CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. TAMIL LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND CULTURE

Tamil language has a hoary tradition with vast literature depicting the ideals to be followed in all walks of life. Even foreign scholars who came to India on missionary services were fascinated by the sweetness of Tamil language, mastered it and did some service of translating some Tamil texts into English and composing new poems. Even as the sun dispels the outer darkness of the people Tamil removes their inner darkness and grants light. In such a grand language grammar has been formulated not only for letters and words, but also for the principles life. The word porul simply means ‘meaning’, but in this context it means the grammar of life such as time, space, deity, method of living, etc.

Everyman is endowed with intelligence, desire and action. When the proposed action is done with accurate knowledge and appropriate motivation, then that action will produce the perfect and good result. On the contrary if an action is done in an unrighteous way with evil design and ignorance, then that action will give only bad
results. According to the contention of the psychologists, man naturally prefers goodness after eliminating evil and joy after removing sorrow. Actually desiring for joy and unwilling of suffering are the pre-requisites of every individual person. However, a man must have the ability to know discriminatively the nature of good and bad as well as happiness and affliction throughout his life span. This process is understood in terms of individual person accomplishing his life in accordance with his environment.

Man is a social animal and he has a natural quality called gregarious instinct. No one can function independently. For one reason or the other, man has to depend on others. For instance, the farmers have to distribute the excessive grains to others in exchange. The patients have to approach the doctors, the students have to discuss with the teachers, and the disciples have to consult their masters. Hence, it becomes inevitable for one to live with others. In this process of getting together, some actions end in prosperity while others in adversity. Thus when an individual strives hard for the welfare of his society, he experiences joy in good deeds and sorrow due to evil deeds. Hence, the individual's character is experimented and measured through social dimensions. All the actions, which promote the welfare of the society, are the acceptable ones while those bring forth discredit to the society are the detestable ones.

Virtue has been defined as the behaviour where one shows interest in other's welfare, while vice as detrimental to others for selfish ends. Individual's
discipline, culture, civilization, etc. are shaped well in the collective social aspects. A
man's progress as well as downfall are determined through social norms. The virtues
like righteousness, wealth and happiness get clarified in the social context. Right and
wrong deeds, moral values, family, educational, elders, wealth etc. are related with
human elements and their greatness are realised. The question naturally arises as why
man has to follow these moral obligations or desist from wicked things?

Man is also equally portrayed as a political animal. When an individual
cannot prevent the harms endangering peaceful living, an organisation becomes
inevitable. This organisation establishes a contract with the people with a view to
protecting the people from quarrels, wars, agitations, restlessness and fueds. Those
who indulge in such violent deeds too are the human beings and they too form part of
the same social unit. Why are they treated as negative deviants and neglected? Social
psychologists analyse their inner aspirations, moral involvement, religious life etc.
When they become beyond redemption since they are greedy, it is essential on the
part of the contracted organisation to protect the people from internal dangers and
external threats. The government machinery has to function in such a way to protect
the citizens from robbers, enemies, invaders and other wicked elements and promote
peaceful existence among them. The government though a political institution, is
more social in its application through army, citizen, ministry, emissary, spying, etc.

The title of this research is exemplified through the above ideas. It proceeds
with philosophical investigation to the views expressed in the Tirukkural. Tirukkural,
the pathway to perfect life, being enunciated by Tiruvalluvar, in its threefold explanation to life principles, is a grammar for promoting individual progress and social development through political devices. "Our Tamil Language, more sweet than nectar, its ancient glory, culture and tradition etc. are preserved through these three cantos of Tirukkural. As a means of developing the true ways of life, it accounts for the psychological nature of mankind such as knowledge, action, desires which are the nature of total human education functioning through body, soul and consciousness; Tirukkural also explicates the nature of language through the quietitude of mental idea, quietitude of natural sound, and the explanation of truth-function; it elucidates grammar of life through righteousness, wealth and pleasure; it brings to light the theism through the paths of wisdom, action and desire; it analysis the components of life as sattvic, rajasic and tamasic qualities. To put it more precisely this work of grandeur describes the three fold way of life, from psychological, educational, linguistic, domestic, theistic and biological perspectives and establishes the truth through prose, poetry and drama and promotes human race on the empirical world. No other language in the world has done this marvellous job than our great Tamil".

(Arumuga Mudaliyar, Saravana, 1971: 186)

Hence, it is no exaggeration to hold that Tamil is hailed as the basic root of the society not only of Tamil society, but of any society in the world. Even as Bharathidasan hails 'O! Tamil! Blow the conch by proclaiming that our life and our prosperity can seldom diminish! A thorough study of the Tirukkural, especially the socio-political philosophy will prove the noble statement of Bharathidasan.
1.2 THE OBJECTIVE OF THIS RESEARCH

This research project aims at bringing to light the philosophical significance of social ideologies and political doctrines as envisaged by Valluvar. This endeavour is not confined to the Tamil country only, but all over the world. Unlike other philosophical texts in India, Tirukkural has been written in chaste and cherished Tamil language so that any one can read, reflect and react over its contents. Just like water springs forth in a sand-well, the more and more one reads the couplets, the better one gets knowledge, acquires wisdom, organises life in a specific track. Another greatness of Tirukkural is that any one born as human, born in any part of the globle, at any age of his life, at any place of his dwelling can be a beneficiary of reading the kural.

Tamil language attains its glory because of the Kural which is held in esteem as the holy scriptures of the Tamils. It insists that people must live as human by brushing aside beast mentality and cultivate all noble traits. Tamil country was known for its harmony which declares ‘every place is our dwelling spot, everyone is our kith and kin’, ‘one is our clan, one is our God, But when differences occurred among the people due to professions which paved the way for caste distinctions, class discriminations, etc. leading to restlessness, Valluvar appeared on the scene and consoled the people that birth is common to all and speciality cannot be granted to professional variation. He endeavoured to establish a casteless, clanless, classless society through discipline, decorum, culture, education etc., by birth all men are good
and equal, but by bringing up they indulge in evil deeds and develop inequality. Due to economic instability, colour difference, poverty, political turmoil, social inequalities, religious feuds, linguistic fanaticism, etc. man deviates from the righteous path and resorts to unrighteous means to eke out his living. Vayuvar offers excellent explanation for man's engrossment in unethical ways of life.

A deed reveals the idea of it, but not its intention. All the evil deeds are performed with an intention only. For instance, in the act of robbery, the idea of robbery is made explicit and not the motivation of the act. There may be a number of intentions for that robbery, but what is known to us is the 'idea' of theft. Vayuvar points out that evil are simply the indulgence in evil deeds with evil design.

"To work no wilful woe, in any wise, through all the days,

To any living soul, is virtue's highest praise.

It is the chief of all virtues not knowingly to do any person evil, even in the lowest degree, and at any time". (Kural 317)

All kinds of evils emerge as a result of wicked ways of thinking, speaking and acting. Hence, it is obligatory on the part of those who want to lead a life of virtues as unblemished men of perfection to desist from evil deeds. Even if money is stolen for spending for God's sake, it is a crime. In the chapter 'Avoiding mean Association, Vayuvar authentically asserts, "Both purity of mind, and purity of action clear, leaning no staff of pure companionship, to man draw near. Chaste company is the staff on which come, these two things, viz., purity of mind and purity of conduct.
Both purity of mind, and purity of action clear,

Learning no staff of pure companionship, to man draw near.

(Kural 455)

Even if one wants to appease the appetite of one's mother, one should not resort to the unfair means, being mocked at by the perfect ones. These deeds approved by the perfect people yield goodness and the disapproved ones yield badness. The grammar for perfection is to perform goodness to all and at all times through inner purity and the path of truthfulness. Every person should desist from following the senses, but should control them and purify the mind so as to become the perfect ones. This may be the central theme of the Tirukkural. Since the mother rejoices more at the news of his son becoming a perfect person, than when she begets him, it is needless to say about the greatness of becoming a perfect person.

Only the perfect person will follow the impartial path always; will be a man of wisdom; will be trained well in education and prefer always to do good to others; get away from evils since they are dreaded worst than fire. The state of perfection is common not only to individual persons, but is applicable to all those who participate in the political affairs of the country including the ruler. Hence, Valhivar is conscious about the goal of life as perfection at the individual level, social level and at political level. As long as an individual person's discipline, culture, righteous actions are made perfect and stabilized without oscillation, that society will be held in high
esteem. Instead due to individual’s selfishness, greediness, evil thought, word and deed, the society becomes unstable and gets deteriorated in all aspects. Hence, Valluvar concentrates on individual’s perfection leading to social upliftment. One should earn through righteous means and enjoy the luxuries of life. This lesser joy will lead to the abiding and permanent joy. This is the message given by Valluvar to mankind.

The famous saying of Plato viz., ‘The philosopher king’ has been exemplified in Valluvar’s political thought. To the question, whether the king is for the people or the people for the king, Valluvar emphatically holds that the king, who rules his domain according to the norms, would be venerated on par with God. Where the king forgets the people, there only anarchy will prevail. The king has no respect or reverence outside his domain. His primordial duty is to protect the people at all costs and take adequate measures for their development. A state, king, ministry, executive, army etc. can not be conceived of outside the premises of society. The aim of this dissertation is to focus the idea that a society is the integrated existence of collective individuals with collective responsibilities; man’s foremost goal of life is to attain perfection. The ruler must ensure that his citizens reach that target and provide with all facilities for this noble venture. (Devasenapathi, V.A., 1971: 539-540)

Above all, while this research project analyses the views and doctrines of Valluvar from philosophical perspective, it becomes clear that ‘knowledge of True’ is the supreme motto of this grand work. A perfect person must have an adequate
knowledge about the permanent as well as transitory objects. The pure and perfect knowledge is to know the truth contents of any statement made by any person as well as any thing. Youthfulness, wealth, body etc. are unstable. Those who have an intuitive vision which is free from delusion and blemishes can alone be deprived of internal darkness and external obscuration. Such person alone can be experiencing joy always. This attainment alone will annihilate rebirth and pave the way for abiding joy. Birth itself causes untold sufferings. Valluvar wants to put an end to the transmigratory existence by saying that to overcome the ignorance associated with birth one has to realise truly the true being which is distinct in itself. This is the state of liberation. This work proceeds in this direction only.

1.3. THE METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH:

Socio-political philosophy of Tiruvalluvar - A Study belongs to the analytical category since an attempt has been made to analyse the fundamental doctrines of Valluvar in a philosophical way, i.e. as to why does Valluvar make such a viewpoint or on what basis individual ethics, social ethics and political ideologies are envisaged. Further the significant feature of this research methodology is to accommodate well being and peaceful living and to know the virtues to be eschewed since they become detrimental to human progress.
Though any work is based on analysis, it should be noted that all ideas must centre around one common theme. *Tirukkural*'s central theme is to realize the supreme Reality (*Meypporul*) and attain perfection (*sanranmai*). Other ideas, though explained both positively and negatively, are meant for realizing the ultimate goal of life. When a man realizes the ultimate truth in himself, he becomes a *jnani* and becomes one who knows everything. However, as he has to live on this earth as human, he needs food, clothing and shelter which are worldly in nature. How is man related to the world? What glory does man gain through this relation? How is the world benefited? Who has created this world? How has it been created? Why has it been created? How do the animate beings and inanimate objects establish a relation between themselves? An answer to these questions has been analytically sought in the *Tirukkural* both affirmatively and negatively.

From the expression used by *Valluvar*, வள்ளுவர் வள்ளுவர் வள்ளுவர் வள்ளுவர் வள்ளுவர், let the creator of the world perish (1062), it is evident *Valluvar* holds the view that a supreme person has created this world. *Valluvar* had the thought of Divine Person from the statements as வேஷத்தே இருந்தே கடக்கும் (God among men - 388), எழுமபை எழும்பையார் (no God adoring - 55), அருந்தத்துடன் குட்டிப்பிட்டார் (God who dwells in heaven), ப்ராச்சுரிய (Primal Deity -1), வருமான் (Purely wise Being - 2) நல்லை நல்லையால் (13) gracious Being, the sea of virtue -8) பானைக்குறிக்குரிய (God as having Eight-fold excellence -9). References about the world, birth, death, domestic life such as marriage, wife, begetting children, glory of heaven, greatness of the renounced ones, etc., are made to indicate the truth that man
has to live in this world with all facilities provided by nature and by his own efforts till he attains salvation own errors till he attains salvation and reaches the domain of God. Valluvar, for the sake of analogy has used grass, palmirah, sugarcane, bamboo, lotus etc etc. as plants and flowers; ant, rat, cobra as mobile spices; tortoise, crocodile, fish etc as living in water; lion, tiger, elephant, horse, bull, goat, cow, deer, crow, crane, peacock, swan etc. as belonging to animal kingdom; domestic people, renounced people, different people., poverty- striken people, learned people, illiterate people, knowledgeable men, ignorant men, perfect one and imperfect people as belonging to human category.

"Even though human beings are branched as one clan since they have similar appearance, it is clear that there are differences in movement, dress, time and place factors, habits, method of living, economic status, education, knowledge, culture, activity etc. According to a Greek scholar, man is a 'gregarious being'. Despite the varieties of differences, what is the underlying unity among the humans like the thread connecting all gems? The external appearance as body, the internal existence of the sixth sense constitutes the unitive life. Valluvar, as a great scholar who has understood those differences as well as the unitive nature among the human beings has enunciated the adaptable principles distinctively in accordance to their virtuous qualities" (Amirdhalingam,P., 1962, 92-93).

From the above facts, it is evident beyond doubt that Tirukkural is a universal work cutting across cultural, social, political, religious, economic and linguistic
barriers. In this research project the ideas have been explained in an analytic way with philosophical expositions. The advantage of analytic method is to make explicit all the implicit ideas, and to bring subtle meaning to light.

For instance, the couplet (29) கொச்சியாம் பல்லிவு புளிப்பு காய்கள் கடையார் கனவு காணாம் அதில் has been loosely interpreted to mean that those who have scaled the height of innovation like virtue cannot bear the wrath even for a moment. This literal interpretation leads to a contradiction. How can a man who cannot control anger be claimed as a virtuous man? Hence, we have to think in another way. We should not provoke the highly virtuous people; otherwise we cannot bear their anger. Valluvar has emphatically stated that righteousness is devoid of jealousy, greediness, wrath and abusive words. Such being the case, even for any provocation the virtuous people should not get angry. So the implicit meaning is that a man of nobility should desist from anger and others should not provoke him. The unbearable anger must be subdued at any cost. Thus an analysis of Valluvar’s seven-word statement may convey a variety of interpretation.

1.4. PIONEERING RESEARCH WORKS IN TIRUKKURAL

There are innumerable commentaries and research projects to Tirukkural. But, according to scholars, not all of them are acceptable. Namakkal Kavignar Ramalingam Pillai (1963) rightly points out thus:
"If Valluvar comes alive now would be taken a back. What else he would do when he could see a variety of commentaries written whimsically by different persons to his assiduous task of framing the worth while couplets? Besides this he may even cry and weep when noticed about the totally contrast commentaries to his original writings."

"It would be totally acceptable that Tirukkural is the result of the penance made by Mother Tamil for a long time. Even though it is in Tamil and yields undying reputation, the knowledge part of it is not pertaining to the Tamils only. As a generic work, it contains the quintessence of useful messages for all walks of life. The scholars of other language accept as Truth that Tirukkural is a matchless work among the grand writings in the world. As this work is being translated in almost all the languages of the world stands as the testimony of its greatness".

"It is the foremost responsibility of the Tamils to present a perfect commentary to this work since it offers everlasting wisdom to the people all over the world. If the Tamils do not fulfil this mission of producing a most appropriate commentary, how it would help other people? (Ramalingam Pillai, 1963: 6)

Keeping in mind the deep rooted desire and expectation of the above scholar, this research projects the correct interpretation of the couplets in a philosophical way for the benefit of people not only belonging to Tamil country, but all over the globe.
During 1968, the second world Tamil Conference was held at Madras. Towards the end of it, Madurai, Annamalai and Madras Universities have been granted endowments for *Tirukkural*. These endowments have produced several research works on *Tirukkural* in different themes. *Tirukkural* has been compared with great works both in India and abroad and with several thinkers in India. 'Valluvar and Aristotle', 'Valluvar found by Ellis', 'Valluvar and Manu', 'Valluvar and Tirumular' *Valluvar and Naladiyar' are some of the titles on which research has been conducted.

"Several commentaries were published for elucidating the couplets of *Tirukkural* which are easy to spell difficult to comprehend. The commentators did not belong to the same period, same religion or same categories of thought. An ancient verse declares that ten scholars wrote commentaries to this work. Even foreign scholars now hail its greatness. The pioneer in this regard is Viramamuni who came from Italy to serve for Christianity. Others followed him". (Sethupillai, R.P., 1965: 2)

Under the auspices of Sornambal Endowment Lecture series, (1971) lectures delivered at Madras University on various themes have been published both in English and Tamil. Besides these many writings by foreign scholars are also available in the form of books and articles. These works have highlighted only one or two themes of *Tirukkural*. In this work *arathuppal* and *porupal* are taken into account and the ideas have been analysed from philosophical perspectives in the
realms of individual virtues - acceptable and despicable, social virtues – acceptable and despicable and *Valluvar*’s political thoughts.

1.5. PRIMARY WORKS WHICH HELPED IN THIS RESEARCH WORK

Though several works both in Tamil and English have been profusely quoted in this work, the translation of G.U. Pope to *Tirukkural* served as a primary source to give the English rendering of the *kural*. “The *Tirukkural*-Endowment lectures”, published by the Madras University served as a source book to bring to light the manifold informations put forth by scholaras of high reputation. Besides this, “The Social Philosophy of the *Tirukkural*” by Professor S. Gopalan immensely served the purpose here to predict the period of *Valluvar* and highlight novel ideas about social thoughts as elucidated by *Valluvar*.

Apart from these works a number of text books, speeches and articles articulated by ardent scholars of *Tirukkural* like, R.P. Sethu Pillai, A.K. Paranthamanar, V.S.P. Manickam, Mu. Varadharasanar, K.V. Jagannathan, T.P. Meenakshisundaram, A.S. Gnanasambandham and others helped to authentically convey the concepts framed by *Valluvar*. One point must be noted here. Each work, whether a text book, or article, research paper, develops a particular theme of *Valluvar*. This is not a defect, but for persons to know more or have a comprehensive understanding about the outer life of man (*puram*) the present
research work will provide the materials with fine elucidation. For instance we come across works like 'Virtues in Tirukkural', 'Domestic life in Tirukkural', 'Ascetic life' in Tirukkural', 'Polity in Tirukkural' etc. These works conduct research on Valluvar from his own standpoint and have found out whether what Valluvar stated during his period would be applicable to the present day world. This approach portrays the view points of Valluvar from different points of view.

This research work is an attempt to reveal the truth as to how the righteous path found by Valluvar is conducive to both individual and society. As governance is inevitable for individual and social living, the political thoughts rendered by Valluvar are suitably explained. The source books which helped for this work are given in the Bibliography.

1.6. THE STRUCTURE OF THIS RESEARCH PROJECT

This work has five Chapters. The first one is the introduction dealing with the objective, methodology etc. of this work. The second chapter ascertains the period of Valluvar and the pattern of Tirukkural. The third one highlights the social philosophy of Tirukkural wherein individual discipline through domestic and ascetic standpoints, fate, social ethics, acceptable norms and non-acceptable norms etc. are explained with logical justification. In the fourth chapter the political philosophy of Valluvar is discussed on the basis of inevitability of politics, functions of a government, factors
of a government etc. are adequately analysed. The last chapter is the conclusion wherein a brief summary of the foregoing topics are given and the theme of this work is fulfilled.