CHAPTER FOUR
ETHICS FOR SOCIAL HARMONY

A work often proves to be the product of the Age in which it is conceived and reflects the ethos and values of the society in which the creator lives. As Wilbur Scott rightly observes,

Art is not created in a vacuum; it is the work not simply of a person, but of an author fixed in time and space answering to a community of which he is an important articulate part.

(Five Approaches, 123).

Hence, in a sense, any literary work can be regarded both as a social document and a monument of a particular Age. This chapter brings into limelight, the preoccupation common to both Solomon and Tiruvalluvar, with regard to the factors contributing to peace, happiness and harmony in the respective social milieux of the two ancient societies compared, which gave birth to these great literary works, Proverbs and Tirukkural.

Further, a writer's own personal ideology is also likely to affect certain aspects of his art, which to a certain extent, may be viewed as an evidence of the fact that art is, after all, a social document of its time.
It either interrogates the state of affairs in which it is conceived and executed, or inherits certain distinct marks of influence of the contemporary society.

This chapter deals mainly with a number of motifs associated with the theme of social order and harmony in Proverbs and Tirukkural. According to Weisstein, "'motif' designates a thematic unit, (Stofflich) which does not yet encompass an entire plot" (139). And, situations like motifs can be reshuffled in numerous ways to form myriads of constellations of genuine motifs, which Weisstein personally prefers to refer to, as "the impersonal situations" (139). Further, the literary motif is conducive to action only to the extent that it contains a situational element. From a literary viewpoint, situation denotes divergent feelings or thoughts reflected in giving rise to an action or conflict. But "an action suggests physical activity whereas the motif is abstracted from concrete reality" (147). All the motifs included in this chapter, pertain to nuances relating to one's own relationship with one's neighbours, such as kindness and empathy expressed through gestures of generosity, compassion, charity, benevolence, honesty, equity, probity and avoidance of negative passions like anger, envy, covetousness, pride, indolence, intemperate language and indulgence in any kind of addiction to liquor and the vice of gambling.
The concept of social norms constitute the very foundation of social structure, as no social group can exist without certain standards or common ideas governing the conduct of individual members. In the words of a social critic, Sankar Rao,

Norms refer to the rules that guide behaviour in everyday situations and are derived from values (Sociology 508).

As for the norms with regard to one’s ‘neighbour’, Prof. Toy sees the neighbour as one who stands in close social relations from whom therefore sympathy may be expected or to whom sympathy is due (ICC on Proverbs 293).

Now, one of the common motifs with regard to norms stressed both in Proverbs and Tirukkural, in respect of one’s neighbour, is that of practising kindness:

Kindness is a matter not of option but of obligation; an act of justice no less than of mercy. Not indeed that it may be demanded by our fellowmen. But the obligation lies upon conscience, and to withhold the due will be our eternal damnation (C. Bridges 48).

The way to express kindness is to help the fellowmen in times of need and allow them to live peacefully. Proverbs explicitly instructs the
individual "not to withhold good from those to whom it is due, When it is in the power of your hand to do it" (P3:27).

Such kindness, as a corollary, anticipates the virtue of generosity in its turn: "This bountifulness is a privilege and many a rich blessing is sealed to it" (Brown 253).

Another quality stressed in Proverbs in respect of every member of the society is 'compassion', which implies a capacity to feel with others and to suffer with them, if necessary. However, in a materialistic context, the virtue of generosity blends with the quality of compassion, resulting in an over-all considerate attitude towards the poor and the oppressed: "He that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he" (P14: 21).

George Lawson rightly interprets the import of Proverbs when he says:

The greatest insurer on earth cannot make so much of his money as the man who gives to the poor (Proverbs 307),

because it is God's ordinance that

The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself (P11:25).
Tiruvalluvar also emphasizes love for one's neighbour on the part of any individual, the lack of which reduces him to a "bony framework clad with skin" (T 80).

In the light of the above kural, Rev. Ellis comments:

Love is the real sign of life; when that existeth not,
This body like a corpse, is merely skin and bone. (Tirukkural - Ellis Commentary 292).

Tiruvalluvar sees charity as "giving to the destitute" (T 221). He lays stress on the three stages of sacrifice, by comparing the wealthy to the water reservoir in the village, the fruit-bearing tree and the medicinal tree living in the heart of the village.

The water reservoir is useful when used; if not, it evaporates or stagnates and putrefies, but the prospective beneficiary has to reach out to the reservoir. In the second case, wealth is "like a tree that bears fruits in the village central mart" (T 216), suggestive of its ready availability without eliciting any kind of prerequisite behaviour on the part of the needy. In the third case, wealth functions much as a 'medicinal tree', in the sense, it is useful at the most opportune moment to those who require it, symbolizing
someone endowed with a spirit of 'agape', as T.P. Meenakshi Sundaram comments, it is an embodiment of absolute self-sacrifice, a complete self-effacement in the cause of love and society. (Philosophy of Tiruvalluvar 81),

Unfailing tree that healing balm distils from every part Is ample wealth that falls to him of large and noble heart. (T 217).

The above kural recalls Portia's words in The Merchant of Venice:

The quality of mercy is not strained
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven.
(Act IV Scene I, ll 177-178).

Benevolence is another salient social virtue, stressed in Tirukkural, again and again:

Though sharp their wit as file, as blocks they must remain Whose souls are void of 'courtesy humane'.
(T 997),

and "All wealth acquired with perseverance by the worthy is for the exercise of benevolence" (T. 212). A genuinely generous act seeks nothing in return. The
rain-bearing clouds attain relief only when they exhaust themselves in a downpour. Similarly, the benevolent feel contented only in helping others by emptying themselves to their heart's content. In contrast, "the futility of the miser is compared to a fair spinster who grows aged in loneliness" (T.1007). Commenting on the virtue of generosity, T.P.Meenakshi Sundaram observes, "Charity to the needy brings its immediate joy and bliss of giving" (85). According to Tiruvalluvar,

Whose soul delights with hungry men to share his meat;

The hand of hunger's sickness sore shall never feel (T.227).

Such a man of charitable disposition shall never be touched by the fiery disease of hunger or want.

T.P.Meenakshi Sundaram recounts Tiruvalluvar's view on a charitable disposition in the following manner:

It is indeed more miserable than beggary to enjoy all alone the accumulated goods. There is greater pleasure in giving before the other expresses his need. As soon as his needs are satisfied, there is the divine bliss inspired by the happy and contented face of the human soul (Philosophy of Tiruvalluvar 86).
Both the works of wisdom emphasize the need for showing charity to those in need. Solomon asserts that "He who gives to the poor will not lack" (P28: 27). Tiruvalluvar affirms:

Call that a gift to needy men thou dost dispense;

All else is void of good, seeking for recompense. (T.221).

Tiruvalluvar is of the view that "to give is the characteristic of the man of noble birth" (T.221). Thus both the works promise generous rewards to those who are charitable to their fellowmen.

Moreover, the Wisdom writer is very much opposed to any act of oppression directed against the poor and the helpless in society and comments that any deed of oppression is tantamount to "reproaching the Maker" (P14:31), and "the Lord will plead their cause and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them" (P22:22-23). In the words of Rolland W.Schloerb,

God helps those who cannot help themselves ...

since He has made them as ends, and not as objects to be used. (IB 909).

The Wisdom writer exhorts the youth further, not "to devise evil against the neighbour" (P3: 29), which is "an indication of a heart, base and depraved, beyond
the common pitch of human wickedness" (George Lawson 51) "He who despises his neighbour, sins" (P14: 21) and "will start strife or spread it" (P25: 8).

Tiruvalluvar is also of the view that the riches acquired through evil means will bring about only evil:

Though ill to neighbour wrought should glorious pride of wealth secure
No ill to do is fixed decree of men in spirit pure. (T 311)

Over every evil doer evil broodeth still (T 320).

Hence, those who desire to be free from sorrow should cause no pain to others.

Tiruvalluvar advises his readers in unequivocal terms, not to devise one’s neighbour’s fall: "Plot not thy neighbour’s fall" (T 204). Hence,

To work no wilful woe, in anywise through all the days

To any living soul is virtue’s highest praise. (T 317),

because evil visits the very person who devises evil against the neighbour:

If, ere the noontide, you to others evil do, Before the eventide will evil visit you. (T 319)
According to the Israelite sage, an evil devised against a neighbour is a curse spoken against God, while to Tiruvalluvar, it brings about evil upon oneself. It is not surprising that both the works of wisdom reiterate the need to avoid devising or harbouring evil of any kind to one's neighbour. For, only when a person is well-disposed to his neighbour, can he expect any good turn from the latter's hands in times of his own need. Further, enjoying the goodwill of one's immediate neighbour ensures one's complete security and well-being during a time of crisis. In fact, as John Garlock puts it, "Neighbourly honesty is a practical application of wisdom" (BSFL 889).

Further Proverbs highlights the need for justice repeatedly: "A false balance is an abomination to the Lord; but a just weight is His delight" (P11:1).

He that justifieth the wicked and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord (P17:15).

"A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour is a maul, a sword and sharp arrow" (P25:18) which are all symbols of deadly destruction. As George Lawson comments:

It is like indulging oneself in a piece of barbarity, destroying the reputation, mangling their character" (448).
In Proverbs, justice is assigned an exalted place of honour as an essential virtue of wise living: "To do justice and judgement is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice" (P21:3).

Tiruvalluvar too accords a high priority to justice while making his pronouncements on neighbourly relations. Shunmuga Subramaniam observes,

> Justice, in its purely ethical aspect is justness, a moral quality residing in a disposition of character. The purpose of justice as a social virtue is to maintain or to restore an equilibrium in human affairs (Lectures in Concepts of Law in Tirukkural on TSEL 490).

Justice implies an unbiased condition of mind:

> In Greek, justice signifies equal distribution and it signifies maintenance of a middle station or state of equality with regard to all others, not moving to either side or being biased (Tirukkural, Ellis Commentary 367).

Equity enables a man to render justice irrespective of whether a person is a fraud or an enemy, or of neutral standing: "Giving to each his due, - 'tis man's one highest gain" (T.111). Tiruvalluvar goes even further:
To stand like balance-rod that level hangs and
rightly weighs
With calm unbiased equity of soul, is sages' praise (T 118).

In the words of Ellis:

The balance is an emblem of Justice in India as well as in Europe. We have received the idea from the ancient figure of Justice personified with a pair of scales in her hand but in India, it was actually connected with the administration of law (Ellis - Tirukkural Commentary 368).

The man who departs from equity, brings upon himself destruction. Tiruvalluvar advocates his concern for others, with a sense of justice: "As thriving trader is the trader known, who guards another’s interests as his own" (T 120); and "If a man departs from equity he will discern signs of impending ruin" (T 116).

The Wisdom writer suggests further that "sharing food" (P22:9); "lending money" (P28:8) and "defending rights" (P31: 9) are some of the vital means by which one can show kindness in a pragmatic way. Such a person honours God and will lack nothing. In kurals like these it must be borne in mind that though blessings are
promised in the name of God, the ultimate stress is on Man's welfare and well-being.

Further, *Proverbs* condemns malice and slander of any kind, for slandering and the use of harsh language oppress others:

He that hideth hatred with lying lips and he that uttereth a slander is a fool (P10:18).

C.H. Toy paraphrases this verse as follows:

The suggestion is that concealed hatred expresses itself in slander, the two are related as cause and effect which is itself an underhand procedure (216).

Further, the Wisdom writer wants to stress the evils of tale-bearing:

The words of the tale-bearer are as wounds and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly (P26:22), though they are "greedily picked up by the hearers like the dainty morsels and stowed away with gleeful maliciousness" (ICC. 886).

"A tale bearer revealeth secrets" (P11:13). While referring to this verse, C. Bridges observes, "The breath of this cruel trifler ... for as readily as he reveals our neighbours' secrets to us, will he reveal ours to
him. All the bonds of confidence and friendship are broken in pieces" (113).

For, "A whisperer separateth chief friends" (P16:28); "Where there is no wood, the fire goes out and when there is no tale-bearer, strife will cease" (P26:20). It is better to discuss a disputed matter in private and settle it at a personal level, than bringing it to court: "Debate thy cause with the neighbour himself and discover not a secret to another." (P25:9).

A babbler is universally disliked and despised; the neighbours' matters should not publicly be discussed: "Words are dynamites; they can destroy people. They should be carefully weighed before they are spoken". (Family Devotional Study Bible. 553).

The mouth of the righteous is also compared to "a well of life" (P10:11) and "choice silver" (P10:20). Similarly, Tiruvalluvar condemns the slanderer who "cuts the very root of friendship which binds society together by sowing discard (Philosophy of Tiruvalluvar 74). The following kurals underscore this view:

With friendly art who know not pleasant words to say,

Speak words that sever hearts, and drive choice friends away (T 187);
The slanderous meanness that an absent friend defames,

This man in words own virtue, not in heart, proclaims. (T 185),

Thus, both the works highlight the evil perpetrated in society by slanderers, condemning such depraved souls in one voice. While Proverbs considers the slanderer a fool, Tirukkural regards him, a wearisome weight to the earth.

In Hebrew, "The common word for friend is 'rea' which means 'neighbours' ... at its nearest; it stands for a person with whom one has close fellowship" (Derek Kidner 44). According to Proverbs, one's neighbour, who is near at hand with readiness to assist, is better than a brother who is far off: "Better is a neighbour that is near than a brother far off" (P27:10).

Proverbs also outlines the three-fold kinds of service rendered by friends, namely rescuing a person out of the wrong path with words of candour, leading him in the right path by offering counsel and being tactful, so as to show respect for his feelings and share his misfortunes. It goes on to assert: "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful " (P27: 6). C. Bridges attaches a great value
to the stern words of counsel uttered by a sincere friend:

The genuineness of friendship without open rebuke is more than doubtful; its usefulness is utterly paralysed (432).

Proverbs instructs the youth: "withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house; lest he be weary of thee and so hate thee" (P25:17). That tactfulness in not being hearty at the wrong time when it is unwelcome, is stressed here:

He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him. (P27:14).

Proverbs suggests circumspection in all intimate relationships:

As a man who casteth firebrands, arrows and death, so is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith Am not I in sport? (P26: 18,19).

C. Bridges expatiates on the meaning of the above verse as follows:

He that purposely deceives his neighbour, under colour of a jest, is no less prejudicial to him than a lunatic, that doth wrong out of frenzy and distemper (424).
Thus, the thoughtless jester's foolish habit of deceiving for the sake of mere amusement, is soundly condemned by the Jewish law-giver, as he does not know when his joke has gone too far.

The Israelite is, nevertheless, extremely sensitive to the cheering effect of a good fellowship: "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart; so doth the sweetness of man's friend by hearty counsel" (P27:9). Thus, sympathy is rightly acclaimed as the balm of friendship by the author of Proverbs. In the words of C. Bridges:

The heartiness of a friend's counsel constitutes its excellence. It is not official or merely intelligent. It is the counsel of his soul (430).

When the countenance is overcast with melancholy, the choice words of a friend infuse gladness into the heart of a person and cheers him up. In the words of Solomon, "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend" (P27:17). Charles Fritsch highlights the truth of the above verse:

This verse states one of the most important aspects of educational process. His intention is not to harm another but to remove all blocks that prevent him being his best self.

(IB, 882).
Further, constancy is considered as the basis of friendship in Proverbs. Fair-weather friends who cling to the rich, profess a kind of love which lasts only so long as their prosperity does. This is implied in the following verse: "The poor is hated even by his own neighbours but the rich hath many friends" (P14: 20). Bacon is of the view,

The personal fruition in any man cannot reach to feel great riches; there is a custody of them; or a power of dole and donative of them; or a fame of them; but no solid use to the owner (Selby ed. 91).

Human nature defers to the rich for the sake of favours only, while "a true friend loveth at all times" (P17: 17) and "in times of adversity, he is more than a brother in his attachment and devotion " (P18: 24).

In the view of C. Bridges,

A true friend is no common acquisition ... to throw him away by neglect, caprice, unreasonable disgust or needless offence is to show himself utterly unworthy of the blessings (265).

Also, the Wisdom writer warns the young man from a moral and prudential perspective, not to join a band of violent men to throw himself into any kind of ruthless
shared enterprise, as "their feet run to evil and make haste to shed blood" (P1: 10). The law of the Israelites at the time was very strict in this regard for, wrong doing will be punished in this life and criminals cannot in the long run escape the vigilance of law (C.H.Toy 18).

Solomon earnestly instructs the youth to be vigilant enough to keep good company:

Enter not into the path of the wicked ... for they sleep not except when they have done mischief (P4:14).

as "mischief is their meat and drink" (Job 15: 16). They will face a sorrowful end as "the wicked shall be cut off from the earth " (P2:22).

Tiruvalluvar devotes 50 couplets in all to study the question of friendship. He too stresses the three-fold services rendered by good friends, namely,

To take his fellow-being off the wrong path thereby saving him from ruin, to keep him in the way of virtue and in troublesome time weep with him who weeps (T1 787).

Further, he has the duty to rebuke the friend at the time of deviation from the right path. Hence,
Tiruvalluvar exhorts the youth to exercise extreme care over the choice of friends:

Make them your chosen friend whose words repentance move,
With power prescription’s path to show, while evil they reprove. (T.795).

Keeping in mind that friendship is not for laughter only but "for strokes of sharp reprovings, when from right you stray" (T 784).

He also instructs the youth to avoid fair-weather friends as

the very thought of the friendship of those who have deserted one at the approach of adversity will burn one’s mind at the time of death (Tl 799);

Where is friendship’s royal state? In stable mind,
Where friend in every time of need support may find. (T 789).

Tiruvalluvar is also of the view that it is futile to cultivate the friendship of those who love when there is gain, and leave when there is loss. But he is quick to add:
In anywise maintain not intercourse with those
Who in the house are friends, in hall are
slandering foes (T 820).

For such dissemblers can show only outward friendship
but they nourish a deep-seated hatred in their hearts.
What is required in true friendship is an identity of
feelings: " 'Tis the unison of feeling friends unites
kindred mind " (T. 785).

Even as the wisdom writer, Tiruvalluvar stresses
the value of "old and faithful-friends who never
forsake, the world commends" (T-809), he compares money-
minded friends to prostitutes and thieves who "accept
whatever you give" (T 813). He is as much concerned with
shunning evil companions, as he is about winning the
love of sincere friends:

Cling to the friendship of the spotless one's;
whatever you pay,
Renounce alliance with the men of evil way.
(T 800).

The honey-tongued dissemblers who hide the evil in their
hearts lose their integrity as their words do not get
translated into action.

Tiruvalluvar also has a worldlywise piece of
advice, to deal with hypocrites who pretend to be
friends:
Friendship of those who seem our kin but are not really kind, Will change from hour to hour like woman's mind (T.822).

'Tis just when men make much of you and then despise To make them smile, and slap in friendship's guise (T 829).

When one's foes begin to affect friendship, one should love them with one's looks and cherishing no love in the heart, give up even the former (T1.830).

Tiruvalluvar is pragmatic enough to suggest here that It is better to dread the friendship of foes who seem like kinsmen than foes who appear with drawn swords (T1 882).

Tiruvalluvar cautions that we should be careful about the choice of our friends, as the character of the man resembles that of his associates: The waters' virtues change with soil through which they flow; As man's companionship, so will his wisdom show (T.452).
Shakespeare also holds a similar view:

Friendship thou hast and their adoption tried
Grapple them to thy soul with hoop of steel.

(Hamlet I Act III Scene lines 63-64).

As regards good neighbourly relations, truthfulness and love are the two most important virtues, which pave the way for any such fruitful relationship. As regards the value of truthfulness or probity in a relationship, C.H. Toy observes:

The most desirable thing in life is the insight which enables one to order one's life by the standard of truth (164).

The Jewish Wisdom writer earnestly exhorts the youth "to buy truth" (P23:23) and "let not mercy and truth forsake thee" (P3:3) for mercy and truth are complimentary to each other and may be said to form a perfect moral character. (58)

Dwelling on the manifestations of truth, C. Bridges finds a close affinity between truthfulness and depth in any relationship:

The faithful man makes no loud profession. He is true to his word. He fulfills his engagements .... He will prefer his conscience to his interest (467).
C.H. Toy also connects truth with integrity and loyalty:  
Faithfulness is steadfastness, fidelity to one's word and to the obligations which spring from one's relations with men (58).

Truth is also the fire of holiness in which every kind of "iniquity is purged" (P3:3). George Lawson stresses the imperative need of truth in any kind of personal bond, for wisdom and understanding which is not grounded in truth is but craftiness and splendid ignorance and that instruction which is not according to truth is poison to the soul (410).

Further, a pair of lying lips is an abomination in the sight of the Lord: "Those who deal truthfully are His delight" (P12:22). "He that speaketh lies shall not escape" (P19:5) and "The lies will be refuted and the liar punished" (The NIV Study Bible. 962). According to the Wisdom writer,

Truthful lips endure for ever;
But a lying tongue lasts only a moment (P12:19).

Tiruvalluvar also exalts the value of truthfulness in respect of one's utterance. He approves only of "a speech from every taint of evil free" (T.291), as Truth
is nothing less than "a lamp of pure radiance bright" (T 299), and to "this every virtue yields spontaneously" (T 296).

Like the Jewish sage, Tiruvalluvar also believes that "inner purity will flow from truth alone" (T 298), and

External cleanliness can be procured by a wash with water,

But internal cleanliness can be secured by truth-speaking (T 298).

When "a man knowingly tells a lie ... his mind will burn him with the memory of his guilt" (T 293), and, in consequence, ruin his integrity and peace of mind:

If a man lives true to his inmost soul, he lives enshrined in the souls of all mankind (Tt 294).

for a man of integrity is superior to "those who make gifts and practise austerities" (T.295). Tiruvalluvar exhorts everyone to practise truth:

In all your life, utter truth, the truth alone,

'Tis well, though other virtuous acts be undone. (T 297).
Also, Tiruvalluvar warns of the possibility of falsehood being mistaken for Truth at times, purely depending on the outcome of a particular effort. "Falsehood may take the place of truthful word; If blessing, free from fault, it can afford" (T 292). As Dr. V.A.Devasenapathi has observed, to the Tamil sage, "Truth is not a mere academic matter but a practical issue" (Tmt. Sornammal Endowment Lectures 352).

Dr. Aram makes an attempt to justify Tiruvalluvar's concept of truth by saying that a mere inconsiderate utterance of truth blurted out at a wrong moment may do more harm than help:

Suppose the law were to allow every person to speak the truth without caring for the consequences, life in society would be intolerable .... Every man's good name will be in constant jeopardy of being sullied by unpleasant truths that do not benefit the society in any way but make the lives of the individual miserable. (TSEL 471).

It is interesting also to note that in Tirukkural, absolute truth is different from 'Vāimai' or truthfulness in speech. Dr.S.Muthusamy remarks, The categorical interpretation of Parimelazhagar that speaking harmful truth is
prohibited has attracted the attention of legal expert Thiru M. Shanmuga Sundaram who has established that the above couplets as interpreted by Parimelazhagar are surprisingly in tune with the most modern legal concepts of our time (Tamil Culture as revealed in Tirukkural 138).

Obviously, the basic cause for adaptation of such a compliant attitude towards utterance of relative truth in Tiruvalluvar, is simply to establish or preserve social harmony.

Tiruvalluvar decries anger as a passion. For instance, George Lawson rightly points out how anger in a person is destructive:

A passionate disposition makes a man the firebrand of society; but meekness makes him a blessing to his neighbour (219).

Anger is a reprehensible passion, symptomatic of weakness in human nature, as it is the cause and effect of emotional imbalance. Charles T. Fritsch is of the opinion that it is the wise who manage to maintain a high degree of self-possession at all times:

Only a fool allows himself a big explosion of feeling whenever he is irritated but the wise
A man can direct his feelings of indignation into constructive channels. (IB 818).

Proverbs says, "Wrath is cruel; anger is outrageous" (P27:4). Just as the phrase 'outrageous' suggests an overwhelming flood, anger also is an outrageous passion. According to P25:28, "Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls". Here the imagery of a defenceless city lacking walls conveys powerfully the utter vulnerability of an angry man. C. Bridges calls anger "a fit of passion, soon over and forgotten ... is a temporary madness which degrades human nature" (275).

"A quick-tempered man displays folly" (P14:29). A person who is even-tempered shows essentially a heroic spirit:

He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city (P16:32).

Kenneth Barber interprets this verse as follows:

Although one who practises patience and self-control receives far less attention and acclaim than a warrior who takes a city, he accomplishes better things (NIV 969).
The temperate person is essentially tolerant: "The discretion of a man defereth his anger but it is his glory to pass over a transgression" (P19:11).

George Lawson remarks:

Anger is a more ungovernable monster than the leviathan and needs much more than a double barrel for curbing it (201).

Anger is destructive like a storm that rages for a while, inflicting great ruin in its wake: "A wrathful man stirreth up strife but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife" (P15:18). For the sake of emphasis, Solomon reiterates the same idea again: "An angry man stirreth up strife and a furious man aboundeth in transgression" (P29:22). On this aspect of anger, C. Bridges remarks:

How many murders do we owe to this paroxysm of the moment! But for the divine restraints, the very foundation of society would be torn up (495).

Hence, the Jewish sage advises his readers to avoid any association with an angry man:

Make no friendship with an angry man and with a furious man, thou shall not go, lest thou learn his ways and get a snare to thy soul (P22:24,25).
Hence, it is wise to avoid bad friends as Kenneth Barber says:

"Bad Company corrupts good manners" (NIV 977).

It is better to dwell in the wilderness than with a contentious and an angry woman (P21:19).

Tiruvalluvar also thinks in similar terms:

Domestic life with those who don’t agree
Is dwelling in a shed with snake for company
(T.890).

The above kural may be interpreted as follows:

A contentious wife leads you to a tight spot
and life with her is like living with a snake
in a closed pot.

Tiruvalluvar regards anger as "the killer of the person who succumbs to it" (T.305), for "anger kills both laughter and joy" (T.304), and like fire ruins the things on which it falls: "Wrath, the fire that slayeth whoso draweth near, Will burn the helpful raft of kindred near" (T.306). Further, "fountains of evil spring from anger" (T.303), and those who eschew anger are greater than sages who renounced the pleasure of the world: "Truly great is the excellence of those who are free from pride, anger and lust" (T.431). Moreover, a man of self-control is assured of personal security:
Virtue, seeking an opportunity will come into the path of that man who, possessed of learning and self-control, guards himself against danger (T 130).

Such a man remains a master of himself and acquires all he desires:

'Tis virtue when, his footsteps sliding not through envy, wrath, Lust, evil speech—these four, man inwards moves its ordered path (T 35).

Both the writers deal with the evil that befalls the angry. There are certain amazing parallels both in terms of content (stoff) and form (gestalt) when motifs are analysed in Proverbs and Tirukkural.

Further, if Solomon says, 'A wrathful man stirreth up strife' (P15:18), Tiruvalluvar asks rhetorically "What other foe to man works such annoy?" (T.304).

While, The Jewish wisdom writer says "A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment" (P19:19), the Tamil sage observes:

The hand that smites the earth unfailing feels the sting,

So perish they who nurse their wrath as noble thing (T 307).
Solomon advises his readers to defer anger as "the man that is soon angry dealeth foolishly" (P14:17) and "the man who is slow to wrath is of great understanding" (P14:29), and Tiruvalluvar asserts: "Men of surpassing wrath are like the men who are dead" (T.310) and so everyman should "preserve his soul from wrathful fires" (T.309). While the wisdom writer instructs his readers not to use "grievous words which stir up anger" (P 15:2) and "not to make friendship with an angry man" (P.22:24), Tiruvalluvar conveys something akin to this when he talks of the woe caused in 'kindred near' by an angry man. Thus, both the writers hold kindred views regarding the evil consequences of anger.

Envy is another vice which both the wisdom writers condemn in unison. Talking of envy, Bacon observes: "It takes no holidays" (Selby ed.23). The Wisdom writer poses a rhetorical question on almost the same truth: "Who is able to stand before envy?" (P27:4). To Solomon, envy makes "a person pine and cause rottenness of bones" (P14:30). George Lawson paraphrases this verse as follows:

The envious man is impoverished by another's riches and tormented by another man's happiness .... He is not only disfigured by his evil eye but pines away under a distemper
that consumes his bones and is a greater enemy to himself than any other man (Commentary on Proverbs 202).

Further, the Jewish sage exhorts the youth "not to envy the oppressor" (P3:31), "the wicked" and "the sinner" (P23:17), as they all bring about destruction upon themselves.

Aeschylus says in Agamemnon:

Few are they who have such inborn grace as to look up with love and envy not when stands another on the heights of weal. (Charles W. Eliot ed. Harvard Classics; VIII 34).

Charles T. Fritsch suggests that the way to combat such an attitude is to determine never to glorify in the misfortunes of others as one never builds oneself up by tearing other people down. (IB. 933).

However, the only effective antidote for envy is love as St. Paul puts it; "Love knows no jealousy" (I Corinthians 13:4).

Enumerating the evil consequences of envy, Tiruvalluvar exalts an "unenvying grace of mind" as something in accordance with "strict decorum's laws"
(T 161), and as "the richest gift" (T 162), for envy destroys all the material prosperity of the envious, ruining their body and life.

Envy embodied ill, incomparable bane,

Good fortune slays and soul consigns to fiery pain (T 168).

Envy destroys not only the envious man but also his children. The envious man loses all happiness, even when he faces not a single enemy. According to Tiruvalluvar, none grows richer by envying and none loses anything by being free from envy:

Envy they have within! Enough to seal their fate

Though foemen fail, envy can ruin consummate

(T 165).

In Hindu mythology, the elder sister of the Goddess of Fortune is Misfortune, who is in charge of bad luck. The man who "sees good gifts given to others with an envious eye will utterly perish in poverty" (T 166);

From envious man good fortune's goddess turns away,

Grudging him good, and points him out misfortune's prey (T 167).
Solomon is quite precise in his remarks on envy but Tiruvalluvar touches upon each and every consequence of the man who indulges in it. Envy causes "ill deeds of foul disgrace" (T 164); "ruins a man's wealth in this world and drives him into the pit of fire" (T 168), in the next.

Social consciousness consists in avoiding this corrosive feeling of envy which strangles all activity and leads man to his doom:

To men of envious heart, when comes increase of joy,

Or loss to blameless men, the 'why' will thoughtful hearts employ. (T.169).

Parithiyar considers that the two conditions referred to in the above kural, "are momentary as the envious cannot remain prosperous for long." Kalingar, another Commentator, affirms that such a sight is merely an empty show for things are different at the very roots. T.P. Meenakshi Sundaram says,

When one without stopping with mere jealousy, proceeds somehow to get others' possessions, this will lead to endless evil. Therefore, the root must be destroyed, the root of covetousness (72).
According to Solomon, Envy is generated in a man when he "covets greedily" (P21:26). James Caroll Tollett comments:

'Covet' means desire or lust. It is not the wanting of something that is wrong but wanting at the expense of others or from a motive of jealousy or envy (BSFL 112).

Covetousness is referred to as "idolatry" in Ephesians 5:5 and as "the root of all evil" in I Timothy 6:9. Covetousness is a bringer of misfortune not only to the possessor but also to the entire family:

He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye and
Considerereth not that poverty shall come upon him (P28:22).

"A greedy man brings trouble to his family, but he that hates bribes will live" (P15:2). Envy also "takes away the lives of those who get ill-gotten gain" (P1:19) and "induces a false sense of security and often damages the character of its possessors" (IB 843).

Interestingly, the Wisdom writer instructs the youth to

Labour not to be rich; cease from thine own wisdom. With thou set thine eyes upon that
which is not? for riches certainly make to
themselves wings, they fly away as an eagle
toward heaven (P23:4,5).

Proverbs says that only the man "who hateth covetousness
prolongeth his days " (P28:16).

With regard to Tirukkural, it holds a similar
view: "Greatness of soul that covets not shall triumph
still" (T.180). Tiruvalluvar roundly condemns
covetousness which deprives a man of inner peace and
freedom:

Men free from strong desires are free
None other share such perfect liberty (T 365).

Such men are those who "desire not others' good even in
the hour of the sorest need" (T 174). To such persons,
"Good Fortune draws nigh in ... time of need" (T 179).

Pride, in Hebrew etymology, "is 'gea', used for
arrogance of those who must have everything their own
way and will not be kicked around" (Derek Kidner 90).
"Pride, which usually goes before a fall, is 'gaon' or
swelling excellence which is rejected in favour of the
lowly spirit" (The New Bible Dictionary 966).

It is interesting to note that the Greek teaching during
the last four centuries B.C. was totally at variance
with Judaism with regard to pride, as the former school held pride as a virtue and humility, despicable. Commenting on this, W. Graham Scroggie says,

Haughtiness and humility are poles asunder; so are their goals - ruin and reward. (The Scripture Union Daily Notes 37).

Also, as a consequential corollary, inordinate pride expresses itself in inordinate self-esteem in the presence of God and man, which ultimately brings ruin. "Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall" (P16:18).

"Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord ... he shall not be unpunished". (P16:15) "The Lord scorneth the scorners; but He giveth grace unto the lowly" (P3:34).

From the above verses, it becomes quite clear that the proud cannot escape punishment ultimately. The Jewish sage dwells at length on the evil effects of pride. By "pride cometh contention" (P13:10); "destruction and a fall" (P16:18); and "Shame" (P11:2) and pride "shall bring him low" (P29:23). Commenting on this, Charles T. Fritsch says, "Pride produces instability and prevents growth" (945). Rolland Schloerb remarks in this context, that pride even makes a man ignore God's omnipotence:
The conceited man lacks the profound self-knowledge that he is dependent on God .... A humble man recognizes his creaturehood (946).

So the Israelite sage says, "Better it is to be of a humble spirit" (P16:19). As for God, "surely he scorneth the scorners but he giveth grace unto the lowly" (P3:34). C.Bridges points to the blessings on the lowly, employing an imagery from Nature:

His sweet dews and showers of grace slide off the mountains of pride and fall on the low valleys of humble hearts and make them pleasant and fertile (52).

Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount underscores the significance of humility: "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of God" (Matthew 5:3). St.Peter observes,

Young men ... be submissive to those who are older. Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another because God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble (I Peter 5:5).

The proud do not have longevity. "The Lord will destroy the house of the wicked" (P15:29), and hence, it is "better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud." (P16:19).
The root meaning of the noun for "humility" is "to be bowed down" (Charles T. Fritsch 907). "With the lowly is wisdom" (P11:2) as "before honour is humility" (P18:12), and "by humility and fear of the Lord are riches, and honour and life" (P12:4). To George Lawson, "Humility and fear of the Lord are straight road to everything desirable" (376).

Tiruvalluvar is also equally opposed to egoistic pride, assigning godly virtue to the lowly:

Who kills conceit that utters 'I' and 'mine'
Shall enter realms above the powers divine
(T 348).

He affirms, "More lofty than a mountain will be the greatness of that man, who without swerving from his domestic state controls himself" (T 124). Humility is the greatest wealth:

To all humility is goodly grace; but chief to them
With fortune blessed, - 'tis fortune's diadem.
(T 125).

and
Greatness humbly bends, but littleness always
Spreads out its plumes, and loads itself with praise (T 978).

Tiruvalluvar shows also a significant grasp of the psychology of ordinary men:
Whenever distinction lights on some unworthy head
Then deeds of hearty insolence are bred

(T 977).

Hence, "submission is the might of men of mighty acts."
(T.985).

Further, the Jewish wisdom writer contends that one should be careful in one's use of words as words are potent enough to hurt or heal one's hearers. Commenting on the vital need for the use of temperate language, Kenneth Barker says: "The ability to control the tongue is one of the clearest marks of wisdom" (NIV 963). To quote from Proverbs "He who restrains his lips is prudent" (P10:29).

A temperate use of language is a mark of wisdom and promotes prosperity, amity and longevity:

A man will be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth (P 12.14);
A wholesome tongue is a trace of life but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit (P 15:4); and
Death and life are in the power of the tongue and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof (P 18:21).
In contrast, "Evil words tend to death, good words to life, to the comfort of the speaker as well as to the blessing of the hearer" (EOP 262). To Charles T. Fritsch, "the perverseness of the tongue breaks or crushes the spirit of the man to whom or about whom evil things are spoken" (IB 868). Words can cause deadly hurt or heal a suffering mind: "There is that speaketh like the piercing of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health" (P12:18), and "he who guards his lips preserves his life but he who opens wide his lips - it is ruin to him" (P13:3).

Hence, "words are dynamites; they can destroy people. They should be carefully weighed before they are spoken" (The Family Devotional Study Bible 553).

Proverbs also enumerates "the sweetness of lips which increases learning" (P16:21) and "causes sweetness to the soul and health to the bones" (P16:24). If a wise, temperate use of language brings to the speaker considerable blessings, so does silence on the appropriate occasions, according to the following Proverbs:

Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth soul from troubles (P21:23); When words are many, sin is not absent. But he who holds his tongue is wise. (P10:19).
It is interesting to note that Tiruvalluvar also accords a high priority to a "restrained tongue":

    Whate'er they fail to guard, o'er lips men guard should keep;
    If not, through fault of tongue, they bitter tears shall weep (T 127).

Moreover, "pleasant words are words with all-pervading love that burn" (T 91).

"A man of sweet words will never suffer sorrow or increasing poverty" (T 94). In such a man of wise words, "The power of vice declines and virtues grow" (T 96). Temperate language "will yield righteousness for this world and merit for the next world" (T 97). "Why harsh unripe words, neglecting the available sweet ripe fruits of pleasing words?" (T 100).

Tiruvalluvar condemns outright, the man who uses profitless words: A man of vain words is considered as "Chaff of humanity" (T 196); and as one "who never righteous wisdom gains" (T 193); as such, vain words "To none delight afford and sever men from good" (T 194).

"Gone are both fame and boasted excellence" (T 195) from a man who uses a profitless tongue. The wise "speak none but words of deep significance" and "not even in thoughtless hour, speak words of vanity" (T 199).
In this context, T.P. Meenakshi Sundaram observes,

The sweet words announce to others the coming in of the spring of love (65).

Hence, it is necessary to cherish the right use of language.

The Israelite sage warns the youth of the evils of drinking intoxicating liquor:

Be not amongst winebibbers, among the riotous eaters of flesh.
For the drunkard and glutton shall come to poverty, and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags. (P23:20,21).

As for this addiction, "It biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder" (P23:32). John Garlock paraphrases the above verse thus:

Wine is described as dangerous as a snake, producing hallucinations, bad language and insensitivity (914).

Moreover, in course of time, drunkenness will lead the drunkard to other vices. His "eyes shall behold strange women and his heart shall utter perverse things" (P23:33). To George Lawson, "The drunkard shall be punished not only for drunkenness but for a countless
multitude of sins to which the vice leads the way" (Commentary on Proverbs 414).

Liquor may provide a man with a momentary excitement and a temporary escape from pain but lands him in permanent misery. To Rolland Schloerb, "This form of escape means only jumping from the frying pan into the fire" (ib., 916). The Wisdom writer cautions a potential victim saying: "Do not look at the wine when it is red" (P23:31).

Tiruvalluvar also dwells at length on the painful consequences of drunkenness. He says that the lover of the palm's intoxicating juice "commands no reverence" and "their glory fades away" (T 921); and "all good men's esteem is lost" by the drunkard (T 922). Further, he considers drunkenness as "a grievous sin":

Shame, goodly maid, will turn her back for aye on them

Who sin the drunkard's grievous sin, that all condemn (T 924).

"Those who drink intoxicating draughts quaff poison" (T 926), and only the ignorant would "buy self-oblivion with gift of goods" (T 925), and become their townsmen's jest" (T 927). Further, "The drunkard's joy is sorrow to his mother's eyes; What must it be in the presence of the truly wise?" (T 423).
Every progressive individual, aspiring for advancement in life, is earnestly exhorted to avoid liquor as it ruins his reason and reputation.

Dr. E.S. Muthuswami observes:

Valluvar's Chapter *Kallunnamai* or "Abstention from Palm Wine" is indeed a radical departure from the Sangam culture in which drinking toddy formed part of a normal way of living. An open toddy jar and a slaughtered sheep were "considered as a sign of prosperity" ([Puranānūru](#) 115). ... Perhaps it was the Jain influence that made Valluvar more moralistic and prohibit drinks as a social evil and as an individual weakness (**Tamil Culture As Revealed in Tirukkural** 95).

Even today, the consequences of this evil habit have been emphasized by Rt. Rev. Leslie Strading, Bishop of Johannesburg: "It is a contributor to the physical, mental and spiritual deterioration of man" ([Quoted in Tmt. Sornammal Endowment Lectures](#) 747).

Both the writers condemn it as a sin against oneself and the society, and stress the need for total abstinence.
The Wisdom writer considers the drunkard 'a fool', and Tiruvalluvar deems him "the ignorant of all that man should prize" (T925). Solomon says, "Wine is a mocker and beer, a brawler, whoever is led astray by them is not wise" (P20:1).

In Proverbs, the Israelite sage hints at the poverty which overtakes the drunkard: "He that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich" (P21:17), he "shall come to poverty" (P23:21). As Tiruvalluvar says, "To the man given over to strong drink, the light of Fortune shines no more" (T920).

The Wisdom writer advises the youth to shun the companionship of the drunkard. "Be not among winebibbers" (P23:19). He recommends a strong drink to the man who is about to perish or has a heavy heart: "Let him drink and forget his poverty and remember misery no more" (P31:6,7). C.Bridges comments: "Many a sinking spirit may be revived and forget his misery under a well-timed restorative" (525). But such indulgences and excitements are not fit for kings. The Jewish wisdom writer realizes that wine is the gift of God. It makes the heart of man glad. Tiruvalluvar does not hint at this aspect at all. Both the writers in
question deal with the same aspect of self-oblivion caused by drunkenness:

Thine heart shall utter perverse things

(P23:33);

What in thy mind lies hid shall soon be known

and

They have beaten me and I felt it not

(P23:35)

Tiruvalluvar also refers to the drunken state as "self-oblivion" and condemns drinking in secret: "No more in secret drink and then deny thy hidden fraud" (T 928). Tiruvalluvar's injunction is unequivocal: "Drink not inebriating draught. Let him count well the cost" (T 922).

It is interesting to note that several of the verses in Proverbs concerning the evil of drunkenness open with the rhetorical mode of questioning:

who hath woe? who hath sorrow?

who hath contentions? who hath babbling?

who hath wounds without cause?

who hath redness of eyes? (P23:29, 30).

Such a rhetorical device seems to have been deliberately employed by Tiruvalluvar also, as he anticipates no valid counter-argument to some of his views:
When one, in sober interval, a drunken man espies,
Does he not think, 'such is my folly in any revelries? (T930).

The Jewish work of wisdom warns everyone against the evil of gluttony. Proverbs instructs the readers not to join riotous eaters of flesh, "for the drunkard and glutton will come to poverty" (P23:20,21). Citing these, George Lawson observes:

By riotous eating of flesh or anything else, our bodies are disabled from doing their duty or have their vigour impaired and the seeds of weakness and drowsiness and disease sown in them, we sin against our own souls and bodies (407).

If Proverbs cautions us against excess with regard to eating, Tirukkural advocates the cause of vegetarianism. Any one who consumes other creatures' flesh in order to feast his own flesh "does not possess kindness" (T251); and "joy" (T253). Anticipating the argument that "we eat the slain; by us no living creatures die," the Tamil sage poses the question: "Who'd kill and sell, if none came there, the flesh to buy?" (T256). In order to discourage non-vegetarianism, he refers to the flesh eaten deliberately
as "other beings' ulcerous wounds" (T 257). He instructs "not to eat the bodies men of life bereave" (T 258). All living things with clasped hand adore the feet of non-killers "Not to kill and eat the flesh of an animal is better than pouring forth of ghee in a thousand sacrifices" (T 259).

If the Wisdom writer denounces gluttony which leads to torpor, Tiruvalluvar denounces the habit of eating flesh:

What is the work of virtue? 'Not to kill';
For 'killing' leads to every work of ill.

(T 321),
You ask what is the good and perfect way?
'Tis the path of him who studies not to slay.

(T 324).

Dwelling on the need for protection of animals, Dr.M.Aram remarks how

The chief of all virtue is not to mean harm even in mind, even in the least degree at any time to any person (Tirukkkural: Its Relevance for the modern world in Tmt. Sornammal Endowment Lectures 436).

It is little wonder that the Jains claim Tiruvalluvar as their own, especially, on account of his stress on vegetarianism and pacifism. The author of Proverbs
comes down heavily against the sluggard but exploits the occasion to highlight certain serious lessons. The sluggard's only exercise is turning on his bed. Proverbs says that he is hinged to it (P 26:14). Any far-fetched excuse like "there is a lion in the sheets" (P 26:13), is enough to keep a sluggard from going to work and "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest and poverty will come on you like a bandit" (NSV 24:33).

Poverty is also like a robber ready to pounce on the sluggard: "The sluggard's craving will be the death of him because his hands refuse to work" (NSVP 21:25). "The way of slothful man is as hedge of thorns" (P15:19). Derek Kidner makes the following comment on the sluggard:

He is restless with unsatisfied desire, helpless in the face of the tangle of his affairs which are like the hedge of thorns. (The Proverbs 43).

He is useless to anyone who employs him: "He that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster" (P18:9). In this context, Derek Kidner observes:

Through shirking hard work, he has qualified for drudgery and through procrastination, the disorder of life (43).
Laziness is strongly censured by the Hebrew sage:

I went by the field of the slothful and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding. And lo, it was all grown over with thorns and nettles had covered the face thereof and the stonewall thereof was broken down (P24:30, 31).

Hence, the relevance of instruction given by Solomon:

Go to the ant, you sluggard, consider her ways and be wise. (P6:6)

Commenting on this, John Garlock observes:

The industrious insects' instinct shames lazy humanity. Proverbs condemns the sluggard's passivity, lack of initiative, the habit of procrastination, oblivion to the dire results and lack of discipline (892).

The Wisdom writer advocates hard work and industry: "He that gathereth by labour shall increase" (P13:11). In other words, "diligence is the ordinary path to advancement" (C.Bridges 137).

Tiruvalluvar also despises sluggishness, describing it as "the death of effort" (T.602), which may ruin "the house from which he springs" (T 603); "His family decays and faults unheeded thrive" (T.604); "no
yield of good obtain" (T 606) and "shall bear reproofs and words of just contempt" (T 607), eventually rendering him "a slave of his enemies" (T 608).

Tiruvalluvar asserts that any "strenuous effort ... gives prevailing power" (T 611). A man of action "wipes away his kinsmen’s grief and stands as the pillar of their might" (T 615). "Effort brings fortune’s sure increase, Its absence brings to nothingness" (T 618).

In sluggishness is seen misfortune’s lurid form, the wise declare;
Where man unslothful toils, she of the lotus flower is there (T.617).

Though fate divine should make your labour vain Effort its labour’s sure reward will gain (T 619).

Thus, even the course of Karmā can be diverted:
The man of energy, of soul inflexible, Good fortune seeks him out and comes a friend to dwell (T 594), and so "Firmness of soul in man is real excellence" (T 600).

In respect of handling one’s own finances, the Jewish Wisdom writer warns against the evils of
suretyship, while Tiruvalluvar dwells at length on the dire consequences of gambling:

My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, ... thou art snared with the words of thy mouth .... Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter and as a bird from the hand of the fowler (P6: 1,2,5).

Tiruvalluvar warns the youth against the evils of gambling, which is as old as the age of Mahabharata:

Gambling is Misfortune’s other name; o’er whom she casts her veil,
They suffer grievous want, and sorrows sore bewail (T 936);
Ancestral wealth and noble fame to ruin haste
If men in gambler’s halls, their precious moments waste (T 937);
Gaming brings many woes and ruins fair renown;
Nothing to want brings men so surely down (T 934)

and

Gambling wastes wealth, to falsehood bends the soul; it drives away All grace, and leaves the man to utter misery a prey. (T 938).
In the case of a gambling prince, "treasure and revenue will pass from him away" (T 933).

Both the works deal with a series of moral virtues that are indispensable for the welfare of the individual and the governance of the community.

Another social virtue which has been stressed in Tirukkural is hospitality, which is conspicuously absent in Proverbs. Tiruvalluvar deals with hospitality in elaborate terms, like the benefits of hospitality in this life; those in the life after death; the evils of its neglect and the need for exercising a cheerful hospitality:

The pleasures and the greatness of sharing of the food with unexpected guests are described as a velvi or a great sacrifice (Philosophy of Tiruvalluvar 65).

Hospitality, being an eminent traditional virtue with the people of ancient Tamil Nadu, is accorded the pride of place in Tirukkural:

All household cares and course of daily life have this in view,

Guests to receive, with courtesy and kindly acts to do (T 81).

As the objective of domestic life is to protect the guests, the hospitable man is promised many blessings:
Who first regales his guest and then himself supplies,
O'er all his fields unsown, shall plenteous harvests rise (T 85);
and
With smiling face, he entertains each virtuous guest,
'Fortune' with gladsome mind, shall in his dwelling rest. (T 84).
and he is "a welcome guest to the inhabitants of heaven" (T 85).

Thus, a comparative study of Proverbs and Tirukkural offers a unique perspective, with regard to the various motifs relating to social harmony in the two different cultures which figure prominently in these works. An analysis of the factors contributing to peace and prosperity in the private life of the individual and those promoting social harmony, shows that there have been certain amazing parallels between the concepts of good life, as viewed by the two thinkers who lived in such distant parts of the globe - one in the Middle East and the other in South India. Such a comparison also highlights certain unique features in personal and social ideals envisaged in the two societies.
The thematic motifs discussed above, show how Proverbs touches upon "every facet of human relationship and its principles transcend the bounds of time and culture" (The Open Bible 623).

In Proverbs, God-centred ethics are viewed in absolute terms and they are abstract, impersonal, objective and constant. Derek Kidner observes:

Wisdom as taught here is God-centred and even when it is most down-to-earth, it consists in the shrewd and sound handling of one's affairs in God's world in submission to His will (13).

The ethics in Tirukkural are, on the whole, more realistic, and hence, at times, likely to be more variable. They are deliberately envisaged as negotiable for the ultimate good and harmony of the society, in the final analysis. There is a profound humanistic concern in Tirukkural which ignores the need for reducing all personal ethics to an absolute, uncompromising scale of values. In short, as Alexander Jones observes:

Real wisdom is found in the fear of God which is the very foundation of true religion. The wisdom of the East may be called humanistic; the wisdom of Israel is humanism spiritualized (The Jerusalem Bible 729).
It may be worth the mention here that though God’s name is, atleast indirectly evoked in *Tirukkural*, the work can be called, by and large, Man-centred whereas *Proverbs* is, in the most unequivocal terms God-centred. If the vision of *Proverbs* can be put in a nutshell as theistic humanism, that of *Tirukkural* can be called, in general terms, as existential humanism.