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ய் ஆனந்த கல்ப அறக்கட்டளை - கோவை

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## ANCIENT AND MODERN CONCEPTION TO VIRTUES – COMPARING NAALADIYAAR AND POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

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### Abstract

Virtues play a major role in directing an individual's life in a morally righteous path, helping them to realize the purpose of life. Research works connecting Thirukkural and Psychology has been extensively done in the recent days. Since Naaladiyaar is a well-known and a less researched scripture, the researcher has attempted to analyze how deep Naaladiyaar is in explaining virtues when compared to Character, Strengths and Virtues in Positive psychology, in the present article. This work would help in providing insights on the usage of ancient scriptures in creating models and classifications in the present academic and research world and understanding the eminent wisdom of the authors and sages ages back. The following article might remain beneficial on conducting further researches connecting Naaladiyaar and Psychology.

**Keywords** Character, Strengths and Virtues (CSV), Positive Psychology, Naaladiyaar.

Virtue is the state of one's character, which makes one good – disposes one to doing one's work well. It is that positive quality of one's mind by which one lives righteously and which one cannot misuse. It is one's permanent disposition and wherewithal to perform morally good acts. It is one's operative habit in the form of morally good conduct (Christopher Ikechukwu, 2015).

A life of virtue is a life in the good control of reason and rational desire. According to Plato's work in Protagoras, What separates the virtuous person from the un-virtuous is not a desire for what is good, everyone desires what they think to be good, but rather the knowledge of what the good really is. On this account, Plato's conception of human virtue boils down to knowing the good, and being able to correctly choose the actions that bring about the most good (John Alison). The need to live a virtuous life is to be a complete man, a complete human being, which would keep them steady and bold. A complete man is the who knows to properly situate reasoning and knows when reasoning is right; knows when it is right to conform to societal rules and when not to, even at the peril of death and knows the true meaning of happiness and how to go about it. A life of virtue brings reverence, respect and honour. In the words of Plato, the Just soul lives well, and therefore is blessed and happy, while an unjust one lives badly and so is wretched.

Thirukkural is the most common and well-known scripture that speaks about virtues in Tamil literature. Other than these there are many scriptures that tells about virtues. Some of them include Naaladiyaar, Aathisoodi, Aranericharam, Needhi neri vilakam, Nanneri, Devaaram, Ulaga needhi, Needhi venba, Nalvazhi, Moodhurai, Innaa naarpadhu, Iniyavai naarpadhu and so on. Since Thirukkural has been widely explored by many researchers, I would like to discuss upon Naaladiyaar, which is a second well-known scripture after Thirukkural, but less popular and less researched one.

Naaladiyaar is a joint literary work of a group of Jain authors which was collected and classified by Padumanar. Since the verses in Naaladiyaar has four lines, it is named as 'Naaladiyaar' (Naaladi-quatram). Just like Thirukkural, Naaladiyaar is classified into 3 dimensions- Arathupaal(Section on Virtue- 13 chapters), Porutpaal(Section on Wealth- 26 chapters) and Kamathupaal(Section on love-

1 chapter). Each chapter contains 10 songs, adding to a total of 400 verses. Among these, Arathupaal and Porutpaal speaks about the culture of right conduct whereas Kaamathupaal speaks about the culture of love.

Arathupaal speaks about virtues and the core message that is emphasized is, everything around the world is 'Illusion' (Maaya), do not get attached to the materialistic world and the impermanent body which might disappear from people anytime; life is uncertain, hence it is essential to perform good deeds and involve in charity, whenever possible before death comes, in order to attain liberation (Moksha). The Virtues spoken here include:

1. Instability of wealth (செல்வம் நிலையாமை)
2. Youth abides not (இளமை நிலையாமை)
3. Non-endurance of bodily frame (யாக்கை நிலையாமை)
4. The might of virtue (அறன் வலியுறுத்தல்)
5. Impurity (சூய் தன்மை)
6. Renunciation (துறவு)
7. Absence of anger (சினம் இன்மை)
8. Patience (பொறையுடைமை)
9. Not desiring other men's wives (பிறன்மனை நயவாமை)
10. Liberality (ஈகை)
11. Old deeds (பழவினை)
12. Truth (Reality) (மெய்ம்மை)
13. Dread of evil deeds (தீவினை அச்சம்)

Porutpaal explains the good things in life, the ways to obtain and enjoy them and the evils that mar their enjoyment. The 26 chapters are subdivided into 6 major divisions namely The essentials of wellbeing, the means to happy life, the right use and estimate of wealth, qualities that give dignity, things that degrade and the domestic matters and miscellaneous. Kaamathupaal explains about love and pleasure, characteristics of love, the loneliness and grief of the deserted wife whose bride has departed for work and the courage of the groom (women) to go in search for her beloved through the desert.

Psychology, being one of the emerging field around India, is defined as the scientific study of behavior and mental processes. One of the recently evolved field in psychology is Positive psychology, which focuses on positive human functioning and flourishing rather than just dealing with the issues of people. This field is built upon three pillars namely Positive subjective experiences, Positive individual characteristics and Positive social institutions. For many years, the study of virtues and character strengths were seen as philosophical and considered as an inappropriate construct for scientific investigation. Since positive psychology emphasizes on being a good person and leading a good life, the study of virtue was seen as essential, for which a research project was developed by Martin Seligman and Peterson in the year 2004, providing a classification of character strengths and virtues named 'Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification.' (CSV), Seligman and Peterson has described 6 major virtues and 24 character strengths, which includes:

1. Wisdom and knowledge (Creativity, Curiosity, Open-mindedness, Love of learning, Perspective)
2. Courage (Authenticity, Bravery, Persistence, Zest)

3. Humanity (Kindness, Love, Social Intelligence)
4. Justice (Fairness, Leadership, Teamwork)
5. Temperance (Forgiveness, Modesty, Prudence, Self-regulation)
6. Transcendence (Appreciation of beauty and excellence, Gratitude, Hope, Humor, Religiousness/Spirituality).

This article has attempted to explain how deep Naaladiyaar is in explaining virtues when compared to CSV.

Naaladiyaar gives more importance to asceticism and it highlights the virtuous ways of life and prefers a life of renunciation to domestic state. It also emphasized the transient nature of the world and the body, stressing that only good deeds done by people would come along with them during every birth. In case of CSV, Virtue is defined as "a disposition to act, desire, and feel that involves the exercise of judgment and leads to a recognizable human excellence or instance of human flourishing." Character strengths are the psychological ingredients- processes or mechanism- that define the virtues.

When compared, both Naaladiyaar and CSV explains similar virtues as shown below,

- The virtues of Absence of anger, Patience and Not desiring other men's wife (chastity) could be connected to the virtue of Temperance (Strengths that protect against excess) in case of CSV, since it mentions about the character strength of self-regulation (exerting control over one's own responses in order to pursue goals and live up to standards). In short, the virtues of 'Absence of anger' and 'Patience' implies that wise men possess the quality of emotional equanimity, restrain emotions and remain patient in front of foolish men (which is explained in the verse 61 of Naaladiyaar as given below), complete their task in hand with forbearance and perseverance in spite of facing extreme degradation and constraints in life by people around them and perform good deeds to people even if they encounter humiliation. It also implies that it is essential to remain patient to the harsh words by wise men and understand that it is for the personal development. It highlights the importance of forbearance in friendship, either to forgive our friends in case of betrayal or withdraw from the relationship rather than divulge the reality to other people. The virtue of 'Not desiring other men's wife' (chastity) highlights the importance of restraining sexual impulses, consequences of chastity which is considered as a sin and stresses that hate, disgrace, guilt with fear would be possessed by men who covet other women.

'மதித்திற்ப் பாரும் இறக்க மதியா  
மிதித்திற்ப் பாரும் இறக்க - மிதித்தேறி  
சுயந் தலைமேல் இருத்தலால் அ. த. நிறுவர்  
காயும் கதமின்மை நன்று.  
- (நூலடி 61)

- The virtue of Prudence (being careful about one's choices and not saying or doing things that might later be regretted) in CSV could be connected to a verse of Naaladiyaar in the virtue of Truth (Reality) where it explains that it is okay to utter a 'No' when one is unable to offer the help requested by a person, but to accept the promise and later cheat that individual without offering the necessary favour would be a sin and might be equivalent to a misdeed of forgetting a help done by an individual at a demanding situation in life, as mentioned below,

இசையா ஒருபொருள் இல்லென்றல் யார்க்கும்  
வசையன்று வையத் தியற்கை - நசையழுங்க  
நின்றோடிப் பொய்த்தல் நிரைதொடஇ! செய்நநன்றி  
கொன்றாரின் குற்றம் உடைத்தி.'

- (நாலடி 111)

- The virtue of Liberality in Naaladiyaar could be connected to the virtue of Humanity (interpersonal strengths that involve "tending and befriending" others) in case of CSV, where it describes instability of wealth, uncertainty of life and the importance of charity in people's lives highlighting that it is essential to involve in doing charitable deeds depending upon one's ability, whenever possible in order to reach heaven (which is exquisitely explained in the verse 96 of Naaladiyaar, as given below). The virtue of Old deeds and The dread of evil deeds in Naaladiyaar could be connected to Humanity, because those virtues speak about Nature of karma, the consequences of engaging in evil deeds (eg. Killing animals, eating meat) and choosing bad companions in life, stressing people to involve in performing good deeds.

'நடுவுருள் வேதிகை சுற்றுக் கோள் புக்க  
படுபனை யன்னர் பலந்ச்ச வாழ்வார்  
குடிகொழுத்தக் கண்ணுங் கொடுத்தாண்ணா மாக்கள்  
இடுகாட்டுள் ஏற்றைப் பனை.'

- (நாலடி 96)

- The virtues of Instability of wealth, Instability of youth, Non-endurance of bodily frame, The might of virtue, Impurity, Renunciation in Naaladiyaar could be connected to the virtue of Transcendence (strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and providing meaning) in case of CSV. The formerly mentioned virtues stresses the transitory nature of the wealth, youth, human body (impurity of human body) and the uncertainty of human life, consequences of attachment to the possessions of the world and the body, creates urgency to involve in doing good deeds to people and become ascetic by renouncing the worldly pleasures, in order to attain Liberation, which is beautifully explained in the verse 53 of Naaladiyaar, as given below,

'இல்லம் இளமை எழில்வனப்பு மீக்கூற்றம்  
செல்வம் வலிஎன் றிவையெல்லாம் - மெல்ல  
நிலையாமை கண்டு நெடியார் துறப்பர்  
தலையாயார் தாம்உய்யக் கொண்டு.'

- (நாலடி 53)

- The virtues of Wisdom and knowledge (cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge) as in CSV, are explained in the Porutpaal (The section on Wealth) of Naaladiyaar which might be because the author considers Education, knowledge and wisdom as a wealth and a legacy which could not be taken away from people, which removes bewilderment and imparts the reality (fact) of life. The virtues of Courage (emotional strengths that involve exercise of will in the face of opposition, external or internal) and Justice (civic strengths that underlie healthy human community) as in CSV, are explained in most of the virtues of Arathupaal where it is mentioned that forbearance and persistence are the core qualities of wise men who would continue to persevere for goals despite of disgrace and restraints in life (as mentioned in the Naladi 62 of Arathupaal). It also highlights the importance of involving in charity only with the wealth gained through righteous means (as mentioned below in the verse 2 of Arathupaal).

'தண்டாச சிறப்பின்தம் இன்னுயிரைத் தாங்காத  
கண்டுபி யெல்லாம் துன்பமே - மணி  
அடிபெயர் தாற்ற இனிவந்த போழ்தின்  
முடிசிற்கும் உள்ளத் தவ்.'  
- (நாலடி 62)

'துகன்றி பெருஞ்செவ்வம் தோன்றியக்கால் தொட்டு  
பகடு நடந்தகற் பல்லாரோ டுண்ட.' (சுசமுஅ நாலடி 2)

Naaladiyaar and CSV explains virtues more or less in similar ways, but Naaladiyaar seems to explain it in deeper sense because while CSV highlights the importance of living a virtuous life, consequences of not abiding by virtues, explains on how virtues could help in leading the life in the present world (practical life), Naaladiyaar is deeper and stronger in explaining the purpose of leading a virtuous life, stressing the fact of life implying the transient nature of the world with simple daily life examples, benefits of involving in doing good deeds and charity, importance of karma and the necessity of renouncing the worldly pleasures.

'Virtue is the golden mean between two vices, the one of excess and the other of deficiency.'

- Aristotle

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