

# ETHICAL VALUES IN THE WORKS OF TIRUVALLUVAR- VEMANA-KABIR

## A COMPARITIVE STUDY

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Ethics is a study of moral issues in the fields of individual and collective interaction .Today with the rapid progress of scientific culture most people have forgotten their true nature, divinity because 'scientifically' it cannot be proved. They are ignorant of true purpose of life which is spiritual self awakening. Now a days under the narrow definition of freedom and with the post modern western concept of 'individualism' people lost their ethical values of life like solidarity, natural love, forbearance, compassion, generosity, and morality.

Ethics is not a static proposition but is constantly in a state of dynamic flux. Hinduism believes that it is an undeniable fact that in the evolution of history of human culture and civilization, spiritual force plays an important role. Still it gives importance to the motto of work as worship or service to humanity is service to God "Naraseva Narayan seva". The most prominent and enduring characteristic of the Indian attitude is spirituality. Indian thought has placed Dharma or the principle of righteousness and virtue as the primary value. This Dharma is a multiple concept and includes those principles of virtuous conduct, goodness, morality and truth. The Vedantic approach and the tolerance if fostered became the tonic note of the Indian symphony. A direct outcome of non-alignment, of "Live and let Live" is the doctrine of Ahimsa ,non violence. Ahimsa is called the highest virtue or way of life. In the voice of Ahimsa could be listened more and more in the modern world ,in the assemblies of the Nations there would be less and less of war-mongering and massacre that are going on. Dharma goes hand in hand with Ahimsa the principle of non-violence. The strong relation between religion and art presupposes the relevance of ethical haze in literature. To be clear religion ethics, arts and society all are inter-related. As regards the presence of ethics poetry or play is the most powerful medium of which society can be impressed and influenced to a great extent. Life without moral values do not have any meaning. Poetry gives not only entertainment but through poetry the touch of ethics is needed for the society.

The didactic poetry generally takes the form of traditional Satakas. Some times of a series of indefinite

number of detached verses. The general theme of all these forms of composition consists of the common places of prevalent ethics. These are composed in a variety of melodious meters on the pain and pleasure of life, fickleness and caprices of lone, follies of men and wiles of women right mode of life, futility of pomp and power. Weariness of servitude, false-hood and instability of human effort desire, delights of solitude and tranquility.

This research paper focuses on the ethical values in the works of the three different language poets Valluvar(TAMIL) – Vemana(TELUGU)- Kabir (HINDI) from different parts of India.

Tamil is the most ancient and highly classical of south Indian languages which is both classical and modern with a continuous unbroken literary history. Tamil divine poet Tiruvalluvar known as "Deiva pulavar" belongs to 1<sup>st</sup> century or before that. Scholars are of different opinions . His "Tirukkural" is a poetic composition of great antiquity in Tamil literature. The meter adopted is a short couplet very well suited to convey great truths in epigrams. It consists of 1 ¾ lines known as couplet. 'Kural'. The author diagnosis the intricacies of human nature through the Kural, the couplet where his prescriptions and humanity are sagacious and practical to the core . Tiruvalluvar's approach to moral doctrine is marked by a very thorough knowledge of human psychology and a desire to help imperfect men with practical hints in the struggle against evil .The poet uses attractive similes and metaphors and brings everything down to the level of practicality without losing hold of the ideal.

Kabir was a saint poet belonging to 'Nirguna devotion' of Hindi literature, popularly known as 'Santkavi'. He belongs to the 15<sup>th</sup> century and is considered to be the 1<sup>st</sup> mystic poet of Hindi literature. Being illiterate he was inspired by the teachings of Ramananda .His collection of poems 'Sakhi,' 'Sabad' and 'Ramaiyni' have been brought up in the form of a book known as *Bejjak* (the 'Seedling'), reflecting his universal view of spirituality. Though his vocabulary is replete with Hindu spiritual concepts, he vehemently opposed dogmas, both in Hinduism and in

Islam. His Hindi language was an amalgamation of Hindi dialects including *Avadhi*, *Braj*, and *Bhojpuri* and *Rajasthani*, alongwith a mixtute of Arabic and Persian words. So his style of language is popularly known as *Sadhukkadi* or *Khichadi* in Hindi. His verses often began with some strongly worded insult to catch the attention of passers-by. Kabir's poetry predominantly falls into two categories, one emotion-ridden, which is basically addressed to God and the second one is fiery, strongly worded and revolutionary because it hits at the social evils prevalent in the society.

The ideological messages in Kabir's legends appealed to the poor and the oppressed who were always exploited in the society in the name of customs, tradition and religion. He launched a severe attack on the hypocritical system which was more caste-ridden. He was of the view that religion should not affect humanity. David describes the primary purpose of his legends as 'a protest against social discrimination and economic exploitation.' He advocated following the *Sahaja* path or the simple/natural way rather than following any scripture. He believed in the *Vedantic* concept of *atman*, but unlike earlier orthodox Vedantins, he spurned the Hindu societal caste system and pratima *pujan* (idol worship), showing clear belief in both *bhakti* and *Sufi* ideas. The hallmark of Kabir's works is his couplets, known as '*Kabir ke Doh*'. The Dohas reflect the deep philosophical thinking of the poet saint. He is a revolutionary social reformer and also a mystic poet of Hindi Saint literature. A famous Hindi critic Acharya Hajari Prasad Dwivedi describes him as 'Dictator of the Style of Language' as language is controlled by his strong emotions.

Vemana belongs to Telugu language of Andhra Pradesh most popularly known as Italian of the East, portrayed as the "Sweetest language for songs among the Indian languages by the National Tamil poet Subrahmanya Bharathi, and also praised as "Desha Bhashalandu Telugu lessa" (The greatest of all Indian Languages) by the Royal and multi linguistic emperor of Andhra Pradesh Sri Krishna Devaraya. Telugu is also the mother tongue of Music Trinity (Thyagaraja, Shyama Shastri and Muthu Swami Dikshith). Telugu poet Vemana known as yogi Vemana was born in Royal Reddy king's palace of Andhra Pradesh. He was vagabond and womanizer when he was young. He realized the facts of life by his sister-in-law Narasamanba and sacrificed all the pleasure of life and became a saint. Someshwara pandit and Lambica Shivayogi were the teachers of Yogi Vemana. In Vemana's poems we find logical reasoning as well as genuine feelings for all the aspects of society. He is the first Telugu poet who voiced against the discrimination against the subalterns and advocated for the equality and harmony in the society. He strongly supported the moral and ethical dimension of education as without morality education becomes futile.

Vemana was a great philosopher and poet. His poems were written in the popular vernacular of Telugu in the meter of "AATA VELADI" and are known for the use of simple language and native idioms. His poems discuss the subjects of wisdom and morality, ethical values of each stage of life. Many lines of Vemana's poems are now colloquial phrases of the Telugu language. They end with the signature line *Viswadhathi Raama, Vinura Vema*, literally *Beloved of Vishwadhathi*, (also means *Lord of the Universe*) listen Vema. There are many interpretations of what the last line signifies. In his poems he used a unique way of expression as in the first two lines he talks about the material reality of the time

and in the third line he gives the appropriate metaphor for that reality. His collection of poems are known as "Vemana Shatakamu" or Vemana padyaalu. Vemana's poems were first collected and published by C.P. Brown in the 19th century. His poems are of many kinds, social, moral, satirical and mystic nature. Most of them are in *Ataveladi* (dancing lady) meter which is considered to be famous "Desiya chand" (National melody meter of Telugu).

## A comparative study of the poems of these poets

1. Concept of 'Nirguna and Advaitavad (Non-Dualism) :- All these three poets were the followers of 'Nirguna' devotion and Advaitavad (Non-Dualism). God is One and Omnipresent. He is unseen. We can feel him as the taste of jaggery in dumb's tongue (mookam Madura swadanam). Confirmed faith on the Almighty, His existence not only in all the human beings, even in each and every particle of dusts are the main features of Hindu religion.

Advaitavadi (follower of Non-Dualism) sees Lord everywhere. In Geetha Lord Krishna depicts about such devotee as - the yogi.

Sarva Bhootasthamatnaanam, Sarva Bhootanichatmani  
EEKSHATE YOGA YUKTATMA SARVATRA SAMADARSANHA-  
---Geeta

The self abiding in all beings and all beings (abide) in the self, sees he whose self has been made steadfast by yoga who everywhere sees the same.

Valluvar, Kabir, Vemana are the followers of concept of Advaitavad, the NON-Dualism.

## Valluvar:

MALAR MISAI EKINAN MANADI SERNDAR  
NILAMISAI NEEDU VAZHVAR

Those who always think about God's holy feet, He will be residing at the lotus heart of the people.

**Vemana:** Vemana expresses the same opinion, condemning the visit to the pilgrimages.

HRUDAYAMAN DUNNA ISHUNI TELIYAKA,  
SHILALAKELLA MROKKA JEEVULARA  
SHILALANAMI VUNDU JEEVULANDAE KAAKA  
VISWADHABI RAMA VINURA VEMA

(Without identifying the God who always resides in the heart of all creatures, people worship him in temples through the statues made up of stones.)

## Another example is:

BRAHAMME DAY ANUCH PULUMARU NADERU  
Verri moorkhajanula vidamu choodu  
Brahmamannita Paripoornamai vundu ||vishwa||

**Kabira:** Kabir says: God is inside of us as the fragrance of Kasthuri deer. But the deer searches it in grass to find out

from where the fragrance comes. So as God resides within every one guiding our activities but we will be searching Him in temples.

**"TERA SAYI TUJJ MEIN JO PUHUPAN MEIN VAAS  
Kasturi ka mruga jyo puni puni dhoodhe vaas."**

**FORGIVENESS (KSHAMA GUNN):-** Indian schools of philosophy stresses about THE FORGET AND FORGIVE POLICY. 'Have no enemy, bless them those curse you.' Shower love on your enemy as his heart is also the place of the Almighty, the teachings of Jesus.

Valluvar says of the best punishment for those who do evil to you is to shame them by returning good for evil. This may appear to be platitude. Actual experiment will disclose how practical and effective the advice is. The pain felt by the wrong doer in his shame is greater than any that anger could inflict on him.

*Inna seydarai oruthal avarnana*

*Nal nayam seyduvidal.*

*and*

*Karuthinna seydv kannum maruttinna*

*Seyyamai masatrar kol.*

In Vemana's words:

**champadaganatti shatruru tanacheta  
chikkineni keedu seyaradu  
posaga meluchesi pommanute chavu | |vishwa| |**

If an enemy, who is the right person to be killed for his sins he did, caught by us don't do harm to him instead do the best to him and send him.

kabir's statement in this matter is wonderful:

"spread flowers in their path who spread thorns in your path. If you spread flowers in return you will get flowers of boons."

**Jo tho ko kantha boovai taki boove too phool  
Tako phool ko phool hai, vako hai phool tirasool**

**Preach yourself before you teach others.:**

One should realize their mistakes and their own faults. Valluvar says in his Kural

**Ethilar kuttram pol tan kuttram kankirpin**

**Teedundo mannum uyirkku**

If men will see their own faults as they see the faults of others, verily evil would become to an end in this world.

Kabir says

**"Bura jo dekhan my chala bura na milya koy**

**Jo dil dhooda aapna mujsa buraa na koy"**

Vemana expresses the same opinion

**"Tappulennuvaru Tandopathtandambu**

**Urvi janulakella vundu tappu**

**Tappulennuvaru tama tappu lerugaru" | |vishwa| |**

(There are many that find faults (with others) Every one in the world has faults The people who count faults do not know their own faults Beloved of the Bounteous, Vema, listen)

**NAARI SAMMAN** - Respect to woman plays a vital role in the ethical values of Indian tradition. In Vedas it is said that **"Yatra naryastu poojyante Tatra Ramante Devatha"**. Where women are respected Gods reside there.

All the three poets respected and praised the ideal Indian women. Valluvar says they are blessed to live in the house of paradise those who are blessed with good ideal wife ,LOYAL PARTNER.

**"Pettroor perin peruvar pendir perunchrappu  
Puthelir vazhum ulagu"**

And

**"Pennin peruinthaka ya ula karpu ennum**

**Thinnmail undaga perin"**

What possession of greater value can one have than a wife, if she be firm in her loyalty to her partner in life 'the term Karpu', Chastity is not mere physical chastity. It is unqualified loyalty to husband.

**Kabir says**

**"Pativratha maili bhali, kali kuchi kurup  
Pathivratha ke roop par varokoti saroop".**

(If a woman of chastity may be dark in complexion ugly to look but she is more superior to that of beauties)

Vemana moves one step more and compares women as Goddesses:

**Gunavatiyagu yuvati gruhamu chakkaganundu  
Cheekatinta dive chelagureeti  
Deviyunna illu devarchana grahambu.  
Viswadabhi rama vinuravemu**

(Gunavathi an ideal wife 's presence in the house is like a lamp in the dark room. Such women are like Goddesses and such houses are like sacred temples.)

Vemana describes the sweetness of lover's words also. For a lover the sweetness of his maiden is more than that of jack fruit, sugar, honey, cheese and juice of sugar cane. All these are less tasty comparing to the words of the lover.

These three poets tried to eradicate casteism from the society. According to Valluvar

**Andhanar enbore aravor matruEvvurikkum  
chentanmai poondu ozukalan -Kural 30**

The man who showers mercy in all the creatures created by God, he is the real saint. Brahminism is attained by behavior not by birth or caste.

Kabir says

**"Jati na pooch sadhu ki pooch Lijiye Gyan  
Mol karo Talwar ki pada rahan do myaan."**

(Don't ask the caste of the saint, question about his knowledge. See the sharpness of the sword not the cover).

Vemana:

**"Rama Nama patanacheMahi Valmeeki  
Parag boyadayyu bapadayya  
Kulamu ghanamagadu, Gunabu Ghanambu.  
Viswadabhi rama vinura vema"**

**The Fleeting World**: About fleeting world kural author says  
( Wondrous indeed is this world where one who was here yesterday may not be found today.)

**"Neru nala ulan oruvan indru illai ennum  
Perumai udaithy ivvulagu."**

and

**"Oru pozudum vazvadhu ariyar karuthuba  
Kodiyum ulla pala"**

( We cannot be certain of living the next minute. But we are not content with even a million plan).

Vemana and Kabir compared the human life to the bubbles of the water .

**Paani kera bud bud budaa Asa Manus jaath |  
Dekhat hi chip jayega jyon taara parabhat ||**

( Life is like the bubbles of water. It disappears minute by minute as the stars vanish in the early morning).

Vemana :

**"Neella meeda Bugga Nilachi napudu  
Tallu vega vachchi Takugaakada  
Videdu kunda kinta vibraanti paduduru  
Viswadabhi rama vinura vema"**

The three poets described about fools mentality and behavior with the beautiful similes. Valluvar says

**Kazakkal palliul vaithartral sandror  
Kuza aththu patai pugol.**

A fools entry into an assembly of wise men is like unwashed feet on a clean white bed. One fool ruins the character of a whole assembly. (Unwashed feet are euphemism for one has neglected necessary ablutions.

Kabir says fools cannot be changed even in the company of scholars. He compares them with those poisonous snakes

which lie along with the sandalwood trees and never leave the poison.

**Chandan sarpa Lapetiya chandan kaa karaay |  
Rom rom vish beeniya amrut kahan samaay ||**

Vemana: If power is given to the fools they make noble persons to get out of the court. How can the dog know the sweetness of sugarcane which is accustomed to chew the chapels?

**Entha chaduvu chadivi Enni vinnanukaani  
Heenudavagunambu maanaledu**

**Boggupaala kaduga povunaa malinambu ||vishwa||**

(A fool ,who acquired much book learning ,who heard much discourses by scholars cannot change his foolish attitude. The colour of the coal remains black in spite of washing it with Milk).

Vemana describes the behavior of fools as

**Alpudeppudu palku adamburamu ganu.....  
Sajjanundu palku challaganu.....  
Kanchu moginatlu kanakammu mroguna.....  
Viswadhaabhiraama, Vinura Vema.....**

A mean(low) person always speaks pompously

A good person speaks softly

Does gold reverberate the way brass does?

Beloved of the Bounteous, Vema, listen!

All the poets had the same opinion that Truth alone can help one to reach the divine. Truth which forms the first towards God realization, alone will ultimately triumph.

Valluvar says: If you are truthful in thought and word you are superior to one who undergoes penances and gives gifts.

**"Manathodu vaimai mozhiyin thavathodu  
Dhanam seivarin thalai".**

In another kural Valluvar says

**" Ella vilakkum vilakkalla sandrorukku  
Poyya vilakke vilakku"**

Lamps do not give the light that holy men desire. It is the light of truth that illuminates their path. Valluvar strongly believes that Truth fullness earns the esteem of the world besides bringing in its train the merit of every other virtue without the physical privations of penance(Chapter-30),and according to Valluvar Water makes external cleanliness.Truthfulness is the detergent of the heart (chapter30).

Vemana stresses about the same concept and says that ""Let it may be many religions, many castes without honesty everything becomes waste.""If a man possesses Truthful ness he will attain true Brahmanism . In his words

**"ENNI MATAMULAINA EE KARMAMAINANU  
SATYAMINTA LEKA JAADA VIDADU  
SATYAMU KALIGUNNA JAGATILONA DWIJUDAYYE  
VISHWADHABI RAMA VINURA VEMA "**

Kabir compares Truth to penance. Lie is itself a sin. One who speaks truth God resides in his heart.

**"saanch Barabar Tap Nahi jooth barabar pap  
Jaake hruday saanch vaako hain aap."**

**CONCLUSION:** Thus the bed rock of Indian thought lies in the sense of fundamental Unity. All the diverse approaches led to the same single summit. This was declared in the oldest Indian scripture the Rig-Veda when it said "The one Truth the wise speak of in diverse ways, and give the one Divinity different names ""Vemana emphasizes this as

**"pasula vane veru paaleka varnambu  
Pushpa jaathi veru pooja okkate  
Darishanambulu veru deiva mokade" ||vishwa||**

(Cows may be of different colors but their milk is white(same color)

Flowers may be of different types but pooja(worship) is same

Darshans (worship) may be different but dev(God) is one  
So as the philosophical thoughts.

The greatest gift of the Indian doctrine, the one goal and the many roads to it, is tolerance. In the words of our sacred book The Bhagwat Geeta, calling it the mother, Let Us Pray

**"Cherishing each other in mutuality  
Let us together achieve the  
Supreme Good"**

**"PARASPARAM BHAVAYANTAH  
SREYAH PARAM AVAPSYATHA "**

**""MAY THERE BE PEACE EVERY WHERE ""**

--- LOKA SAMASTHA SUKHINO BHAVANTU---

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