

EVENT: THIRUVALLUVAR DAY CELEBRATION
ORGANISER: MGI
DATE: MONDAY 16 JANUARY 2017 AT 13.30HRS
VENUE: SUBRAMANIA BRARATHI LECTURE THEATRE, MGI, MOKA

Malai Vanakkam

Agara Mudala Ezhuttellaam athi
Bhagaran Mudattré Ulagu

I am indeed very pleased to be with you this morning to listen to the lecture entitled “The contemporary relevance of Thirukkural” by eminent scholar Dr. S. Murugan, to mark Thiruvalluvar Day.

This is the 9th Thiruvalluvar Day organized by the MGI. I would like to thank and congratulate MGI and in particular the school of Indian Studies and the Department of Tamil Studies for including Thiruvalluvar Day celebrations in their yearly calendar of activities.

In its essence, Tirukkural is a treatise par excellence on the art of living. Thiruvalluvar, the author, diagnoses the intricacies of human nature with such penetrating insight, perfect mastery and consummate skill absorbing the most subtle concepts of modern psychology, that one is left wondering at its range and depth. His prescriptions, ethics, morality and humaneness are full of wisdom and are practical to the core. They cut across castes, creeds, regions and ages and have a freshness which makes one feel as if they are meant for the present times

In fact, the immortality and universality of Thirukkural are unquestionable. Its ethics and values are applicable to every human being, of every nationality, religious belief and of any age. The ideas expressed in Thirukkural are so universal that even after almost two millennia they are still relevant to-day. Thirukkural does not refer to any nation, leader, society, language, religion or caste in the entire book, which is why it has been called the 'Universal Veda.'

We all know how Mahatma Gandhi's Satya Graha non-violence principle was a victorious weapon against oppression and also how Gandhi influenced Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela in their struggle for human rights and how, Mandela because he upheld Gandhi's non-violence principles and was forgiving towards his apartheid oppressors, and he became, in his lifetime, a living legend.

How do all these relate to the Thirukkural?

Well, T.M. Abdul Khader, a professor of Tamil and noted Tamil poet who presided over a seminar on Thirukkural said that *'Inna Seidharai Oruthal, Avar Naana Nannayam Seidhuvidal'* (**doing good to a person who troubled you is the way to punish the person**) is the couplet which inspired Tolstoy and through him Gandhi, to take to the path of non-violence. Mahatma Gandhi at one point of time is known to have said, "I wanted to learn Tamil to enable me to study Valluvar's Thirukural in his mother tongue itself. It is a treasure."

Prime Minister Modi once said "I bow to the great Thiruvalluvar. Simple and vast in scope, his thoughts & writings have been a strong influence on humanity for centuries".

The Thirukkural is a Masterpiece imparting Self Development Skills, Family Management and Parenting Skills, Right Attitudes towards Work, Money, Friends and Enemies, Managerial Skills and Good Governance.

In Mauritius, we have to pay tribute to the efforts made by many of our elders like the Sungeelee brothers to spread the messages of Thiruvalluvar. Mootoocomaren Sungeelee indeed translated the Thirukkural in French. A few years back, Me. Rama Valayden ventured to translate Thirukkural in creole for a wider access to the Mauritian people.

I am happy to learn that the MGI council has approved the project of a Philosophical Walk on the campus and that a Thiruvalluvar statue made of granite stone, offered by the Tamil Thai Trust, India, will very soon be installed on the campus.

More recently, the International Tamil Diaspora Association of Mauritius (INTAD), under the chairmanship of Professor Armoogum Parsuramen, has enlisted the propagation of Thirukkural as one of its objectives.

The Association organised a National Seminar on Thirukkural in August 2016 during which it was resolved to institute a Chair for Thirukkural in Mauritius with the collaboration of MGI and I hope that this laudable project will materialise soon. It was also decided at that conference that INTAD and the Institute of Asian Studies, Chennai, will collaborate in promoting Thirukkural as a Universal Scripture all over the world. In this connection an International Conference will be held at Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu, in May 2017 and probably another one in the year 2020 at UNESCO, Paris. I would invite you all to join the Mauritian delegation for the Kanyakumari Conference.

At family level, we can also play our role in spreading the philosophy of the Thirukkural. If each family can learn and teach their children one kural daily, then within less than four years all members of the family will have learnt about the ethics and philosophy leading towards a prosperous and peaceful life.

At the school level, the Thirukkural should find its place in all the secondary school libraries. As for the primary school children, what may be done is to produce booklets with the teachings of the Kural in a simple language accessible to young children.

Let me congratulate all the winners and participants of the Thirukkural Recitation and Essay Writing Competitions.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I leave you now to appreciate Dr. Murugan's lecture

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