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Valluvam – An Icon of Globalization

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**ABSTRACT**

*This article is an attempt to quote the couplets from the ancient tamil literature 'Thirukkural' and relate it to today's scenario. The virtues of life which is exhibited as the three parts of the book and its importance to mankind has been showcased and further the article unleashes the valuable thoughts rendered by this Tamil poet that suits today's business environment and also the ethics needed for the human race is quoted and explained. The importance of globalization and virtues required for an individual has been clearly revealed through his lines.*

**Keywords:** Thirukkural, globalization, ethics, righteousness, business

'Valluvam' is a term referring to the conceptual collection of life principles authored after careful rumination by an ancient celebrated Tamil poet namely Thiruvalluvar, shortly called 'Valluvar'. He was an extraordinary intellectual with a rare global concern who lived in the ancient Tamilagam between 5<sup>th</sup> BC and 2<sup>nd</sup> BC. His universally applicable ideas for the welfare of the mankind are treasured in his book called 'Thirukkural' or 'Kural' meaning sacred couplets. This book of witty, pragmatic maxims in the poetic form of couplet proves the great acumen and prudent wisdom of this sacred and pious sage. His masterminded thoughts are enshrined in his book well-organized by his well-comprehensive sagacity. Thirukkural is not for his own age old regional race but for all mankind on this earth.

Thiruvalluvar by his lofty thought and practical saying, stands unique to be a genuine poet of world culture and concern. That is why his book is called "the universal code of conduct" (Rajendiran. C P.No. 21) by all learned men. To say aptly this compilation of the universal code of conduct in the form of 1330 couplets under three parts comprises the philosophical and logical understanding of life principles called "Valluvam". To be frank Valluvar belongs to Tamilnadu but 'Valluvam' belongs to the world. Thiruvalluvar through his valluvam reiterates the very

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famous quotes of a Tamil sangam poet namely Ganiyan Poongundranar proudly. Falling into the same line, to echo universality, everyone in this globe should say we are one. In short Valluvam energies everyone to proclaim that “I am a world citizen and all citizens are my Kith and Kin.”

The philosophy of valluvam centres around the most essential virtues of mankind that are very very necessary for a standard universal life. These ideological virtues are global in character irrespective of nation, race and language. This meritorious valluvam, if followed, no doubt, will lead to a single world that “has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls” (R.N Tagore p. 16). The narrow domestic walls as referred by Tagore in his Gitanjali are the unwanted prejudices like colour, caste, creed & language. Valluvam winking at all these prejudices echoes the very basic core concept of globalization that is equality and oneness. Globalization in modern trend is a process of interaction and integration among people, companies and government by which the people of the world are incorporated into a single world society. [Martin Albrow and Elizabeth King]. As a matter of fact valluvam aims at a synchronized homogenous society par excellence. That is why the erudite and elite men called valluvam a book of universal thought.

Valluvam focuses on three important virtues essential for the genuine, common life of mankind throughout the world. They are virtues of righteousness, virtues of wealth and virtues of love. In Tamil, they are termed as Aram, Porul and Inbam.

‘Aram’ means right way of living,  
‘Porul’ means right way of earning,  
‘Inbam’ means right way of enjoying.

The righteousness of life requires three important virtues namely virtue of spirituality, virtue of charity and virtue of love. By strictly following these virtues, Valluvam emphasizes, the integrity of mankind and peace in society that can be restored, by universal thought, Spirituality, charity and love are basic cultural values of the world. Spirituality on non-religious terms is based on righteousness that is intrinsic, charity is based on materialism which is extrinsic and love is based on tenderness, affection and vitality which is both intrinsic and extrinsic. As rightly extolled by G.U. Pope Valluvam is a compilation of perfection clarity and unity and hence. it is an “echo of the Sermon on the Mount.” and the person who compiled it is “a bard of universal man” (Rajaram M, 2015).

Virtues related to righteousness (i.e. Aram) are independent of one’s surroundings. Righteousness is the morally tuned nature of oneself. It is the purity enhanced in one’s character and conduct. This is very essential for the development of kinship among the dispersed mankind globally. The harmonious interconnected relationship among one who gives and one who receives is the output totality of a healthy and wealthy life. For an uncorrupted dealing righteousness is the one and only way to succeed. In this mundane world a person’s moral

conduct or behaviour is solely based on these virtues. In this section of Valluvam it is emphasized how one's intrinsic values of life will be universally accepted and applauded.

Virtues of wealth are dependent of the surroundings of oneself and hence they are extrinsic. Extrinsic values may depend on the economy and earning principles. As occupation, business, commerce, and their total values are decided by the public, government and traders certain universally accepted traits are essential to ease the interrelativeness. These traits with objectivity are auxiliary in supporting the virtues of righteousness.

The third part containing virtues of love are both intrinsic and extrinsic that leads one for a contented life. The love portrayed by Valluvam is not only for conjugal bliss but also for universal appeal. Valluvam portrays a love that is

“bigger than earth, certainly  
higher than the sky,  
more unfathomable than the waters (A.K. Ramanujan, P No. 5)

Thus Valluvam portrays “the love which not Time's fool “(William Shakespeare, Sonnet 116)”. These three important facets of mankind are very very basic for that global interaction and integration for all times.

To speak frankly, globalization is acknowledged in the extension of social relations across world space. To seek and achieve such smooth, conducive social atmosphere among companies and governments, at the outset, one necessarily needs a challenging timid behaviour to be exhibited among relations across various boundaries. It is the timely need of the world and the order of the day now to give a rereading to Valluvam because the present world is purely materialistic world going beyond control minding only the production of tools, gadgets and vicious things. This frosty materialistic life is a cry on the modern society's shoulder of the globalization. Globalization in the present international commercial context refers to trade and economy only. Hence it emphasizes purely the physical, material domination and denomination and concentrates on the pursuing success in achieving it fully. But interaction and integration are two important strategic and practical hubs around which the spirit of the life resolves. To give a satisfactory resolution and a global revolution it is necessary for the society to inculcate the virtues portrayed by Valluvam that stand very bright before the mankind supporting him to ease the wheel of humanity with harmony.

In this international business world, products of various materials are mobilized interconnectedly by various business magnets throughout the world and thereby the modern commerce flourishes in leaps and bounds. This is the positive aspect of globalization on oneside. On the other side globalization unleashes inequality and injustice negative in human life causing many problems like differentiation in thought and action. In today's reality rivalry, enmity, hatred and difference of opinion are the outgrowth of negativity that lurks in the commercial

globalization. Differentiation of mankind in their origin and survival is based on their language, colour, creed and gender. They form a collection of psychological divisive forces of mankind. Infact man is still with vehement animalistic qualities in pursuing life goals and to win his supremacy. He has shrunk the world by his modern innovations. Time and space are in the pocket of the modern man by his advanced gadgets. The highly sophisticated tools of transportation and communication open up not only the brighter side of life but also the darker side of it. He has advanced innovations to prove his mettle, talent and options. Man is pursuing the game of life with more velocity and vigour. All these lead to disparity causing dichotomy and disorder in the common life of man.

On one side modern globalization unite the individuals freely. On the other hand it disunities the far off countries of the world. Now in the present global scenario opponents of globalization argue that there is unequal power and respect in terms of international trade between the developed and underdeveloped countries of the world. (Juris, Jeffrey. s (2000) p.2)

It is in this context that the nucleus of Valluvam will play a vital role in globalizing everyone's thought economically, politically and culturally. Actually the projection of a single world society is the prime aim of valluvam. Valluvam, since its birth, has been portraying the Utopian ideals in the day to day life of human beings. The quintessence of valluvam aims at a global harmony even before the advent of our present modern era. Alexander Piatigorsky ranks valluvam as the best one of its kind "not only to the great artistic merits of the work but also to the lofty humane ideas permeating it which are equally precious to the people all over the world of all periods and countries" (Rajaram M, 2009).

Many studies, estimations, commentaries were made on valluvam which is a proof to the excellence of its universality. Enchanted by its practical life orientation in couplets G.U. Pope gave his golden touch to it. His prosodie couplets enshrined the pure essence of valluvam as it should be in his English translation.

Valluvam as a whole hones on the concept of righteousness as an essential trait of ethics for human life. It says the universal truth pungently and sharply as follows:

"Tis virtue when his footsteps sliding not through en wrath,  
Last, evil, speech – these four , man onwards moves in ordered path."

(G.U.Pope trans. 35)

The meaning of this couplet is "Righteousness rests on the honest attempt of removing four flaws of life namely envy, desire, anger and harsh words. In the multifaceted globalized world, the honesty is the dire necessity of a modern life.

The ethics propounded by valluvam are eminently practical and universal. Its concern is primarily to a world of all of us. It is realistic in its approach to human life (APJ. Abdul Kalam).

Ethical behaviour is an essential trait to the trending universal trade, commerce and globalization. In the corporate world of today many negative words related to dishonestly, lack of integrity and unethical practices have gained entry into every walk of life. Today there is misappropriation, fraud, embezzlement, swindle, scams, doping, trafficking and cheating everywhere. Valluvar as a sagacious practical ascetic anticipated 20 centuries before that business people and business houses would become greedy and that would result in complications of business practices, introduction of unethical practices and negative consequences to business and societies. Valluvam speaks a lot about this fraudulent cosmos indirectly and putforths its effects for straightening the characteristic of a business by emphasizing the righteousness required.

Valluvam reiterates Ganthi's proverbial saying that wealth without work is sin. It says,

Like sweet milk soured because in filthy vessel poured  
Is ample wealth in churlish man's unopened coffers stored.

(G.U.Pope trans. 1000)

Valluvam staunchly believes on the action and not on mere words. Interaction between nations, corporate companies and governments is a prerequisite of the fortification of the interrelationship in the international trade, commerce and business. In that one must use the sophisticated techniques both in action and words to ease the execution. Above all there should be a justification in the fair business for which valluvam advocate the businessmen. "To stand like balance-rod that level hangs and rightly weighs" (G.U. Pope trans. 118). Further he identifies a good trader as one "Who guards another's interest as his own." (G.U. Pope trans. 120).

Valluvam talks on the very basic tenets of a healthy and wealthy life of mankind. Firstly it talks about the well-being of the mind. The betterment of one's mind in the world depends upon the good energy diverted towards the beauty of the mind. He says that a lotus plant raises according to the water level and the dignity of men also raises according to the mind.

"With rising flood the rising lotus flower its stem unwinds,  
The dignity of men is measured by their mind." (G.U.Pope trans. 595 )

This good essence of Valluvam will teach the people to accept and accede to the dignity of men in all spheres. To achieve a good globalization dignity of men will be the right key to unlock the measureless energy among humankind. Of course in the present globalization the famous traders should understand this concept to strengthen interdependency of political, personal, cultural and economic factors. By dignity men will improve the global justice which will lead to fair trade. Such dignified men in the world today have joined their hands to establish a movement called "movement of movements" that advocate fair trade rules and perceive current institutions of global economic integration as problem.

Valluvam expounds on the strategies to be developed for a better globalization. Today the modern world is a world of competition, enmity, threat and restlessness. Due to economic flow, transaction and greedy possession of wealth, countries wage war unnecessarily against the naturally resourceful countries to plunder their natural abundant wealth. To quote an example gas, petrol, diesel and the related products are highly wanted commodities in the market today. But super powers want to rule over them and produce a globalized utilization of these sources. For this there comes a tussle in which a lot of damage to the wealth and the people is caused. Valluvam views this kind of activity on cultural plane and says that if one is properly cultured and trained well in polity, he may change even the foe into a friend. Infact a friendly world is the true essence of globalization.

The world secure on his dexterity depends,  
Whose worthy rule can change his foes to friends. (G.U.Pope trans. 874)

This tactics is highly essential today for mobilizing effective globalization in the world. This is what ideologically aimed and sought by international human rights organization like Redcross, Equality now, common wealth Human Rights Initiative and Human rights without Frontier and so on.

Valluvam vividly portrays the importance of agriculture in this globalized world. Many outstanding trade companies like Amazon, Flipkart, Reliance and so many have taken their strong roots throughout the world to market their products especially consumable commodities. The International fund flows to different direction and International economy makes surplus production of food and franchising its cultural foods thought the world. Agriculture is the main source of food supply connected with food culture.

Agriculture is the key stone of all life activities in the world. In the economic globalization food plays a vital role and a cultural diffusion among people of various races takes place only because of food culture. Agriculture is the main spring board on which the world commerce revolves for the standardized life norms. The whole world should nurture and safeguard the spokes of the wheels of agriculture in a matchless way. Promising of farmers Valluvar extols “Howe’er they roam, the world must follow still the plougher’s team.” (G.U.Pope trans. 1031) Further Valluvam glorifies them saying “The ploughers are the linch-pin of the world.” (G.U.Pope trans. 1032) Valluvam finally eulogizes the greatness of agriculturist saying “Who ploughing eat their food, they truly live. The rest to others bend subservient, eating what they give” (G.U.Pope trans. 1033).

Today in the globalized world the present situation is highly warranting. Religion as a major factor of divisive force has taken gigantic shapes in manifold ways. It leads to genocide, massacre and race extermination. There is discrimination between the haves and havenots. Ethnic groups clash with each other and there is no peace and order in this global, social and political mileu. What is the use of material globalization without peace and order. Materialistic world only will not bring happiness to the mass. Thought of nobility and equality is the one and

only resort for achieving a peaceful atmosphere and a global village for which ‘Valluvam’ is the right therapeutic medicine to bring tranquility, peace, happiness and completeness.

The war of Vietnam, War in Indonesia, war in Cylon have highlighted the truth that understanding cultural identities are biased and still the proper globalization is yet to be achieved ethically and humanely. Valluvam emphasizes that “by birth all are one and the same equally. But it is their occupation that makes them different. It propitiates that

Specialty in one’s existence is based on one’s diversity in work and not by birth. So the philosophy of Valluvam says,

“All men that live are one in circumstances of birth”  
Diversities of works give each his special worth.

(G.U.Pope trans. 972)

This brings out a truth that equality is the corner stone of globalization economically, culturally and politically.

Wealth and education decide the economic globalization. A perfect globalization will be brought by education. So Valluvam expounds the greatness of education saying

“The learned make each land their own, in every city find a home.”

(G.U.Pope trans. 397)

“Their joy is joy of all the world.”

(G.U.Pope trans. 399)

What a great visionary Valluvar is! His motif behind his aphoristic couplets is to destroy the hegemonic economic growth and to restore a globe where

“Love, modesty, beneficence, benignant grace  
With truth “serve as pillars of perfect virtue’s resting place.

(G.U.Pope trans. 983)

Valluvam speaks on secular ethics. It expounds a universal, moral and practical attitude towards life. Valluvam decries butchery, debauchery, terrorism, evil friendship gambling, baseness in a quite realistic way for universal appeal. These deteriorating facets of life will never allow healthy globalization. Hence this is the right time to reevaluate the essence of Valluvam to infuse into the cross cultural ethics because cultural globalization involves the formation of shared norms and knowledge with which people associate their individual and cultural identities. (James Paul, 2006). To imbibe Valluvam and to inculcate the virtues it portrays, the world should come forward now to resource it as a global treasure which is an icon of globalization. Otherwise the whole world will witness the ‘Hollow men of’ T.S. Eliot everywhere.

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