

Group 4

THIRUKKURAL

The Thirukkural is a 2,200 year old South Indian Dravidian classic on ethical living. It is one of the most revered scriptures in South India and Sri Lanka, where every Hindu child learns to recite its verses by heart. Hindus regard it with the same reverence that Buddhists regard the Buddha's Dhammapada and Christians regard Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount." In the courts of law in Tamil Nadu, it is given the same status as the Bible and the Quran, as it is used by Hindus to swear upon to tell the truth during legal trials.

It was written by a Tamil weaver sage called Saint Thiruvalluvar. In Tamil Thiru means "holy" or "sacred" and kural means a brief verse or literary couplet.

There are 1,330 verses in the Thirrukural. Each verse is extremely short, containing only two lines and is, in fact, the shortest form of verse in the Tamil language similar to the Sanskrit sloka.

Saivism's four legitimate goals of life are Aram, Porul, Inbam and Veedu known in English as Virtue, wealth, love and liberation. The Thirukkural is divided into 3 parts, dealing with three of those four great aims in life - Aram, Porul, and Inbam in depth. Veedu means consciously returning back to our source. Thiruvalluvar does not deal with the fourth aim in life in his Thirukkural. Some say that this is because if you follow the first three perfectly, Veedu will be automatically achieved.

The first part, called Arathupaal, in 38 chapters enumerates the ways to live a morally upright life; touching on such things as the ways of a householder and a monk - focusing on good conduct and warning about the perils of wrong doing. The second part, called Porutpaal, in 70 chapters tackles the conduct of those involved in administration and socio-political life; about social interactions and citizenship. The last part, called Inbathupaal, in 25 chapters discusses the relationships of men and women.

The Thirukkural has achieved a perfect balance between secular and spiritual. Much of what is said revolves around the home and day to day living. The saint talks about the faithful husband, the devoted wife, of the fine children they raise and the joys they experience, of the value of relationships and how to nurture and sustain them. He speaks of age and its merits and of the importance of honouring the elderly. He also tackles difficult issues that continue to perplex us. He speaks of killing, of alcohol addiction, of the debilitating effects of gambling, of adultery and the tragic loss of a life lived in lazy indifference. He guides us in matters of education, of the roles and responsibilities of leaders. He speaks of making money and using it wisely and explores values such as purity, humility and friendship. And, throughout, we encounter glimpses of his humour, which he uses to make us laugh, even when he points out our most stubborn flaws!

Saint Thiruvalluvar lived with his wife, Vasuki, in what is today a part of Chennai in South India. They lived a peaceful and loving life and had children to delight them. Vasuki was the perfect example of simple devotion and traditional intelligent co operation with her husband, and there are many stories depicting the wonder and harmony of their marriage. And, to this very day, Vasuki is a role model for tens of millions of Tamil women, who pray to Lord Shiva that their lives may be as loving and virtuous as this remarkable, humble and devoted lady.

Saint Thiruvalluvar spent the fullness of his life quietly and intelligently observing mankind. Towards the end of his life, he was asked to speak out and share his wisdom with the others in his community.

The Thirukkural was Saint Thiruvalluvar's only known work and, although it is relatively short compared to other major sacred texts, it brought renown to a simple and highly observant weaver, making him a venerated sage and lawgiver of the ancient Tamil Dravidian people. This classical work in Tamil has been widely translated in over 60 languages of the world. The simplicity of its writing and its extreme practicality are its strengths - giving us a timeless classic for practical daily life, for every age and for every section of the community.