

MP-IDSA Monograph Series
No. 70 March 2021

*A Study
of the Kural
Concepts and Themes*

Pradeep Kumar Gautam



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्द्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	7
-------------------------------	---

PART I: HISTORY, TEXT AND CONTENTS

Chapter 1

Background	11
------------------	----

Chapter 2

Introduction to the <i>Kural</i>	32
--	----

Chapter 3

Reception of the <i>Kural</i> in Contemporary Times	38
---	----

PART II: KEY CONCEPTS AND THEMES

Chapter 4

The State and Its Constituent Elements	73
--	----

Chapter 5

Importance of Personal Qualities: Self-control, Character Building and Leadership	83
---	----

Chapter 6

Management and Communication	90
------------------------------------	----

Chapter 7

Diplomatic Practices, Intelligence and Diplomacy	95
--	----

Chapter 8

Accomplishment of Tasks and Appreciations: Military and Non-Military	107
--	-----

Chapter 9

On Morals	114
-----------------	-----

Chapter 10

Conclusion	119
------------------	-----

REFERENCES	121
-------------------------	-----

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I remain responsible for what I have written and assert my moral rights as an author.

PART I: HISTORY, TEXT AND CONTENTS

BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

Since 2012, in an ongoing project at Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA) on Indigenous Historical Knowledge, two foundational and classical texts on political science, statecraft, warfare and security-related issues in the Indian traditions have been sufficiently addressed in the strategic domain on themes such as statecraft, foreign policy, intelligence, war and internal security studies. These two Sanskrit texts, translated into English and other languages, are Kautilya's *Arthashastra*¹ and the subsequent text, *Nitisbastra*, by Kamandaka.² In a personal capacity, since 2012, I have focused on the majestic and comprehensive Kautilya's *Arthashastra* in a detailed manner through articles in journals, chapters in four edited volumes and three monographs; similarly, I have done two such works in 2019 on Kamandaka's *Nitisbastra*.³ Taking into account the work done by

¹ R.P. Kangle, *The Kautiliya Arthashastra, Part II: An English Translation with Critical and Explanatory Notes*, 2nd edition, 7th reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2010.

² Rajendralala Mitra (ed.), *The Nitisara or the Elements of Polity by Kamandakī*, Bibliotheca Indica: Collection of Oriental Works, published under the superintendent of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, No. 179, printed by Calcutta Baptist Mission Press in 1861, revised with English translation by Sisir Kumar Mitra, Calcutta: The Asiatic Society (reprinted), 1982(1849).

³ Monographs on Kautilya include: *One Hundred Years of Kautilya's Arthashastra*, IDSA Monograph Series No. 20, July 2013; *Kautilya's Arthashastra: Contemporary Issues and Comparison*, IDSA Monograph Series No. 47, October 2015; and *Understanding Dharma and Artha in Statecraft through Kautilya's Arthashastra*, IDSA Monograph Series No. 53, July 2016. For chapters related

other scholars of repute in this project at MP-IDSa, a ‘critical mass’ of high-quality international scholarship has emerged on Kautilya’s *Arthashastra* and its follow-up and successor text called *Nitisashastra* by Kamandaka.

As the Indian subcontinent has many regions, replete with rich languages and literary traditions on statecraft, it is important to inquire and research into other than Sanskrit traditions. In this regard, Tamil takes a pride of place. According to S. Gopalan, only Sanskrit works are well documented and widely known and not much work has been done for the study of Tamil classics from the perspective of Indian philosophy and religion.⁴ In the words of A.K. Ramanujan:

For a long time, Indian civilization was thought of only as the civilization of classical India expressed mainly in Sanskrit...India

to Kautilya, see ‘Dharmavijay (Just War), Winning the Peace and War without Spilling Blood’, in Pradeep Kumar Gautam, Saurabh Mishra and Arvind Gupta (eds), *Indigenous Historical Knowledge: Kautilya and His Vocabulary*, Vol. I, New Delhi: IDSA/Pentagon Press, 2015, pp. 87–95; ‘One Year of *Arthashastra*: Response, Pedagogy and Research’, in Pradeep Kumar Gautam, Saurabh Mishra and Arvind Gupta (eds), *Indigenous Historical Knowledge: Kautilya and His Vocabulary*, Vol. II, New Delhi: IDSA/Pentagon Press, 2016, pp. 106–25; ‘The Army: Then and Now’, in Pradeep Kumar Gautam, Saurabh Mishra and Arvind Gupta (eds), *Indigenous Historical Knowledge: Kautilya and His Vocabulary*, Vol. III, New Delhi: IDSA/Pentagon Press, 2016, pp. 63–82, 153–59; and ‘Understanding Kautilya’s *Arthashastra*: What do We Know about the *Arthashastra*’s Origination, Transmission and Diffusion in India’, in Michael Liebig and Saurabh Mishra (eds), *Kautilya’s Arthashastra in Transcultural Perspective: Comparing Kautilya with Machiavelli, Nizām al-Mulk, Barani and Sun Tzu*, New Delhi: IDSA/Pentagon Press, 2017, pp. 68–112.

For Kamandaka, see *The Nitisara by Kamandaka: Continuity and Change from Kautilya’s Arthashastra*, IDSA Monograph Series No. 62, March 2019 and ‘Comparing Kamandaka’s *Nitisara* and Kautilya’s *Arthashastra* on Some Aspects of Statecraft, Diplomacy, and Warfare’, paper presented at a seminar titled, *Roots of India’s Strategic Culture* held at IDSA on October 5, 2017. YouTube presentation at <https://idsa.in/event/exploring-the-roots-of-indias-strategic-culture> (edited book forthcoming).

⁴ S. Gopalan, *The Social Philosophy of Tirukkural*, Delhi and Madras: Affiliated East-West Press Pvt. Ltd, 1979, pp. 20–21.

has a live, longstanding, continuous tradition and it is a multiple tradition. In the study of this multiple traditions we need the living languages...not only Sanskrit but also Dravidian traditions...Until we have some idea of, and some acquaintance with all of these,...the picture of India will not be complete...For a total picture of Indian civilization and Indian linguistics we need both these classical but contrasted languages.⁵

In this category pointed out by Ramanujan, there is a powerful Tamil text from south India called the *Tirukkural* by Tiruvalluvar, also known as the *Kural*. The issues of statecraft, governance and related topics embedded in the *Kural* are less known, understudied and not theorized for modern times. Therefore, the study and revival of political wisdom and statecraft in the *Kural* will be an important contribution for contemporary times. The *Kural*, as is known, is the most famous and popular work in the history of Tamil literature. Indeed, Japanese scholar Takanobu Takahashi lists out eight other names that the *Tirukkural* or the *Kural* is known by: *Uttaravetam* (the ultimate Veda); *Tiruvalluvar* (Saint Valluvar, the author's name); *Poyyamoli* (the false-less word); *Vayurai valttu* (truthful praise); *Teyvanul* (the divine book); *Potumarai* (the common Veda); *Muppal* (the threefold path); and *Tamilmarai* (the Tamil Veda).⁶ The work consists of 1,330 couplets, divided into 133 chapters of 10 couplets each. The book deals with three Sanskrit words denoting the concepts of *dharmā*, *artha* and *kāma*, which in Tamil corresponds to *aram* (virtue), *porul* (wealth) and *kāman* or *inbam* (love/desire).

In modern Indian history, great thinkers, who seem to follow the footsteps of Tiruvalluvar have always focused on the moral and ethical aspects. A case in point is Mahatma Gandhi who was introduced to it

⁵ A.K. Ramanujan, quoted from *Span*, New Delhi, August 1970, in *ibid.*, pp. 20–21.

⁶ Takanobu Takahashi, "The Treatment of King and State in the *Tirukkural*", in Noboru Karashima (ed.), *Kingship in Indian History*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1999, pp. 53–54.

by his Russian friend, Leo Tolstoy (who had read a German translation). Tolstoy also alerted Gandhi to concept of non-violence in the *Kural*. Gandhi's non-violence is supposed to be drawn from the *Kural* as he said 'the maxims of Valluvar have touched my soul. There is none who has given such a treasure of wisdom like him.'⁷

TOLKAPPIYAM, SANGAM LITERATURE AND THE KURAL

Sangam literature, comprising *Emmuttogai*, also spelt as *ettu-tokai* (Eight Anthologies) and *Pattuppammu*, also spelt as *pattu-pattu* (Ten Idylls), that is, 18 anthologies, comprises poems on love and war. They are the earliest available literary works which follow and are indebted to the earlier Tamil grammatical treatise called *Tolkappiyam* (c. 300 BCE), a grammatical work by Tolkaṭṭiyar. The earlier parts of the first two books of grammatical work *Tolkāṭṭiyam* are modelled on bardic songs. The poems are of two types, *akam* and *puram*. *Akam* (pronounced as *aham*) mean 'interior feelings', that is, love poems, and *puram* mean 'exterior actions', that is, poems on heroic deeds, war, values, ethics, etc. This literature is rich and an evocative source of the history of early south India. The *puram* poems eulogize the bravery and generosity of great kings.⁸ A unique feature of Sangam poetry derived from *Tolkappiyam* is classification of emotional states and attitudes with natural features of the Tamil region. The five landscapes, known as *tinai*, compared to the human state of emotions are:

1. *kurinchi*, mountain (unification of lovers);
2. *palai*, arid terrain (separation);

⁷ Armoogum Parsuramen, Speech of the President, International Thirukkural Foundation, 'Thirukkural-A Global Book of Ethics', in G. John Samuel (editor-in-chief) and G. Rajagopal and V. Murugan (eds.), *Souvenir, Third International Conference on Thirukkural: Thirukkural for World Peace and Harmony*, Chennai: Institute of Asian Studies, 2019, no page; and 'Introduction', in M. Rajaram (trans.), *Thirukkural: Pearls of Inspiration*, New Delhi: Rupa, 2009, no page.

⁸ Upinder Singh, *Political Violence in Ancient India*, Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2017, pp. 372–73.

3. *mullai*, pastoral tracts (patient waiting);
4. *neytal*, seashore (pining); and
5. *marutam*, riverine track (sulking).⁹

The post-Sangam literature, according to contemporary scholars such as Y. Subbarayalu, ‘comprises of Eighteen Minor Works (called *kilkanakku*) and the two epics (*kavya*), the *Silappatikaram* and the *Manimekalai*... The eighteen works contain mostly ethical or didactic poetry.’¹⁰ Out of these 18:

the *Tirukkural*, considered to be a book of lofty wisdom, is an outstanding work. The author, Tiruvalluvar, though a Jain by belief, has presented his ideas in a non-partisan way so that each religious group has claimed him as their own. There are three sections in the work: *aram*, *porul* and *inbam* (or *kamam*), somewhat reflecting the northern *dharmā-arthā-kamā* concept... in the third section, he follows earlier bardic *akam* tradition. In the first section he talks not only about man’s private moral life, but also his relationship towards elders, society, king, and state. In the second section, he reflects on the empirical and pragmatic ideas of the

⁹ Ibid., pp. 372–73. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri explains:

The five regional *tinai*s deal with mutual love reciprocated in equal degree, between a youth and a maid well matched in every respect. These are called regional because the Tamil land is divided into five regions—mountainous (*kurinji*), forest or pastoral (*mullai*), agricultural (*marudam*), maritime (*neydal*) and desert (*palai*).

See K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, ‘Chapter Thirty (B): Language and Literature—Southern India’, in R.C. Majumdar (ed.) and K.K. Dasgupta (joint ed.), *A Comprehensive History of India, Vol. III, Part II (AD 300–985)*, New Delhi: People’s Publishing House, 1982, p. 1039.

¹⁰ Y. Subbarayalu, ‘Sangam and Post-Sangam Literature’, in Noboru Karashima (ed.), *A Concise History of South India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 46.

arthasastra tradition of the north but, unlike Kautilya, he mostly dwells on the benign aspects of friendship, kindness and justice. Tiruvalluvar despised tyrannical rule. Obviously, his materialistic ideas were tempered with moral ideas of Jainism.¹¹

According to the doyen and pioneer of history of south India in mid-twentieth century, K.A. Nilakanta Sastri:

Most of the important didactical works composed in the period have been grouped together under the title ‘The eighteen *kilkkanakku*’ from about the thirteenth century, because of their being composed in various short metres, generally types of the *venba*. Certainly the best known of them all, and possibly also among the earliest is the *Kural* of Tiruvalluvar, a comprehensive manual of ethics, polity and love. It contains 1,330 distichs divided into 133 sections of ten distichs each—the first 38 on ethics (*aram*), the following 70 on political and economic topics (*porul*) and the rest on love (*kamam*).¹²

Therefore, a study of the *Kural* must also take into account Sangam literature. Majority of the scholars give the bracket 100 BCE–300 CE as the period of Sangam literature and 300 CE–600 CE as the period of post-Sangam literature.¹³

THE STYLE

From a technical point of view, the *Kural* is written in ‘*venpa* metre containing two or four lines’.¹⁴ According to Gopalan, *Kural* ‘is one of

¹¹ Ibid., p. 47. In this quote, Kautilya is spelt as Kautalya. Both spellings are in use by Indologists.

¹² K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India: From Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar*, London: Oxford University Press, 1966, pp. 366–67.

¹³ Subbarayalu, ‘Sangam and Post-Sangam Literature’, n. 9, pp. 43–47.

¹⁴ Subbarayalu, ‘Sangam and Post-Sangam Literature’, n. 9, p. 46.

the earliest work to adopt the *Kural-venpa* form'.¹⁵ David Shulman further explains that in the *Kural*, 'all verses are in ... *venpa* meter, with four feet in the first line and three in the second'.¹⁶ He gives an example of P.S. Sundaram's 'deft translation':

Nattampol ketum ulat'akum cakkeatum/

Vittakarkke' allal aritu//

It is only the wise who can convert

Loss into gain, and death into life. (24.3)¹⁷

AUTHOR AND DATE

There are a number of claimants as to who the author was and the date when the text was written. It is said that Tiruvalluvar was either a Jain, or may be a Sudra/weaver or even a Brahmin. As to the time of its composition, like in the case of all ancient literature in India, it is difficult to pinpoint the date. For *Kural*, the time varies from first century BC to fifth or sixth century CE. A. Appadorai places its composition in the second century AD.¹⁸ According to C. Rajagopalachari, 'Scholars place it in first century B.C.'¹⁹ Gopalan likewise says that historians writing on south India, like V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar, K.R. Srinivasa Aiyangar and K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, generally agree that the Cankam (Sangam) literature may be placed between the fifth century BC and the fifth century AD and 'Kural belonged to period between the first century

¹⁵ Gopalan, *The Social Philosophy of Tirukkural*, n. 4, p. 24.

¹⁶ David Shulman, *Tamil: A Biography*, Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016, p. 92.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

¹⁸ A. Appadorai, 'Tiruvalluvar's Tiru-k-kural', in *India Political Thinking through the Ages*, New Delhi: Khama Publishers, 1992, p. 91.

¹⁹ C. Rajagopalachari, 'The Tiru-K-Kural', in *The Cultural Heritage of India, Vol. II: Itihasa, Puranas, Dharma and Other Sastra*, Belur Math: Ramakrishna Mission, 2013, p. 530.

B.C. and first century AD in middle-cankam or early cankam period.²⁰ To give further evidence of this time bracket, Gopalan avers:

Since traditionally the two Tamil epics, *Cilalppatikaram* and *Manimekalai*, as also the *Patinenkil Kanakku* (the eighteen ‘minor’ works of which the *Kural* is extremely important) are considered to form part of the cankam (Sangam) literature, and since the dates of the two Tamil epics have been historically well-established, we maintain that we have sound reasons, even historically speaking, for our views on the date of the *Kural*.²¹

On the author and his times, Gopalan further argues:

The age in which Tiruvalluvar, the author of *Tirukkural*, lived is shrouded in mystery. He was probably born during the cankam age (coinciding with the pre-Christian and early Christian era) when Tamil civilization was at its peak. The Tamil people then enjoyed a high degree of material prosperity thanks to trade and commerce with many foreign countries. This period in the history of the Tamils was characterized by contentment and happiness. Such material prosperity might have provided an edge to a philosophy of good life with its this worldly emphasis in the *Kural*.²²

One complexity creeps in when there is absence of a recorded history. Gopalan argues that the period of sixth century CE is unlikely as the day of *Kural* and the argument is:

a decisive point in favour of our view—the ‘tone of tolerance’ towards *all* religions which is the characteristic feature of the *Kural* cannot be accounted for, if it was the product of the sixth century A.D. For, by then the Pallavas had come to power and

²⁰ Gopalan, *The Social Philosophy of Tirukkural*, n. 4, pp. 2–4.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

Pallava age, the sixth to the ninth century A.D. witnessed the attitude of fanatical devotion to particular religions.²³

This debate over exact date and period is unlikely to get resolved. According to Sastri: ‘The author was most probably a learned Jaina divine and his close acquaintance with works of Manu, Kautilya and Vatsyayana is unmistakable. We have little authentic information on his life...450–550 may be suggested as the best data for the *Kural*.’²⁴

In an entry in *Comprehensive History of India* (1982),²⁵ Sastri gives finer details about the influence of north Indian Sanskrit texts and traditions to understand who the author was and what the date was. The following points are important links based on Tamil grammar and didactic literature. First, ‘The *Tolkappiyam* is the earliest extant Tamil grammars...is directly indebted to Panini...The thirty-two *tantrayuktis* of Kautilya’s *Arthasastra* are reproduced at the end of the Tamil work also...Tolkappiyar appears to have been a Jain by persuasion.’²⁶

²³ Ibid., p. 13.

²⁴ Sastri, *A History of South India*, n. 11, pp. 366–67.

²⁵ Sastri, ‘Chapter Thirty (B): Language and Literature—Southern India’, n. 8, pp. 1030–92.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 1037. The 32 *tantrayuktis* of Kautilya’s *Arthashastra* are to be found in Book XV. K.J. Shah classifies them into three groups:

‘(a) the devices which are used for the establishment of the point of view such as advice (*apadesa*), reason (*hetvartha*), doubt (*samsaya*), the opponent’s view (*purvapaksa*), etc; (b) the devices which are used to explain the meaning of words such as giving the meaning of a word (*padartha*), the meaning of a word through the meaning of the components of a word (*nirvacanam*), etc.; (c)...devices of literary composition or stylistic devices, references (*apadesa*), reference to a future statement (*anagata aveksanam*), reference to a past statement (*atikranta aveksanam*), etc.’

See K.J. Shah, ‘Of *Artha* and the *Arthashastra*’, in Anthony J. Parel and Ronald C. Keith (eds), *Comparative Political Philosophy*, New Delhi: Sage, 1992, pp. 159–160. According to Satis Chandra Vidyabhusana, ‘This list appears also in *Charaka-Sambhita* and *Susruta-Sambhita*, two authoritative works on medicine...The terms included in the list are found to have been employed more widely in works on *Nyaya* philosophy than in those on Polity or Medicine.’ See Satis Chandra Vidyabhusana, *A History of Indian Logic: Ancient, Mediaeval and Modern Schools*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2010 (1920), p. 24.

Second is that Sastri locates the *Kural* in the didactic literature category. He then relates to the context of those times:

end of fifth century...popular theistic *bhakti* movement led to sharp sectarian antagonisms which were reflected in literature. Hinduism girded itself up against Buddhism and Jainism...Buddhism was academic in its tone...preserving...Buddhist text and founding monasteries...Jainism on the contrary aimed at proselytism on a large scale. The Jains mastered the language of the people and sought their allegiance by writing important works in it, particularly gnomic and didactic poems. To this activity we owe the immortal *Kural*...About Valluvar, the real author of the *Kural* very little is known. A doubtful tradition makes him an out-caste by birth; he has also been taken to have been a weaver, a Vellala and what not. There is epigraphic evidence in favour of equating Valluvar with Vallabha, a superintendent or king's officer. Valluvar is defined in the *Divakaram* (II, 29) as *ul-padu-kearumattalaivam*, chief of the drummer boys who proclaimed the royal commands and were drawn from the Pariah caste...We may be sure that Valluvar was a Jain from the epithets he bestows on his deity in the opening decad of his work...The *Kural* is counted among the *kilik-kanakku* (didactic manuals) which are always distinguished from Sangam works as belonging to a later time, their authors being described as *pirchanror* (the *elite* of a later day)...²⁷

The third argument by Sastri is about the influence of Sanskrit and the time period based on the Sanskrit work and their known dates of authorship:

A study of Valluvar's work reveals that he is largely indebted to well known Sanskrit authors such as Manu, Kautilya and Kamandaka, to Ayurvedic treatises, and the *Kamasutra*. Of these

²⁷ Sastri, 'Chapter Thirty (B): Language and Literature—Southern India', n. 8, pp. 1042–43.

works *Kamasutra* is assigned to the fourth century A.D. by both Keith and Winternitz, though the former is inclined to give even a later date, A.D. 500. As for Kamandaka for whom Valluvar has a partiality, Keith puts him as late as c. 700, though others have made him contemporary with Varamihira (A.D. 550). The earliest date for the *Kural* must therefore be found about A.D. 600. This accords well with our date of Tolappiyar to whose work Valluvar is indebted.²⁸

However, recent scholarship of Subbarayalu²⁹ and others, such as Takanobu Takahashi,³⁰ place it in fifth century CE and the author being a Jain:

The *Tirukkural* (*Kural*), also called Tamil Veda, is the most famous and popular work in the history of Tamil literature. The author, Tiruvalluvar (Valluvar), was probably a Jain of the fifth or sixth century A.D., although we have almost no authentic information on his life, religion and dates.³¹

Further, we know that one of the most important feature is classification of the Tamil literature of love (*akam*). Takahashi has attempted to analyze 'the *Kural*'s date on the basis of relative chronology between the love (*akam*) poems of the Sangam age (first-third century A.D.) and those of the *Kural*.³² His conclusion is that '*Kural*' belongs to a later

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 1043–44. Sastri also points out that 'The date of Valluvar has become a matter of sentiment among modern Tamils. One writer places him c. 1250 B.C. (*Kalaikkadir*, January, 1950). Others begin a Valluvar era from January, 30 B.C.', *ibid.*, p. 1044, note 29. This sort of extreme ancient dating is very common in nearly all Indic texts.

²⁹ Subbarayalu, 'Sangam and Post-Sangam Literature', n. 9, pp. 46–47 and Y. Subbarayalu, 'Post-Satavahana and Post-Sangam Politics', in Noboru Karashima (ed.), *A Concise History of South India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 62.

³⁰ Takahashi, 'The Treatment of King and State in the *Tirukkural*', n. 6.

³¹ Ibid., p. 37.

³² Ibid., p. 54.

date than the Sangam period, say, after the fifth century A.D.³³ Thus, it is reasonable to say that the *Kural* is of post-Sangam literature (c. 300–600 CE).

Tiruvalluvar, the author of the *Kural*, though a Jain by belief, presents 'his ideas in a non-partisan way so that each religious group has claimed him as his own'.³⁴ Surely, more relevant and important today may be the enduring idea content. Nevertheless, in the absence of historical records, it may be worth to construct a broad political history of the times when *Kural* was conceived and composed.

POLITICAL HISTORY

In Indian traditions, there is often a dearth of written political history with chronology. The most important first step to overcome this challenge is to construct a political history. Indeed, barring Kalhana's *Rajatarangani* and its follow-through text on the Hindu kingdom of Kashmir, there exists no known political history of ancient or medieval India. It was argued by Sastri that 'no better method can be availed to understand the nature of Tamil monarchy in the period than to discuss some of the salient statements of Tiruvalluvar on the subject'.³⁵

One example is that there are some glaring omissions in the *Kural* when compared to Kautilya's *Arthashastra*. For example, the aim of Kautilya was to overthrow the unjust Nanda king and consolidate an empire which was being threatened by foreign/external invasion. In *Kural*, there is no such motivation to write this treatise and unlike Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, there is no concept of a *vijigishu* (would-be

³³ Ibid., p. 54, note 2.

³⁴ Subbarayalu, 'Sangam and Post-Sangam Literature', n. 9, p. 47. Also see Subbarayalu, 'Post-Satavahana and Post-Sangam Politics', n. 29.

³⁵ Quoted in Takahashi, 'The Treatment of King and State in the *Tirukkural*', n. 6, p. 40. The work being referred to is K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Colas*, revised edition, Madras: University of Madras, 1975, p. 67.

conqueror) to unify Indian subcontinent into one political empire or *chakravartikshetra*. Allied with it is an absence of a circle of competing kings, famously known as the *mandala* theory. There seems to be no explicit mention of the political anthropology of the strong devouring the weak, conceptualized by Kautilya as *matsyanyaya*.

In south India, there was no foreign invasion and there existed a balance in kingdoms. Beginning with Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, and also from the Ashokan rock edict of 250 BCE, the kingdoms of Chola, Pandya and Chera (Keralaputra) find a mention. In the era that followed, that is, Sangam period from first to third centuries CE, the Tamil area comprising of Chera, Chola and Pandya did not form a political unity but a cultural one. However, like Kautilya, the concepts and vocabulary of the seven constituent elements of the state is retained in the *Kural*.

The post-Sangam period of fourth to sixth century, according to Takahashi:

is called the 'the Dark period' by some historians, since there is an almost total lack of information regarding events in the Tamil area...The dark period was marked by the influx of northern culture, languages, religion and customs. Probably under the patronage of Pallavas and the Kalabhras, Brahmanism, Buddhism and Jainism began to flourish; especially the latter two were becoming increasingly popular in their territories...This age was also characterised by great literary activity in Tamil, and the *Kural* was one of its product.³⁶

Govindaswamy Rajagopal, in his recent book, hints at the political conditions that may have led to Tiruvalluvar composing these didactic poems. In the 'Foreword', Pulavar R. Vishwanathan gives the lead that Rajagopal:

discusses certain core ethics endorsed by Tiruvalluvar. He has adeptly shown that the frequent wars among the traditional rulers

³⁶ Takahashi, 'The Treatment of King and State in the *Tirukkural*', n. 6, p. 39.

of Tamil Nadu viz. Cera, Cola, and Pandiya, their subsequent loss of political power to the intruders Kalabhras (of Karnataka), increasing influence of North over Tamil country and the internal uncertainty prevailing in post-Sangam age (c. A.D. 200–600)—all these factors have contributed to the advent of Tirukkural for guiding people well in righteous path.³⁷

On the question of frequent wars, Rajagopal argues:

Tamil ethnicity historically belonged to ‘Heroic Age’ (c. 3000 B.C.–A.D. 300), the ethnic group had upheld equally at par both akam (love feelings) and puram (heroic deeds and values) sentiments in their lives as their two eyes. As the monarchical era of kings was vested with absolute power along with atrocities and ceaseless battles/wars over wealth and territory, there were chaotic and terrible situations prevailing in the country. So in the much disturbed condition, didactic poets like Tiruvalluvar penned how life should be lived and what sort of moral percepts and codes and conducts should govern it.³⁸

Further, on the identity of the Kalabhras and influence of north Indian Aryan culture, Rajagopal argues:

Having become fatigued of habitually invading their opponents now and then, the emperors hailed from the great three Tamil dynasties viz. Cera, Cola and Pandiya, started losing their high esteem and became weakened by the end of A.D. 300. Kalabhras, originally a dynasty belonging to Andhra Pradesh, had shrewdly exploited the deplorable socio-political situation to their benefit. These kings, staunch followers of Jainism who entered Tamil

³⁷ Pulavar R. Vishwanathan, ‘Foreword’, in Govindaswamy Rajagopal, *Etiquette and Ethos: Ethics of Tirukkural and Acarakkovai*, New Delhi: Sun International Publishers, 2016, p. xii.

³⁸ Govindaswamy Rajagopal, *Etiquette and Ethos: Ethics of Tirukkural and Acarakkovai*, New Delhi: Sun International Publishers, 2016, pp. xvii–xviii.

Nadu through Karnataka had ruled the country for nearly three hundred years i.e. from c. A.D. 300–600. Well before the advent of Kalabhras, the Aryans had already entered the Dravidian land and established their stronghold over the Tamils. The impact of the Aryan's Vedic religion was tangible on Tamils to some extent, however not domineering or overriding the latter's religious sentiments.³⁹

Fortunately, from the sixth century CE onwards, there is clear historical and archaeological evidence:

In the sixth century, the Jains, Buddhists, Saivas and Vaishnavas were struggling to gain popularity, and gradually the Saivas and Vaishnavas became considerably popular, while the Jainism and Buddhism were on the wane, although the Jainism still survived in south India long after Buddhism had declined.⁴⁰

There was also Aryanization of Tamil country under Pandya–Pallava rulers with Sanskrit getting an honoured place as language of higher literature and culture.⁴¹ These periods, if analyzed, will give the contextual basis for the normative message from the *Kural*. It needs to be noted that the *Kural* does not shy away from the use of force for 'reason of the state' and has core subjects of statecraft, diplomacy and intelligence studies.

Summary in Table 1.1 gives a rough idea on the literature, the approximate time period, dynasties and kingdoms.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 88.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 39–40.

Table 1.1: Literature, Approximate Time Period, Dynasties and Kingdoms

S. No.	Literature	Time Period	Dynasties and Kingdoms	Remarks
1		Third century BCE or earlier	Early Tamil polities of Cheras, Cholas, Pandyas.	Migration of Aryans to south India based on story of sage Agastya.
2	<i>Tolkappiyam</i> , a grammatical work by Tolkappiyar, a Jain by persuasion.	Between 300 BCE and 200 CE		
3	Sangam poems/literature, mostly under patronage of Pandya kings, to include the following: main body of eight anthologies of shorter poems and 10 long songs or lays (total 18).	Between 100 BCE to 300 CE	Cholas, Pandyas, Cheras and other minor kingdoms.	Intermecine conflict was a feature of the time.

S. No.	Literature	Time Period	Dynasties and Kingdoms	Remarks
4	<p>Post-Sangam literature:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 18 minor works (<i>kilkanakku</i>) of ethical or didactic poetry of which <i>Tirukkural</i> is the most outstanding and enduring, followed by <i>Naladiyar</i>. In total, 11 works are didactic and seven deal with <i>akam</i> and <i>puram</i> themes of Sangam literature. 2. Two epics or twin <i>mahakavya</i>: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (i) <i>Silappatikaram</i> (The Tale of an Anklet) by a Jain author Ilangovadigal/a Chera Jain prince in fifth century CE; and (ii) Manimekalai by the Buddhist poet Cattanar (also spelt as Sattnar). A legendary and semi-historical work of sixth century CE. 	Between 300 to 600 CE	Kalabhras,* Pallavas, Pandyas	* Not much is known about Kalabhras (Kalappalar) dynasty which began in fourth century and lasted till third quarter of the sixth century when Pandyas and Pallavas uprooted them. Post-Sangam period of fourth to fifth century is called the 'Dark Period' due to lack of information regarding events in the Tamil area.

Source: Compiled by the author from Hirosh Yamashita (2014), Y. Subbarayalu (2014), Upinder Singh (2008) and Govindaswamy Rajagopal (2016).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The *Kural* is possibly the only text which has combined all three pillars of the triage or *trivarga*—*aram* (*dharmā*), *porul* (*artha*) and *kama* (*kāma* or *inbam*)—in one slim book. As to *aram* and *porul*, many of the concepts (but not all) look similar to Kautilya's *Arthashastra*. For example, the Tamil Veda or the *Kural* by Tiruvalluvar of south India has combined, for the lay reader, key aspects of virtue (*aram*), wealth (*porul*) and love (*kāman*), which corresponds somewhat to *dharmā*, *artha* and *kāma* of Sanskrit, which is also the key feature of Kautilya and other texts. This south Indian tradition indicates a bonding and common civilizational nature of India. Rather, as also argued by Shulman:⁴² 'The notion that there was a pure Tamil that had no Sanskrit in it is a complete fantasy. There are Prakrit and Sanskrit words in the earliest Tamil Brahmi inscription we have. The *Tolkappiyam* is permeated by Sanskrit.'⁴³

So, even if we set aside debates of philology and linguistics, we find that philosophical concepts pertaining to various aspects of statecraft transcend language barriers and it is here that a geo-cultural common thread which is pan-Indian can be found. For example, the *Kural*, in chapter 78, 'Military Bearing, Pride and Valour', has an apt aphorism echoing very much of what Kautilya says: 'It is a soldier's virtue to be fierce and pitiless to the foe, but if he is down, it is virtue of a higher grade to be compassionate.'⁴⁴

The *Kural* is unique in another 'secular' way. At one level it can be compared to the philosophies of all three Indian traditions of Brahmanical Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism. Yet, at another level, it stands and shines on its own merit as a unique text of political wisdom and statecraft.

⁴² Shulman, *Tamil: A Biography*, n. 16, pp. 182–83 and elsewhere.

⁴³ Lalita Sridhar, 'I cannot Compartmentalise my Life' (interview with David Shulman), *The Hindu Magazine*, Sunday, 27 August 2017, p. 2.

⁴⁴ S.M. Diaz and N. Mahalingam (eds), *Tirukkural*, with English translation and explanation, Coimbatore: Ramanandha Adigalar Foundation, 2000, reprint 2008, in two volumes, p. 792.

It could be argued that *artha* is a necessary but not sufficient condition to understand the sinews of traditional Indian statecraft. In other words, there is a regulating mechanism of *dharmā* with *artha* and it is this exceptional and remarkable work called *Kural*, which has been described by Rajagopalachari as a ‘masterpiece of brevity’.⁴⁵ What this indicates is that there is a lot more of cross-disciplinary interpretative work that is yet to be done for statecraft by inclusion of not only *porul* or *artha* but also *aram* or *dharmā*. Tracing and then projecting the branches that have emanated from the roots of India’s strategic culture as a part of the Indigenous Historical Knowledge project at MP-IDSA is a work in progress and the *Kural* fills an important gap. It follows that this rich text from south India is now an appropriate text to be examined, analyzed and made relevant for contemporary times.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH METHOD

A rough idea of the historical events that may have influenced the author can be had if the text is compared to the events of the period for a context as in Table 1.1. The text will be examined and compared for thematic subjects and interpreted to make it useful for contemporary times. *Bhasyas* (commentaries) on the text by other scholars will also be compared and analyzed.

IMPLICATIONS

The MP-IDSA has set an institutional aim to initiate the study, internalization, spread and consolidation of indigenous historical knowledge and revisit the roots of India’s strategic culture from various angles. There is immense treasure and knowledge lying buried and unexamined in our ancient traditions. The present study of the *Kural* will further reinforce this aim by providing an updated relevant interpretation of the text for contemporary issues. Thus, the scope of indigenous historical knowledge will widen and broaden.

⁴⁵ Rajagopalachari, ‘The Tiru-K-Kural’, n. 19, p. 530.

An analysis of the text, with context, may help further trace and map the indigenous development of political theory in India. The textual-cum-contextual interpretations and concepts that emerge will contribute in shaping the discourse of continuity, with refinements, to reclaim Indian heritage for statecraft; and in doing so reinforce the momentum of Indian traditions to knowledge creation. With this, Indian traditions can now play an active role to enrich the global discourse on statecraft and diplomacy not only based on the work of Kautilya, but also others who followed and that too in our ancient heritage of Tamil. As per newspaper reports, the *Kural*, possibly for the first time in recent times, has also been translated into Chinese (Mandarin) by the Taiwanese scholar Yu His in 2014, at the initiative of Tamil University, Thanjavur.⁴⁶

In this context, it is important to note that Kautilya's *Arthashastra* has not yet been translated into Chinese. Therefore, besides Indian traditions now available in English translation, this may be the first text on political wisdom that will also generate interest by those who speak and write in Chinese. The Russians, likewise, are keen to get it translated and have Tiruvalluvar's statue installed in Moscow.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the latest good news is that *Tirukkural* is to feature in Cambodian school textbooks after being translated into Khmer and a statue of the author is to be installed in the country.⁴⁸ So, it is an apt time to begin with this work that revisits the *Kural* for maximum outreach, both domestic and international, although to begin with, like all outputs, the language will be English.

⁴⁶ R. Rajaram, 'Chinese Translation of *Tirukkural*, Bharathi's Poems Ready', *The Hindu*, 19 June 2018.

⁴⁷ C. Jaisankar, 'Russia Keen on Tiruvalluvar Statue', *The Hindu*, 12 January 2014.

⁴⁸ Megha Kaveri, 'Ancient Tamil Text "Tirukkural" to Feature in Cambodian School Textbooks', *The News Minute*, 20 July 2019, available at <https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/ancient-text-tirukkural-feature-cambodian-school-textbooks-105775>, accessed on 14 August 2019.

POLICY AND ACADEMIC IMPACT

The policy and academic community will benefit from this study as it will supplement and further reinforce the literature from Indian heritage and traditions. It will also demonstrate that Indic traditions have survived through centuries and are relevant today, in many aspects, in the evolving global order and international relations. Policymakers, academics and the public at large will also benefit from this new generation of knowledge of Indian heritage and strategic culture.

LAYOUT OF THE MONOGRAPH

In order to study and analyze political wisdom and statecraft in the *Kural* for contemporary times, some of the questions that need to be addressed are: (i) what is the vocabulary of the *Kural* as it relates to two key concepts in Indian tradition of statecraft, namely, *dharma* and *artha*?; (ii) what is the common thread that is running through the various texts on statecraft in the major Indian textual traditions and where does the *Kural* fit in?; and (iii) what is the contemporary relevance of the *Kural* to strategy and diplomacy?

With this background and to address the given questions, the monograph is divided into two parts. Part I has three chapters, including this chapter on background. Chapter 2 is an introduction to the *Kural* and Chapter 3 talks about the reception of the *Kural* in contemporary times. Part II discusses key concepts and themes and is divided into the following chapters: Chapter 4, 'The State and Its Constituent Elements'; Chapter 5, 'Importance of Personal Qualities: Self-control, Character Building and Leadership'; Chapter 6, 'Management and Communication'; Chapter 7, 'Diplomatic Practices, Intelligence and Diplomacy'; Chapter 8, 'Accomplishment of Tasks and Appreciations: Military and Non-Military'; Chapter 9, 'On Morals'; and Chapter 10, 'Conclusion'.

INTRODUCTION TO THE *KURAL*

ABOUT THE TEXT

There are a number of English translations of the *Kural*. For this study, the translation used is that of Reverend (Rev.) W.H. Drew and Rev. John Lazarus.¹ Where needed, translations by Rev Dr G.U. Pope, Rev W.H. Drew, Rev John Lazarus and Mr F.W. Ellis have been used. This work is also available on the World Wide Web for free.² Other translations and commentaries used are that of C. Rajagopalachari,³ Gopalkrishna Gandhi,⁴ S.M. Diaz and N. Mahalingam⁵ and M. Rajaram.⁶

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- ¹ Rev. W.H. Drew and Rev. John Lazarus, *Thirukkural with English Translation*, New Delhi and Chennai: Asian Educational Services, 2014.
 - ² *Tirukkural*, English Translation and Commentary by Rev. Dr G.U. Pope, Rev. W.H. Drew, Rev. John Lazarus and Mr F.W. Ellis, first published in 1886 by W.H. Allen & Co., reprinted in 1962 and 1982 by The South India Saiva Siddhantha Works Publishing Society, Tinnevely, Madras, India. This version is on the net. On the first page, it is mentioned that it is 'English Translation & Commentary (in italics)'. See <https://tamilnation.org/literature/kural/mp153.htm>
 - ³ C. Rajagopalachari, *Kural: The Great Book of Tiru-Valluvar*, 14th edition, Mumbai: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 2017(1965).
 - ⁴ Gopalkrishna Gandhi, *Tiruvalluvar: The Tirukkural*, New Delhi: Aleph Book Company, 2015.
 - ⁵ S.M. Diaz and N. Mahalingam (eds), *Tirukkural*, with English Translation and Explanation, Coimbatore: Ramanandha Adigalar Foundation, 2000, reprint 2008, in two volumes.
 - ⁶ M. Rajaram, *Thirukkural: Pearls of Inspiration*, New Delhi: Rupa, 2009. I thank Ambassador R. Rajagopalan for gifting me a copy of this book when he chaired the round-table discussion at MP-IDSA on 17 July 2019.

THE *KURAL*

The topic of each chapter of Book 1 (*aram*) and Book 2 (*porul*), as translated by Rev. W.H. Drew and Rev. John Lazarus, is enumerated next.⁷ In later chapters, all or some selected couplets from a topic of study will be reproduced to illustrate their importance and emphasis.

1. *Aram* (38 chapters with topics dealing with ethics, morals and *dharmā*)

- Chapter 1 Praise of God
- Chapter 2 The Excellence of Rain
- Chapter 3 The Greatness of Ascetics
- Chapter 4 The Power of Virtue
- Chapter 5 The Domestic State
- Chapter 6 The Virtue of a Wife
- Chapter 7 On Obtaining Children
- Chapter 8 On Love
- Chapter 9 On Hospitality
- Chapter 10 On Sweetness of Speech
- Chapter 11 On Gratitude
- Chapter 12 On Equity
- Chapter 13 On Self-control
- Chapter 14 Propriety of Conduct
- Chapter 15 Against Desiring Another's Wife
- Chapter 16 On Patience
- Chapter 17 Against Envy
- Chapter 18 Against Covetousness
- Chapter 19 Against Backbiting
- Chapter 20 Against Profitless Conversation

⁷ Drew and Lazarus, *Thirukkural with English Translation*, n. 1.

- Chapter 21 On the Fear of Sin
- Chapter 22 On Benevolence
- Chapter 23 On Alms-Deeds
- Chapter 24 On Praise
- Chapter 25 Mercy
- Chapter 26 Abstinence from Flesh
- Chapter 27 On Austerities
- Chapter 28 On Inconsistent Conduct
- Chapter 29 Against Fraud
- Chapter 30 On Truthfulness
- Chapter 31 Against Anger
- Chapter 32 Against Inflicting Suffering
- Chapter 33 Against Destroying Life
- Chapter 34 Instability
- Chapter 35 On Renunciation
- Chapter 36 True Knowledge
- Chapter 37 The Destruction of Desire
- Chapter 38 On Fate

2. **Porul** (70 chapters dealing with political and economic topics, or *artha*)

- Chapter 39 On Kingly Excellence
- Chapter 40 On Learning
- Chapter 41 On the Neglect of Learning
- Chapter 42 On Hearing (Instructions)
- Chapter 43 On Wisdom
- Chapter 44 On the Correction of Faults
- Chapter 45 Securing the Friendship of Great Men
- Chapter 46 Against Associating with Evil Persons
- Chapter 47 On Acting with Fore-thought
- Chapter 48 On the Knowledge of Resources

- Chapter 49 On the Discernment of (a suitable) Time
- Chapter 50 On the Choice of (a suitable) Place
- Chapter 51 On Reflection before Decision
- Chapter 52 On Employment of Servants
- Chapter 53 On Kindness to Relatives
- Chapter 54 Against Forgetfulness
- Chapter 55 On Upright Government
- Chapter 56 On Unjust Government
- Chapter 57 Against Acting with Cruelty
- Chapter 58 On Gracious Demeanour
- Chapter 59 On the Employment of Spies
- Chapter 60 On Energy
- Chapter 61 Against Idleness
- Chapter 62 On Manly Effort
- Chapter 63 On Perseverance in spite of Difficulties
- Chapter 64 On Ministry
- Chapter 65 On Power of Speech
- Chapter 66 On Uprightness of Action
- Chapter 67 On Quality of Action
- Chapter 68 On Mode of Action
- Chapter 69 On Embassy
- Chapter 70 On Movement with King
- Chapter 71 On Understanding One's Mind
- Chapter 72 On Judging the Audience
- Chapter 73 On Self-confidence before an Audience
- Chapter 74 On the Greatness of a Kingdom
- Chapter 75 On Fort
- Chapter 76 On the Importance of Wealth
- Chapter 77 The Characteristic of a Good Army
- Chapter 78 On Warrior

- Chapter 79 On Friendship
- Chapter 80 On the Choice of Friends
- Chapter 81 On Intimacy
- Chapter 82 On Evil Friendship
- Chapter 83 On False Friendship
- Chapter 84 On Folly
- Chapter 85 On Vanity
- Chapter 86 On Hatred
- Chapter 87 On the Characteristic of Enemies
- Chapter 88 On Enmity
- Chapter 89 On Internal Hatred
- Chapter 90 On Disrespect to the Great
- Chapter 91 On Submission to Wife Rule
- Chapter 92 On Prostitutes
- Chapter 93 On Abstaining from Drink
- Chapter 94 On Gambling
- Chapter 95 On Moderate Eating
- Chapter 96 On Good Birth
- Chapter 97 On Self-respect
- Chapter 98 On Greatness
- Chapter 99 On Goodness
- Chapter 100 On Courteousness
- Chapter 101 On Niggardliness
- Chapter 102 On Modesty
- Chapter 103 On Raising the Family
- Chapter 104 On Agriculture
- Chapter 105 On Poverty
- Chapter 106 On Begging
- Chapter 107 On Evil of Begging
- Chapter 108 On Unscrupulousness

KAMAN/INBAM (LOVE)

Chapters 109–133 (a total of 25) deal with *kamam*. The purpose of this monograph is to study about various aspects of statecraft and thus, the third book of *Kamam* is not included here. However, it must be mentioned that the *Kural* is an exceptional piece of work which combines all three, that is, *aram*, *porul* and *inbam* or *kaman*, in one comprehensive work.

EXPLANATION OF CONCEPTS AND THEMES

In the next chapter, a survey of literature has been done to examine how the *Kural* has been received in contemporary times by highly esteemed authors. This is followed by Part II, in which key concepts and themes are covered in six chapters, followed by conclusion.

RECEPTION OF THE *KURAL* IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES

A number of scholars have given their opinions and commentaries on the *Kural*. This chapter studies the views and understanding of some prominent scholars. For reasons of clarity, exact quotes are being used at many places. The scholars or publication(s) being quoted for analyses are: V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar, *The Gazetteer of India*, C. Rajagopalachari, K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, R.C. Majumdar, Charles Drekmeier, R.N. Dandekar, K. Appadurai, S. Gopalan, A. Appadorai, Takanobu Takahashi, Y. Subbarayalu, David Shulman, Govindaswamy Rajagopal, and some key deliberations at The Third International Conference on Thirukkural of 2019.

V.R. RAMACHANDRA DIKSHITAR

Dikshitar only briefly mentions that 'Kural (501) on spies is indebted to Kautilya. He based his political theories on arthshastra text especially Kautilya *Arthashastra*.¹ It is obvious that study of the entire *Kural* was not done. However, link to Kautilya indicates some commonalities.

THE GAZETTEER OF INDIA

It is interesting to see that the *Gazetteer* makes use of one of the schools of Indian philosophy to say: "The Kural of Tiruvalluvar, dating not later than the 10th century AD is said to be the work of a poet belonging

¹ Ramachandra Dikshitar, *War in Ancient India*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987(1944), pp. 359-60.

to the depressed classes. It enforces the Sankhya philosophy in 1,330 poetical aphorisms.²

However, the entry does not explain or clarify what it implies by ‘Sankhya philosophy’. Possibly, the author(s) of the entry assumed that the reader will be familiar with it and be able to discern. *Sankhya* philosophy is an objective quantitative understanding of the human. It does not incorporate the divine or *ishwar*. In its original form, *Sankhya* ‘could provide our philosophical tradition with the fundamental idea of positive science’.³ It is evident that the author(s) of the entry on the *Kural* in the *Gazetteer* meant to emphasize the positive science part of the *Kural*.

C. RAJAGOPALACHARI

Rajagopalachari has translated the *Kural* and also added his own interpretation (what we may say as *bhashya*) to selected couplets of the first two books dealing with *aram* and *porul*.⁴ His translation continues to be very popular and has been used by Appadorai (covered later) extensively. Rajagopalachari’s translated selected couplets also have the Tamil version side by side. At many places after the couplet, Rajagopalachari inserts his views, with explanations and comments or *bhashya*. For example, on the capacity of forbearance to defeat arrogance, he finds: ‘The incisive rationalist approach is a common characteristic of Tiru-Valluvar and Marcus Aurelius.’⁵ Marcus Aurelius, the Roman Emperor (121–180 CE), wrote his famous book, *Meditations*,⁶ which records his thoughts in short sentences. He was

² *The Gazetteer of India, Vol. 1: Country and People*, Delhi: Publications Division, 1965, p. 432.

³ Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, *Lokayata: A Study in Ancient Indian Materialism*, New Delhi: People’s Publishing House, 1959, p. 363.

⁴ C. Rajagopalachari, *Kural: The Great Book of Tiru-Valluvar*, 14th edition, Mumbai: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 2017(1965).

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁶ Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, translated from Greek with an introduction by Maxwell Staniforth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1974.

influenced a great deal by the Stoic philosophy, which, like the *Kural*, laid great emphasis on the moral element, frugality, just and virtuous dealings, self-discipline and so on.⁷ Most importantly, as noted earlier, a rationalist approach can also be compared to *Sambhāya* philosophy as was endorsed by the above-mentioned *Gazetteer*.

Rajagopalachari has also contributed an essay for *The Cultural Heritage of India* series.⁸ In this essay, his main focus is on the second book (*poruḷ*), demonstrating its unique pragmatic feature of world affairs and statecraft:

That the great moralist should have sought to preach eternal *dharma* seems natural enough. The second Book, however, shows that the moralist poet was not a mere unpractical visionary unused to the ways of the world, but had a deep insight into human nature and was possessed of great practical wisdom. The seventy chapters of that book lay down with characteristic terseness the principles that should govern the conduct of wise and good men in the affairs of the world.⁹

Importantly, he highlights that the text has parts meant for the prince and his staff for statecraft, and also chapters ‘applicable to all persons engaged in secular affairs’.¹⁰ This emphasis by Rajagopalachari makes it clear that the *Kural* is just not a mirror of prince-type of work. Some samples from his essay are the traditional seven constituents of the state (*prakri*); and in the text, and the ever-regulating *dharma* is also pointed out.¹¹ Rajagopalachari lays emphasis on certain passages, such

⁷ Maxwell Staniforth, ‘Introduction’, in *ibid.*, p. 10.

⁸ C. Rajagopalachari, ‘The Tiru-K-Kural’, in *The Cultural Heritage of India, Vol. II: Itihāsa, Purānas, Dharma and Other Sastra*, Belur Math: Ramakrishna Mission, 2013, p. 530.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 530–31.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 531.

as: (i) the ideal ruler and his qualities and conduct (39.2, 39.4); (ii) trust of subordinates (52.7, 52.8); (iii) on being vigilant (54.2, 54.6); (iv) on selection of executives with high standards (47, 49, 51, 52); (v) loyalty and trust (52.3, 52.4, 52.7, 52.8); (vi) real wealth is will to action (60.1); and so on.

He further suggests that it may be possible: ‘The historian and the scholar will find plenty of material in the *Kural* from which to reconstruct the political life of Tamil community in Tiruvalluvar’s time. The emphasis on the art of persuasive speech shows that decisions were taken after debate in assemblies.’¹² The most important finding from this quote is the emphasis on persuasive speech in that era. It follows there was no autocratic decision making, which is so very relevant today. However, the most vital part is the methodology to construct the political life. No work has been found which relates that text to actual historical episodes. This is a perennial problem with Indian historical tradition. It corresponds with what Majumdar (covered later) expresses on a similar issue about Kautilya: ‘But we do not know how far ancient rulers followed in actual life the dictates of Kautilya as laid down in his Arthashastra.’¹³

K.A. NILAKANTA SASTRI

Sastri gives the breakdown of ‘Valluvar’s great work’ consisting of three books: the first book on *aram* (*dharmā*); the second book on *porul* (*artha*) of 70 chapters, with first 25 dealing with kings, their duties, etc., succeeding 32 chapters dealing with the rest of constituent elements of a state and the next 13 dealing with miscellaneous matters; and the third book on *inbam* (*kaman*) of 25 chapters, with the first seven on pre-marital love (*kalavni*) and the next 18 on marital love. Thus, there

¹² Ibid., p. 532.

¹³ R.C. Majumdar, ‘Political Theory and Administrative System’, in *The History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol. II: The Age of Imperial Unity*, 4th edition, Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1968, p. 323.

are a total of 133 chapters.¹⁴ To the question as to why it is termed as the *Kural* although the name of the author is Valluvar, Sastri explains that ‘each chapter containing ten distichs in the metre known as *Kural*. Hence it has become usual to call the work itself by the name of *Kural*, though it is fairly certain that the name given by the author was *Mup-pal* or the trichotomous (book).’¹⁵ Sastri praises and compares the work:

Never before, nor since, did words of such profound wisdom issue forth from any sage in the Tamil land...Kautilya was more a politician than a statesman. He found in his great work room for a state-craft motivated by an unquenching thirst for conquest and characterised by a mechanical efficiency and thoroughness which we now associate with the Germans. He would regard humane considerations as weakness...Valluvar, the Tamil sage, excels each one of these ancients. He makes humanity and love the cementing force of his society, and considerations of birth are of no account to him. His political wisdom is characterised by a breadth of vision at once noble and elevating...No wonder his great work took by storm the learned academicians of Madurai, as tradition would have it. The utter simplicity of his language, his crystal-clear utterances, precise and forceful, his brevity, his choice diction, no less his inwardness, his learning, culture and wisdom, his catholicity and eclecticism, his gentle humour and his healthy balanced outlook have made him an object of veneration for all time and his book is considered the Veda of the Tamils. The genius of the Tamil race has flowered to perfection in this great author believed to be a man of lowly birth.¹⁶

¹⁴ K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, ‘Chapter Thirty (B): Language and Literature—Southern India’, in R.C. Majumdar (ed.) and K.K. Dasgupta (joint ed.), *A Comprehensive History of India, Vol. III, Part II (AD 300–985)*, New Delhi: People’s Publishing, 1982, pp. 1044–45.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 1044–45.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1045. ‘These ancients’ from the quote are clarified by Sastri as meaning Manu for *aram*, Kautilya for *porul* and Vatsyayana for *inbam*.

Further, a number of verses in praise by academics were collected together with the title *Tiruvalluvamalai*. About 10 commentaries were written. Interestingly, Sastri, like so many other scholars, is impressed by its universality as:

followers of every religion claim him as their own...When law-courts were first instituted in the Tamil country, the judges and lawyers used to cite the *Kural* as authority. Like the *Bible* it was held sacred and used in administering oaths to witnesses in courts. Even at the present day, it is studied as much as ever and it has been translated into several European languages.¹⁷

R.C. MAJUMDAR

In an entry in ‘The Age of Imperial Unity’, under system of administration in *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Majumdar elaborates on *Arthashastra*, then follows it up with a brief description of *Kural* in a section titled, ‘Sources Other than Arthashastra’.¹⁸

The political data supplied by presumably contemporary Tamil literature tally with the *Arthashastra*. The relevant passages in V. Kanakasabhai’s *Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*, based on literature, often remind one of Kautilya. The same remark holds true of the *Muppal* or the *Kural* composed by Tiruvalluvar. He insists the same qualities in the king as Kautilya—fearlessness, liberality, wisdom, energy, vigilance, learning, bravery, virtue in general, freedom from pride, anger, lust, avarice and low pleasures, and capacity and readiness to hear unpalatable words.¹⁹

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 1046.

¹⁸ R.C. Majumdar, ‘Chapter XVII, Political Theory and Administrative System, III System of Administration, Sources other than the Arthashastra’, in *The History and Culture of the Indian People Vol II, The Age of Imperial Unity*, Bombay: Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 4th edition, 1968, pp. 324–325.

¹⁹ Majumdar, ‘Political Theory and Administrative System’, n. 13, pp. 324–25; in note 1, Majumdar refers to the translation, that is, ‘*Kural*, Ed. Lazarus, 382–84, 387–89, 390, 431–432, 436’.

The king must be accessible to all people, must personally conduct the administration, examine cases and give decisions.²⁰

The need for consultation is emphasised and the qualifications and duties of the chief officers of State are dwelt upon in the manner of the *Arthashastra*.²¹

On ambassadors, the *Kural* reads like an echo of the *Arthashastra*.²²

On forts and on the army the *Kural* is feeble, but in line with *Arthashastra*. Tiruvalluvar's sayings on espionage might, with slight alterations, pass for those of Kautilya: 'A spy and a book of laws are the eyes of a king.'²³

Though avowedly an ethical treatise, the *Kural*, when dealing with diplomatic or foreign affairs, betrays the same lack of moral considerations as Kautilya. Its opportunism and Machiavellian precepts are exactly parallel to the maxims of the *Arthashastra*.²⁴

The brief extracts, given above, show commonality in essential good qualities in the king and the constituent elements of a state (the seven *prakritis*) and diplomatic practices etc. as in *arthashastra* tradition and all subsequent text on *niti* and statecraft. However, the *Kural*, in no way, can be called a mirror image of *Arthashastra* (as will be seen later). Further, Majumdar's comparison of the *Kural* with Machiavellianism may not be true. Many authors surveyed in this chapter, as also my own chapters in Part II, provide ample evidence to show just the

²⁰ Ibid., p. 325; in note 2, corresponding translations are listed: '520, 547–50, 561, 568. See also 551–55, 563–67 on righteous rule.'

²¹ Ibid.; in note 3, corresponding translations are listed: '631–35, 638–40, 643, 646, 655, 660, 675'.

²² Ibid.; in note 4, corresponding translations are listed: '681–82, 685–86'.

²³ Ibid.; in notes 5, 6 and 7, corresponding translations are listed: '742–50; 761–62, 764, 766–80; 581'.

²⁴ Ibid.; in note 8, corresponding translations are listed: '471–74, 488–90'.

opposite.²⁵ Possibly, the closest analysis of the balancing of moral aspects in statecraft is that of Rajagopalachari, covered earlier.²⁶

CHARLES DREKMEIER

Points made by Drekmeier on the *Kural* are:

1. *Tirrukkural* (*Kural*) is the only Tamil text ‘claimed by all religious sects of India, contains general reference to the science of artha.’²⁷
2. Tiruvalluvar was a native of Madura. ‘The work, which belongs to the fourth or fifth century A.D., owes much to Sanskrit studies, and particularly to the Arthashastra’ (note *n* at page 218: ‘Note for example, Chapter 74 and 75, which correspond closely to *Arthashastra* II, 1 and II, 3 respectively [Greatness of Kingdom and On Fort]).’²⁸
3. He may have been a weaver by profession, of which there is no confirmation.

There is not even complete agreement on whether the work is anti-Brahmanical or not. Its author was, according to legend, a pariah. Nilakanta Sastri, (*A History of South India from Prehistoric Times to the Sixteenth Century*, London, 1929, p. 349) believes him to have been a learned Jaina divine.²⁹

4. ‘Perhaps one difference between the early arthashastra work of Kautilya and the later Tamil version is that the latter does not appear to be a part of “mirror of princes” literature.’³⁰ The *Kural* is both

²⁵ See A. Appadorai given later in the chapter as example.

²⁶ Rajagopalachari, ‘The Tiru-K-Kural’, n. 8, p. 530.

²⁷ Charles Drekmeier, *Kingship and Community in Early India*, Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1962, p. 217.

²⁸ Ibid, pp. 217–18.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 217, footnote *i* and *m*.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 218.

for the common man and the prince. Drekmeier is very right in contrasting the *Kural* with mirror of princes literature. This is a very important aspect due to its moral overtone and thus, it is meant for all.

5. '[I]n policy considerations Tiruvalluvar is willing to place moral principle in the wake of expediency.'³¹
6. *Prakerits* are the same as in Kautilya's *Arthashastra*. There is mention of diplomats and the qualities and attributes.³²
7. 'In foreign policy the *Kural* is again reminiscent of Kautilya: "Strive not with the powerful, but against those that are weaker than thyself carry on the war without relaxing even for one moment".'³³
8. Also:

There is the same reluctance to allow moral considerations to rule diplomatic conduct that characterized the *Arthashastra*. In order to judge the enemy's capabilities it is essential to calculate the resources required in an undertaking, to evaluate one's own sources of power and those of the ally as well as those of the foe. The proper timing of campaigns is of crucial importance as is patience (and even the willingness to retreat—as a fighting ram draws back before attack). It is as necessary that the place be favourable as that proper time is chosen.³⁴

9. "Glory is not for the unwatchful".³⁵

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., p. 219.

³³ Ibid., note 36, *Kural* 861.

³⁴ Ibid., note 37, *Kural* 471 ff., 481 ff., 491 ff. These correspond to power, time, and place.

³⁵ Ibid., note 38, *Kural* 533.

Drekmeier's quotes at points 5, 7 and 8 show that for reason of the state, the moral had to be weighed with due care. In terms of political realism, the *Kural* is thus a very practical text on statecraft. Yet, moral arguments are comprehensively spread across the text and are a central feature of the *Kural*.

R.N. DANDEKAR

Dandekar, first, compares the text of Kamandaka's *Nitisbastra* (The Essence of Policy), which followed Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, and then, very much like other historians of that era like R.C. Majumdar, terms the *Kural* like Kautilya's *Arthashastra*.

The *Essence of Policy*...which also is traditionally ascribed to the Gupta period (A.D. C. 400), is but a metrical conspectus of Kautilya's *Treatise on Material Gain*. Its author shows no originality whatsoever nor are any traces to be found in it of any practical experience of governmental administration. The *Essence of Policy* indicates on the one hand the unique sway which Kautilya's work held over ancient Indian polity, and on the other, the general decline of political thought in the succeeding periods. The same may be said of the *Kural*, a comprehensive work in Tamil by Tiruvalluvar, which deals with the three ends of man. This work probably dates from A.D. 450–500, and like most of Tamil literature produced in that period, shows unmistakable influence of earlier Sanskrit works. Even a casual perusal of the section on polity in the *Kural* would make it quite evident that Tiruvalluvar was closely acquainted with Kautilya's *Treatise* and has derived his inspiration and material from that work. Contrary to our expectations, therefore, the *Kural* does not contain any political thought which can be characterized as peculiar to South India.³⁶

³⁶ R.N. Dandekar, 'Artha, the Second End of Man', in William Theodore de Bary, Stephen Hay, Royal Weiler and Andrew Yarrow (compilers), *Sources of Indian Traditions*, New York: Colombia University Press, 1958, pp. 239–40.

K. APPADURAI

Appadurai narrates how in the case of *Muppal* (the triple path), the ancient name of the work of *Tirukkural* of Tiruvalluvar, ‘there is not as single literary work in Tamil from the days of the Tolkappiyam and the Sangam Classics to the national poems of Bharati and Bharatidasan of our own day, that has not paid its tribute to Tiruvalluvar.’³⁷ For Appadurai, the *Kural* is both universal and modern. A summary of main points made by Appadurai is given next:

1. ‘Alfred Schweitzer reads the influence of Tiruvalluvar’s thoughts and ideas in the evolution of India’s religion and culture through the ages.’³⁸ As to its age, Appadurai makes an important point and it seems agrees with Alfred Schweitzer that maxims of the *Kural* existed long before him, even before the Vedas, and he codified them later ‘in literary form of Tirukkural as we see it’.³⁹
2. He further states:

That Tirukkural is no out-and-out ethics or stray maxims has however been recognised by a picked few. Among the early eulogists of Tirukkural (collected for us in the Tiruvalluva Malai, which is not later than the 9th century A.D.) one (Madurai Tamil Naganar) has chosen to call it an encyclopaedia.

In this work one can see everything;

There is nothing it does not contain.⁴⁰

³⁷ K. Appadurai, *The Mind and Thought of Tiruvalluvar*, Madras: Sekar Pathippakam, 1966, p. 1.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 6.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 7.

3. The *Kural* is 'considered as a Veda or Bible and has often been called the Bible of the Tamils. It has also been styled as *Podu Marai* or the Bible of All Humanity.'⁴¹

4. Appadurai remarks:

As we see in the West a full-blooded culture of ancient days of Greece and Rome and a revival of it in our own days, we see in Tirukkural, Tolkappiyam and the Sangam classics of Tamil and the Upanishads of the Older Sanskrit, glimpses of a Glory that was East, a revival of which is beginning only in our days. A study of Tirukkural afresh in the light of this ancient period of the East, and research in the spheres of the literature and the culture of the Age of Tirukkural can alone bring that Golden Age of the East back within our reach.⁴²

5. Although the final goal of *moksha* is not mentioned, the *Kural* in a way leads to that path as well:

A fourth entity called Vidu in Tamil that corresponds to the Moksha of the Sankritists, is added to the Triad or the Three-fold Path to make it a Tetrad or a Four-fold Path (the Narpal)...In reality Vidu is the summation of all the other three units, but it is more than that. It is the basic governing part of all three put together.⁴³

This dual role of the *Kural* is unique as, according to Appadurai, it is both 'other-worldly' and 'this worldly'. No other text in Indian traditions seems to have this deep philosophical flexibility. Taking this argument further and with an understanding of all Tamil literature having a sophisticated philosophical classification as *aham* (subjective) and *puram* (objective), Appadurai continues: 'the Aham–Puram classification cuts

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 9.

⁴² Ibid., p. 19.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 32.

across the seven *Tinai*s (the five regional and the two non-regional *tinai*s).⁴⁴ With such deep entwining in the concepts of Tamil literature, style and philosophy, it is understandable that besides just dealing with the three concepts of *aram*, *porul* and *inbam*, ‘*Tirukkural* is called *Marai* (Mystic Work) as well as *Veda* (Bible).’⁴⁵

S. GOPALAN

Gopalan, a scholar of philosophy is from that school which avers that the *Kural* is not at all a mirror of Kautilya’s *Arthashastra*.⁴⁶ He argues that ‘originality of Tiruvalluvar is completely overlooked by scholars’ such as Vaiyapuri Pillai⁴⁷:

One of the unfortunate misunderstandings about the *Kural*, according to us, consists in equating the concept of *aram* with *dharma*, *porul* with *artha* and *kaman* with the meaning given in the term *kama* in the *Kama-Sutra* and drawing the conclusion that Valluvar’s philosophy is derived entirely from Sanskritic sources dealing with *dharma*, *artha* and *kama*. Vaiyapuri Pillai has thus misunderstood and misread the *Kural*.⁴⁸

We need to pause and consider recent scholarship on similarities between the *Kural* and the *Arthashastra*. This aspect will be considered when we come to Subbarayalu later in the chapter. Be that as it may, the scholarship of Gopalan has important arguments which are worth considering

Gopalan avers that according to tradition and legends, Tiruvalluvar was a weaver by profession and lived in Mylapore in Madras city. On

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 33.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 35.

⁴⁶ S. Gopalan, *The Social Philosophy of Tirukkural*, Delhi and Madras: Affiliated East-West Press Pvt. Ltd, 1979, p. 6.

⁴⁷ Vaiyapuri Pillai, *History of Tamil Language and Literature*, Madras: New Century Book House, 1956.

⁴⁸ Gopalan, *The Social Philosophy of Tirukkural*, n. 45, p. 6.

his visit to Madura to present his work to the gathering of poets during the reign of Pandyan King Vamca Cekhara, the high-caste assembly did not accept him. Tiruvalluvar then requested to lay his books at the end of the seat and:

On his request being granted, the book was placed where the poet should have sat and the whole bench at once disappeared leaving the learned professors afloat in the lotus tank. Realizing then the worth of the poet, they sang in praise of Tiruvalluvar and the song came to be known as *Tiruvalluvamalai* (Garland of Tiruvalluvar).⁴⁹

Gopalan admits that it is difficult to know his place of birth, parents, caste and so on. An interesting comparison is done here by Gopalan (in a footnote) with Kautilya:

It is possible that though during the *cankam* age the word *valluvar* had no reference to the 'untouchable' class, the word gradually lost its original significance and began to be referred to those who proclaimed the orders and commands promulgated by the king by beat of drums from the back of an elephant. It is thus possible that the author of the *Kural* held such a position in the Pandyan court. His eminence in the literary world might have overshadowed his official greatness just as Kautilya's fame is more due to his *Artha-Sastra* than to his ministership under the great King Chandragupta.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 23–24. Gopalan qualifies this in note 14:

Even though the story is perhaps not historically true, it is significant to note that it could last even the most devastating attack of critics and vindicate its position among scholars. The *Tiruvalluvamalai* was, very likely, a composition of a much later date, but it reflects the intentions of the Tamil literati to show that all outstanding Tamil poets must accord recognition to the *Kural*.

Ibid., p. 34, note 14.

⁵⁰ note 12, pp. 35–36.

The style is of the classic the *Kural-venpa* form'.⁵¹ Technically:

'Kural' in the Tamil language literally means 'anything short' and refers to couplet-form. It is interesting to find that the *kural*-form is comparable to *sutra*-style adopted in Sanskrit literature to convey ethical and philosophical ideas...brevity (in the case of the *Kural*) is executed almost with a vengeance...It should also be noted that *kural*, unlike *sutra* form, is elegant poetry, a work of art.⁵²

Gopalan clarifies that in his study, 'the normative rather than the empirical approach to society shall be taken'.⁵³ However, he sees both the normative and empirical in the *Kural* to argue: "The intertwining of the normative and the empirical approaches to society found in the classic seems to be intriguing especially if we pose to ourselves the question: "Is the *Kural*'s approach to man and society empirically oriented or is it normative-idealistic?"⁵⁴ Considered in an integrated manner, Gopalan says that the *Kural* has normative-empirical approach. The most empirical aspect may be that the *Kural* recognizes multi-religious and multicultural reality of the country. As Gopalan notes, 'the non-sectarian tendency of the *Kural* is found reflected in its accepting Brahmanism, Jainism and Buddhism on the one hand and, on the other, refusing to be reduced to any one of these religions, in their narrower meaning'.⁵⁵

Unlike *The Gazetteer of India* quoted earlier which places the *Kural* as *Sankhya* philosophy, to the question, 'does the *Kural* belong to any school of Indian philosophy?', Gopalan argues that '*Tirukkural* eludes a simplistic description...to categorize the philosophy of Tiruvalluvar

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 24.

⁵² note 16, p. 37.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 29.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 33.

in terms of the well-known schools of Indian philosophy is to do scant justice.⁵⁶ Gopalan sees the *Kural* on its own merit. Gopalan goes on to elaborate in detail (in notes 3 to 5) the terms such as Brahmanism, Aryan and Hinduism. On Brahmanism, Gopalan quotes from *The Encyclopaedia Americana*, Vol IV, 1973, which refers to Brahmanism as:

“the most ancient and orthodox core of traditional Hinduism as expressed in the religious scriptures known as the Veda and related materials.” The important point about the article in our context is that it maintains that the post-Vedic era which exhibits the growth of religious and philosophical ideas under the over-arching authority of the Veda also be considered Brahmanism and instances of *Manu Dharma-Sastra* to be representative of classical Brahmanism.

On Aryan, Gopalan states the most obvious: ‘It is now increasingly being realized the term Aryan and Dravidian probably stand more for groups of languages than for divergent races pitched against one another for asserting their superiority.’ On Hinduism, Gopalan, based on Wilfred Cantwell Smith’s *The Meaning and End of Religion*, New York: The New American Library of World Literature, 1964, writes about the complexity as it relates to a ‘river’ or Sindh or Indus known to the Greeks, indicating a territory around that river as ‘India’, a term used by foreigners and not internally. ‘The term “Hindu” as a religious designation was developed by the Muslim invaders in the second millennium A.D.’

Gopalan’s core argument is that the *Kural* is representing the proto-Hinduism: ‘Proto-Hinduism may be effectively used to refer to the world of ideas which were linguistically pre-Sanskritic (not non-Sanskritic), culturally pre-Aryan (not non-Aryan) and religiously pre-Brahmanical (not non-Brahmanical).’⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 41.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 42.

A. APPADORAI

Appadorai, a great scholar of world politics, introduced in the early years of post-independence, the study of international relations at universities, including the Jawaharlal Nehru University. Besides his interest and vast knowledge of Indian traditional texts,⁵⁸ he also authored books on India's foreign policy.⁵⁹ His main observations on the *Kural* are:⁶⁰

1. Following the *Mahabharata* and *Arthashastra* traditions, Tiruvalluvar greatly emphasised the importance of chastisement, the punishment to be awarded carefully and impartially by the king.⁶¹ In other words, *danda* has to be regulated by *dharmā* to ensure rule of law.

2. Further,

The qualities and duties of ministers are more or less the same in *Kural* as in *Arthashastra* or *Kamandakeya Nitisara*; the ministers should be well-versed in the science of state craft and art of diplomacy, possess sound knowledge of world affairs, be prompt and impartial in decision-making and be the true well-wisher of the king.⁶²

3. Government officials should be chosen 'after putting them into the fourfold test of virtue, wealth, pleasure and fear. The men of good character, high born and virtuous should be chosen as government officials.'⁶³

⁵⁸ A. Appadorai, *Indian Political Thinking through the Ages*, New Delhi: Khama Publishers, 1992.

⁵⁹ For example, A. Appadorai, *National Interest and India's Foreign Policy*, Delhi: Kalinga Publications, 1992.

⁶⁰ See A. Appadorai, 'Tiruvalluvar's Tiru-k-kural', in *India Political Thinking through the Ages*, n. 58, pp. 91–101.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 91

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

4. Also,

Unlike other ancient classical works, verses in *Kural* are not addressed to the king or his ministers alone. It is not a hand-book primarily meant for the king, but a treatise on the art of living equally useful to the common people. In the chapter on citizenship, the author advises the individual to put himself at the service of community and to identify his interests with those of the community. This piece of advice is very much relevant than ever as good citizenship and service to the nation is the crying need of today.⁶⁴

Here, Appadorai makes this important distinction (as has been done by Rajagopalachari, Drekmeyer and Gopalan) that the *Kural* is not just a mirror of princes-like text but also for the lay person.

Appadorai then reproduces selected text translated and rearranged by Rajagopalachari⁶⁵ under six heads: (i) Individual and Community; (ii) Importance of the State and Science of Politics; (iii) Essentials of a Good State; (iv) Qualities and Duties of Ministers; (v) Qualities and Duties of the Ruler; and (vi) War, Peace and Diplomacy.

Appadorai shows the connection between foreign policy and morality in the *Kural*. He quotes a passage from the *Kural*, verse 10 of chapter 66, 'Purity of Action', which features in part II on 'Wealth or Artha' (*porul* in Tamil) as translated by Rajagopalachari: 'To seek to further the welfare of the State by enriching it through fraud and falsehood is like storing water in an unburnt mud pot and hoping to preserve it.'⁶⁶ Other translations of the same are as follows:

1. Rev. W.H. Drew and Rev. John Lazarus translate verse 10, chapter 66, 'On Uprightness of Action' as: '(For a minister) to protect (his

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Rajagopalachari, *Kural: The Great Book of Tiru-Valluvar*, n. 4.

⁶⁶ Appadorai, *National Interest and India's Foreign Policy*, n. 59, pp. 4–5.

king) with wealth obtained by foul means is like preserving a vessel of wet clay filling it with water.⁶⁷

2. S.M. Diaz and N. Mahalingam translate this as: 'Water cannot be treated long in an unbaked mud-pot. So too, wealth acquired by wrong-doing will not last.'⁶⁸

At no place does the *Kural* have passages or implicit arguments such as 'ends justify means'. The moral approach is an important contribution of this tradition, as highlighted by Appadorai in his study of India's foreign policy. It also is proof that it not a Machiavellian text as was pointed out earlier in the understanding of Majumdar.

TAKANOBU TAKAHASHI

Takahashi has written a very detailed essay on the *Kural*.⁶⁹ In the introduction to the volume, the editor, Noboru Karashima, summarizes Takahashi's essay as one which:

examines kingship as revealed from *Tirukkural*, a didactic Tamil classic of fifth century. This work is often referred as the south India (Dravidian) counterpart of Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, as it treats *artha* in addition to *dharma* and *kama*. According to Takahashi, however, *Tirukkural* neither provides us with any prescription for the duties and rights of the king as we see them in the *Arthashastra* nor presents us with the often-supposed ferocious image of early south Indian kings as being a brave warrior. It

⁶⁷ Rev. W.H. Drew and Rev. John Lazarus, *Thirukkural with English Translation*, New Delhi and Chennai: Asian Educational Services, 2014, p. 133.

⁶⁸ S.M. Diaz and N. Mahalingam (eds), *Tirukkural*, with English Translation and Explanation, Vols I and II, Coimbatore: Ramanandha Adigalar Foundation, 2000, reprint 2008, p. 686.

⁶⁹ Takanobu Takahashi, 'The Treatment of King and State in the *Tirukkural*', in Noboru Karashima (ed.), *Kingship in Indian History*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1999, pp. 37–61.

presents, instead, a vague image of the king as an ideal and righteous man.⁷⁰

This introduction, which is centred on the notion of the king being ‘an ideal and righteous man’, is perhaps the most relevant to this study. It also refutes the argument set by other authors that the *Kural* is very much like *Arthashastra*. Let us examine the main arguments and findings of Takahashi.

According to Takahashi, the literature on the *Kural* is in two groups: ‘those that aim to convey the *Kural*’s excellent messages to a broader circle of readers, and those concerned with various issues, such as its date, author, and relationship with Sanskrit treatises on *dharma*, *artha* and *kama*.⁷¹ The present study will focus on the former. To comment on latter is best left to linguists and historians, though some aspects have to be taken note of, like the date, to get an idea of the political and social history of those times. As shown earlier in Chapter 1, the *Kural* belongs to the post-Sangam period from fourth to sixth century CE.

Takahashi has compared the *Kural* with texts such as Kautilya’s *Arthashastra*, as well as other texts and traditions on the seven *prakrit* or constituent elements of the state found in almost all traditions and texts of India dealing with political science and statecraft. However, unlike Kautilya’s *Arthashastra*, the *Kural* has only brief and general features of the concepts and vocabulary, as evident from Takahashi’s subtitled section, ‘The *Kural*’s Less Concrete and Practical or More Abstract and General’.⁷² Take the example of a fort. In Kautilya’s *Arthashastra*, Book II gives many finer details about forts, whereas the *Kural* allots only 10 couplets to forts in chapter 75, ‘On Fort’. Similarly, for the army, Kautilya’s *Arthashastra* has two chapters in Book X, while

⁷⁰ Noboru Karashima, ‘Introduction’, in Noboru Karashima (ed.), *Kingship in Indian History*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1999, p. 3.

⁷¹ Takahashi, ‘The Treatment of King and State in the *Tirukkural*’, n. 69, p. 37.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 41.

the *Kural* condenses it in 20 verses in two chapters (chapter 77, ‘The Excellence of the Army’ and chapter 78, ‘Military Spirit’). Takahashi indicates that such examples show that:

the *Kural*’s treatment of subjects is far less concrete and practical in comparison with KAS (Kautilya’s *Arthashastra*). On the other hand, the *Kural* incorporates in a limited space didactic texts such as 763 or traditional ‘heroic (*puram*) poems’ (actually, all 10 poems in chapter 78 deal with *puram*).

What if (a host of) hostile rats roar like the sea? They will perish at the mere breath of the cobra. (763; Lazarus).⁷³

There is also a style of poem’s relevance to the subject at hand by inclusion of maxims. Some examples highlighted by Takahashi are in Kautilya’s *Arthashastra*, Book IX, ‘The Activity of the King about to March’. This has chapters on ascertainment of three factors: power (9.1.1–16); place (9.1.17–21); and time (9.1.22–25). Takahashi finds a parallel in Valluvar’s chapters 48 (‘Knowing Power’), 49 (‘Knowing the Fitting Time’) and 50 (‘Knowing the Suitable Place’), respectively. However, Takahashi points out subtle difference in that ‘Among the 10 couplets of chapter 48 of the *Kural*, only 471 refers to the topic in a direct way, but others, like 475, mention it maxim-wise:

Let (one) weigh well the strength of the deed (he purposes to do), his own strength, the strength of his enemy, and the strength of his allies, and let him act. (471; Drew, adaptation by Takahashi)

The axle tree of a bandy, loaded only with peacock’s feathers will break, if it be greatly overloaded. (475; Drew)⁷⁴

⁷³ Ibid., p. 42.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 43. Interestingly, regarding the popularity among the people today, David Shulman observes that some useful advice from *Kural* is displayed prominently and this one on the city buses near the driver’s seat: ‘The feather of a peacock will break the axle of an overloaded cart.’ See David Shulman, *Tamil: A Biography*, Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016, p. 92.

In chapter 49 on time, when compared to Kautilya's *Arthashastra* 9.1.22–25, Takahashi finds a similar practice:

the *Kural* treats the topic in a generalised, less practical, or maxim-like way, which gives us the impression that the poems relevant to the subject are interspersed among maxim-like verses, and *not* vice versa:

A crow will overcome an owl in the day time; so the king who would conquer his enemy must have (a suitable) time. (481; Drew)

The power of one who has a large army will perish, if he goes into ground where only a small army can act. (498; Drew)⁷⁵

Another feature observed by Takahashi is that the *Kural* has a nominal treatment of a subject as seen in the five chapters (79–83) on friendship with allies:

but one thing is clear: Valluvar's less concrete and elaborate treatment of subjects than Kautilya's is not due to limited space in the *Kural* but rather to his approach to them. That is, Valluvar did not *deliberately* go into elaborate detail about political subjects, since although he allocated 50 couplets to the subject, he still did not refer to it.⁷⁶

Takahashi's conclusion, in his essay, sums up the features:

Valluvar's concern was to deal with men's personal or social virtues in general, adopting the framework of Sanskrit treatises on *dharma* and *artha*. . . In other words . . . Valluvar deals mainly with the virtues in terms of good, or even idealised citizenry, and not in terms of caste-based or *asrama* based *svadharma* and hence when he discusses subjects in politics, it appears that he does not address the king or kshatriya, but simply a man.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Takahashi, 'The Treatment of King and State in the *Tirukkural*', n. 69, p. 43; emphasis in original.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 45. emphasis in original.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

Further, based on the work of H.A. Popley,⁷⁸ Takahashi concludes:

Therefore, in spite of the fact that many parallel ideas or matching passages are to be found in the Sanskrit treatises and the *Kural*, it seems *as if* ‘the *Kural* is so remarkably free from Sanskrit words’ [Popley: 26], and this is why it does not provide us with so much information on politics as expected from its content structure.⁷⁹

There is also a discussion by Takahashi on other features: whether all the couplets have two meanings; his motive for composition; Valluvar’s adherence to the ‘threefold division’; and its influence in later periods. On the couplet having two meanings, it is argued:

it is not always correct to define the *Kural* as a carefully structured, integrated work under a coherent and consistent plan...commentators admit the total perfect structure of the *Kural* and present a single ‘structural meaning’ to each couplet, such that eventually, its second part, *Porutpal*, seems as if it were a perfect treatise on politics.⁸⁰

On the question of threefold division, the first two books, that is, virtue (*aram*) and wealth (*porul*), are generalized and nominal. He describes the third, ‘love’ following exactly the Tamil tradition of love poetry (*akam*) which is indigenous to Tamil and has almost nothing to do with the Sanskrit tradition of *kama*.⁸¹ On the question of Valluvar’s motivation in writing the *Kural*, various factors are listed, of which he being a Jain is an important one, in a period when there were social and cultural changes:

Valluvar might have been influenced by the social and cultural milieu of the Tamil country of his times when it was in the

⁷⁸ H.A. Popley, *The Sacred Kural of the Cankam Age: Literary and Tribal*, Madras: University of Madras, 1931.

⁷⁹ Takahashi, ‘The Treatment of King and State in the *Tirukkural*’, n. 69, p. 45; emphasis in original.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

process of change due to the impact of Aryan or northern culture, religions and languages. Buddhism, Jainism, Brahmanism and Hinduism were trying to gain ascendancy over one another...Buddhism and especially Jainism were flourishing in towns and royal courts before the sixth to seventh century A.D. Saivism as well as Vaishnavism were also on rise.⁸²

On the *Kural*'s influence in later periods, it was and is undoubtedly very popular even to this day. On its influence on politics, Takahashi finds no indication of king and leaders adhering to its concepts with no stone inscriptions (*prasasti*) or copper plates. Takahashi has a serious problem with the interpretation of V. Subrahmaniam.⁸³ He quotes Subrahmaniam's argument:

as the work of a Jain, the *Kural* suffered the same process of slow erosion and absorption in Tamil Nadu as Buddhist philosophy did in the rest of India, neglected by Brahmins and Purohites in south Indian royal courts and even banned from reading by some Saivaites.⁸⁴

Takahashi does not accept this explanation of Subrahmaniam and terms it 'not only insufficient but improper'.⁸⁵ Instead, for Takahashi, Valluvar's approach to political subject is general, universal and timeless and because of this, 'it became an excellent "literary" or "didactic" work'.⁸⁶ I am inclined to accept Takahashi's understanding.

In a postscript, Takahashi admits that little is known about the political and cultural situation. He then engages with, and refutes, the scholarship

⁸² Ibid., p. 50.

⁸³ The first example being V. Subrahmaniam, 'The *Kural*'s Contribution to Political Thought: A New Analysis of *Porutpaal*', in *Proceedings of the First International Conference Seminar of Tamil Studies*, Vol. I, Kuala Lumpur, 1969, pp. 376–88. The second is that of Burton Stein, given in the text.

⁸⁴ Takahashi, 'The Treatment of King and State in the *Tirukkural*', n. 69, p. 51.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

on the situation in those days where ‘some critics describe polity or kingship of classical Tamil as if it were a historical fact’.⁸⁷ Takahashi does not agree with Burton Stein’s⁸⁸ understanding of a culture of fierce warfare to write:

ancient kings were war-like, violent and amoral in an age of fierce warfare [Stein:10] is quite contrary to the impression among those who are familiar with the love (*akam*) poems, comprising more than three-fourth of the total number of classical texts. Apart from their highly conventionalised nature, love poems imply that society of those days had already become, to a great deal, cultured and sophisticated, and people do not seem to have suffered from the ravages of war.⁸⁹

To be fair to Takahashi, he is not rigid on these issues and suggests the need for further studies in this ‘richly rewarding field’.⁹⁰

Y. SUBBARAYALU

The understanding of Subbarayalu has to be compared with the work of Gopalan, quoted earlier. Unlike Gopalan, who argues that the *Kural* has very little to do with Kautilya, Subbarayalu (as mentioned earlier in Chapter 1), finds a reflection and balance in comparison of the *Kural* with Kautilya.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Ibid. Examples are: N. Subrahmanian, *Sangam Polity: The Administration and Social Life of the Sangam Tamils*, revised edition, Madurai: Ennes Publications, 1980; and Burton Stein, ‘All the King’s Mana: Perspectives on Kingship in Medieval South India’, in B. Stein (ed.), *Papers on Medieval South Indian History*, Madras: New Era Publications, 1984 (reprint; original in J.F. Richard [ed.], *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1978, pp. 115–67), pp. 1–67.

⁸⁸ As in *ibid.*

⁸⁹ Takahashi, ‘The Treatment of King and State in the *Tirukkural*’, n. 69, p.53.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁹¹ Y. Subbarayalu, ‘Sangam and Post-Sangam Literature’, in Noboru Karashima (ed.), *A Concise History of South India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 47.

On Sangam literature, Subbarayalu indicates that ‘Most of the works of these poets were ‘discovered’ at end of nineteenth century.’⁹² Other points made are:

1. ‘The main body of Sangam literature comprises eight anthologies (*ettu-tokai*) of shorter poems and ten long songs or lays (*pattu-pattu*)... Poems are classified into two broad categories...namely *akam* or ‘interior’ themes (love and family life) and *puram* or ‘exterior’, that is, worldly (martial and panegyric (themes)).’⁹³
2. On the impact of Sanskrit or northern ideas on Sangam literature, there are two camps of opposing views. First is that of Sanskrit dominance. The main proponent of this view, according to Subbarayalu, is Nilakanta Sastri, who argues that ‘Sanskrit was the magic wand whose touch alone raised Tamil and other Dravidian languages from the patois to the literary level.’⁹⁴ About the other camp of Tamil purists, Subbarayalu’s study indicates: ‘Tamil literary tradition has a hoary antiquity unsullied by Sanskritic culture.’⁹⁵ Subbarayalu then balances to say:

Recent, more sober studies, have identified the nature of the pre-Sanskritic tradition in the south...both early Tamil and Prakrit poetry appear to be refined developments of a common, popular, pre-Aryan oral tradition that must have flourished in the first millennium BCE in the Deccan, the meeting ground of the northern and southern cultures.⁹⁶

3. The 18 minor works (called *kilkanakku*) and the two epics (*kaṇya*), the *Silappatikaram* and the *Manimekalai*, are included in the period between fourth and sixth century CE and are mostly ethical or

⁹² Ibid., p. 43.

⁹³ Ibid., p.44.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 46.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

didactic poetry. As mentioned earlier, the style of writing is in *venpa* metre and in the group of 18 works, ‘the *Tirukkural*, considered to be a book of lofty wisdom, is an outstanding work. The author, Tiruvalluvar, though a Jain by belief, has presented his ideas in a non-partisan way so that each religious group has claimed him as their own.’⁹⁷

4. Moral, as we saw, has great purchase. Accordingly, Subbarayalu adds that:

the Tamil work, *Tirukkural* of circa fifth century takes the personal moral qualities of the king as the quintessential element of kingship. This Jain conception of kingship, as Burton Stein⁹⁸ succinctly put it, differed from the morally neutral conception of the valorous king in early Tamil poetry, on the one hand, and the contingently moral king of the sacrificial, Brahmanical *sastra* and *kavyas* on the other.⁹⁹

DAVID SHULMAN

David Shulman, from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, has used the innovative title, *Tamil: A Biography*,¹⁰⁰ and not ‘history’, as it is a living language. For Shulman, the *Tirukkural* and *The Tale of an Anklet* are the best-known Tamil literary works. The *Kural* is a ‘the miracle of linguistic

⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 46–47. Here, it may be of interest to know that Subbarayalu highlights that *Silappatikaram* (fifth century CE) was authored by the Jain, Ilangovaligal, and *Manimekalai* (sixth century CE) by a Buddhist poet, incorporating Buddhist Jataka tales, and ‘Unlike the *Silappatikaram*, the *Manimekalai* is quiet outspoken in religious propagation and underlines the fact that there were lots of polemical disputes and discussions developing among adherents of rival religions’, *ibid.* For chronology, also see Table 1.1 in Chapter 1.

⁹⁸ Stein, *All the King's Mana*, n. 87, pp. 11–16.

⁹⁹ Y. Subbarayalu, ‘Post-Satavahana and Post-Sangam Polities’, in Noboru Karashima (ed.), *A Concise History of South India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 62.

¹⁰⁰ Shulman, *Tamil: A Biography*, n. 76.

compression in musical, metrical form'.¹⁰¹ He notes that the first two books of the *Kural* were highly popular with Christian missionaries in colonial period in south India, and some translated it. It was thought by them that it had been influenced by 'early Christians, perhaps via Alexandrian or Syria Christians'.¹⁰²

GOVINDASWAMY RAJAGOPAL

Rajagopal's *Etiquette and Ethos: Ethics of Tirukkural and Acarakekavai* (2016) is a recent work on the *Kural*.¹⁰³ Rajagopal elaborates to say:

The concept of virtue has been explained in 380 *kurals*, whereas 700 *kurals* speak at length about the dynamics of politics, qualities of a king as well as the subjects related to individuals. The ideal aspects of human love are aesthetically described in the last 250 *kurals*. On the whole, each *kural* dwells on a particular human quality or principle for the meaningful existence in the world.¹⁰⁴

Rajagopal highlights the features:

It consists of three sections viz. *Aram* (Virtue), *Porul* (Wealth) and *Inbam* (Love). It clearly brings out the ideals of an enchanting family life and the excellence and beauty of ascetic life in the first section. The second section elaborates the procedures of an able administration of a country. The third section deals with the delicate and fine feelings of love. It comprises 133 chapters of ten couplets each with a total of 1330. It has used about 12000 words in total, out of which less than 50 are Sanskrit. This classical ethical work employs as few words as possible i.e. just seven words (always seven cîrs, seven metrical units) in every couplet

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 92.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Govindaswamy Rajagopal, *Etiquette and Ethos: Ethics of Tirukkural and Acarakekavai*, New Delhi: Sun International Publishers, 2016.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 4–5.

to express a universal fact/truth. Not a single syllable is superfluous.¹⁰⁵

On its grandeur, Rajagopal, like other scholars in the past, highlights its non-sectarian philosophy:

Tirukkural (c. A.D. 200–250), ‘the Universal Tamil Scripture’ is composed by Tiruvalluvar in the post-Sangam period. It is the scripture—next only to the *Holy Bible* (Christianity), the *Holy Quran* (Islam) and the *Bhagavad Gita* (Hinduism)—widely translated into more than eighty languages. Its non-sectarian views are its uniqueness... ‘The Maxims of Truth’ is an eternal guiding light to humanity. It preaches ethical values, to live in moral purity, spiritual knowledge and eternal wisdom. The didactic work is a wonderful guide for any individual, be they householder, homemaker, worker, artist, teacher, scholar, industrialist, politician or ruler... The concept of virtue has been explained in 380 *kurals*, whereas 700 *kurals* speak at length about the dynamics of politics, qualities of a king as well as the subjects related to individuals. The ideal aspects of human love are aesthetically described in the last 250 *kurals*. On the whole, each *kural* dwells on a particular human quality or principle for the meaningful existence in the world.¹⁰⁶

THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THIRUKKURAL

The Chennai based Institute of Asian Studies has been engaged with the *Kural* with initiatives for its contemporary outreach at the international level. Third International Conference on Thirukkural was held at New Delhi in September 2019 with the theme ‘Thirukkural for World Peace and Harmony’ (since published).¹⁰⁷ The President, International

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 3–5.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 4–5.

¹⁰⁷ G. John Samuel (editor-in-chief) and G. Rajagopal and V. Murugan (eds), *Souvenir, Third International Conference on Thirukkural: Thirukkural for World Peace and Harmon*, Chennai: Institute of Asian Studies, 2019.

Thirukkural Foundation is Prof. Armoogum Parsuramen from Mauritius who presided. The international advisory committee has members from Scotland, Russia, the US, Hongkong, England, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, China, South Korea, Japan, Qatar, Thailand, Reunion Is, Australia, Canada, Mauritius, France, Hungary and Poland. The Vice President of the Republic of Mauritius, Paramasivum Pillai Vyapoory in his greeting message to the international conference highlights that ‘The Kural’s concern is primarily with the world. Many modern scholars in their enthusiasm and admiration to the sage Thiruvalluvar do call the book a code of Ethics for humanity. Some call it Tamil Vedom, Tamil Bible and the Tamil Koran and so on, but at the same time emphasizing its secular character and universal appeal.’¹⁰⁸ The crux is that for contemporary relevance to peace studies, ‘Thirukkural could help humanity as a guide book to address various conflicts of the day, and also suggest ways of promoting peace, happiness, meaning of human life, healthy relationships and communal harmony which are highly relevant to our contemporary social milieu. It is eminently a book of world peace.’¹⁰⁹

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the understanding and reception of the *Kural* by renowned and ‘heavyweight’ scholars has been attempted. Like any ancient work in India, various views on the date, authorship, context and history are evident. The broad divisions and differences of opinion amongst the scholars are on issues, such as: who was Tiruvalluvar and what was his caste/calling or religion; the *Kural*’s relationship with the *Arthashastra*; its relationship with *moksha* or *vidu*; its relationship with Sanskrit and Tamil; its relationship with the six orthodox schools of

¹⁰⁸ Paramasivum Pillai Vyapoory, ‘Message’, *ibid.*, no page.

¹⁰⁹ G. John Samuel, ‘Thirukkural as an Ethical corpus for World Peace and Harmony’, in G. John Samuel, (editor-in-chief) and G. Rajagopal and V. Murugan (eds), *Souvenir, Third International Conference on Thirukkural: Thirukkural for World Peace and Harmon*, Chennai: Institute of Asian Studies, 2019, no page.

Indian philosophy or *Darshan shastra*; its relationship with all religions of the era; the time period of its composition; and the political and social conditions when the text was written (varying from the ‘dark period’, of warring states, of a normative–empiric approach, with vague image of the king as an ideal and righteous man, the debate on whether it is normative/didactic or empirical). Whatever may be the different findings of the scholars, most agree that the *Kural* is a unique text that combines the triage of *aram*, *porul* and *inbam* in one slim volume and has quintessential Indianness. It is also a work which is both ‘other-worldly’ and ‘this-worldly’. It is brief yet powerful living text of beautiful Tamil poetry—a classical and didactic work which is universal across nations, cultures, ethnicities, caste, class and religions. It is meant not only for the prince as a ‘mirror of prince’ work, but for all humans as individuals or members of a social group. It is also clear that the text deals with the issues and challenges of political violence, the use of force for the state and statecraft. It thus recognizes the institution of wars, diplomacy and related concepts and themes (covered in Part II). Yet, its central argument is towards the enduring values of ethical and moral aspects. Therefore, it is a normative work whose time has come.

Interestingly, unlike classical Sanskrit texts where a number of experts are from the West, it is refreshing to note the deep study and commitment of scholars from Japan and Israel to this Tamil text. As to scholars from India, it seems unfortunate that other than the Tamils from south India, scholars from other regions of India (barring few exceptions of the 1950s and the 1960s) have not dwelt on the *Kural* in a multidisciplinary manner in spite of the fact that it is a work also of Indology, politics, ethics and much more—even an encyclopaedia. As stated earlier in *Tiruvalluvar*: ‘In this work one can see everything; There is nothing it does not contain.’¹¹⁰

It may be that not having knowledge of Tamil creates a mental block. However, this seems just an excuse and an artificial obstacle, a restriction of the linguistic hurdle which can be overcome as most of the Indic

¹¹⁰ Appadurai, note 37.

literature of this genre, in various languages, now have good English translations. Surely, in a country having so many languages and scripts, with good working translations available for the contemporary public with reading habit, the lack of engagement by scholars of disciplines other than Tamil with the *Kural* is surprising and should be acceptable no more by encouraging its study. We leave this issue aside for now and engage with the ‘idea–content’ in the following part on key concepts and themes.

PART II

KEY CONCEPTS AND THEMES

THE STATE AND ITS CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS

THE CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS OF A STATE

The seven constituents of a state (*prakertis*) are found in most texts like Kautilya's *Arthashastra* or Kamandaka's *Nitisashastra*. The seven 'state factors' (*prakertis* or *saptanga*) are: the *svamin* (king or ruler); *amatya* (body of ministers and structure of administration); *janapada* / *rastra* (territory being agriculturally fertile with mines, forest and pastures, water resources and communication system for trade); *durga* / *pura* (fort); *kosa* (treasury); *danda* / *bala* (army); and *mitra* (ally). In the *Kural*, these constituents are spread across the text and not discussed in one chapter.

Chapter 39, 'On Kingly Excellence', in the first verse (381) of *Porutpal*, lists these constituents: 'He who possesses these six things, an army, a people, wealth, ministers, friends and fortress, is a lion among kings.'¹ In verse 381, including the king, the attributes or elements total up to seven for a kingdom. The priority, except for the king, does not match with that of the order of Kautilya or Kamandaka. The reason for this is not clear, or maybe Tiruvalluvar did not find it necessary to prioritize it. However, the chapters which deal with each constituent in the *Kural* follow the same sequence as that of Kautilya and others in Indic traditions:

1. King; chapters 39–63.
2. Ministers; chapters 64–73.

¹ Rev. W.H. Drew and Rev. John Lazarus, *Thirukkural with English Translation*, New Delhi and Chennai: Asian Educational Services, 2014, p. 79.

3. People (like *janpada* for Kautilya); chapter 74, ‘On the Greatness of a Kingdom’.
4. Forts; chapter 75.
5. Wealth; chapter 76.
6. Armies; chapters 77–78.
7. Friends; chapter 79–83.

The aforementioned classification, according to Takanobu Takahashi, ‘was formulated not by the author himself but commentators, but this may reflect the original scheme of the author.’²

SOME ELABORATION ON THE CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS

THE KING

Chapter 39, ‘On Kingly Excellence’, from verses 2 to 10, gives the following attributes: fearlessness; liberality; wisdom; energy; vigilance; learning; bravery; modesty; acquisition of wealth and its protection, followed by guarding it and distributing it; ease of access; not harsh in words; giving with affability; protect all who come to him; he who performs his own duties and protects his subjects; qualities of beneficence, benevolence, rectitude; and care for his people.

*MINISTERS*³

In Chapter 51, ‘On Reflection before Decision’, the first couplet (501) is on the selection criteria of a minister: ‘Let (a minister) be chosen, after he has been tried by means of these four things, his virtue, (love

² Takanobu Takahashi, ‘The Treatment of King and State in the *Tirukkural*’, in Noboru Karashima (ed.), *Kingship in Indian History*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1999, p. 56, note 15.

³ Drew and Lazarus, *Thirukkural with English Translation*, n. 1, p. 129.

of) money, (love of) sexual pleasure, and fear of (losing) life.⁴ The message in the *Kural* is that out of these four things, he must possess the first and be devoid of the next three.

Chapter 64⁵, ‘On Ministry’, corresponds to the *amatyas* of Kautilya. Some of the important qualities of a trustworthy, reliable and good minister are summarized as:

631 The minister is one who can make an excellent choice of means, time, manner of execution, and the difficult undertaking (itself).

632 The minister is one who in addition to the aforesaid five things excels in the possession of firmness, protection of subjects, clearness by learning, and perseverance.

633 The minister is one who can effect discord (among foes), maintain the good-will of his friends and restore to friendship those who have seceded (from him).

634 The minister is one who is able to comprehend (the whole nature of an undertaking), execute it in the best manner possible, and offer assuring advice (in time of necessity).

637 Though you are acquainted with the (theoretical) methods (of performing an act), understand the ways of the world and act accordingly.

638 Although the king be utterly ignorant, it is the duty of the minister to give (him) sound advice.

Clearly, the same attributes are applicable today. In fact, verse 633 is about two of the four *upayas* or methods of Kautilya and other Indian traditions, that is: ‘discord (among foes)’ is *bheda* or sowing dissention

⁴ Ibid., p. 103.

⁵ Ibid., p. 129.

or divide; and ‘maintain the good-will of his friends and restore to friendship those who have seceded (from him)’ approximates *sama* (conciliation).

Chapters 65–68⁶ give in detail the qualities and expectations of a true minister and will be discussed later in Chapter 6 in this monograph, ‘Management and Communication’, as in contemporary times, the qualities are to be imbibed not only by ministers but other leaders in all fields. Here, it suffices to quote a verse from chapter 66, ‘On Uprightness of Action’, as the *Kural* lays importance on morals, not reflecting the Machiavellian adage that ‘ends justify the means’: ‘660 (For a minister) to protect (his king) with wealth obtained by foul means is like preserving a vessel of wet clay filling it with water.’⁷ In Chapter 3, A. Appadorai had made use of this couplet as a bridge between foreign policy and morality.

PEOPLE

Chapter 74 gives the attributes of a kingdom (known as *janpada* in other texts, such as by Kautilya). It comprises of a cohesive society with harmony between the sovereign and the subjects, with varying professions, is endowed with resources, capable of bearing burden from adjoining kingdom and yet pay full tribute to its sovereign, free from starvation, epidemics and destructive foes/internal enemies, adequate water resources, well-situated hills and an indestructible fort, as well as endowed with five ornaments of a kingdom, namely, freedom from epidemics, wealth, produce, happiness and protection (to subjects).

FORT

Next is chapter 75, ‘On Fort’.⁸ This is like the *durga* (fort) of Kautilya, which is the centre of power and where treasury is kept. Today, we

⁶ Ibid., pp. 131–37.

⁷ Ibid., p. 133.

⁸ Ibid., p. 151.

call it urban centres and infrastructure. The fort is to be well constructed from a defensive point of view and for being self-contained and well stocked in munitions and supplies for prolonged siege. In verse 741, it is stated: 'A fort is an object of importance to those who march (against their foes) as well as to those who, through fear (of pursuers), would seek shelter.'⁹ A great deal of capacity to overcome an adversary, internal cohesion and use of appropriate strategies and excellence of action are considered necessary in the verses in this chapter.

WEALTH

Chapter 76¹⁰ is 'On the Importance of Wealth' or *kaśh*. The importance of wealth, as the title mentions, is recognized to be a vital constituent. In verse 754, it is stated that means of acquiring wealth are to be just and moral: 'The wealth acquired with knowledge of the proper means and without foul practices will yield virtue and happiness.'¹¹ Later, verse 756 lays out: 'Unclaimed wealth, wealth acquired by taxes, and wealth (got) by conquest of foes are (all) the wealth of the king.'¹² This is fair enough and can be understood as 'proper means' of verse 754. These are aspects of statecraft and realism, indicating that it is a practical advice. The final verse, 760, sums up the philosophy: 'To those who have honestly acquired an abundance of riches, the other two (virtue and pleasure), are things easy (of acquisition).'¹³ This squares up with the north Indian Kautilyan argument of *artha* or wealth being a top concern of the text, *Arthashastra*, without ignoring the balance with *dharma* (moral) and *kama* (desire/pleasure). Kautilya's *Arthashastra* (9.7.60) states: 'Material gain, spiritual good and pleasures: this is the triad of gain.'¹⁴

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 153.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ R.P. Kangle, *The Kautiliya Arthashastra, Part II: An English Translation with Critical and Explanatory Notes*, 2nd edition, 7th reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2010, p. 431.

ARMY

Chapter 77, ‘The Characteristics of a Good Army’,¹⁵ and chapter 78, ‘On Warrior’,¹⁶ have verses regarding the army and military virtues. It is necessary to reproduce all the 10 verses of each of these chapters. These will be followed by my understanding of some of these verses for contemporary times.

The verses from chapter 77 on the characteristics of a good army are:

761 The army which is complete in (its) parts and conquers without fear of wounds is the chief wealth of the king.

762 Ancient army can alone have the valour which makes it stand by its king at the time of defeat, fearless of wounds and unmindful of its reduced strength.

763 What if (a host of) hostile rats roar like the sea? They will perish at the mere breath of the cobra.

764 That indeed is an army which has stood firm of old without suffering destruction or deserting (to the enemy).

765 That indeed is an army which is capable of offering a united resistance, even if Yama advances against it with fury.

766 Valour, honour, following in the excellent footsteps (of its predecessors) and trustworthiness, these four alone constitute the safeguard of an army.

767 That is an army which knowing the art of warding off an impending struggle can bear against the dustvan (of a hostile force).

768 Though destitute of courage to fight and strength (to endure), an army may yet gain renown by the splendour of its appearance.

¹⁵ Drew and Lazarus, *Thirukkural with English Translation*, n. 1, p. 155.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

769 An army can triumph (over its foes) if it is free from diminution; irremediable aversion and poverty.

770 Though an army may contain a large number of permanent soldiers, it cannot last if it has no generals.

Takahashi notices correctly that verse 769 matches with the Kautilyan *vysanas* or disasters/calamities of the army of Book VIII. The point being made here is on the brevity of the *Kural* and the fact that its 'treatment of subjects is far less concrete and practical in comparison with KAS (Kautilya's *Arthashastra*)'.¹⁷ He also shows that verse 763 is a 'heroic (*puram*) poem'. Indeed, as pointed out by Takahashi, 'all 10 poems in chapter 78 deal with *puram*'.¹⁸

Some of the above-listed qualities are relevant even today. The verses mention control of fear of injury and death and cohesiveness of the regimental spirit. Also, a very high value is placed on 'valour, honour, following in the excellent footsteps (of its predecessors) and trustworthiness'. All this is matching with the need in contemporary time to keep the regimental traditions alive and the role of battle honours and veterans. C. Rajagopalachari translates verse 762 as: 'Ancient army can alone have the valour which makes it stand by its king at the time of defeat, fearless of wounds and unmindful of its reduced strength.'¹⁹ The Madras Regiment, the Madras Engineering Group and other units/subunits in the armoured corps, mechanized infantry and regiment of artillery having one class or fixed class composition of south Indian communities may well have these verses included in their training routine for recruits and young officers. The last verse, 770, will surely please the generals.

¹⁷ Takahashi, 'The Treatment of King and State in the *Tirukkural*', n. 2, p. 42.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ C. Rajagopalachari, *Kural: The Great Book of Tiru-Valluvar*, 14th edition, Mumbai: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 2017(1965), p. 160.

Chapter 78, 'On Warrior'²⁰, has the following 10 verses:

771 O my foes, stand not before my leader; (for) many are those who did so but afterwards stood (in the shape of) statues.

772 It is more pleasant to hold the dart that has missed an elephant than that which has hit hare in the forest.

773 The learned say that fierceness (in contest with a foe) is indeed great valour; but to become a benefactor in case of accident (to a foe) is the extreme (limit) of that valour.

774 The hero who, after casting the lance in his hand on an elephant, comes (in search of another) will pluck the one (that sticks) in his body and laugh (exultingly).

775 Is it not a defeat to the valiant to wink and destroy their ferocious look when a lance is cast at them (by their foe)?

776 The hero will reckon among wasted days all those on which he had not received severe wounds.

777 The fastening of ankle-ring by those who desire a world-wide renown and not (the safety of) their lives is like adorning (themselves).

778 The heroes who are not afraid of losing their life in a contest will not cool their ardour, even if the king prohibits (their fighting).

779 Who would reproach with failure those who seal their oath with their death?

780 If (heroes) can so die as to fill with tears the eyes of their rulers, such a death deserves to be obtained even by begging.

²⁰ Drew and Lazarus, *Thirukkural with English Translation*, n. 1, p. 157.

Chapter 78 has two relevant passages. Verse 771, according to Rajagopalachari's commentary, is the custom of setting up memorials in stone for those killed in battle.²¹ This is a practice followed, with variations, across nations. Verse 773, akin to Geneva Conventions, mirrors Kautilya's *Arthshastara* and has been translated by S.M. Diaz and N. Mahalingam as: 'It is a soldier's virtue to be fierce and pitiless to the foe, but if he is down, It is virtue of a higher grade to be compassionate.'²² The same verse is commented by M. Rajaram as: 'The great manliness is to fight the battle with courage/But it's better to show mercy to the humble enemies.'²³ This indicates that warfare was not targeted on the destruction of the people and land, but the armies clashed only for a decision.

FRIENDS

The *Kural* has five chapters on friendship: Chapter 79, 'On Friendship'; Chapter 80, 'On the Choice of Friends'; Chapter 81, 'On Intimacy'; Chapter 82, 'On Evil Friendship'; and Chapter 83, 'On False Friendship'.²⁴ Friendship is at two levels. One is personal and the other is with a political ally or *mitra*. These chapters address friendship at a personal level, though in latent terms it can extrapolated for a political ally or *mitra*. For example, in Chapter 81, verse 806 says, 'Those who stand within the limits (of true friendship) will not even in adversity give up the intimacy of long-standing friends' and verse 810 adds, 'Even enemies will love those who have never changed their affection to their long-standing friends.'²⁵

²¹ Ibid., p. 162.

²² S.M. Diaz and N. Mahalingam (eds), *Tirukkural*, with English Translation and Explanation, Vol. II, Coimbatore: Ramanandha Adigalar Foundation, 2008, p. 792.

²³ M. Rajaram, *Thirukkural: Pearls of Inspiration*, New Delhi: Rupa, 2009, p. 158.

²⁴ Drew and Lazarus, *Thirukkural with English Translation*, n. 1, pp. 159–67.

²⁵ Drew and Lazarus, *Thirukkural with English Translation*, n. 1, p. 163.

CONCLUSION

Remarkably, what makes up a state are the known constituents as mentioned in this chapter. This classification is very logical and the priority pragmatic; it is found in all texts of political science from India. However, the *Kural* is no moral utopian sermon. It recognizes and cannot wish away political realism in a world where, till date, there is no world society or world government. Thus, the necessity for alliance (friends) and diplomacy, armed forces supported by treasury, secured in urban centres led by able king advised by competent ministers, with a productive countryside and upright people. If all conditions are met with political virtue and legitimacy, then a state can be prosperous and ensure good life. Subsequent chapters examine key concepts and themes.

IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL QUALITIES: SELF-CONTROL, CHARACTER BUILDING AND LEADERSHIP

The first building block of a society is the human. In contemporary times, both education and training have a vital role to play not only for the leaders but also for citizens at large. Inculcation of the habit of self-control and building up of a good moral and upright character is a vital function of education, starting from the young age. While some may inherit these qualities from family traditions, not all may have been exposed to it in a scientific manner. This can be best achieved by good education and training based on the guidelines provide in the *Kural*.

It is remarkable that personal qualities, such as self-control, control of anger and character building, are found in almost all ancient traditions in India. For example, in Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, Book I, 'Concerning the Topic of Training', chapter Three, section 1 (Continuation of Enumeration of the Science), *sutra* 1.3.13 has this important message for all: '(Duties) common to all are; abstaining from injury (to living creatures), truthfulness, uprightness, freedom from malice, compassionateness and forbearance.'¹ Later, in chapter Six, section 3, 'Control over the Senses' (Casting out the Group of Six Enemies), 1.6.1 has the following reasoning for self-control:

Control over the senses, which is motivated by training in the sciences, should be secured by giving up lust, anger, greed, pride,

¹ R.P. Kangle, *The Kautiliya Arthashastra, Part II: An English Translation with Critical and Explanatory Notes*, 2nd edition, 7th reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2010, p. 8.

arrogance and fool-hardiness. 2. Absence of improper indulgence in (the pleasure of) sound, touch, colour, taste and smell by the senses of hearing, touch and sight, the tongue and sense of smell, means of control over senses; or, the practice of (this) science (gives such control). 3 For, the whole of this science means control over senses.²

The *Kural*, likewise, has touched upon this subject. Rather, it is spread across both the books. One major difference from Kautilya is that he talks only to the king and the elite, whereas the *Kural* is both for the king and the common person. The *Kural* not only lists them in the first book on *aram* but also has some couplets in the second book on *porul*, as given next.

ON SELF-CONTROL

The *Kural* has chapter 13, 'On Self-control'.³ Self-control is considered as a treasure, as given in verses 122 and 124: 'Let self-control be guarded as treasure; there is no great source of good for man for that'; and 'More lofty than a mountain will be the greatness of that man who, without swerving from his proper state, controls himself.'⁴

Other chapters linked to personal qualities and control over self are:

1. Chapter 14, 'Propriety of Conduct',⁵ which is called the 'seed of virtue' in verse 138.
2. Chapter 16, 'On Patience',⁶ emphasizes that greatness is a function of patience, compassion and even control over hunger.

² Ibid., p. 12.

³ Rev. W.H. Drew and Rev. John Lazarus, *Thirukkural with English Translation*, New Delhi and Chennai: Asian Educational Services, 2014, p. 27.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., p. 29.

⁶ Ibid., p. 33.

3. Chapter 17, 'Against Envy',⁷ in verse 170 sums it up: 'Never have the envious become great; never have those who are free from envy been without greatness.'
4. Chapters 20, 'Against Profitless Conversation'.
5. Chapter 21, 'On the Fear of Sin'.
6. Chapter 22, 'On Benevolence', of which the perfect philosophical verse related to man and nature is verse 211: 'Benevolence seeks not a return. What does the world give back the clouds?'⁸

Verses of chapter 23, 'On Alms-Deeds' (or charity), are relevant today to those responsible for corporate social responsibility and politicians and policymakers accountable for lifting people out of grinding poverty. Verse 227 has the essence and ethos of giving: 'The fiery disease of hunger shall never touch him who habitually distributes his food to others.'⁹ This can be related to the philosophy of joy of giving that is so much in short supply today.

Chapter 95, 'On Moderate Eating',¹⁰ also translated as 'Medicine' by M. Rajaram and Gopalkrishna Gandhi¹¹, has novel ideas from the disciplines of Ayurveda or Siddha, and has verses assigned that may be found in any medical treatise and wisdom of elders. Here are two examples: '942 No medicine is necessary for him who eats after assuring (himself) that what he has (already) eaten has been digested'; and '946 As pleasure dwells with him who eats moderately, as disease (dwells) with the glutton who eats voraciously'.¹²

⁷ Ibid., p. 35.

⁸ Ibid., p. 45.

⁹ Ibid., p. 47.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 191.

¹¹ Gopalkrishna Gandhi, *Tiruvalluvar: The Tirukkural*, New Delhi: Aleph Book Company, 2015.

¹² Drew and Lazarus, *Thirukkural with English Translation*, n. 3, p. 191.

In the field of medical science and patient care verse 950 points out (what is common sense) the four essential pillars: ‘The patient, healer, remedy and nurse/ Are the four parts of medical science.’¹³

ON CONTROLLING ANGER

Control over anger is given great emphasis as anger is the worst of all negative emotions. Verse 130 from chapter 13, ‘On Self-control’, is on anger; and entire chapter 31 is tilted, ‘Against Anger’.¹⁴ Rev. W.H. Drew and Rev. John Lazarus have translated verse 130 as: ‘Virtue seeking for an opportunity will come into the path of that man who guards against anger and has learnt to control himself.’¹⁵ Rev Dr G.U. Pope *et al.* have translated the same verse as: ‘Who learns restraint, and guards his soul from wrath, Virtue, a timely aid, attends his path’ or ‘*Virtue, seeking for an opportunity, will come into the path of that man who, possessed of learning and self-control, guards himself against anger.*’¹⁶

In a more recent translation, Gopalkrishna Gandhi constructs verse 130 as: ‘Who rising anger quells by the power of self-control/In composure dwells and lets the virtue save his troubled soul.’¹⁷ In verse 305 of Chapter 31, likewise, caution against anger at a personal level is emphasized: ‘If a man would guard himself, let him guard against anger, if he do not guard it, anger will kill him.’¹⁸

¹³ M. Rajaram, *Thirukkural: Pearls of Inspiration*, New Delhi: Rupa, 2009, p. 193.

¹⁴ Drew and Lazarus, *Thirukkural with English Translation*, n. 3, p. 63.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁶ *Tirukkural*, English Translation and Commentary by Rev. Dr G.U. Pope, Rev. W.H. Drew, Rev. John Lazarus and Mr F.W. Ellis, first published in 1886 by W.H. Allen & Co, reprinted in 1962 and 1982 by The South India Saiva Siddhantha Works Publishing Society, Tinnevely, Madras, India, p. 17; emphasis in original.

¹⁷ Gopalkrishna Gandhi, *Tiruvalluvar: The Tirukkural*, New Delhi: Aleph Book Company, 2015, p. 15.

¹⁸ Drew and Lazarus, *Thirukkural with English Translation*, n. 3, p. 63.

Over and over again, much like what is called ‘anger management’ by psychologists today, the wise counsel tells us to be wary of the problem of anger and the need to control all negative emotions. The literature does not have any vague aphorisms. Thus, all the methods of control over senses are emphasized and almost everything is explained.

Chapter 16, ‘On Patience’,¹⁹ is another chapter linked to self-control, with verse 154 stating: ‘If you desire that greatness should never leave, you must preserve in your conduct the exercise of patience.’²⁰ In chapter 44, ‘On the Correction of Faults’,²¹ the first two verses emphasize excellences of a king to include freedom from pride, anger, lust and faults in a king, like avarice, undignified pride and low pleasures. Guarding against fault is the remedy and verse 439 warns against self-praise.

CHARACTER BUILDING AND PERSONAL VALUE SYSTEM

Chapter 25, ‘Mercy’,²² is astoundingly modern on being kind and what M.K Gandhi would have approved. The main focus of chapter 27, ‘On Austerities’, is the praise for the ascetic. For the lay person, it encourages frugality.

The *Kural*, in the second book on *porul*, devotes chapters 97, 98, 99 and 100 to various aspects of strength and building of character and ethical values and convictions. Beginning with chapter 97, ‘On Self-respect’, verses 963 and 970 give the message: ‘In great prosperity humility is becoming; dignity, in great adversity’; and ‘The world will (always) praise and adore the fame of the honourable who would rather die than suffer Indignity’.²³

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 33.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., p. 89.

²² Ibid., p. 55.

²³ Ibid., p. 195.

Verse 972 of chapter 98, 'On Greatness', says: 'All human beings agree as regards their birth but differ as regards their characteristics, because of the different qualities of their actions.'²⁴ Further, in verses 978 and 979, it is said: 'The great will always humble himself; but the mean will exalt himself in self-admiration'; and 'Freedom from conceit is (the nature of true) greatness, (while) obstinacy therein is (that of) meanness'.²⁵

In chapter 99, 'On Goodness', an important part of character, the *Kural* offers verses 983 and 988: 'Affection, fear (of sin), benevolence, favour and truthfulness: these are the five pillars on which perfect goodness rests'; and 'Poverty is no disgrace to one who abounds in good qualities'.²⁶ Importantly, as the military emphasizes strength of character as the highest virtue, so does the *Kural* in verse 990: 'If there is a defect in the character of the perfect, (even) the great world cannot bear (its) burden.'²⁷ Chapter 100, 'On Courteousness' is a good behavioral guide, and which indicates the importance and wealth of courtesy and humbleness.

CONCLUSION

Self-control and character building in the *Kural* are not for an ascetic but for all citizens of a society. Indeed, one reason that nearly all religions claim Tiruvalluvar as theirs is due to the universal message of self-control and mastery of the self. These ideas and guidance are as necessary and relevant today as they were when the *Kural* was composed. It is possible to have these secular ideas included in education at schools, and also in higher training and education in both the military and civil walks of life. Why is it important? Simply put, to the rising expectations (many may be unmet) in an era of Anthropocene, resource scarcity, environmental degrading and modern stresses of a risk society, the

²⁴ Ibid., p. 197.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 199.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 199.

pragmatic ideas in the *Kural* can perform the role of a balancer. In chapter 9 that follows, some ethical and moral aspects indicate a deep linkage in cultivating these essential (inner) personal qualities for statecraft.

Thus endowed with such qualities as above, we can now proceed to the application or execution part of the *Kural* in the succeeding chapter.

MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION¹

INTRODUCTION

It is indeed remarkable that aspects of management and communication are given in a very scientific and logical way in the *Kural*. The process, as seen in the preceding chapter, begins with mastering of self-development, self-discipline, including getting rid of arrogance and anger, and character building. Having thus attained self-control and discipline, the next stage is that of learning and getting educated. Further, how a job is to be performed depends on good counsel and is achieved by breaking up the activity into logical and systematic steps. This process seems like any modern theory of leadership and its managerial aspects, applicable to the military as also other professions. In this chapter, themes such as, communication skills and the art of persuasion, and judging an audience are discussed.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND THE ART OF PERSUASION

A leader has to carry along his team members, each with differing capabilities. Therefore, good communication skills are essential for the leader, who also has to double up as a teacher or an instructor for persuading his team. The *Kural* does not leave out these essentials. Let us examine them as communication skills and the art of persuasion.

Mastery of the classical skills of communication is essential across cultures. A Japanese scholar from Nagoya University, Katsunori Hirano,

¹ Some portions of this chapter are based on Pradeep Kumar Gautam, 'Leadership and Management Theories in Indic Traditions', *Journal of Defence Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 1, January–March 2019, pp. 33–49.

has given a good lead in communication theory in his examination of Indian philosophy and text science: 'Basic communication consists of four elements: a sender, code(s), a message, and a receiver'.² If sender and receiver have a common understanding of a subject or text, then the code(s) and message on receipt get understood. However, this ideal situation may not be there most of the time. So, the sender has to be conscious of this problem and then structure his/her communication accordingly. This problem becomes acute when textual interpretation is to be carried out. For example, in case of Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, it has been seen that rather than having read the original text, many are familiar with commentaries or *bhashyas*. Fortunately, the *Kural* does not face this problem as it is very brief and crisp. It can be even argued that very good translations into English and other languages are now available to understand and apply the basic ideas in the text. Here, a common understanding is the key.

The *Kural* devotes 10 chapters (64–73) just for the ministers on various matters of counsel and communications. Good communication skills, combined with the art of persuasion, are a prerequisite for any successful social or political endeavour. Verse 718 of chapter 72, 'On Judging an Audience', tells us to be mindful of an audience which is well informed and thus, 'Lecturing, to those who have the ability to understand (for themselves) is like watering a bed of plants that are growing (of themselves).'³

For communication skills, public speaking and conveying an inspirational message, the precepts in the *Kural* seem to be contemporary. They feature prominently in the *Kural* in what we may today call 'bullet form' of a PowerPoint presentation. It is no wonder that this exceptional and remarkable work has been described by C. Rajagopalachari as a

² Katsunori Hirano, *Nyaya-Vaisesika Philosophy and Text Science*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2012, p. 20.

³ Rev. W.H. Drew and Rev. John Lazarus, *Thirukkural with English Translation*, New Delhi and Chennai: Asian Educational Services, 2014, p. 145.

‘masterpiece of brevity’.⁴ Let us see some aphorisms, as translated by Rajagopalachari, on public speaking or briefing in an operational environment:⁵

1. ‘What is good speaking? It should be such as would hold fast the convinced and it should be pleasing to the unconvinced.’⁶
2. ‘Neither right conduct nor any worldly good can result from talking above the heads of those who are addressed. Speak suitably to the capacity and attainment of the audience.’⁷
3. ‘It is only those that have not learnt to speak briefly and correctly that indulge in much speaking.’⁸

The lay reader cannot miss the message in the above-mentioned three guidelines. The lesson plan, so to speak, has to be tailored for the type of audience. It is important to know what is the type and composition of the audience as it is a vital link for a successful communication theory. The target audience definitely matters and the *Kural* addresses this aspect under chapter 72, ‘On Judging an Audience’.

CHAPTER 72, ‘ON JUDGING AN AUDIENCE’⁹

There is, today, an overload of data in various mediums of information and communication technology. In fact, currently, the virtual ‘on-line’ world appears superficially more important than the real ‘off-line’ world. Today’s impatient generation just wants short twitter-length

⁴ C. Rajagopalachari, ‘The Tiru-K-Kural’, in *The Cultural Heritage of India, Vol. II: Itihasa, Puranas, Dharma and Other Sastra*, Belur Math: Ramakrishna Mission, 2013, p. 530.

⁵ Rajagopalachari, *Kural: The Great Book of Tiru-Valluvar*, n. 2, pp. 142–44, section on ‘Art of Persuasion’.

⁶ Ibid., p. 142, verse 643.

⁷ Ibid., p. 143, verse 646.

⁸ Ibid., p. 144, verse 649.

⁹ Drew and Lazarus, *Thirukkural with English Translation*, n. 6, p. 145.

answers that can be forgotten the very next day. Many are not trained, or educated or interested, in liberal arts, humanities or classics. However, in the final analysis, technology cannot replace human interaction and touch, for communication is dependent on the type of audience.

In the chapter on judging an audience, the *Kural* has a verse on the negative aspect: ‘Verse 720. To utter (a good word) in the assembly of those who are of an inferior rank is like dropping a nectar on the ground.’¹⁰ Here, ‘an inferior rank’ seems an inappropriate translation by Rev. Drew and Rev. John Lazarus. S.M. Diaz and N. Mahalingam, in their recent work, seem to have a better translation of the same verse: ‘Indulging in learned discourse before a gathering who are not your intellectual peers, Is like pouring nectar in to the gutters.’¹¹ Diaz and Mahalingam argue that this is very much similar to what is given in the *New Testament* (Mathew: 7, 6): ‘Neither cast ye your pearls before swine, Lest they trample them under their feet.’¹² This verse clearly tells us that what we present has to be tailor-made for the audience it is meant for.

Meanwhile, verse 718—‘Lecturing, to those who have the ability to understand (for themselves) is like watering a bed of plants that are growing (of themselves)’—is a warning or stricture as to not do it for a highly knowledgeable gathering. However, not all the audience may be of this type; and the leader also has to take his team, with members of different capabilities, along as one. The ancients seem to be aware of this. It is here that a modern reader has to understand one important verse in *Kural* on the art of persuasion, as highlighted by Rajagopalachari’s translation of verse 643: ‘What is good speaking? It should be such as would hold fast the convinced and it should be pleasing to the unconvinced.’¹³

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ S.M. Diaz and N. Mahalingam (eds), *Tirukkural*, with English Translation and Explanation, Vol. II, Coimbatore: Ramanandha Adigalar Foundation, 2000, reprint 2008, p. 737.

¹² Ibid., p. 738.

¹³ Rajagopalachari, *Kural: The Great Book of Tiru-Valluvar*, n. 2, p. 142.

CHAPTER 73, 'ON SELF-CONFIDENCE BEFORE AN AUDIENCE'¹⁴

This is a unique chapter, best suited to educate and train anyone in public speaking. Although it is meant for the minister, in our contemporary society these couplets seem relevant to all walks of life and professions. After all, it is the clarity of thought, speech and action that must be synchronized.

Indeed, through these couplets, research scholars may get fresh insights on the importance of self-confidence. Their teachers and mentors need to make them practice the art regularly to instil confidence and thus master communication skills. Some couplets in this regard are:

721 The pure who know the classification of words having first ascertained the nature (of the court) will not (through fear) falter in their speech before the powerful body.

723 Many indeed may (fearlessly) die in the presence of (their) foes; (but) few are those who are fearless in the assembly (of the learned).

725 In order to reply fearlessly before a foreign court, (ministers) should learn logic according to the rules (of grammar).

728 Those who cannot agreeably speak good things before a good assembly are indeed unprofitable persons in spite of all their various acquirements.

CONCLUSION

Management and communication skills are assumed, incorrectly, as modern disciplines. The gist of these subjects can be found in Indian texts of the ancient past. A study of the *Kural* clearly indicates that many principles, as elaborated in this chapter, are to be found in this ancient Tamil text.

¹⁴ Drew and Lazarus, *Thirukkural with English Translation*, n. 2, p. 147.

DIPLOMATIC PRACTICES, INTELLIGENCE AND DIPLOMACY

Diplomacy, foreign policy and intelligence are the warp and weft of foreign affairs, war, peace and international relations. Harold Nicolson's *Diplomacy*, a textbook of sorts for diplomats, characterizes diplomacy as 'an essential element in any reasonable relations between man and man and between nation and nation'.¹ It is about negotiations and methods used by ambassadors and envoys in management of international relations.² Indic traditions have always been aware of political realism and violence and the key function of diplomacy. In these traditions on diplomacy and statecraft, peace and negotiations are the first priority. And thus, we encounter concepts such as the four methods or *upayas* (*sama*, *dana*, *bheda* and *danda*), combined with *sadgunya*, the six measures of foreign policy. In the four *upayas*, *sama* (conciliation) is the first option. In *sadgunya*, *sandhi* (peace treaty and alliance) is the preferred first policy. Use of force to be the last resort is as true today as it was in the ancient past. In contemporary diplomacy, the use of force, or war, is no more a method of sorting out disputes in international law and United Nations charter—yet, the use of force has not gone away.

Diplomacy and intelligence have always featured in almost all texts of statecraft. For example, in the north India epic Mahabharata, before the war, diplomacy was attempted for a peaceful solution, but with no

¹ Harold Nicolson, *Diplomacy*, London: Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 72, as quoted by Gandhi Jee Roy, *Diplomacy in Ancient India*, Patna and New Delhi: Janaki Prakashan, 1981, p. 3.

² Ibid.

success. Gandhi Jee Roy's *Diplomacy in Ancient India* is a comprehensive work which covers Kautilya's *Arthashastra* and other texts.³ However, it has not included the *Kural*. It is hoped that this chapter will reinforce Roy's seminal work.

The *Kural* is also practical and is not utopian. It recognises war as an institution, a prime concern of diplomacy. In the *Kural*, diplomacy is an integral and pragmatic part of statecraft. Topics dealing with the subject are: chapter 69, 'On Embassy'; chapter 59, 'On the Employment of Spies'; chapter 68, 'On Mode of Action'; along with two chapters on the enemy, namely, chapter 87, 'On the Characteristics of Enemies' and chapter 88, 'On Enmity'.

ON EMBASSY

In the second book, chapter 69, 'On Embassy', has 10 aphorisms about an ideal-type diplomat:⁴

681 The qualification of an ambassador are affection (for his relations), a fitting birth, and the possession of attributes pleasing to royalty.

682 Love (to his sovereign), knowledge (of his affairs), and a discriminating power of speech (before other sovereigns) are the three sine qua non qualifications of an ambassador.

683 To be powerful in politics amongst those who are learned (in ethics) is the character of him who speaks to lance bearing kings on matters of triumph (to his own sovereign).

684 He may go on a mission (to foreign rulers) who has combined in him all three, viz., (natural) sense, an attractive bearing and well-trained learning.

³ Roy, *Diplomacy in Ancient India*, n. 1.

⁴ Rev. W.H. Drew and Rev. John Lazarus, *Thirukkural with English Translation*, New Delhi and Chennai: Asian Educational Services, 2014, p. 139.

685 He is an ambassador who (in the presence of foreign rulers) speaks briefly, avoids harshness, talks as to make them smile, and thus bring good (to his own sovereign).

686 He is an ambassador who, having studied (politics) talks impressively, is not afraid of angry looks, and knows (to employ) the art suited to the time.

687 He is chief (among ambassadors) who understands the proper decorum (before foreign princes), seeks the (proper) occasion, knows the (most suitable) place and delivers his message after (due consideration).

688 The qualifications of him who faithfully delivers his (sovereign's) message are purity, the support (of foreign ministers) and boldness, with truthfulness in addition to the (aforesaid) three.

689 He alone is fit to communicate his sovereign's reply who possesses the firmness not to utter even inadvertently what may reflect discredit (on the latter).

690 He is an ambassador who fearlessly seeks his sovereign's good though it should cost him his life (to deliver his message).

All the 10 verses seem modern. Rather, verse 690 demands life itself, generally applicable to a general who, in a lighter vein, 'dies for his country whereas a diplomat lies for his country!' These qualities, given in chapter 69 of the *Kural*, can be inculcated by selection of those having the right aptitude, followed by imparting proper training and education. Intelligence studies is also a vital part of diplomacy. Next, we discuss in brief the chapters in the *Kural* on the topic.

INTELLIGENCE

No worthwhile foreign policy can be formulated and diplomacy practised without obtaining information and its synthesis into intelligence. The *Kural* has only one chapter, that is, chapter 59, 'On the Employment of Spies',⁵ on this subject, which includes both internal

⁵ Ibid., p. 119.

and external intelligence. It has another intelligence-related chapter, that is, chapter 87, ‘On the Characteristic of Enemies’⁶ (discussed later). Some of the verses related to intelligence from chapter 59⁷ are:

581 Let a king consider as his eyes these two things, a spy and a book (of laws) universally esteemed.

582 It is the duty of a king to know quickly all that happens, at all times amongst all men.

583 There is no way for a king to obtain conquests, who knows not the advantage of discoveries made by a spy.

584 He is a spy who watches all men, to wit, those who are in the king’s employment, his relatives, and his enemies.

585 A spy is one who is able to assume an appearance which may create no alarm (in the minds of others), who fears no man’s face, and who never reveals (his purpose).

586 He is a spy who, assuming the appearance of an ascetic, goes into (whatever place he wishes), examines into all that is needful, and never discovers himself whatever may be done to him.

587 A spy is one who is able to discover what is hidden and who retains no doubt concerning what he has known.

588 Let not a king receive the information which a spy has discovered and made known to him until he has examined it by another spy.

589 Let a king employ spies so that one may have no knowledge of the other; and when the information of three agrees together, let him receive it.

590 Let not a king publicly confer on a spy any marks of his favour; if he does, he will divulge his own secret.

⁶ Ibid., p. 175.

⁷ Drew and Lazarus, *Thirukkural with English Translation*, n. 5, p. 119.

The given verses surely will pass muster with the intelligence community for their relevance. Interestingly, B.N. Mullik, in his book, praised C. Rajagopalachari for his pragmatism in statecraft with no prejudice against the need for intelligence. He narrated how in the first intelligence officers' conference in 1951, Rajagopalchari, as Home Minister, 'quoted the *Kural* to say that there must be three source to confirm a particular piece of intelligence before the organisation should accept it as authentic'.⁸ Mullik, in an earlier book, had also quoted the work on the *Kural* by Rajagopalachari to empathize the need for foolproof intelligence and confirmation by three independent sources.⁹

Today, external and internal intelligence is collected by a number of organizations and agencies. What is also implicit is that the agency collecting intelligence should not be allowed to interpret it as well. This is an important rule for external intelligence. Nor should there be one-upmanship by various intelligence agencies to feed their own intelligence to the top political leadership. These are all common mistakes that many countries have made in the past, including India. Thus, this obvious point needs to be addressed and corrected by political and executive oversight. That these injunctions were given thousands of years ago shows how human nature and its infirmities endure.

Diplomacy, as noted earlier, concerns making choices and weighing the options in the best interests of a nation. The actionable part is given in chapter 68 in the *Kural*.

ON DIPLOMACY

Chapter 68, 'On Mode of Action',¹⁰ is relevant to diplomacy on matters of taking offensive or defensive action: '673 Whenever it is possible

⁸ B.N. Mullik, 'Nehru and Intelligence', *My Years with Nehru: 1948–1964*, Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1972, p. 59

⁹ B.N. Mullik, *My Years with Nehru: The Chinese Betrayal*, New Delhi. Allied Publishers, 1971, pp. 498–99. I thank late Dr Michael Liebig for letting me know about the mention of the *Kural* by Mallik in his two books.

¹⁰ Drew and Lazarus, *Thirukkural with English Translation*, n. 5, p. 137.

(to overcome your enemy) the act (of fighting) is certainly good; if not endeavour to employ some more successful method.¹¹ The message is that force may not always be the best answer or strategy.

Verse 675 says: ‘Do an act after due consideration of the (following) five: viz, money, means, time, execution and place.’¹² Rajagopalachari, in his commentary, explains this as:

Before launching an operation, all five elements that will make for success or defeat should be thoroughly considered and not left untackled, i.e., equipment, strength of forces, the favourableness, or the opposite of time and place, and the nature of the operation... *irul theera* denotes that the consideration should be so through as to remove all doubts. Literally the phrase means until all darkness is dispelled.¹³

Verse 676 states: ‘An act is to be performed after considering the exertion required, the obstacles to be encountered, and the great profit to be gained (on its completion).’ The idea of this verse is also found in other texts on the strategy and steps in completing a task. Further, verse 678 observes: ‘To make one undertaking the means of accomplishing another (similar to it) is like making one rutting elephant the means of capturing another.’ Rajagopalachari’s commentary describes verse 678 thus: ‘As one elephant is used to capture another, the experience of one action should be used to achieve success in another.’¹⁴

This verse 678 of the *Kural* corresponds to a *sutra* in Kautilya’s *Arthashastra*, in Book IX, about the way power leads to more power,

¹¹ Ibid., p.137.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ C. Rajagopalachari, *Kural: The Great Book of Tiru-Valluvar*, 14th edition, Mumbai: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 2017 (1965), p. 158.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 159.

like a force multiplier: '(9.4.27). Men, without wealth, do not attain their objects with even hundreds of efforts; objects are through objects, as elephants are through elephants set to catch them.'

Chapter 68 also brings out the relevance of the need to finish a job or task in time. In addition, it contains some wisdom on alliances, along with guidance for a weaker party.

ALLIANCES

Verse 679 from chapter 68, 'On Mode of Action', is on alliances: 'One should rather hasten to secure the alliance of the foes (of one's foes) rather than perform good offices to one's friends.' Rajagopalachari translates verse 679, which corresponds to sowing dissent (*bheda*), as: 'Be quicker to compose differences with enemies than even in rendering good offices to allies.'¹⁵ Further, in his commentary, Rajagopalachari gives two alternative interpretations:

1. making alliances with your opponent's enemies even more promptly than securing confirmation of friendship already gained.
2. whenever you have to declare war, while it is necessary promptly to strengthen existing alliances, it is well to give even greater attention to making alliances with your enemy's enemies.¹⁶

A Conversation and Criticism.¹⁷ Interpretation of ancient text needs to be critical and contextual. I list below criticism by S. Kalyanaraman and my response.

Criticism: 'A critical look on the two interpretations by Rajagopalachari above shows that these maxims in the *Kural* appear to be not as sound

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 159.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ I thank S. Kalyanaraman in pointing out and critiquing the writing on the aspect of alliances and strategy of small and weak states. I have thus engaged with his critique as a conversation in this part. I have also made use of the example and argument he gave of Eric J. Labs's article (covered later).

as they may appear for contemporary world politics where major powers have a mix of both friendly and adversarial relations on different issue areas. For instance, is forging an alliance with the enemy's enemy instead of lavishing attention on existing friends and allies applicable in the contemporary era? What consequence is such an approach likely to have? For instance, should India pay more attention to its chief adversary's adversaries, its chief adversary being China, and America and Japan being China's adversaries? In the process, it appears that India's relative neglect of Russia has led to Russia forging defence cooperation with Pakistan?¹⁸

A Response to the Criticism: These methods in the *Kural* are for a hot war in ancient times. Today, due to historical learnings of past wars, new intuitions for global governance and nuclear weapons, wars are no longer the preferred choice and thus, this rather simplistic verse 679 of the past. To be fair to the *Kural*, it has no historical evidence to relate to the verse.

STRATEGY OF THE SMALL WEAK STATES

Verse 680 says, 'Ministers of small states, afraid of their people being frightened, will yield to and acknowledge their superior foes, if the latter offer them a chance of reconciliation.'¹⁹ Rajagopalachari translates this as: 'If your forces are weak, you should take the first opportunity to yield and make peace before letting your men taste defeat and demoralization.'²⁰ The lesson from this wise counsel in the *Kural* resonates (on being ignored by the people of Melos) with 'Thucydides' Melian dialogue in ancient Greece during the Peloponnesian War. In that episode, the Melians, knowing well their vulnerabilities and weaknesses, did not accept the terms and conditions of the Athenians and were destroyed in turn.²¹

¹⁸ Question posed by S. Kalyanaraman.

¹⁹ Drew and Lazarus, *Thirukkural with English Translation*, n. 5, p. 137.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

²¹ Pradeep Kumar Gautam, 'Thucydides: Quoting and Misquoting', *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 42, No. 6, November–December 2018, p. 630.

A Conversation and Criticism. As in alliance above, interpretation of ancient text needs to be critical and contextual. I list below criticism and my response.

Criticism: “The criticism of this policy may be that in the modern context this can not be taken as an unchanging rule. The weak have often resorted to war on the strong and we have several contemporary examples of weak states successfully resisting stronger ones: China entered the Korean War in 1950 and fought America to a stalemate, North Vietnam successfully resisted America (of course with Chinese and Soviet help), North Korea has defied America, and Iran too since the 1979 revolution. So, does the *Kural*’s advice to a weak state actually apply in the modern world where the force of nationalism compels even weak states to resist and even win against a stronger opponent? Further, the *Kural*’s advice overlooks the role of strategy in war, which can deliver victory to the weaker, as well as the self-confidence and steadfastness of a military commander. There are contrasting arguments within Western IR (International Relations) literature. The common, widespread understanding is that weak states bandwagon with great powers or emerging powers or stronger powers. Kenneth Waltz more generally and Stephen Walt more specifically argued thus. And this argument is in agreement with the *Kural*. However, there is a counter-argument as well as counter-examples. Melos standing up to Athens is the first. In the 20th century, Belgium fought against Germany at the start of the First World War. Poland did the same against Germany at the start of the Second World War. And Finland stood up against the Soviet Union which is what led to its retention of independence in contrast to being fully absorbed. Erik Labs wrote an article in the early 1990s citing these examples and backed them up with logical inferences from a discussion of the balance of threat theory and collective action theory.²² Labs convincingly argued that weak states do not as a rule bandwagon with a stronger power. He went on to rank

²² Eric J. Labs, ‘Do Weak States Bandwagon?’, *Security Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3, Spring 1992, pp. 383–416.

their policy preferences and placed bandwagoning as the last of six options that weak states have.²³

A Response to the Criticism: Today, in the thick forest of literature in international relations, there are many theories explaining the way weak states behave. Tiruvalluvar may qualify to be considered a ‘moral realist’. It is clear that the *Kural* is only mentioning a small and weak state with no historical evidence. It is distilled wisdom. Today, with the United Nations system in place, each country has a vote and voice. There is also international pressure and law. Thus, rather than engaging in war, making peace may still be a worthwhile diplomatic option for small states. What the *Kural* says is still of some worth and cannot be rejected. Today, small state(s) may possess nuclear weapons, which changes the power equation drastically. As to strategy in war, yes, strategy matters, but if the differential is very large, then no amount of superior strategy can ensure victory to a weak and small state.

Be that as it may, what the *Kural* has is a common-sense advice which may have been very useful in an era of frequent and incessant wars. This verse from the *Kural* can be compared to Kautilya’s Book XII, ‘Concerning the Weaker King’. Kautilya does not agree with Bharadwaja (a weak king, attacked by a strong king, should everywhere remain submissive) or with Visalaksa (fight it out as a valourous duty of a Kshatriya). Instead, Kautilya suggests in 12.1.7–9 the following:

7 One submissive everywhere lives despairing of life like a ram (strayed) from a herd. 8 And one fighting with only a small army perishes like one plunging into the ocean without a boat. 9 He should, however, act finding shelter with a king superior to him or in an unassailable fort.²⁴

Later in the book, Kautilya suggests varieties of diplomatic warfare, secret practices and intrigues to destroy the stronger enemy finally. In

²³ Question posed by S. Kalyanaraman.

²⁴ R.P. Kangle, *The Kautiliya Arthashastra, Part II: An English Translation with Critical and Explanatory Notes*, 2nd edition, 7th reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2010, p. 460.

the *Kural*, such strategies are conspicuous by their absence. Possibly, Tiruvalluvar saw the futility of war and was suggesting an option with least destruction and loss of life to maybe fight another day.

ON ENEMY

In the first translation of Kautilya's *Arthashastra* into English from Sanskrit (when the text was recovered by R. Shamasastri and translated into English in 1915), besides the seven elements of sovereignty, the enemy also featured in it.²⁵ Similarly, although not a constituent of the *prakerti*, in the *Kural*, chapter 87, 'On the Characteristics of Enemies' and chapter 88, 'On Enmity' further combine some of the strategies from the six measures of foreign policy (*sadgunya*) similar to Kautilya's *Arthashastra*. Verse 861 says: 'Avoid offering resistance to the strong; (but) never fail to cherish enmity towards the weak'²⁶, while verse 875 states: 'He who is alone and helpless while his foes are two should secure one of them as an agreeable help (to himself).'²⁷ This is exactly the Kautilyan dual policy of *dvaiddibhav*. Rajagopalachari's translation is perfect: 'If you have no allies, and you are faced with two enemies, immediately make it up with either of them and make him a fast friend.'²⁸

Another verse of what can be called pre-emptive action is 879: 'A thorny tree should be felled while young, (for) when it is grown it will destroy the hand of the feller.'²⁹

²⁵ *Kautilya's Arthashastra*, translated by the late Dr R. Shamasastri, Delhi: Low Price Publications, 2012(1915), p. 287. It was qualified: 'excepting the enemy, these seven elements, possessed of their excellences are said to be limb-like elements of sovereignty', *ibid.*, p. 289.

²⁶ Drew and Lazarus, *Thirukkural with English Translation*, n. 5, p.175.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.177.

²⁸ Rajagopalachari, *Kural: The Great Book of Tiru-Valluvar*, n. 14, p. 168.

²⁹ Drew and Lazarus, *Thirukkural with English Translation*, n. 5, p. 177.

CONCLUSION

The *Kural*, in the second book on *porul*, has concepts, vocabulary and strategies of political realism. The contents are operational methods of execution of diplomacy. This is due to the fact that power continues to be the currency of international relations, with all the trappings of diplomatic practices to serve national interests. However, structurally, this part cannot be read in a stand-alone mode as the moral legitimacy is paramount and is spread across the *Kural* in abundant measure. What is noticeable is that unlike the central and north India traditions as in *Arthashastra*, there is no *vijigishu* (would-be conqueror), or a *mandala* theory with circle of kings, and no putative *sarvabhaum* or *chakravarti* to politically unite the one geo-cultural Indian subcontinent. The region of interest is only south India. There is no classification of types of conquest (*dharmavijai*, *lobhavijai* or *asuravijai*) or types of combat or *yuddhas* (*prakash*, *kuta* and *tusmin*). Yet, it has the seven constituents of the state with straightforward methods of achievement of national security. The people have to be nurtured and made secure with good life.

ACCOMPLISHMENT OF TASKS AND APPRECIATIONS MILITARY AND NON-MILITARY¹

In this chapter, the thought process, reflection and pragmatic action will be highlighted. This process is applicable to the military, diplomatic and non-military spheres. The concepts in the *Kural*, in the progression of chapters, are that of forethought, knowledge of resources, time, place, reflection before decision, energy in execution, perseverance or doggedness, efficiency in action and the quality of action. Thus, for the military, it encompasses both operational and intelligence appreciations.

CHAPTER 47, 'ON ACTING WITH FORE-THOUGHT'²

In the selected passages given in this section, the golden rules of forethought are spelt out. The chapter has the concept of cost and benefit analysis. Counsel of friends is emphasized. Also, reflection is given due importance, including having intelligence on the enemy's capabilities.

461 Let a man reflect on what will be lost, what will be acquired
and (from these) what will be his ultimate gain, and (then, let
him) act.

¹ Some portions of this chapter are based on Pradeep Kumar Gautam, 'Leadership and Management Theories in Indic Traditions', *Journal of Defence Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 1, January–March 2019, pp. 33–49.

² Rev. W.H. Drew and Rev. John Lazarus, *Thirukkural with English Translation*, New Delhi and Chennai: Asian Educational Services, 2014, p. 95. All verses given in this section are from *ibid.*, p. 95.

462 There is nothing too difficult to (be attained by) those who, before they act, reflect well themselves, and thoroughly consider (the matter) with chosen friends.

464 Those who fear reproach will not commence anything which has not been (thoroughly considered) and made clear to them.

465 One way to promote the prosperity of an enemy, is (for a king) to set out (to war) without having thoroughly weighed his ability (to cope up with its chances).

467 Think (first, and then) begin your work; after you have begun, to say 'Let us consider,' is a reproach.

CHAPTER 48, 'ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF RESOURCES'³

This chapter is fundamentally about intelligence about self and the other on what we call today as comprehensive national power. The key takeaway is 'knowledge is power' and that proper intelligence appreciation and assessment is essential, as shown in some key passages:

471 Let (a king) weigh well the strength of his enemy and the strength of the allies (of both) and then let him act.

472 There is nothing which may not be accomplished by those who, before they attack (an enemy), make themselves acquainted with their own ability, and with whatever else is (needful) to be known, and apply themselves wholly to their object.

473 There are many who, ignorant of their (want of) power (to meet it), have haughtily set out to war, and broken down in the midst of it.

474 He will quickly perish who, ignorant of the measure (of his resources), flatters himself (with an idea of his greatness) and does not live in peace with his neighbours.

³ Ibid., p. 97. All verses given in this section are from *ibid.*, p. 97.

475 The wheel of a bandy, loaded only with peacocks' feathers
will break, if it be greatly overloaded.

Chapter 48, 'On the Knowledge of Resources', supplements the previous chapter 47 on forethought. It has the principles of intelligence and warns against over-exaggeration of own material capabilities. The verse 475—as pointed out by David Shulman (and common knowledge of those hailing from Chennai)—an advice on how to live your life and universal truths, is displayed in public buses in Chennai, duly appropriated by the transporters to send a message of the perils of overloading of vehicles.⁴

CHAPTER 49, 'ON THE DISCERNMENT OF (A SUITABLE) TIME'⁵

Some verses from chapter 49 are reproduced in this section. Examples of crows (day fighters) and owls (night fighters), given in verse 481, are also found in the *Panchatantra* and *Hitopdesa* (both derived in a major way from Kautilya's *Arthashastra* and Kamandaka's *Nitisashtra*). These, as demonstrated by Takanobu Takahashi in Chapter 3, are the 'maxim-wise' verses. In fact, these maxims are found in most Indic texts on statecraft/warcraft.

In verse 485, 'the world' is only used as a literary device and not world conquest of the *chakravartikshetra* as in Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, implying the Indian subcontinent. Verse 486 indicates strategic defence and then counter-attack. Control over anger (see Chapter 5 of this volume) is repeated here in verse 487. Verse 488 indicates the finality or consequentiality of the reason of the state in this type of diplomacy.

481 A crow will overcome an owl in the day time; the king
who would conquer his enemy must have (a suitable) time.

⁴ David Shulman, *Tamil: A Biography*, Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016, p. 92.

⁵ Drew and Lazarus, *Thirukkural with English Translation*, n. 2, p. 99. All verses given in this section are from *ibid.*, p. 99.

482 Acting at the right season, is a cord that will immovably bind success (to a king).

483 Is there anything difficult (for him to do), who acts, with (the right) instruments at the right time?

484 Though (a man) should meditate (the conquest of) the world, he may accomplish it, if he acts in the right time, and at the right place.

485 They who thoroughly consider and wait for the (right) time (for action), may successfully mediate (the conquest of the world).

486 The self-restraint of the energetic (while waiting for a suitable opportunity) is like the drawing back of the foot of a fighting-ram in order to butt.

487 The wise will not immediately and hastily show their anger; they will watch their time, and keep their anger within.

488 If (a king) meets his enemy, let him show him all respect, until the time for his destruction is come; when that is come, his head will be easily brought low.

490 At the time when (a king) should use self-control, let him restrain himself like a heron; and, like it, let him strike, when there is a favourable opportunity.

CHAPTER 50, 'ON THE CHOICE OF (A SUITABLE) PLACE'⁶

Notice that verses 481 (chapter 49), 495 and 500 (chapter 50), reproduced next, are tactical examples and lessons to be learnt from the animal kingdom. This stylistic device is very common. Though these appear to be self-evident, they have very profound meanings in

⁶ Ibid., p. 101. All verses given in this section are from *ibid.*, p. 101.

matters of tactics, like day or night operations, what weapon or platform to use for which type of target and so on.

491 Let not (a king) despise (an enemy), nor undertake any thing (against him), until he has obtained (a suitable) place for besieging him.

493 Even the powerless will become powerful and conquer, if they select a proper field (of action), and guard themselves, while they make war on their enemies.

495 In deep water, a crocodile will conquer (all other animals); if it leave the water, other animals will conquer it.

496 The strong-wheeled, lofty, chariot cannot run on the sea; and ships, which sail on the sea cannot run on land.

498 The power of one who has a large army will perish, if he goes into ground where only a small army can act.

500 A fox can kill a fearless, warrior-faced elephant, if it go into mud in which its legs sink down.

In sum, power on the knowledge of resources, place and time (*shakti*, *desha* and *kala*), as in chapters 48, 50 and 49 of the *Kural*, are somewhat similar to the factors which are to be taken into account in military appreciation in Kautilya's *Arthashastra* (Book IX, chapter 1, *sutras* 26–33).

CHAPTER 60, 'ON ENERGY'⁷

These couplets below are on some of the attributes of power of personal energy which also find a mention by Kautilya as *utsahshakti*. The *Kural* explains them in detail.

591 Energy makes out the man of property; as for those who are destitute of it, do they (really) possess what they possess?

⁷ Ibid., p. 121. All verses given in this section are from *ibid.*, p. 121.

592 The possession of (energy of) mind is true property; the possession of wealth passes away and abides not.

593 They who are possessed of enduring energy will not trouble themselves, saying, 'we have lost our property.'

597 The strong-minded will not faint, even when all is lost; the elephant stands firm, even when surrounded by a shower of arrows.

600 Energy is mental wealth; those men who are destitute of it are only trees in the form of men.

Later, in chapter 62, 'On Manly Effort',⁸ diligence, labour and hard work are exemplified for success. Chapter 63, 'On Perseverance in spite of Difficulties',⁹ likewise, counsels never to give up and get despondent.

CHAPTER 67, 'ON QUALITY OF ACTION'¹⁰

It is often argued by some that we make grandiose plans but what is lacking is its execution. What constitutes a 'successful conclusion of an enterprise'? Tiruvalluvar lays down some key principles on the quality of action: '661 Firmness in action is (simply) one's firmness of mind; all other abilities are not of this nature.'¹¹

Some of its key messages emphasized by C. Rajagopalachari are:

1. 'Efficiency essentially consist in a resolute mind; other things come thereafter.'¹²

⁸ Ibid., p. 125.

⁹ Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 135.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² C. Rajagopalachari, *Kural: The Great Book of Tiru-Valluvar*, 14th edition, Mumbai: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 2017(1965), p. 155.

2. 'Anyone can formulate plans, but it is only exceptional men that are able to carry their plans to fulfilment.'¹³
3. 'Plan with a clear brain, and when once you have decided and launched on an undertaking, be firm and unmoved by difficulties, and avoid dilatoriness in action.'¹⁴

The three quoted passages from the *Kural* may well be from some modern manual of a motivational speaker on 'how to win and be successful'.

CONCLUSION

The *Kural* lays out the ingredients that make up for the accomplishment of a task successfully. It is also a foundational guide for consideration of factors in an appreciation or in the wisdom of thought process and action that must accompany it. The couplets and their implicit meaning are not only for warlike activities for the military. They are also a handy tool for any non-military endeavour.

¹³ Ibid., p. 156.

¹⁴ Ibid.

ON MORALS

In the *Kural*, there is great emphasis on ethics/morals (*aram*) both at the personal level and the level of the state as a unique political virtue. Therefore, this chapter is the last, before the screen comes down and the readers reflect on the *Kural*. The building block of this text is *aram*, which, if theorized, can be a normative text for *porul*. K. Appadurai explains the interlinkage well:

Tiruvalluvar solves the problems of community by sinking the interest of the individual in that of the race...if his *Aram* is the duty of the Individual to Society and the Race, his *Porul* is the duty of Society to the Individual...A complete harmony of individual rights with those of race, is the secret of Tiruvalluvar's surprising universalism and modernism.¹

In the first book on *aram*, chapter 4, 'The Power of Virtue',² sets the stage. Few indicative couplets convey a very powerful message on virtue:

31 Virtue will confer heaven and wealth; what greater source of happiness can man possess?

32 There can be no greater source of good than (the practice of) virtue; than the forgetfulness of it, there can be no greater source of evil.

¹ K. Appadurai, *The Mind and Thought of Tiruvalluvar*, Madras: Sekar Pathippakam, 1966, pp. 86–87.

² Rev. W.H. Drew and Rev. John Lazarus, *Thirukkural with English Translation*, New Delhi and Chennai: Asian Educational Services, 2014, p. 9. All verses given in this section are from *ibid.*, p. 9.

34 Whatever is done with a spotless mind is virtue; all else is vain show.

35 That conduct is virtue which is free from these four things: malice, desire, anger and bitter speech.

Chapter 55, in the second book, deals with upright government³ and chapter 56 is on unjust government.⁴ Both the chapters, it appears, deal with only internal administration and not foreign affairs in the sense we understand it today, as all kingdoms in south India were not 'foreign'. Inter-state relations may be a better term as K.A. Nilakanta Sastri explains: 'Indians have always with good reason looked upon themselves as a single nation. That is why it seems more natural to speak of inter-state law in ancient India rather than international law.'⁵

Next, two chapters are further enumerated: chapter 55, 'On Upright Government', in full; and Chapter 56, 'On Unjust Government' in parts.

CHAPTER 55, 'ON UPRIGHT GOVERNMENT'⁶

541 To examine into the crimes which may be committed, to show no favour to any one, to desire to act with impartiality towards all, and to inflict such punishments as may be wisely resolved on, this is rectitude.

542 When there is rain, the world enjoys prosperity; and when the king rules justly, his subjects prosper.

³ Ibid., p. 111.

⁴ Ibid., p. 113.

⁵ K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, 'International Law and Relations in Ancient India', in Charles Henry Alexandrowicz (ed.), *The Indian Year Book of International Affairs 1952*, The Indian Study Group of International Affairs, Madras: University of Madras, 1952, p. 101.

⁶ Drew and Lazarus, *Thirukkural with English Translation*, n. 2, p. 111. All verses given in this section are from *ibid.*, p. 111.

543 The sceptre of the king is the firm support of the Vedas of the Brahmin, and of all virtue.

544 The world will constantly embrace the feet of the great king who rules over his subjects with love.

545 Rain and plentiful crops will ever dwell together in the country of the king who sways his sceptre with justice.

546 It is not the javelin that gives victory, but the king's sceptre, if it do no injustice.

547 The king defends the whole world; and justice, when administered without defect, defends the king.

548 The king who gives not facile audience (to those who approach him), and who does not examine and pass judgment (on their complaints), will perish in disgrace.

549 In guarding his subjects (against injury from others), and in preserving them himself, to punish crime is not a fault in a king, it is his duty.

550 For a king to punish criminals with death, is like pulling up the weeds in the green corn.

Criminal law is a necessity, a duty, as given in verse 549. In verse 550, capital punishment is prescribed. Overall, however, this entire chapter is clearly for internal governance. Unlike fear, the argument is that it is love that the ruler needs to inculcate in the people.

CHAPTER 56, 'ON UNJUST GOVERNMENT'⁷

551 More cruel than the man who lives the life of a murderer is the king who gives himself to oppress and act unjustly (towards his subjects).

⁷ Drew and Lazarus, *Thirukkural with English Translation*, n. 2, p. 113. All verses given in this section are from *ibid.*, p. 113.

553 The country of the king will daily fall to ruin, who does not daily examine into and punish (crimes).

554 The king, who, without reflecting (on its evil consequences), perverts justice, will lose at once both his wealth and his subjects.

556 Righteous government gives permanence to the fame of kings; without that their fame will have no endurance.

557 As is the world without rain, so live a people whose king is without kindness.

Chapters 55 and 56 both lay emphasis on uprightness of the king, the rule of law and fairness. The author, it seems today, is speaking ‘truth to power’. Alternatively, it may be that ‘power and absolute power corrupts’, as we understand today, was the implicit message by Tiruvalluvar. In the absence of political history, it is difficult to pinpoint who were the kings who needed this advice or adhered to these norms. It also shows that the negative attributes of kingly (human) behaviour have continuity and there is always a need for self-correction. The moral concept is converted into these ethical couplets as a literary and didactic device. That such sane advice was forthcoming indicates that the *Kural* is a courageous piece of work, relevant to this day and also in the future. The *porul* (*artha*) is interspersed with *aram* (*dharmā*) not at the individual level but at the state level of analysis.

LOVE AND FEAR

There are strictures against acting with cruelty in chapter 57, ‘Against Acting with Cruelty’: ‘563 The cruel-sceptred king, who acts so as to put his subjects in fear, will certainly and quickly come to ruin’; and ‘567 Severe words and excessive punishments will be a file to waste away a king’s power for destroying (his enemies)’.⁸ This, when combined with verse 544, given earlier—‘The world will constantly embrace the feet of the great king who rules his subjects with love’—conveys a

⁸ Drew and Lazarus, *Thirukkural with English Translation*, n. 2, p. 115.

message opposite to that of the European Machiavelli. Machiavelli's central rule or suggestion for a king or prince to have his way is that it is better to be feared than loved. Even Kautilya, the most misunderstood philosopher who is wrongly painted as the forefather of Machiavelli, in 7.5.14 has the courage of his conviction to state: 'impoverished and greedy subjects, when devoted to their master, remain steadfast in what is beneficial to the master or make the instigations futile, on the principle, "Where there is love, all qualities (are present)."'⁹

Thus, in India, in classical texts from all regions, in Sanskrit, Tamil or regional languages, the basis of human psychology is that of trust and love and not fear. The *Kural*, of course, debates in great detail, like no other eclectic text, on this aspect of the moral. Clearly, the *Kural* is both suitable and relevant for contemporary times.

⁹ R.P. Kangle, *The Kautiliya Arthashastra, Part II: An English Translation with Critical and Explanatory Notes*, 2nd edition, 7th reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2010, pp. 334–35.

CONCLUSION

The study and survey of the *Kural* on various aspects of statecraft, defence, security, diplomacy, governance, etc., shows that the work is not idealistic. The text is cognizant of the institution of war and national interest and the instruments of exercising state power. It has pragmatic advice for the ruler. Yet, its moral and ethical flavour stands out clearly. It could be that in its normative dimension, the text argues for peace in an era of recurring wars. That is the calling of an intellectual and a philosopher.

What makes the *Kural* unique is the general and universal approach to political subjects with no concern for country, age or historical state of society; an excellent 'literary' or 'didactic' work.¹ The real value is that Tiruvalluvar, the author of the *Kural*, is broad minded, and a universal author who presents his ideas in a secular non-partisan way.

Thus, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, we need to ask as to what is the value of a didactic work such as the *Kural*? The *Kural*, adds value to the Indian and world heritage of normative political science, democratic governance and philosophy. From a glance at the chapters in the study, it is clear that even though the work may be didactic, it has some valuable sets of advice on issues such as statecraft, warcraft, diplomacy, external and internal security and management and governance.

¹ Takanobu Takahashi, 'The Treatment of King and State in the *Tirukkural*', in Noboru Karashima (ed.), *Kingship in Indian History*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1999, p. 52.

As to it being didactic, in the present precarious geophysical planetary condition of the Anthropocene, with rising expectations, aspirations and populations with selfish national and individual interests, and proliferation of various types of lethal weapons and disruptive technologies, the need of the time is actually for such a normative and didactic philosophy. The value of *aram* or *dharmā* is supreme. What *Tirukkural* is arguing is that it is *aram* which regulates and needs to check both *porul* and *inbam*. This is what exactly M.K. Gandhi had argued for in his *Hind Swaraj*. The *Kural*, in Tamil, thus adds value to the Indian heritage and as this study shows, many of its ideas and concepts as related to ethics and morals endure and indeed are relevant for contemporary and futuristic times, not only for India but for the entire world for world peace and harmony.

According to Indic philosophy the world is one family. Benefit of wealth needs to be distributed. Verse 527 of the *Kural* gives an example from the behaviour of crows:

Crows hide not their food but call and share

Wealth accrues to men of such nature.²

As I end this chapter this message in this verse is so important in not only sharing the vaccines to end the devastating global pandemic of 2020-21, but sharing economic prosperity.

² M. Rajaram, *Thirukkural: Pearls of Inspiration*, New Delhi: Rupa, 2009, p. 109.

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India has a live, longstanding, and multiple traditions of secular texts and treatise on statecraft, not only in Sanskrit but also in Dravidian traditions in Tamil. For a total picture of Indian civilization and culture there is need to explore texts other than just Sanskrit. In this category there is a powerful and compact text in Tamil from south India called the *Tirukkural* by Tiruvalluvar, also known as the *Kural*. The unique character of this text is that it deals with the three concepts which in Tamil are: *aram* (virtue), *porul* (wealth) and *kaman* or *inbam* (love/desire). Sanskrit words denoting the concepts are *dharma*, *artha* and *kama*. The poetic work consists of 1,330 couplets, divided into 133 chapters of 10 couplets each. The special feature of the *Kural* is its powerful and contemporary message and relevance both at individual and state level on the importance of virtue, *aram* and *dharma*. Yet it does not ignore the essential of *porul* or *artha*. It has some valuable advice on statecraft, warcraft, diplomacy, management, governance, and communications.

In modern Indian history, great thinkers and doers such as Mahatma Gandhi were influenced by it. Today, the world seems to be getting fragmented by power politics and under great planetary stress by human abuse of nature. A new paradigm is needed in such disastrous times. Humanity needs this didactic and normative text saturated with common sense, humanism and virtue. The study and revival of relevant political wisdom, virtue and statecraft in the *Kural* will be an important contribution for contemporary and futuristic times, not only for India but for the entire world for peace and harmony.

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