

Saint Valluvar

Thirukkural

with
English couplets

Translated by
Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati



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Editor's Notes

Thirukkural

Thirukkural has been translated into many languages. English translations in prose and verse by eminent scholars have appeared in print. Of those done in verse, G. U. Pope's verses are in varying metres, Rev. Popley's in blank verses (of five feet), K. M. Balasubramaniam's in heptametric couplets and Robinson's in tetrametre. The very name Kural in Tamil means short verse in venba metre of 2 lines each, the first line containing 4 feet and the second line 3. Great truths are found imbedded within the brief compass of those two lines.

Aphoristic brevity and felicity of expression, impregnated with great moral truths, distinguish Kural from other works. So a translation that comes very near this high ideal has to be preferred to others. Robinson's translation of Kural in tetrametric couplets being the shortest in structure, perfect in diction and felicitous in expression, besides being faithful to the original, we thought at first we could arrange to get the third part of Kural on Love translated into English in tetrametric verse (Part III not having been translated by Robinson) and publish Kural in its entirety in uniform tetrametric verse. But since many old Tamil commentaries have now become available (after Robinson) and since it would be advantageous to get the Kural translated by a single eminent hand in uniform metre, taking advantage of the new commentaries since made available. The great saint and savant, poet-philosopher Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati was

requested to undertake the task. He readily agreed to do so. He completed the translation in tetrametric couplets, French metre being adopted.

Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati, the reputed author of many valuable books in varied languages, with his wide knowledge and travel experiences, with his mastery over several languages like Tamil, English, Sanskrit, Telugu, Hindi, French, etc., with his delving into the depths of Yogic silence and Light and Divine inspiration, has brought out the great truths of Tiruvalluvar in apt and resonant verses, in crystal-clear tetrametric couplets, which can be set to music.

Explanatory notes for difficult words in English verses have been added at the end.

It is hoped the English reading public will appreciate this new venture of ours and benefit by it.

It is a real pleasure for me to present this treatise on *Thirukkural* to you. Thank you, Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati for having transmitted *Thirukkural* to us. The first edition of this book is dated on October 11, 1968. With the blessing of Aum Shuddha Shakti.

Christian Piaget



Sage Valluvar

Sage Valluvar, priest of thy lowly clan
No tongue repeats, no speech reveals thy name
Yet, all things changing, dieth not thy fame
For thou art bard of universal man.

And still thy "Book" above the waters wan
Virtue, true wealth, and joy, and being's aim
In sweetest mystic couplets doth proclaim
Where winds sea-wafted palmy forests fan.

Haply undreamed of "Visions" glad thine eyes
In realms beyond thy fabled sevenfold birth
And clouds of darkness from thy spirit roll.

While lands far off have heard with strange surprise
Faint echoes of thy song. Through all the earth
Men hail thee brother, seer of spotless soul.

G. U. Pope

Song of Unity

Unite. Unite, Unite, Oh Souls
Unite and play your roles
Unite in mind, unite in heart
Unite in whole, unite in part
Like words and tunes and sense in song
Let East and West unite and live long
Trees are many; the grove is one

*Branches are many; tree is one
Shores are many; sea is one
Limbs are many; body is one
Bodies are many; self is one
Stars are many; sky is one
Flowers are many; honey is one
Pages are many; book is one
Thoughts are many; thinker is one
Tastes are many; taster is one
Actors are many; the drama is one
Nations are many; the world is one
Religions are many; Truth is one
The wise are many; Wisdom is one
Beings are many; breath is one
Classes are many; college is one
Find out this One behind the many
Then life shall enjoy peaceful harmony*

Peace Anthem

*Peace for all, peace for all
For all the countries peace
Joy for all, joy for all
For all the nations joy
A rosy morning peace
A smiling summer joy (Peace for all)*

*All for each and each for all
This is the golden rule
Life and Light and Love for all
For all that live our love (Peace for all)*

*Work and food and clothes for all
Equal status for all
Health and home and school for all
A happy world for all (Peace for all)*

*No idle rich, no more beggars
All are equal workers
No more tears, no more fears
The heart is full of cheers (Peace for all)*

*No atom scare, no fat mammon
No room for war demon
Like leaves in trees, like rays in the sun
We are one communion,
One Divine communion (Peace for all)*

*The good in you is good for all
Your life is life for all
The God in you is God for all
Your love is love for all (Peace for all)
For he or she or it or rest
This collective life is best
This Universal Life is best
North or South, or East or West (Peace for all)*

*Peace for plants and birds and beasts
For hills and streams and woods
Peace in Home - land and air and sea
Dynamic peace we see*

Peace for all, peace for all

Immortal Peace for All



Presentation of Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati

11th May 1897 – 7th March 1990

The wise one to the cosmic age

Although more than 90 years old, in his school in the south of India, *Kavi Yogi Maharishi* (great divine visionary, wise poet), Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati worked like a young man of twenty. When he was asked his age, he answered: "My age is Courage!" The Yogi wrote several hundred works in English, French, Tamil, Hindi, Telugu and Sanskrit; five thousand songs, and fifteen hundred poems in French. The magnum opus of the man conscious of the presence of God in him, *Bharata Shakti*, (in 50,000 verses) described his ideal: only One Humanity living in communion with only One God in a transformed world! *Bharata Shakti* is a monumental and unique work. The Yogi depicts the essence of all the religions, of all the prophets and saints, all the approaches of yoga and all the cultures on an allegorical fabric. It is a book for any age which all spiritual researchers and all nations should read and meditate on. His commitment is summarized in his book celebrating his life, *Pilgrim Soul*. The three poems mentioned in the opening express perfectly his ideal. His mantra, *Aum Shuddha Shakti Aum*, nourishes our souls and guides our steps toward the inner joy *Ananda*. It means: The light of Grace and power of the pure supreme Almighty bless us of peace, happiness and prosperity! Let the beauty and greatness of soul of Dr. Bharati Shuddhananda bloom and scent the entire Earth of its divine message and his spiritual and unifying benefactor!

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Introduction

There are three holy works by which the Tamil language has been universalised and immortalised. They are *Thirukkural*, *Thiruvachakam* and *Thirumandiram*. *Thirukkural* is the life, *Thiruvachakam* the heart and *Thirumandiram* the soul of Tamilian culture. We are here concerned with *Thirukkural* or Holy Kural of Saint Valluvar. It is a grand mosaic of cultural creation, a repertory of universal thoughts and truths. It is the one book for all, for all times and a world that lives it shall enjoy eternal peace, harmony, health, wealth, power, grace and bliss. It gives the light of right life, the wealth of practical wisdom, the milk of heart's abundance, the honey of conjugal bliss and the joy of peace and harmony at home and the wider homeland. It is the Gospel of "Love and give", a code of soul-luminous life. The whole human aspiration is epitomised in the immortal book – a book for all ages. The *Bhagavad Gita*, *Thirukkural* and *Kalidasa's Sakuntalam* have been hailed by savants all over the world as the cream of Indian thought and culture. Indian, English and French scholars have translated *Thirukkural*.

My bosom friend and scholar-hero Sri V. V. S. Ayyar, amidst a stormy political life, translated *Thirukkural* in the Biblical style and I had the honour of typing it and reading the proofs. One day I was translating my *Yoga Siddhi* into rhymed couplets. *Yoga Siddhi* is the *Gospel of Perfect Life*. I did the translation with an elaborate commentary. V. V. S. Ayyar admired the style and substance of the work and requested me to translate *Thirukkural* into rhymed couplets.

I did translate the first Section. But it was lost with many of my manuscripts during my long pilgrimage from saint to saint. My magnum opus, the *Bharata Shakti* (53,000 verses) was translated into hexametric blank verses during my long Yogic Silence at the feet of Sri Aurobindo who blessed the work. In *Bharata Shakti* I had introduced a chapter on *Thirukkural*. Sri Aurobindo read it in English and wanted the whole of *Thirukkural* to be translated into English and French couplets. A French scholar from France helped me in translating the Kural into French. But it was not completed. After a world tour, I raised the Yoga Samaj at Adyar Sri Ramnagar for my tapasya and cultural service. The World Tamil Conference boosting up *Thirukkural* as our scripture gave me an impetus.

I seriously bent to the work of rendering *Thirukkural* into English couplets. God brought me an ardent lover of Tamil and Siddhanta, one who appreciated my services to Tamil literature. I cannot forget Thiru V. Subbiah Pillai, the Karma Yogin.

Mr. Subbiah Pillai is a constructive genius. He requested me to translate the *Thirukkural* into rhymed tetrametric couplets following those of E. J. Robinson. He placed into my hands the translations of Robinson, Rev. G. U. Pope, S. M. Michael and I had already got the translations of V. V. S. Ayyar, Popley, etc. My friend Sri K. M. Balasubramaniam had translated *Thirukkural* into rhymed heptametric couplets, which I have appreciated in three pages in his book. I wanted to be true to Saint Valluvar and my conscience. I have studied the Kural from my boyhood and reanalysed the chapters and my *Thirukkural Inbam* is well

known to the reading public. I read all available translations in English and French. I found out that the terse cryptic couplets of Valluvar's Kural contained something more than what have been brought out in translations up to now. I took to a month's silence and delved into the treasure-mine of Saint Valluvar. One inspired day, I began the translation. It was my birthday, 11.5.1967, while I was in Moscow. From that day I steeped myself into silent inner communion for two days a week and completed the whole book on the 24th April, 1968. The rhymed couplets in this book follow the French syllabic system and I have made them as clear and simple as possible so that the Kural couplets can be quoted as proverbs and also sung melodiously. I hope the University of Madras, Annamalinagar and Madurai and the universities of all the 14 linguistic regions will encourage this book. I hope that UNESCO will recognise this translation of the *Thirukkural* and distribute it all over the world. Our government is requested to present this *Thirukkural* to all students that take up degrees and enter the world from the college portals. I thank Thiru Nedunchezian, the Minister for Education, Tamil Nadu for encouraging me from time to time in carrying on this translation to the finish.

Thiru V. S. Pillai has requested me to write an elaborate commentary on *Thirukkural* in English, verse by verse, so that the ideas and ideals of *Thirukkural* can reach humanity and awaken aspiring souls to live a life of love, give, serve, purify and unite. I have begun the work and I hope to finish it next year. *Thirukkural* is a Guiding Light to humanity. It leads humanity to live as it ought to live in moral purity, spiritual knowledge, eternal wisdom in perfect health,

wealth and prosperity. It is a faithful friend to the family man, to the mother, to children, to workers, teachers, industrialists, politicians, artists, scholars, rulers, etc. It subtly brings ascetic life in the first section after dealing with an ideal family life.

In the second section it elaborates the manner of the prosperous administration of a country. In the third section it deals with love. This is a very deep and subtle portion of the *Thirukkural*. None has dared to descend into the realms of sex-love in a book of morals as Saint Valluvar has done.

For Valluvar wants perfect sex-harmony and the sex-life he advocates is a florescence of the soul which is one in man and woman. It is based on a psychic love deeply laid in the heart. It closely follows the *Thiruchitrambala Kovai* of Saint Manikkavachakar. I shall elaborate Valluvar's idea in my *Lights on Thirukkural*.

Saint Valluvar lived what he wrote. He was a sage and a statesman. He lived a righteous family life with his chaste wife Vasuki. *Thirukkural* is the eternal lamp of his life. To read the Kural is to read into the pure life of Saint Valluvar.

Blessed are the pure for their Godhood is sure. Blessed are the peaceful for they shall be joyful. Blessed are the meek for they get what they seek. Blessed are the righteous for they shall be victorious. Blessed are the faithful for their life shall be fruitful. Blessed are the patient for they shall be efficient. Blessed are the pure in love for they receive grace from above.

Prosper All!

Yogi Dr. Shuddhananda Bharati



I. The praise of God

La louange de Dieu

1. A leads letters; the Ancient Lord
Leads and lords the entire world.

L'alpha , lettre première ; le Primordial, Dieu
guide et gouverne l'univers en tous lieux.
2. That lore is vain which does not fall
At His good feet who knoweth all.

Vaine est la tradition, si elle ne s'empresse
aux pieds de Celui qui possède la sagesse.
3. Long they live on earth who gain
The feet of God in florid brain.

Longue vie sur terre à qui atteint par ardeur
Les pieds de Dieu dans son âme parée de fleurs.
4. Who hold His feet who likes nor loathes
Are free from woes of human births.

Adorer Celui qui ne désire ni n'abhore
Délivre des malheurs humains et de leur sort.
5. God's praise who tell, are free from right
And wrong, the twins of dreaming night.

Louer Dieu délivre, et du vrai, et du faux
qui, fils d'illusion, sont de ténébreux jumeaux.

I. The praise of God

La louange de Dieu

6. They prosper long who walk His way
Who has the senses singed away.

Eternel Bonheur à qui va de confiance
avec Celui qui a maîtrisé les cinq sens.
7. His feet, whose likeness none can find
Alone can ease the anxious mind.

Seuls les pieds du Seigneur à nul autre pareil,
savent soulager l'esprit qu'anxiété enraille.
8. Who swims the sea of vice is he
Who clasps the feet of Virtue's sea.

Tu veux surnager dans l'océan du vice,
de l'Océan de Vertu, fait tes délices.
9. Like senses stale that head is vain
Which bows not to Eight-virtued Divine.

Aussi vain que des sens usés est ce tête
qui ne s'incline devant Dieu aux huit Vertus.
10. The sea of births they alone swim
Who clench His feet and cleave to Him.

Sont aptes à traverser la mer des naissances
Seuls ceux qui s'ariment à Lui avec puissance.

II. The blessing of rain

11. The genial rain ambrosia call
The world but lasts while rain shall fall.
12. The rain begets the food we eat
And forms a food and drink concrete.
13. Let clouds their visits stay, and dearth
Distresses all the sea-girt earth.
14. Unless the fruitful shower descend
The ploughman's sacred toil must end.
15. Destruction it may sometimes pour
But only rain can life restore.
16. No grassy blade its head will rear
If from the cloud no drop appear.
17. The ocean's wealth will waste away
Except the cloud its stores repay.
18. The earth, beneath a barren sky
Would offerings for the gods deny.
19. Were heaven above to fail below
Nor alms nor penance earth would show.
20. Water is life that comes from rain
Sans rain our duties go in vain.

III. The merit of ascetics

21. No merit can be held so high
As theirs who sense and self deny.
22. To con ascetic glory here
Is to count the dead upon the sphere.
23. No lustre can with theirs compare
Who know the right and virtue wear.
24. With hook of firmness to restrain
The senses five, is heaven to gain.
25. Indra himself has cause to say
How great the power ascetics sway.
26. The small the paths of ease pursue
The great achieve things rare to do.
27. They gain the world, who grasp and tell
Of taste, sight, hearing, touch and smell.
28. Full-worded men by what they say
Their greatness to the world display.
29. Their wrath, who've climb'd the mount of good
Though transient, cannot be withstood.
30. With gentle mercy towards all
The sage fulfils the virtue's call.

IV. The power of virtue

31. From virtue weal and wealth outflow
What greater good can mankind know?
32. Virtue enhances joy and gain
Forsaking it is fall and pain.
33. Perform good deeds as much you can
Always and everywhere, O man!
34. In spotless mind virtue is found
And not in show and swelling sound.
35. Four ills eschew and virtue reach
Lust, anger, envy, evil-speech.
36. Do good enow; defer it not
A deathless aid in death if sought.
37. Litter-bearer and rider say
Without a word, the fortune's way.
38. Like stones that block rebirth and pain
Are doing good and good again.
39. Weal flows only from virtue done
The rest is rue and renown gone.
40. Worthy act is virtue done
Vice is what we ought to shun.

V. Married life

41. The ideal householder is he
Who aids the natural orders three.
42. His help the monk and retired share
And celibate students are his care.
43. By dutiful householder's aid
God, manes, kin, self and guests are served.
44. Sin he shuns and food he shares
His home is bright and brighter fares.
45. In grace and gain the home excels
Where love with virtue sweetly dwells.
46. Who turns from righteous family
To be a monk, what profits he?
47. Of all who strive for bliss, the great
Is he who leads the married state.
48. Straight in virtue, right in living
Make men brighter than monks praying.
49. Home-life and virtue, are the same
Which spotless monkshood too can claim.
50. He is a man of divine worth
Who lives in ideal home on earth.

VI. The worth of a wife

51. A good housewife befits the house
Spending with thrift the mate's resource.
52. Bright is home when wife is chaste.
If not all greatness is but waste.
53. What is rare when wife is good.
What can be there when she is bad?
54. What greater fortune is for men
Than a constant chaste woman?
55. Her spouse before God who adores
Is like rain that at request pours.
56. The good wife guards herself from blame
She tends her spouse and brings him fame
57. Of what avail are watch and ward?
Their purity is women's guard.
58. Women who win their husband's heart
Shall flourish where the gods resort.
59. A cuckold has not the lion-like gait
Before his detractors aright.
60. An honest wife is home's delight
And children good are jewels abright.

VII. The wealth of children

61. The world no higher bliss bestows
Than children virtuous and wise.
62. No evil comes and no blemish
Noble sons bring all we wish.
63. Children are one's wealth indeed
Their wealth is measured by their deed.
64. The food is more than nectar sweet
In which one's children hands insert.
65. Children's touch delights the body
Sweet to ears are their words lovely.
66. The flute and lute are sweet they say
Deaf to baby's babble's lay!
67. A father's duty to his son is
To seat him in front of the wise.
68. With joy the hearts of parents swell
To see their children themselves excel.
69. The mother, hearing her son's merit
Delights more than when she begot.
70. The son to sire this word is debt
"What penance such a son begot"!

VIII. Loving - kindness

71. What bolt can bar true love in fact
The trickling tears reveal the heart.
72. To selves belong the loveless ones
To oth'rs the loving e'en to bones.
73. Soul is encased in frame of bone
To taste the life of love alone.
74. Love yields aspiration and thence
Friendship springs up in excellence.

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