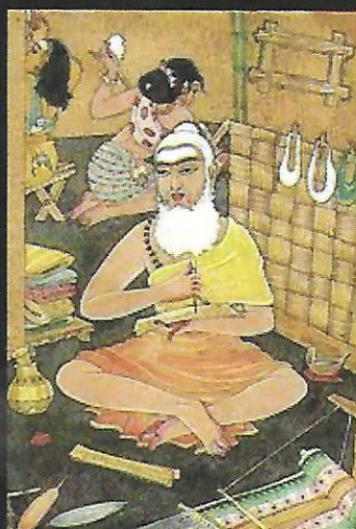


THE SACRED KURAL

OR

The Tamil Veda of Tiruvalluvar



H. A. Popley

THE SACRED KURAL



திருவள்ளுவ நாயனார்.

TRADITIONAL FIGURE OF
THE POET

*From Pandit K. Vadivelu Chettiar's
Edition. With permission of the Author*

THE SACRED KURAL

OR

THE TAMIL VEDA OF TIRUVALLUVAR

**Selected and Translated with
Introduction and Notes**

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**DEDICATED TO
THE
GENEROUS PEOPLE OF THE TAMIL LANDS**

**WHO WELCOMED ME, A STRANGER, INTO
THEIR MIDST AND OPENED TO ME THEIR
HEARTS AND THEIR TREASURES AND**

TO MY OLD FRIEND 'K.T.'

**(KANAKARAYAN TIRUSELVAM PAUL)
WHO IN SO MANY WAYS REPRESENTED
THE BEST IN TAMIL LIFE AND CULTURE**

EDITORIAL PREFACE

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

No section of the population of India can afford to neglect her ancient heritage. The treasures of knowledge, wisdom, and beauty which are contained in her literature, philosophy, art, and regulated life are too precious to be lost. Every citizen of India needs to use them, if he is to be a cultured modern Indian. This is as true of the Christian, the Muslim, the Zoroastrian as of the Hindu. But, while the heritage of India has been largely explored by scholars, and the results of their toil are laid out for us in books, they cannot be said to be really available for the ordinary man. The volumes are in most cases expensive, and are often technical and difficult. Hence, this series of cheap books has been planned by a group of Christian men, in order that every educated Indian, whether rich or poor, may be able to find his way into the treasures of India's past. Many Europeans, both in India and elsewhere, will doubtless be glad to use the series.

The utmost care is being taken by the General Editors in selecting writers, and in passing manuscripts for the press. To every book, two tests are rigidly applied: everything must be scholarly, and everything must be sympathetic. The purpose is to bring the best out of the ancient treasures, so that it may be known, enjoyed, and used.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

It was at the suggestion of Dr. J. N. Farquhar and Mr. K. T. Paul that I first undertook to prepare a volume for the Heritage of India Series on *The Sacred Kural*, the ethical Bible of the Tamil people. Ever since I began to study this little book, twenty-eight years ago, it has been, with the New Testament, my daily companion in all my travels, and I have learnt to love it, and to rejoice in its homely, high-minded teaching. Dr. Farquhar's suggestion, therefore, found an instant response and, although I fully realized my own deficiencies for the task, I regarded it as a great and noble purpose to help to make more widely known the inimitable couplets of this humble Tamil sage.

Many translations of these couplets have been made in English, of which that of the great Tamil scholar, Dr. G. U. Pope, is the best known. Dr. Pope has put them into rhymed verses, a form which has involved in many cases some slight addition to or alteration of the meaning of the original. Many of his renderings, however, are extremely happy and arresting, and I am indebted to them for many ideas and suggestions.

V. V. S. Aiyar, a Tamil scholar, the most recent translator—whose tragic death a few years ago at the *ashram* he established at Ambàsamudram came as a great shock to the Tamil people—has probably produced the best English rendering hitherto. In the introduction to his book he says, 'After a great deal of thought I have come to the conclusion that the Authorised English version of the Bible is the proper model to be followed. The resemblance of the thought and diction of Tiruvalluvar to the great master-pieces of the Bible struck me forcibly, and I thought that if any portion of the vigour of the *Kural* could be presented in English, it could only be by adopting the phraseology and the terms of expres-

sion of the English version of the Hebrew and Greek Veda.' V. V. S. Aiyar has certainly succeeded in giving us a very fine translation and I have been indebted to him again and again.

Mrs. Tirunāvukkarasu, a cultured Tamil lady of Jaffna, in her little devotional book entitled *A Gem for Each Day*, has given some exceedingly happy renderings of many of the couplets, to which also I am indebted. With the exception of Mrs. Tirunāvukkarasu, none of the other translators has endeavoured to reproduce the terseness and brevity of the original.

The translations in this book have all been made from the original, with the help of the best commentaries available, and I have tried to reproduce, as far as possible, something of the terseness and brevity of the original. Upon the advice of the Rev. E. C. Dewick, who has succeeded Dr. J. N. Farquhar as Literary Secretary of the Y.M.C.A., I have also tried to give a metrical form to the couplets, but I have not made use of rhyme, as it seems to me to detract from the dignity of the translation. Wherever possible, without doing injustice to the meaning, I have used both vowel and consonant alliteration, which is the Tamil substitute for rhyme.

It is almost impossible in any translation to do justice to the beauty and force of the original; only a master of English and of Tamil, such as Tiruvalluvar was in Tamil, could do that. The first desideratum has been to get the actual meaning of the couplet as exactly as possible, and then to express it in the fewest and choicest words. I realize that I have failed miserably again and again and can only hope that those who read this translation may be able to gain at least a glimpse of the inimitable style of the Tamil author.

Fairly full notes have been added so that the reader may be able to understand the literary and local allusions and to enter as completely as possible into the

spirit of the poet. In the notes I have also quoted the renderings of other translators, where this seemed desirable.

It has not been possible within the limits of the Heritage of India Series to give a complete translation of the work, nor is it necessary to do so for the non-Tamilian to gain a good idea of the teaching of this book. Those who wish for a complete translation may obtain that of V. V. S. Aiyar.

I have to express my especial indebtedness to the Rev. E. C. Dewick, to my old friend, the late Mr. K. T. Paul, to the Rt. Rev. V. S. Azariah, Bishop of Dornakal, and to Pandit G. S. Duraiswamy Pillay for their valuable help in the preparation of this book; and to Mr. Martin S. Lall for his help in typing out the whole manuscript a number of times. I must also pay my tribute of respect and gratitude to my old Tamil tutor, Sriman Pandit Sivaprasada Hridayam Pillay Avl., who first led my feet into the untrodden paths of Tamil literature in the little town of Erode, where under his guidance for fourteen years, I studied many of the masterpieces of Tamil literature.

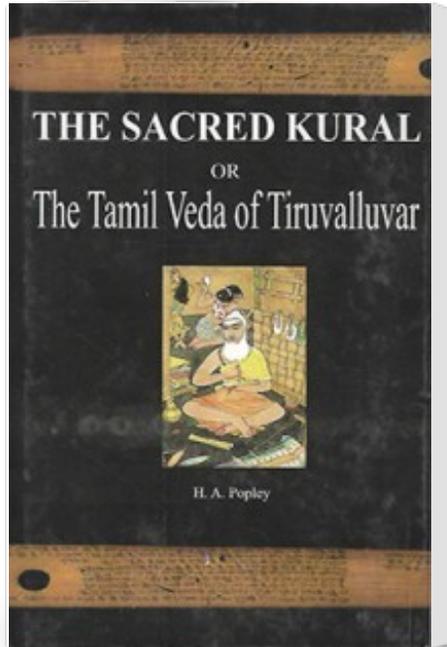
In humble devotion I place this work before the sacred feet of my Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, 'the light which enlightens every man.'

Calcutta,
July, 1931.

H. A. POPLEY.

Note:—I have not used any diacritical marks for the name of the book itself. It should really be written 'Kural,' the 'r' being strong and the 'l' pronounced by an upward twist of the tongue and slightly guttural. This should be remembered throughout.

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