garlands and sexual union also takes place simultaneously. No further act or ceremony is needed to complete their form of marriage” (24). Unlike *ghandharva* form of marriage, *kaḷavu* should invariably be followed by a public marriage with the parents’ consent. The third book of the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*, *Love* reveals the nature, belief, customs and ceremonies followed in the communities of the Tamil Nadu and India.

*Maṭalēṟutal* is a social custom followed in ancient Tamil country. In *caṅkam* period, a lovelorn man whose love is not reciprocated by the woman he loved, or not approved by the family of his beloved, had observed this custom called *maṭalēṟutal* in order to win the hands of the lady he loved with the help of the neighbours and with the support of the community. Nilakanta Sastri refers to this custom in his book, *Sangam Literature: Its Cults and Cultures*, as “the lover voluntarily demonstrates his undying love for the maiden, by the process called *maṭalēṟutal*” (53). Tiruvaḷḷuvar speaks of a custom called *maṭalēṟram* in his couplets which comes under *kaḷavu* or “pre-marital love.”

\[ \text{kāma muḻantu varunṭiṇārk kēma} \]

\[ \text{maṭalalla tillai vali.(1131)} \]

(To those who've proved love's joy, and now afflicted mourn,

Except the helpful 'horse of palm', no other strength remains. [Pope])
(To those who are torn from their loved one and suffer the pangs of separation there is no other resource left but the riding of the palmyra stalk. [Aiyar])

(Who having tasted love, now suffer pains,
Except palmyra horse no other hope remains. [Sreenivasan])

(For those who have loved and would love some more
Only thee palmyra-horse! [Iyengar])

(To know love and to lose it! No way but this-
To mount the madal to have it again. [Sundaram])

maṭalēṟram is performed in order to win the lady of one’s love. If the love of a man is not reciprocated by his lady-love, after every trial of proposing, requesting, messaging and mourning, the lover opts for maṭalēṟram. It is known as maṭalma ēratal too. maṭal is the leaf palm tree with its hand (maṭṭai) and ma is the horse. And this custom is mounting over a horse made of palm leaves and hands (maṭṭai) in the nearby junction of the lady-love’s home with ash- powdered face wearing a garland of calotropis flower (flower of erukku which is not usually used on auspicious occasions), holding the portrait of his beloved with the details of her name and place, in order to seek the sympathy of the public. The public, who witness this scene, scold and advise the lady of his love, make her accept his proposal; and pave the way for the lovelorn man to win the hands of his lady.

nōṟa vuṭampu muyiru maṭalēṟum

nāṇiṅai nǐkkī niruttu. (1132)

(My body and my soul, that can no more endure,
Will lay reserve aside, and mount the 'horse of palm'. [Pope])
(Body and soul cannot support this anguish and have consented to ride the palm: they have trampled down all delicacy. [Aiyar])

(My soul and body, shame no longer count; Without reserve palmyra horse I mount. [Sreenivasan])

(Shameless, and anguished in body and soul, the palm-horse is my refuge. [Iyengar])

(Away with shame! Soul and body Can bear no more, and will mount the madal. [Sundaram])

\[
\text{nāṇōtu nallāṁmai paṇṭuṭaiyēṅ īṇruṭaiēṅ} \\
kāmurrā rēru maṭal. (1133)
\]

(I once retained reserve and seemly manliness; To-day I nought possess but lovers' 'horse of palm'. [Pope])

(Firmness of mind and delicacy I had formerly: but now I poses only the stalk of the palmyra that is ridden by the love-lorn lover. [Aiyar])

(Reserve and manliness I once retained, Today, the horse of palm, I have attained. [Sreenivasan])

(Gone are my manliness and modesty: love- hungry, I ride the palm. [Iyengar])

(I had manliness once and shame, but today Wish only to mount the madal. [Sundaram])

In the title of this Chapter itself, Pope mentions that “this chapter has its special difficulties” (156). While translating a couplet with culture-specific term such as maṭalēṟram, a translator faces a lot of troubles such as finding an equivalent custom and equivalent term in translating the couplet into the TL as this
term needs a long narration of a certain custom which was followed in ancient Tamil Nadu.

*toṭalaik kuṟuntoṭi tantāḷ maṭaloṭu*

*mālai yuḷakkun tuyar. (1135).*

(The maid that slender armlets wears, like flowers entwined, Has brought me 'horse of palm,' and pangs of eventide! [Pope])

(This fair one who weareth tiny bracelets and who is tender as a flower, it is she that hath given me the palm-stalk and the anguish of eventide. [Aiyar])

(Slender, flowerlike, bracelet-wearing maid, For me the horse of palm and pangs of night has made. [Sreenivasan])

(It’s the braceletled fair who stings my nights and drives me to the palm-horse. [Iyengar])

(Night’s yearnings and the *madaṅko* cure them Are the gifts of that braceletled girl. [Sundaram])

*maṭalūrtal yāmmattu muḷuvēṇ maṅra*

*paṭalollāp pētaikkey kan.* (1136)

(Of climbing 'horse of palm' in midnight hour, I think; My eyes know no repose for that same simple maid. [Pope])

(My eyes cannot sleep for thinking of that artless one: I shall ride the stalk therefore even in this late hour of the night. [Aiyar])

(Of the horse of palm, at midnight hour I think; For love of her, I cannot sleep a wink. [Sreenivasan])

(Sleepless I think of her even at night: / O for the palmyra-horse! [Iyengar])
(Even at midnight I think of the madal /Sleepless for love of her.

[Sundaram])

Pope offers long notes in order to explain the term maṭalēṟṟam. If maṭalēṟṟam is translated as “mount the horse of palm”, it will not be adequate for a reader to grasp the exact meaning without going through the detailed notes of the term. Aiyar uses the term palm-stalk or palmyra-stalk but without any explanatory notes and hence it is difficult to grasp the meaning or to become aware of the ancient cultural practice of maṭalēṟṟam with the help of the translated term “riding of the palmyra stalk” without any further explanation or descriptive notes. And Sreenivasan uses the term “palmyra horse” with notes which provides a different cultural practice that it is a torture expressive of the burning passion of the lover towards his beloved whom he married secretly. Iyengar uses “palmyra-horse” and “palm-ride” with detailed explanatory notes on the custom maṭalēṟṟam practiced in ancient Tamil country. Sundaram too gives detailed notes on the practice of maṭalēṟṟam to help the readers get a clear idea of the ancient traditional custom to win the hand of one’s love even if his love is not reciprocated.

kaṭalanna kāma muḻantu maṭalēṟāp

penṉiṆ peruntakka til. (1137)

(There's nought of greater worth than woman's long-enduring soul, Who, vexed by love like ocean waves, climbs not the 'horse of palm'. [Pope])

(Nothing is more sublime than the self-restraint of the woman who would not ride the palm-stalk even when the passion of her heart is deep as the ocean. [Aiyar])

(None nobler than a woman who will not ride
Palmyra horse, though dragged by passion’s tide. [Sreenivasan])

(Storm-tossed within, yet sublime her restraint,

and she rejects the palm-ride. [Iyengar])

(Women are lucky- their love may rage, / But not for them the madal. [Sundaram])

But translating the cultural terms and culture-bound words which are used to express the cultural practices or customs of a particular region create difficulty to the translators as well as the readers. The translators face troubles in finding the equivalent term in the TL to explain the cultural terms and culture-specific experiences as custom and tradition are unique by nature and not common to two countries or languages. The readers too feel it critical to understand what is revealed in the translated versions. The method of translating the cultural term maṭalēṟṟam by different translators proves that the cultural items do demand clear, thorough and definite notes of explanation along with its translation. It would be of great justification to the SLT and the TLT if the particular cultural terms are also transliterated by the translators into the TL.

3.8. Ornaments and Dresses

While discussing the cultural elements in translation, Thriveni states that “dress code or ornaments used and the symbols behind each of them . . . pose a problem to the translator” (2). The clothing and ornaments found in the couplets of the Tirukkuṟaḷ belong to the people of a particular region (Tamil country), race (Tamilians), period (caṅkam period) and their culture. As the particular clothes and jewels were worn in the ancient Tamil people, it is not possible for the foreign languages to have equivalents for them. And, there is every possibility of deviating
from the SLT while such culture-bound words are translated into the TL English.
The names of clothe utukkai ‘a kind of cloth used for dressing’ and ornaments toṭi ‘an ornament worn around the arm,’ toṭalai ‘a string of globules to be worn around the hip,’ kulai ‘ornament worn on the ear,’ kalal ‘ankle bracelet made of the gold extracted from the diadem of the vanquished to be worn in the legs of the victor as a sign of their bravery,’ and the common names for ornaments kalam ‘jewel or ornament’ and anī ‘ornament’ are used in the couplets of the Tirukkuṟaḷ.

3.8.1. Uṭukkai ‘clothing’

In the 79th chapter entitled natpu ‘Friendship,’ the 8th couplet has a word utukkai ‘a kind of cloth used for dressing in Tamil Nadu and India’ which creates problem to the translators to find an equivalent to it in the TL.

\[uṭukkai \text{ ḫ̤antavaŋ \text{ kaipōla vānkē}}\]

\[yīṭukkaŋ \text{ kalaivatām natpu. (788)}\]

(As hand of him whose vesture slips away,
Friendship at once the coming grief will stay. [Pope])

(Behold the hand of the man whose garment hath been blown aside, how it hurrieth to recover his limbs: that is the symbol of the true friend that hasteneth to succor a man in his misfortune. [Aiyar])

(As hand that comes to rescue when one’s garment slips,
Friendship saves one from his misfortune’s grips. [Sreenivasan])

(Like a hand that retrieves one’s wayward robe,
a friend rushes to one’s help. [Iyengar])

Swift as one’s hand to slipping clothes / Is a friend in need. [Sundaram])
The word *uṭukkai* is the equivalent for dhoti or saree, the long robe of cloth which is the traditional dress of the Tamilians used for wearing ‘*uṭuttal*.’ Hence the term *uṭukkai* which means *uṭuttal* or wearing is used in the SLT. The translators substitute multi-layers of synonyms like “vesture,” “garment,” “wayward robe” and “clothes” in their translations. All these words can be considered as substitutions closer to the word *uṭukkai*, though none among them is the exact English equivalent as the SL term *uṭukkai* which is a form of dressing that needs no tailoring for which an equivalent is not available in the TL English.

3.8.2. *Toṭi* ‘an ornament worn around the arm’

Tiruvaḷḷuvar uses the name of the ornament *toṭi* ‘an ornament worn around the arm’ with and without prefixes in eight couplets. And another ornament’s name *toṭalai* ‘an ornament made of beads to be worn around the hip’ is also used in one among those couplets. While translating the names of the ornaments, the select translators use different names of the ornaments closer to the meaning and usage of the particular ornament from the TL as it belongs to ancient Tamil culture and people of their time.

*toṭalaik kuruntoṭi tantāḷ maṭaloṭu*

*mālai yuḷakkun tuyar.* (1135)

(The maid that slender armlets wears, like flowers entwined,

Has brought me ‘*horse of palm.*’ [Pope])

(This fair one who weareth tiny bracelets and who is tender as a flower, it is she that hath given me the palm-stalk and the anguish of eventide! [Aiyar])

(Slender, flowerlike, bracelet-wearing maid,

For me the horse of palm and pangs of night has made. [Sreenivasan])
(It's the braceleted fair who stings my nights
and drives me to the palm-horse. [Iyengar])

(Night's yearnings and the madal to cure them
Are the gifts of that braceleted girl. [Sundaram])

Pope translates it as “armlet” in all the couplets except one where he translates it as “bracelet.” Aiyar translates it as “bangles” in a couplet and “bracelets” in the other couplets and ignores the word in a couplet. Sreenivasan ignores the word in a couplet and translates it as “bracelets” in all the other couplets. Iyengar translates it as “bangle” in a couplet and “bracelet” in four couplets and ignores the name toṭi in three couplets. Sundaram translates the word as “jewel” in a couplet and “bracelet” in six couplets and ignores the word toṭi in a couplet. In the translations, the names of three ornaments worn around the arm or hand which are near to the meaning of the ornament toṭi is used by the select translators. toṭi is a jewel or ornament worn around the arm. The name of the ornament “armlet,” the equivalent word to the SL name of the ornament toṭi is used by Pope. But all the other select translators substitute the names of the ornaments “bracelet” or “bangles” which are used to wear around the wrist of the hands and the general term “jewel” to the word toṭi. Though “bracelets” and “bangles” are the ornaments worn around the hand, they are not the “armlets” as they are worn around the wrist while toṭi is the ornament worn around the upper arm.

3.8.3. toṭalai ‘a string of globules to be worn around the hip’

The metaphor toṭalaik kuruntoji is used in order to bring out the tender nature of the maid. But, the select translators do not consider the term toṭalai ‘a string of globules to be worn around the hip’ while translating the couplet. Pope,
Aiyar and Sreenivasan add one or other term with “flower” to bring out the
tenderness which the author brings out through the metaphor tọlaik kurụn̄tọi.
They make addition by adding the word “flower” in their translations and all the
five select translators ignore the term tọlai in their translations and create the
mistake of deleting a cultural term which has cultural-specifications in their
translations. Pope was able to find the English equivalent for the word tọti while
the other select translators substitute the names of ornaments closer to the SL word.
Being native translators, they might have preferred the names of ornaments closer
in meaning and usage to the SL word tọti.

3.8.4. Kaâlal ‘an ornament worn around the ankle by men’

Kaâlal ‘an ornament worn around the ankle by men’ is the name of the
ornament worn by brave men as a symbol of bravery. Venkatasubramanian gives
the meaning of the word kaâl as veerakandi, the ankle bracelet made of “the gold
extracted from the diadem of the vanquished” to be worn in the legs of the victor as
a sign of their bravery worn in the legs of men in the form of anklet or hoop as a
sign of their bravery. (29) Tiruvaḷḷuvar uses the name of this ornament in the 777th
couplet.

\[
cuḷalu micaivēṇṭi vēṇṭā vuyirār
calalyāppuk kārikai nīrttu. (777)
\]

(Who seek for world-wide fame, regardless of their life,
The glorious clasp adorns, sign of heroic strife. [Pope])
(Behold the men that care not for their lives but yearn for the fame that
encompasseth the earth about: the anklet that they wear round their foot is a
very feast to the eye. [Aiyar])
(Everlasting fame they ask, regardless of their life,
The anklet rings adorns such men of heroic strife. [Sreenivasan])

(Anklet-rings on their feet, they risk their lives for the winning of world-wide glory. [Iyengar])

(That hero is worth of his anklet Who gives up his life for fame. [Sundaram])

Translating the name of the ornament *caḷal* too challenges the translators as this too belongs to the ancient Tamil culture and country. Pope translates the name of the ornament as “the glorious clasp,” Aiyar as “the anklet that they wear round their foot,” Sreenivasan and Iyengar as “the anklet rings” and Sundaram as “anklet.” Though all the select translators use one or other equivalent word in their translations, the foreign readers may not come to know of the ancient Tamil custom and significance of wearing the ornament *caḷal*, unless an explanatory note or footnote with all such details is added to it. If it is simply given as the ornament worn by heroes or soldiers as a sign of heroic deed, it will not bring out the unusual importance of this ornament which was made up of the gold extracted from the crown of the defeated. So, while translating such culture-bound words, explaining the tradition or custom along with the translation is a basic need to maintain the real effect of the SLT.

3.8.5. *Kuḷai* ‘ornament worn on the ear’

In the 1081st couplet, the ornament *kuḷai* ‘ornament worn on the ear’ is used by the author.

\[
\text{aṇaṅkuṇol āyayil kollō kaṇaṅkuḷai}
\]

\[
mātarkol mālumēṁ neńcu. (1081)
\]
(Goddess? Or peafowl rare? / She whose ears rich jewels wear, /
Is she a maid of human kind? / All wildered is my mind. [Pope])
(The jeweled form that appeareth yonder, is it the siren of the solitudes?
Or a peacock fairer than its kind? Or is it simply a lovely maid? Verily I am
too dazed to tell. [Aiyar])
(Goddess? Peafowl rare? Or human kind
With rich ear-rings? Bewildered is my mind. [Sreenivasan])
(Is it goddess- peahen- jeweled maid
I see? I’m dazed in my heart. [Iyengar])
(“A goddess? Or a rare peacock? Or a woman
Bedecked with jewels?” asks my heart amazed. [Sundaram])
The term kaṇaṅkulai mātar from this couplet means the women who wear long and
rich ear jewels, is also translated differently by the select translators. Jagannathan
cites difference of opinion regarding the meaning of the term kaṇaṅkulai by various
interpreters, among those, Pandit Kavirajar gives the meaning as “the one with a
long ear jewel” (687). The translators except Pope and Sreenivasan, never mention
that it is the ear jewel.

While translating the cultural elements like kulai, the translators find
difficulties in finding equivalents in the TL, because such terms are pure literary
terms and not the familiar names used for the ear jewel; and hence creates
confusion to the translators as well as the readers. But regarding the readers, they
never have an idea of the ornaments or jewels used by the ancient Tamilians in
ancient Tamil country.
3.9. Recreations and Games

Each country is known for its own games and recreations. And the Tamil country too is not an exception to it. People of Tamil country have their own recreation and it is revealed in its literary works. As the Tirukkuṟaḷ reveals the life of the Tamils, there is a reference to the well-known recreation called kūṭtu ‘dance or drama or comedy’ in the 332\textsuperscript{nd} couplet, without which a village festival cannot be thought of in ancient Tamil country. Also, a reference to a familiar game vaṭṭāṭṭam ‘a game used to play with terracotta or stone tablets’ in one of his couplets (401), which was and is played in the villages by adolescent girls. Tiruvaḷḷuvar writes ten couplets on the harms of a game called cūṭṭam ‘gambling.’ Translating the names of these recreations, cause enough problems to the translators, since they belong to a particular culture (Tamil) and particular region (Tamil Nadu).

3.9.1. Kūṭtu ‘dance or drama or comedy or everything together’

In the 34\textsuperscript{th} chapter entitled nilaiyāmai ‘Instability,’ Tiruvaḷḷuvar uses a comparison of the crowd assembled to witness kūṭtu ‘dance or drama or comedy or everything together’ who disappear when the performance was once over, to the wealth which was gathered and lost by itself. The recreation kūṭtu is translated differently by the select translators. Pope translates the term kūṭṭāṭṭavaik kulām as “crowds round dancers fill the hall” (46), Aiyar as “the crowd that assembleth to witness a village show” (73), Sreenivasan as “a play” (36), Iyengar as “a crowd in a dancing hall” (36) and Sundaram as “a crowd at a concert” (36). As kūṭtu is a form of recreation performed by a group of artists who were well-versed in singing, dancing and acting, in the streets or villages during festivals and special occasions in Tamil Nadu or India, it is not possible to find an equivalent word for this folk art
küttu in the TL English. Hence, Pope and Iyengar substitute the term related to
dance performance which is quite familiar in the western countries and languages.
Sreenivasan substitutes the term “a play” which is a part of the küttu, while Aiyar
and Sundaram substitute the terms “village show” and “concert” which are closer in
meaning to each other.

3.9.2. Vaṭṭāṭṭam ‘a game played on checked court’

Vaṭṭāṭṭam is a game played with tablets of terracotta or stone by the
adolescent girls in the villages of Tamil Nadu for which the equivalent English
word is not yet found. In the very first couplet of the 41st chapter kallāmai
‘Ignorance,’ we have come across the game vaṭṭāṭṭam, an outdoor game, which
needs checked court to keep the small flat clay or terracotta or stone piece and to
skip the checks with one leg, by counting the checked columns, by closing the eyes
or stretching out the hands, which is usually played by the adolescent girls in Tamil
Nadu; and each translator tries to render an equivalent term in the TL for this
culture-bound word in his or her translation.

araṅkiri vattātiyārē nirampiya
nūlini kötti koḷal. (401)

(Like those at draughts would play without the chequered square,
Men void of ample lore would counsels of the learned share. [Pope])

(Ascending the rostrum without abundant knowledge is like the playing of
dice without the chequered board. [Aiyar])

(Playing chess without a board, compare,
To the ignorant who learned counsels share. [Sreenivasan])

(As well play chess without the board, as speak
with no learning to the wise. [Iyengar])

(To address an assembly ill-equipped

Is to play at dice without a board. [Sundaram])

In translating the name of the game *vaṭṭāṭṭam* and *araṅku*, the translators find it difficult to find equivalent words or games as such equivalents are not available in the TL English. This game suits only to a region where the climatic condition is like that of Tamil Nadu and not any Western or desert countries where these games are not even dreamt of. So, getting an equivalent or substituting a closer one is not possible for the translators. Pope translates *vaṭṭāṭṭam* as “draughts”, Aiyar and Sundaram as “dice”, and Sreenivasan and Iyengar as “chess” which are all in-door games played by using checked squares or boards without much physical exercise and none among them is the equivalent of *vaṭṭāṭṭam*.

*Vaṭṭāṭṭam* is an outdoor game which belongs to a particular geographical area called Tamil Nadu where the climatic conditions allow outdoor games which are to be played with bare foot. Finding an equivalent game or word in the TL where such a game does not exist is not even thought of. Yet, the translators find a game or the other which is near to *vaṭṭāṭṭam*; at least played in its checkered board if not *araṅku*; and substitute them for *vaṭṭāṭṭam*.

Regarding the court or ground to play *vaṭṭāṭṭam*, *araṅku* is the SL term. But the select translators except Pope render the word “board” for the SL word *araṅku* which is used to play the indoor games like chess or dice which is the outdoor court to play *vaṭṭāṭṭam*. Though, the equivalent terms to the words *vaṭṭāṭṭam* and *araṅku* are not available in the TL English, the select translators succeed in offering the translation of the couplet into the TL by following one or the other methods like,
3.9.3. Cūtāṭṭam ‘gambling’

Tiruvalḷuvar writes a chapter on cūtu ‘Gambling’ under which he writes ten couplets on the harms of cūtāṭṭam ‘gambling.’ The title of this chapter itself is translated differently by the select translators. Pope translates it as “Gaming” which too is played by betting; while all the other select translators translate it as “Gambling” which is another English equivalent to “gaming” as well as cūtāṭṭam. Though the word “gaming” is used in a broader sense for gambling, Pope used the term “gaming” instead of “gambling” which was the practice in foreign countries. Also, he was the first to translate all the couplets of the Tirukkuṟaḷ and he might not have got the chance to think or refer to it in the contextual sense of the SLT and used the word “gaming” instead of the word “gambling” as he knew that both gaming and gambling are the equivalents of the SLT term cūtāṭṭam. Though the word “gaming” refers to various games played by betting and one of the synonyms of “gaming” is “gambling,” using the term “gaming” or “gambling” will not create any confusion to the readers. Also, translating the name of the play thing kavaṟu, ‘the sphere shaped nut’ used for gambling and the gambling place kaḻakam of the 935th couplet create problems to the translators (Pillai “1981” 405).

\begin{verbatim}
  kavaṟuṇ kaḻakamun kaiyun tarukki
  yivarīyā rillāki yār. (935)
\end{verbatim}

(The dice, and gaming-hall, and gamester’s art, they eager sought, Thirsting for gain- the men in other days who came to nought. [Pope])
(Many there have been who were proud of their skill in the throwing of dice and were mad after the gambling house: but there hath not been a single man of them all that did not come to grief. [Aiyar])

(For dice and gambling dens and skill, who fall, In time they lose their all. [Sreenivasan])

(Many had boasted of their skill with dice, yet all of them came to grief. [Iyengar])

(They lose all who will not give up The dice, the board and the throw. [Sundaram])

Kavaṟu is the nut of sphere shape used for gambling while dice is a small cube used for gambling (405). Though the gambling of the foreign or English speaking countries is different from the cūtāṭṭam of the ancient Tamil country, the English equivalent available for the game cūtāṭṭam is gambling. Then for the word kavaṟu 'a nut of sphere shape used for gambling,’ all the select translators use the word “dice” which is a small cube used for gambling. Actually, kavaṟu is the nut of sphere shape which is rolled while playing cūtāṭṭam. Translating the word kaḷakam too poses problem to the translators as no equivalent word is available in the TL English. So, the select translators substitute one or the other word relating to the game “gambling.” Pope uses “gaming hall” Aiyar and Sreenivasan use “gambling house/ den” and Sundaram translates the word as “board,” but Iyengar ignores the word in his translation. While a translator ought to translate a culture-bound word for which no equivalent word is available, there is every possibility of using a similar term relating to the TL and its culture and all the select translators follow
the method of addition, deletion, substitution or loss of a particular word or term to fulfill their task of rendering it into the TL English.

3.10. Nature and Religion

As stated by Ali R. Al-Hasnawi, “beliefs and religion are aspects of culture that play a very significant role in translation” (10). Tiruvaḷḷuvar too is not an exception to use the traditional beliefs and religious elements in his couplets. In a couplet (1196), Tiruvaḷḷuvar uses a cultural term kā which means kāvaṭī (a balanced load on either side of a poll to be carried on the shoulders), while comparing the unreciprocated or one-sided love to an unbalanced kāvaṭī kept on one’s shoulder which one struggles to carry. A kāvaṭī is a load with two equal parts which must be balanced in both the parts lest it should provoke terrible problems to the one since it is carried on one’s shoulders. The kāvaṭī consists of two semicircular pieces of wood or steel which are bent and attached to a cross structure that can be balanced on the shoulders of the devotee.

Kāvaṭī is the ceremonial worship, followed in a particular religion called “Hinduism” through which a devotee can seek the help of the lord Murugan. There is also a legendary story behind the initiation of this devotion where lord Siva handed over two hillocks (kāvaṭī) to the Sage Agathiar who left them in the forest and sent one of his disciples called Idumban to bring them. He lifted them with divine support, and brought them to a place called Palani where he placed the hillocks in order to take rest. When he tried to continue his journey, the hillocks were immovable and a youth claimed that they belonged to him. He is believed to be lord Murugan and from then onwards, the ceremony of worshipping lord Murugan with kāvaṭī came into practice (http://murugan.org/kavadi.htm n.pag.).
oru talaiyāṉ ippatu kāmamkāp pōla

virutalai yāṉum ippatu. (1196)

(Love on one side is bad; like balanced load
By porter borne, love on both sides is good. [Pope])

(Even as the burthen on the carrying pole, love is pleasant only when it is
on both sides: but it is a galling load when it is only on one side. [Aiyar])

(One sided love is pain. But mutual love,
Like balanced load on both sides, sweet will prove. [Sreenivasan])

(Like twosome weights balanced on one’s shoulders
love is blissful shared by two. [Iyengar])

(Love one-sided is bitter, / Balanced, sweet. [Sundaram])

The translations of the select translators except Sundaram seem to render the SL
couplet into English by translating the simile used by the author of the SLT into
simile in the TL English, while Sundaram deletes the simile in his translation and
brings out the general idea of the couplet in his English rendering.

In Pope’s translation, he never uses or explains the term kā or kāvaṭi; and
instead he substitutes “like balanced load by porter borne”, which is in no way
equal to the load carried by a devotee using poles on a shoulder since no porter’s
load is ever mentioned in the SL couplet. Aiyar, who is familiar with the term kā or
kāvaṭi, renders a closer translation to the SL text comparing to the other translations.
Sreenivasan simply translates kā or kāvaṭi into “balanced load on both sides” and
Iyengar offers the “balanced weights on the shoulders” without even mentioning
any substitute like poles for the word kā or kāvaṭi. Sundaram ignores the simile
used by Tiruvaḷḷuvar and deletes it in his translation. The loss of that simile in his
translation of this couplet gives it an appearance of a proverb rather than the translation of the couplet of Tiruvalḷuvar.

In the TL English, finding an equivalent word to the cultural term such as kā or its expansion kāvaṭi is not possible, since this ceremonial worship belongs to a particular region Tamil Nadu/ India and to a particular religion “Hinduism.” Hence transliteration along with the explanatory notes alone can satisfy the norms of translation for such culture-bound and religion-oriented customs and ceremonies.

3.11. Belief System

Ali R. Al-Hasnawi states that “beliefs and religion are aspects of culture that play a very significant role in translation” (7). As every culture has its own customs and tradition, the literary works too are enriched with them and the renowned work Tirukkural also has many such references in its couplets. Also, in ancient Tamil country, women were given the reputation of goddesses, deities and the adorable objects of nature. Tiruvalḷuvar too uses imageries to compare the beauty of the features of woman to such objects. For example, he compares a woman’s face to the moon in some of his couplets; and even exaggerates her beauty by saying that she is with spotless beautiful face while the moon is with deformities in a couplet; and hence she is more beautiful than the moon (1117).

\[ \text{In moon, that waxing and waning shines, as spots appear,} \]
\[ \text{Are any spots discerned in face of maiden here? [Pope]} \]
\[ \text{(But is there a spot in the face of this fair one even as in the moon which hath rounded up only to-day its deformities of yesterday? [Aiyar]} \]
(The moon has spots, though she may shine with grace;
No spots are discerned in my beloved’s face. [Sreenivasan])
(Today the full Moon has cleansed all her spots:
my love has no spots at all! [Iyengar])
(Is there a spot on my love’s face / As on the inconstant moon? [Sundaram])

In the translations of Pope, Sreenivasan and Sundaram, the TL equivalent to the word nirainta avirmai, i.e. “the full moon” is not used, while Aiyar and Iyengar use the appropriate equivalents such as “rounded-up only today” and “the full moon” in their translations. Yet, the first part of the phrase aruvāy nirainta is left out in their translations. The gradual growth or waxing of the moon is not expressed with the phrases “the full moon” or the “rounded up only today.” Pope talks about the “waxing and waning” of the moon; yet it does not give the exact meaning of the term aruvāy nirainta. Since it gives the inconstant nature of the moon like the translation of Sundaram and from these translations, it won’t be possible to get the actual meaning of the SLT. Also the word maru of the SL couplet, which means stain or some disfiguring or discolouring in the normal skin’s colour and texture, is translated as “spot” by all the select translators except Aiyar. Aiyar uses the word “deformities” which seems to be more suitable than the word “spot.” This may be for the reason that Aiyar is the first native translator who did not have much translated versions to go through while translating the Thirukkural and he is the person who knows the traditional beliefs of the Tamils and the Indians and quite familiar with the usage of such comparisons.

Like the ancient people all over the world, the Tamils too had their own traditional beliefs. For instance, they believe that the solar and lunar eclipses are
certain phenomenal intimations to humanity and they occur since a snake swallows
the sun and the moon which is referred to in the 1146th couplet.

\[kaṇṭatu maṅgum oruṇāl alarmaṅgum\]

\[tiṅkaḷai pāmpukon ṭarru.\] (1146)

(I saw him but one single day: rumour spreads soon
As darkness, when the dragon seizes on the moon. [Pope])
(Our meeting was but for one day; but the outcry that hath arisen over it is
as when the serpent hath swallowed the moon! [Aiyar])
(I saw him only once, yet rumour spread so soon,
As darkness when the serpent swallows the moon. [Sreenivasan])
(I saw him but once; rumour spread like night
when the Snake swallows the Moon. [Iyengar])
(An eclipse is much noised however brief-
So my one day’s meeting with my lover. [Sundaram])

As an ancient myth has a part of Indian belief system, the Indians believe that the
lunar eclipse happens when a big snake swallows the moon. Different nations have
different myths, legends and beliefs regarding the lunar eclipse and solar eclipse.
For instance, the Pomo tribes of native Americans believe that it is a fight between
a bear and the sun or the moon who come across the milky way; the Amesonian
tribes of Brazil believe that the reddening of the sun and the moon is a result of
piercing the eye of the sun and the moon with an arrow by a small boy; another
tribe believes that it happens while the spirits of the dead try to eat the sun or the
moon; and a race of northern California believes that the moon is a man who
bleeds with the attack of his pets who are not satisfied with the hunting lots of him
As the beliefs differ from place to place, they create difficulties to the translators to render the SLT into the TL; yet it becomes the duty of the translator to explain the ancient belief mentioned in the SLT while translating it into the TL. For a native learner who is well-versed in cultural and traditional beliefs and mythological and legendary stories, it won’t be a problem to grasp the meaning of the usage of the term tīṅkaḷai pāmpu koṇṭarṟ. But for the non-Tamil readers and learners, a detailed explanatory note is a basic need to understand this myth. Pope, Aiyar and Iyengar do not add any explanatory notes to their translations while Sreenivasan offers footnotes. Sundaram leaves out the significance of the comparison and his translation of this particular couplet does not bring out the translation of the SL couplet as a whole, yet the intended teaching of the SLT is brought out. Leaving such beliefs in translating and avoiding explanatory notes may cause problems to the readers in grasping the content of the SLT in the TL if they get chance to read more than one translated versions.

These translations clearly prove that there can never be a one-to-one exact translation. However, an equally careful analysis would show that a translation cannot be made nearer to the original, but they can be made identically appropriate in their content and meaning. As a translator’s duty is to render the original text into another TL in order to make it known to those who are really interested in reading or learning a literary work of another language, no translator translates a work of art for the readers who know the SL. The translations of the select translators Pope, Aiyar, Sreenivasan, Iyengar and Sundaram prove that any reader who happens to read the Tirukkural in English can enjoy the beauty, experience the
life style and learn the moral and ethical codes taught by Tiruvalluvar to a certain extent. The select translators follow the procedures of Harvey, in translating the culture-specific words and concepts, like transliteration, description, explanation, substitution of similar words with the same relevance and make their translations worthy to read and admirable to learn. If transliteration is used for all the culture-bound words and cultural elements along with some explanatory notes, it will be more effective than the adopted methods of translating these terms.

The next chapter is devoted to the study of the problems the translators encounter in translating the cultural elements like the flora and the fauna and the culture-bound words relating to them referred to in the SLT; and the translation strategies followed by the translators to set over the difficulties in rendering those cultural elements of the SLT into the TLT without losing the actual effect and content of the SLT.