

A Brief Theme note on
ICPR Sponsored National Seminar on
The Individual, Society and the Universal Wisdom in the
Philosophy of *Tirukkural*

The text *Tirukkural*, represents the greatest treasure house of wisdom of the Tamil and the gift of the Tamil Nadu to the whole world. It is on par with any other ethical work of the world. Of all the ethical works, the *Tirukkural* is the most well-known and world-renowned work. It prescribes certain norms for the individual as well as society. Tiruvalluvar's ethical principles are applicable to ruler and the ruled, the rich and the poor, men and women. The norms which he has prescribed are applicable to the entire human society. The text contains three major parts or divisions, namely, the *Arattuppal*, the *Porutpal* and the *Inbattuppal*. The first part of the *Tirukkural*, i.e. the *Arattuppal* or Dharma or virtue, containing 38 chapters, is divided into four sections: (1) the *Payiram* or Introduction which includes four chapters: (i) in praise of God. (ii) in praise of rain, (iii) the greatness of those who renounced the world, and (iv) the glorification of righteousness, (2) the *Illarayil* or domestic virtue which includes chapters dealing with family life, love, hospitality, children, sweet words, gratitude, equity, self-control, right-conduct, on adultery, patience, envy, liberality, etc., (3) the *Turavarayil* or on renunciation which talks about compassion, abstaining from meat, penance, improper conduct, non-stealing, truth, not getting angry, non-killing, non-permanence, renunciation, true knowledge, avoidance of desire, etc., and (4) the *Ooliyal* or destiny or fate. The second part, is the *Porutpal* or wealth, consists of 70 chapters and is divided into three major sections: (1) the *Arasiyal* or the state that deals with majesty, learning, non-learning, hearing, knowledge, avoiding low company, knowing time, unrighteous rule, and tyranny, (2) the *Angaviyal* or the limbs of the state, which deals with ministers, good speech, action, kingdom, fortress, acquisition of wealth, importance of army, courage, friendship etc., and, (3) the *Olipiyal* or the residue, which contains chapters on noble lineage, honour, greatness, good conduct, courtesy, modesty, agriculture, poverty, begging etc. The third part of the *Tirukkural*, is the *Inbattuppal* or love, running into 25 chapters and divided into two sections: (1) the *Kavaviyal* or clandestine love and, (2) the *Karpiyal* or wedded life. Commenting on the importance of the *Tirukkural*, U. Ve. Swaminatha Iyer says that only the *Tirukkural*

contains the necessary principles of righteous life for all religions, all nations and also for all those who have different ideologies. Tiru. Vi. Ka. also says that sustenance of life is presented in the text, wherein the author makes a distinction between individual life and social life. But these two lives are not distinct. The individual represents the society and the society is reflected in the individual. The harmony between them shows a healthy society. Whether it is a person's knowledge, wealth, or happiness, it should be shared by all. Tiruvalluvar asks: "what is the benefit of knowledge if a person does not feel the pain of others as his own?" He asks us to understand the pain and sufferings of others. This attitude towards life made him to become a world poet. The uniqueness of the *Tirukkural* is that in it we find a discussion of all the three values, namely virtue, wealth and love, essential for man in one single text. The text is not meant for any particular religion or caste. The literature is for the humanity of all times and places. The ethics it prescribes is meant for both for individual and society. The values that are necessary for the individual is prescribed mainly in the first part, the values for the social as well as individual is depicted in the second and in the third part, conjugal love and marriage is exemplified. The wealth part, which is stressed in the second part, also means that it has to be considered as a means for one's own virtues.

There is no other ethical teacher in the world who has stressed the power of virtue, like the Tamil sage Tiruvalluvar. He has allotted one full chapter to emphasize the power of virtue. He believes that virtue secures glory as well as wealth. Hence there is no greater virtue than this and no greater loss than to forget it. Where does the true virtue lie? It lies in the purity of mind, says Tiruvalluvar. It is the bedrock of virtue. In ancient Indian tradition, we find innumerable evidence for this. For example, the *Muntaka Upanisad* says: "Truth alone conquers, not untruth. By truth is laid out the path leading to the Gods by which the sage who have their desire fulfilled travel to where is that supreme abode of truth." Tiruvalluvar defines truth as follows: "The speaking of that which is free from even the slightest taint of evil." Further he says that even falsehood is of the nature of truth if it brings forth unmixed good. Tiruvalluvar says that if a person practices truth, no other virtue is needed. The person whom he speaks of is an ideal man. An ideal man is one who has all the noble qualities. What are the qualities necessary for man? Tiruvalluvar mentions five distinguished virtues, i.e. universal love, sensitivity, helpfulness to all, compassion and truthfulness, which are the five pillars of nobility. The management expert, Peter Drukker says that there are five P's necessary for any action that must be done perfectly. Principle, policy, plan, procedure and personnel are these five P's. Tiruvalluvar lists the five important principles, which should be

followed before taking a decision with regard to our action: resources, means, time, the nature of the deed and the place. Further he says that a proper person for performing a particular action should have love, wisdom, clear vision, and freedom from covetousness are necessary for a person to perform any action.

A country should promote social justice, equality and integration to ensure participation of all in a democracy. There should be socio-economic and political equality and justice. Tiruvalluvar believed in the principle of social justice when he talks about the equality of all human beings. All men, according to him are equal by birth. "By birth, all men are equal and it is by the difference in the action that their worth is rendered unequal." It is necessary that we have to democratize the knowledge system, wealth, rights and freedom. Tiruvalluvar talks about the concept of justice in detail. The administration of justice is the sole duty of the government. In one of the couplets, he says that the world falls at the feet of a great King who wields the sceptre for his subjects' welfare. People's welfare is the key principle operating the democratic form of government. Tiruvalluvar says that the unrighteous kind who oppresses his subjects is more cruel than the one who leads the life of a murderer. The tears that the subjects shed as a result of oppression will destroy the prosperity of the king. Thus Tiruvalluvar makes it clear that there should be proper political justice so that there will be peace and prosperity among the members of the society.

For Tiruvalluvar, both wealth or politics (*Porutpal*) and love or happiness (*Inbattuppal*) follow from virtuous life (*Arattuppal*) and hence he places them after it. The *Porutpal* is a detailed study of king and his rule which is monarchical in nature and because of this, one may think that what Tiruvalluvar had said is only applicable to a monarchical politics. But this can be substituted with the present governmental form also. What he said about the king is equally applicable to the democratic form of government. In Indian political philosophy, *Tirukkural* is compared to Kautilya's *Arthashastra* and there are scholars who argue that there are statements in both the texts, which are similar. Especially, the role of a king and his administration which is depicted in the *Kural* is compared to the *Arthashastra*. Politics as a study of government, deals with the relation between the ruler and the ruled, the nature of the State, its policies, justice, sustainable economy, sovereignty, welfare state and other components. The uniqueness of Tiruvalluvar is that in his political philosophy, ethics or moral philosophy is very much stressed. This shows the relation between politics and ethics. A proper definition of a country is given by Tiruvalluvar in the chapter *nadu* or country. Does a country mean a mere land surrounded by four boundaries? He says that a

country must be free from famines, incurable diseases, and destructive enemies. Tiruvalluvar says that a country should be wealthy. He says that the country should acquire wealth, to lay it up, to guard and distribute it. A wealthy country alone gives peace and happiness to the citizens.

Sub-themes:

Comparison between Indian Value theory and Tirukkural

The Significance of Dharma or Virtue in Tirukkural

Plato and Aristotle in comparison with Tiruvalluvar

Confucius and Tiruvalluvar on Ethical Values

Social and Political Philosophy of Tirukkural

The concept of Love in Tirukkural

Commentarial tradition and Tirukkural: Examination of different comments to the Text

The Individual and Society in Tirukkural

The contribution of Tirukkural to Indian Philosophical Tradition

The Relevance of the Text to the present day world

The concept of Ideal Man in Tirukkural

The significance of Truth and non-violence as expressed in the Text

The concept of woman in Tirukkural

There are many subjects and topics to be dealt with in this seminar from philosophical perspectives. You are cordially invited to present a well researched and well thought out paper. We appreciate analytic papers only and not descriptive ones. Selected papers will be presented after evaluation by competent experts. Kindly send your learned papers latest by 15th October, 2017 via email to seminar.icpr@gmail.com in Hindi or English (Typed, doc format, English – Times New Roman fonts size 12, Hindi –Unicode or any other font, size 14-16 (in the case of any other fonts than Unicode please send font also). The venue of the seminar will be Thanjavaur (Tamilnadu). Selected participant shall be provided free hospitality and travel as per ICPR rules.