

CORE XV – INDIAN LITERATURE IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

UNIT II : - Non-detailed: Tirukkural 1 to 20 verses

An Introduction to Tirukkural: The German-born Nobelprize winner, Dr Albert Schweitzer described the Kural thus: “On the most varied questions concerning the conduct of man to himself and to the world, Tirukkural's utterances are characterised by nobility and good sense. There hardly exists in the literature of the world a collection of maxims in which we find so much lofty wisdom ..”.

The Tirukkural, literally means the Sacred Verses, or shortly the Kural, is a classic Tamil language text consisting of 1,330 couplets or Kurals. The text is divided into three books, each with aphoristic teachings on virtue (aram, dharma), wealth (porul, artha) and love (inbam, kama). Considered one of the great works on ethics and morality, it is known for its universality and secular nature. Its authorship is traditionally attributed to Valluvar, also known as Thiruvalluvar. The text has been dated variously from 300 BCE to 5th century CE. The traditional accounts describe it as the last work of the third Sangam, but linguistic analysis suggests a later date of 450 to 500 CE and that it was composed after the Sangam period.

The Kural is traditionally praised with epithets and alternate titles such as "the Tamil Veda" and "the divine book". It emphasizes non-violence and moral vegetarianism as virtues for an individual. In addition, it highlights truthfulness, self-restraint, gratitude, hospitality, kindness, goodness of wife, duty, giving, and so forth, besides covering a wide range of social and political topics such as king, ministers, taxes, justice, forts, war, greatness of army and soldier's honor, death sentence for the wicked, agriculture, education, abstinence from alcohol and intoxicants. It also includes chapters on friendship, love, sexual union, and domestic life.

The popularity of Tirukkural among the world scholars: The Kural has been widely admired by scholars and influential leaders over its history. These include Ilango Adigal, Kambar, Leo Tolstoy, Mahatma Gandhi, Albert Schweitzer, Joseph Beschi, Karl Graul, George Uglow Pope and so on. The text has been translated into at least 40 Indian and non-Indian languages. The Kural is considered a masterpiece and one of the most important texts of the Tamil Literature. The Tamil people and the government of Tamil Nadu have long celebrated and upheld the text with reverence.

The work is highly cherished in the Tamil culture, as reflected by its nine different traditional titles: Thirukkural (the sacred kural), Uttaraavedam (the ultimate Veda), Thiruvalluvar (eponymous with the author), Poyyamoli (the false less word), Vayurai valttu (truthful praise), Teyvanul (the divine book), Potumarai (the common Veda), Muppai (the three-fold path), and Tamilmurai (the Tamil Veda)

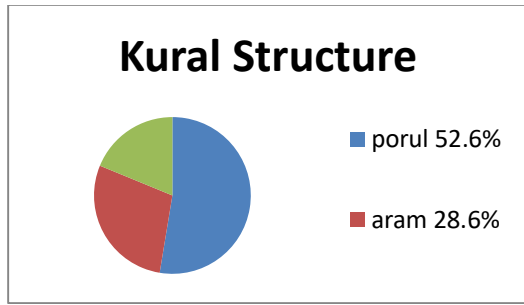
The name explained: The term Tirukkural is a compound word made of two individual terms, tiru and kural. Tiru is an honorific Tamil term that corresponds to the universally Indian, Sanskrit term sri meaning "holy, sacred, excellent, honorable, and beautiful." The term tiru has as many as 19 different meanings. Kural means something that is "short, concise, and abridged." Etymologically, kural is the shortened form of kural paattu, which is derived from kuruvempaattu, one of the two Tamil poetic forms explained by Tolkappiyam, the other one being neduvempaattu. According to Winslow, kural is used as a literary term to indicate "a metrical line of 2 feet, or a distich or couplet of short lines, the first of 4 and the second of 3 feet." Thus, Tirukkural literally comes to mean "sacred couplets."

The Structure of Tirukkural: The following subdivisions are found in Parimelalhagar's version, which greatly varies from that of Manakkudavar's: Chapters 1–4: Introduction, Chapters 5–24: Domestic virtue Chapters 25–38: Ascetic virtue, Chapters 39–63: Royalty, the

qualities of the leader of men Chapters 64–73: The subject and the ruler, Chapters 74–96: Essential parts of state, shrewdness in public life, Chapters 97–108: Reaching perfection in social life Chapters 109–115: Concealed love, Chapters 116–133: Wedded love

Universal Ethical Content : The greatest value of Kural is its universal ethical content. The scripture is divided into three books: Virtue, Wealth and Love — consisting of 1330 couplets clustered in 133 chapters elucidating different aspects of human virtues or vices. In the first chapter of Virtue, God is portrayed as Universal in content transcending the marginal line of God being Hindu, Jain, Muslim or Christian. Kural's primary concern is with the whole world and according to Tiru Valluvar a man's prosperity and adversity, heaven and hell, and his present and his future are products of his own actions.

The Kural is structured into 133 chapters, each containing 10 couplets (or kurals), for a total of 1,330 couplets. All the couplets are in kural venba metre, and all the 133 chapters have an ethical theme and are grouped into three parts, or "books"



Book I – Aram- Book of Virtue (Dharma), dealing with moral values of an individual and essentials of yoga philosophy (Chapters 1-38)

Book II – Porul: Book of Polity (Artha), dealing with socio-economic values, polity, society and administration. (Chapters 39-108)

Book III – Inbam: Book of Love (Kama), dealing with psychological values and love (Chapters 109-133)

The book on aram (virtue) contains 380 verses, that of porul (wealth) has 700 and that of inbam or kāmam (love) has 250. Each kural or couplet contains exactly seven words, known as cir, with four cir on the first line and three on the second, following the kural metre. A cir is a single or a combination of more than one Tamil word. For example, the term Tirukkural is a cir formed by combining the two words thiru and kural.

Of the 1,330 couplets in the text, 40 couplets relate to god, rain, ascetics, and virtue; 200 on domestic virtue; 140 on higher yet most fundamental virtue based on grace, benevolence and compassion; 250 on royalty; 100 on ministers of state; 220 on essential requirements of administration; 130 on morality, both positive and negative; and 250 on human love and passion.

The work largely reflects the first three of the four ancient Indian aims in life, known as purusharthas, viz., virtue (dharma), wealth (artha) and love (kama). The fourth aim, namely, salvation (moksha) is implicit in the last five chapters of Book I. Dharma (aram) refers to ethical values for the holistic pursuit of life, artha (porul) refers to wealth obtained in ethical manner guided by dharma, and kāma (Inbam) refers to pleasure and fulfillment of one's desires, also guided by dharma.

Book I : Aram (Righteousness) Chapter 1 Kural 1 : Invocation -

அகர முதல எழுத்தெல்லாம் ஆதி

பகவன் முதற்றே உலகு..

A, as its first of letters, every speech maintains;

The "Primal Deity" is first through all the world's domains

Explanation: As the letter A is the first of all letters, so the eternal God is first in the world.

kural 2: கற்றதனால் ஆய பயனென்கொல் வாலறிவன்

நற்றாள் தொழார் எனின்.

No fruit have men of all their studied lore,

Save they the 'Purely Wise One's' feet adore

Explanation: What Profit have those derived from learning, who worship not the good feet of Him who is possessed of pure knowledge?

Kural 3 : மலர்மிசை ஏகினான் மாண்டி சேர்ந்தார்

நிலமிசை நீடுவாழ் வார்.

His feet, 'Who o'er the full-blown flower hath past,' who gain

In bliss long time shall dwell above this earthly plain

Explanation: They who are united to the glorious feet of Him who passes swiftly over the flower of the mind, shall flourish long above all worlds.

Kural : 4 வேண்டுதல் வேண்டாமை இலானடி சேர்ந்தார்க்கு

யாண்டும் இடும்பை இல.

His foot, 'Whom want affects not, irks not grief,' who gain

Shall not, through every time, of any woes complain

Explanation: To those who meditate the feet of Him who is void of desire or aversion, evil shall never come.

Kural 5 : இருள்சேர் இருவினையும் சேரா இறைவன்

பொருள்சேர் புகழ்புரிந்தார் மாட்டு.

The men, who on the 'King's' true praised delight to dwell,

Affects not them the fruit of deeds done ill or well

Explanation: The two-fold deeds that spring from darkness shall not adhere to those who delight in the true praise of God.

Kural : 6 பொறிவாயில் ஐந்தவித்தான் பொய்தீர் ஒழுக்க

நெறிநின்றார் நீடுவாழ் வார்.

Long live they blest, who 've stood in path from falsehood freed;

His, 'Who quenched lusts that from the sense-gates five proceed'

Explanation: Those shall long proposer who abide in the faultless way of Him who has destroyed the five desires of the senses.

Kural : 7 தனக்குவமை இல்லாதான் தாள்சேர்ந்தார்க் கல்லால்

மனக்கவலை மாற்றல் அரிது.

Unless His foot, 'to Whom none can compare,' men gain,

'Tis hard for mind to find relief from anxious pain

Explanation: Anxiety of mind cannot be removed, except from those who are united to the feet of Him who is incomparable

Kural : 8 அறவாழி அந்தணன் தாள்சேர்ந்தார்க் கல்லால்

பிறவாழி நீந்தல் அரிது.

Unless His feet 'the Sea of Good, the Fair and Bountiful,' men gain,

'Tis hard the further bank of being's changeful sea to attain

Explanation: None can swim the sea of vice, but those who are united to the feet of that gracious Being who is a sea of virtue.

Kural 9 : கோளில் பொறியின் குணமில்வே எண்குணத்தான்

தாளை வணங்காத் தலை.

Before His foot, 'the Eight-fold Excellence,' with unbent head,
Who stands, like palsied sense, is to all living functions dead

Explanation: The head that worships not the feet of Him who is possessed of eight attributes, is as useless as a sense without the power of sensation.

Kural 10: பிறவிப் பெருங்கடல் நீந்துவர் நீந்தார்

இறைவன் அடிசேரா தார்.

They swim the sea of births, the 'Monarch's' foot who gain;
None others reach the shore of being's mighty main.

Explanation: None can swim the great sea of births but those who are united to the feet of God.

Chapter: II : வான்சிறப்பு / The Blessing of Rain - Kural 11:

வான்நின்று உலகம் வழங்கி வருதலால்

தான் அமிழ்தம் என்றுணரற் பாற்று.

The world its course maintains through life that rain unfailing gives;
Thus rain is known the true ambrosial food of all that lives

Explanation: By the continuance of rain the world is preserved in existence; it is therefore worthy to be called ambrosia.

Kural 12 : துப்பார்க்குத் துப்பாய துப்பாக்கித் துப்பார்க்குத்

துப்பாய தூஉம் மழை.

The rain makes pleasant food for eaters rise;

As food itself, thirst-quenching draught supplies

Explanation: Rain produces good food, and is itself food.

Kural : 13 விண்இன்று பொய்ப்பின் விரிநீர் வியனுலகத்து

உள்நின்று உடற்றும் பசி.

If clouds, that promised rain, deceive, and in the sky remain,

Famine, sore torment, stalks o'er earth's vast ocean-girdled plain

Explanation: If the cloud, withholding rain, deceive (our hopes) hunger will long distress the sea-girt spacious world.

Kural 14 : ஏரின் உழாஅர் உழவர் புயல்என்னும்

வாரி வளங்குன்றிக் கால்.

If clouds their wealth of waters fail on earth to pour,

The ploughers plough with oxen's sturdy team no more

Explanation: If the abundance of wealth imparting rain diminish, the labour of the plough must cease

Kural 15 : கெடுப்பதூஉம் கெட்டார்க்குச் சார்வாய்மற் றாங்கே

எடுப்பதூஉம் எல்லாம் மழை.

'Tis rain works all: it ruin spreads, then timely aid supplies;

As, in the happy days before, it bids the ruined rise

Explanation: Rain by its absence ruins men; and by its existence restores them to fortune.

Kural 16 : விசும்பின் துளிவீழின் அல்லால்மற் றாங்கே

பசும்புல் தலைகாண்பு அரிது.

If from the clouds no drops of rain are shed

'Tis rare to see green herb lift up its head

Explanation: If no drop falls from the clouds, not even the green blade of grass will be seen.

Kural 17 : நெடுங்கடலும் தன்நீர்மை குன்றும் தடிந்தெழிலி

தான்நல்கா தாகி விடின்.

If clouds restrain their gifts and grant no rain,

The treasures fail in ocean's wide domain

Explanation: Even the wealth of the wide sea will be diminished, if the cloud that has drawn (its waters) up gives them not back again (in rain).

Kural 18 : சிறப்பொடு பூசனை செல்லாது வானம்

வறக்குமேல் வானோர்க்கும் ஈண்டு.

If heaven grow dry, with feast and offering never more,

Will men on earth the heavenly ones adore.

Explanation: If the heaven dry up, neither yearly festivals, nor daily worship will be offered in this world, to the celestials.

Kural 19 : தானம் தவம்இரண்டும் தங்கா வியன்உலகம்

வானம் வழங்கா தெனின்.

If heaven its watery treasures ceases to dispense,

Through the wide world cease gifts, and deeds of 'penitence'

Explanation: If rain fall not, penance and alms-deeds will not dwell within this spacious world.

Kural 20 : நீர்இன்று அமையாது உலகெனின் யார்யார்க்கும்

வான்இன்று அமையாது ஒழுக்கு.

When water fails, functions of nature cease, you say;

Thus when rain fails, no men can walk in 'duty's ordered way'

Explanation: If it be said that the duties of life cannot be discharged by any person without water, so without rain there cannot be the flowing of water.

The translations of Tirukkural : The Kural text, considered to have been written in the 1st century BCE, remained unknown to the outside world for close to one and a half millennia. The first translation of the Kural text appeared in Malayalam in 1595 CE under the title Tirukkural Bhasha by an unknown author. It was a prose rendering of the entire Kural, written closely to the spoken Malayalam of that time. The Kural text has enjoyed a universal appeal right from antiquity owing to its secular and non-denominational nature that it suited the sensibilities of all.

The universality is such that, despite its having been written in the pre-Christian era, almost every religious group in India and across the world, including Christianity, has claimed the work for itself. Owing to its ethical content, the Kural remained one of the most admired ancient Indian works among the Christian missionaries of the 16th and 17th centuries, who arrived in India during the colonial era and found the Kural text containing many more ideals in addition to those that are similar to their own Christian ideals. This marked the beginning of wider translations of the Kural text.

In 1730, Constantius Joseph Beschi rendered the Kural text into Latin, introducing the work to the Europeans for the first time. However, only the first two books of the Kural text, namely, virtue and wealth, were translated by Beschi, who considered translating the book on

love inappropriate for a Christian missionary. Around 1767, an unknown author made the first French translation, which went unnoticed. The Danish Missionary August Friedrich Caemmerer translated it into German in 1803. The first available French version, however, was the one made in 1848 by Monsieur Ariel.

The first English translation was attempted by N. E. Kindersley in 1794 when he translated select couplets of the Kural. This was followed by another incomplete attempt by Francis Whyte Ellis 1812, who translated only 120 couplets—69 in verse and 51 in prose. William Henry Drew translated the first two parts in prose in 1840 and 1852, respectively. Along with Drew's English prose translation, it contained the original Tamil text, the Tamil commentary by Parimelalhagar and Ramanuja Kavirayar's amplification of the commentary.

By the turn of the twenty-first century, the Kural had already been translated to more than 37 world languages, with at least 24 complete translations in English language alone. By 2014, the Kural had been translated to more than 42 languages, with 57 versions available in English. Along with the Bible and the Quran, the Kural remains one of the most translated works in the world.