

Morality, Happiness and Kural Literature

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ABSTRACT: *Morality concerns what is 'good or bad' or 'right or wrong' in human character and behavior. A moral person is one who chooses the 'right' and 'good' character and behavior over the bad. Happiness is a mental or emotional state of well-being. We all want to be happy. But how do you achieve it? Even if you don't have much happiness in your life, there are some steps you can take to increase your chances of finding it. They say success doesn't cause happiness, happiness causes success. Life is better all around when you are happy. And religion, of course, can provide such purpose for many people.*

KEYWORDS: *mortality, positive, happiness, ethics, virtue and Thiruvalluvar.*

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Many religions have value frameworks regarding personal behavior meant to guide adherents in determining between right and wrong. There exists a positive relationship between morality and happiness. Many philosophers hold that happiness result from morality. It is a virtue that is achieved after living uprightly. Morality can be defined as the state of being upright. It is acquired from living according to the moral standards and values of a society. Morality is a good judgment of behavior that distinguishes between good and bad decisions, actions, and general way of life.

Kant says that morality is not about becoming happy but rather about becoming worthy of happiness by heeding the call of duty. And those who do so can expect, with some level of certainty, that they will in fact attain happiness. Morality is not the doctrine of how we may make ourselves happy, but how we may make ourselves worthy of happiness. The purpose of morality is to teach you to enjoy yourself and live. This paper will look at the meaning of happiness, morality and religion and why many philosophers hold that in order to be happy, one has to be moral.

Happiness is a state of being contented with life and the progress one is making in life. According to Aristotle 'Happiness 'is not pleasure nor is it virtue. Happiness depends on acquiring a moral character, where one displays the virtue of courage, generosity, justice, friendship, and citizenship in one's life. Plato maintains a virtue –based' eudemonistic' conception of ethics. That is to say happiness or well being is the highest aim of moral thought and conduct, and the virtues are the requisite skills and dispositions needed to attain it.

Human happiness depends on the wide range of factors. Some of them are common to all individuals while others are specific. Good deeds make us feel better. It happens when we act fulfilling our moral standards. Plato argued that those who are happy are moral.' Moral' refers to what societies sanction as right and acceptable. It is good to understand that, for one to be happy, he must set realistic and achievable goals which he will be able to achieve within a given time limit.

All of us are expected to be responsible and accountable for our actions so that they do not harm anyone. We should follow our conscience in all our actions and decisions. Morality ensures that, people live in harmony with one another and treat each other with respect. It is also through morality that we are able to maintain a good relationship with our creator. Morality plays a huge role in our everyday decisions, it makes us good not only to ourselves but to the people around us (Hare 60). Fulfilling the purpose of life is important. Moral excellence can contribute to a happy life. Thus, being a moral person is essential to living a life of happiness. A person achieves happiness by possessing the dispositions (i.e. tendencies) to make the right choice at the right time in the right way.

Virtue ethics are normative ethical theories which emphasize virtues of mind, character and sense of honesty. Virtue ethicists discuss the nature and definition of virtues and other related problems that focus on the consequences of action. These include how virtues are acquired, how they are applied in various real life contexts, and whether they are rooted in a universal human nature or in a plurality of cultures. Virtue is generally agreed to be character trait, such as a habitual action or settled sentiment. Specifically, a virtue is a positive trait that makes its possessor a good human being. A virtue is thus to be distinguished from single actions or feelings. Rosalind Hursthouse says:

“A virtue such as honesty or generosity is not just a tendency to do what is honest or generous, nor is it to be helpfully specified as a ‘desirable ‘or ‘morally valuable ‘character trait. It is, indeed a character trait—that is, a disposition which is well entrenched in its possessor, something that, as we say “goes all the way down”, unlike a habit such as being a tea drinker—but the disposition in question, far from being a single track disposition to do honest actions, or even honest actions for certain reasons, is multi-track. It is concerned with many other actions as well, with emotions and emotional reactions, choices, values, desires, perceptions, attitudes, interests, expectations and sensibilities. To possess a virtue is to be a certain sort of person with a certain complex mindset. (Hence the extreme recklessness of attributing a virtue on the basis of a single action.)

Practical wisdom is an acquired trait that enables its possessor to identify the thing to do in any given situation. Unlike theoretical wisdom, practical reason results in action or decision. As John McDowell puts it, Practical wisdom involves a “perpetual sensitivity” to what a situation requires. There are several lists of particular virtues. Socrates argued that virtue is knowledge, which suggests that there is really only one virtue. The Stoics concurred, claiming the four cardinal virtues were only aspects of true virtue. John McDowell is a recent defender of this conception. He argues that virtue is a “perpetual capacity” to identify how one ought to act, and that all particular virtues are merely “specialized sensitivities “to a range of reasons for acting.

Thiruvalluvar, commonly known as Valluvar, was a celebrated Tamil poet and philosopher. He is best known for authoring the *Thirukkural*, a collection of couplets on ethics, political and economical matters, and love. The text is considered the greatest work of the Tamil literature and one of the finest works on ethics and morality. He is known by numerous honorific designations, such as Saint, First poet, Dive poet, Brahma, and Great Scholar.

Much of the information about Valluvar comes from legendary accounts, and little is known with certainty about his family background, religious affiliation, or birthplace. The life, culture and ethics of the Tamils are considered to be solely defined in terms of the values set by the Kural literature. The government and the poet of Tamil land alike venerate Valluvar and his work with utmost reverence. Various claims have been made regarding Valluvar’s occupation. One tradition claims that he was a Paraiyar weaver. Another theory is that he must have been from the agricultural caste of Vellalars because he extols agriculture in his work. S. Vaiyapuri Pillai derived his name from “valluvan” (a Paraiyar caste of royal drummers) and theorized that he was ‘the chief of the proclaiming boys analogous to a trumpet major of an army.

Thirukkural emphasises on the vital principles of non – violence, vegetarianism, casteless human brotherhood, absence of desires, path of righteousness and truth, and so forth, besides covering a wide range of subjects such as moral codes of rules, friendship, agriculture, knowledge and wisdom, sobriety, love and domestic. The *Thirukkural* has influenced several scholars across the ethical, social, political, economical, religious, philosophical, and spiritual spheres. Thiruvalluvar said that righteousness yields good reputation and wealth. True moral integrity lies in being flawless in thoughts. Righteousness is all about removing the four flaws – envy, desire, anger and harsh words. True joy blossoms only due to righteous deeds all else cause unhappiness and disrespect. The only way to live is to live righteously. Here are few couplets of Thiruvalluvar which say:

“It is compassion, the most gracious of virtues,
Which moves the world”?

“The immoral can no more earn respect”

“Those are fools however learned
Who have not learned to walk with the world”.

“Although an act of help done timely might be small in nature, it is truly larger than the world itself”.

“The wound made by hurting with fire will heal but the wound created by harsh words
Uttered using out tongue leaves an indelible scar”.

“To reprove harm – doer, put him to shame by doing a good deed in return”.

Thiruvalluvar said in *Thirukkural* that love is very important. Life without love will be stung by the righteous conscience like a body without bones that is burnt by the sun. A life without love in the heart is as futile as a dried up tree blossoming in a desert. Only a person, who follows the part of love, is in a state of living; it is just skeleton dressed with skin. To look at someone with kindness, to smile at them and say pleasant words, is a nice virtue. There are other meaningful couplets which support this:

“Uttering foul words, while there are the sweetest of words, is like going for the unripe fruits while there are a lot of ripe ones”.

“If people scrutinize their own faults as they do the faults of others, mankind will be freed of all evil”.

“Just as the hand rushes involuntarily to protect one’s honour in case of accidental state of undress, so does a friend come to his friend’s aid without being asked”.

Good conduct becomes the seed for good will. A person who has envy has no wealth; a person who has no decorum has no growth. One attains eminence through decorum. Bad behaviour always yields agony. “There is a limit for everything. You can’t just load tons and tons of peacock feathers in a cart considering its light weight. If you do, it will damage the axle of the cart”. One who in his envy does not appreciate the wealth of others is known not to value virtue and his own wealth. Envy is a dammed ill that will destroy one’s wealth. The foremost among all wise deeds, is to refrain from doing harmful deeds even to those who hate you. Thiruvalluvar says, “Vile deeds yield vile results; and hence vile deeds are more fearsome than fire”. Thiruvalluvar feels that one has to make the best use of the opportunity one gets. It is said as: “When the rare chance comes, seize it to do the rare deed”.

Clinging to wealth, out of avarice, is worse than the any other flaw. Water assumes the quality of the land; wisdom depends on the company one keeps.” Senuous are governed by the brain; reputation is determined by one’s company”. “ Wisdom seems to stem from the mind: is shaped by the people around us”. Purity of mind, and deeds, depends on the quality.

One may think that a thought to steal what belongs to others crossing his mind is not a great issue. It is not really so. It is a serious issue therefore by all means one has to remove that idea from an individual’s mind.

“Anger destroys its holder

And, his boat his kith and kin shoulder”

Anger held for long by a person against others destroys him or her. Similarly an incessantly angry man is deserted by his kith and kin who could not put up with his anger. As a result he loses the protection he can count upon at times of need from his kith and kin. The kith and kin are like live boats.

To conclude, throughout history morality and religion have been intertwined. Many argue that religion authored morality. Religion makes people to view morality as a set of objective truths. Happiness is the food to our life and it gives us direction. When we are happy, we get motivated to work more productively in order to be even happier. It is through happiness that we get the desire to help other members of the society to achieve their goals. It also directs us on the path to follow for more satisfaction hence we become successful in life.

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