

# Saint Thiruvalluvar

January 16, 2021

**In news:** Saint Thiruvalluvar day is celebrated in the month of January every year

## A brief note on Saint Thiruvalluvar:

- Thiruvalluvar also called Valluvar, is revered as an ancient saint, poet, and a philosopher by Tamils, irrespective of their religion.
- He is an essential anchor for Tamils in tracing their cultural roots; Tamils are taught to learn his couplets word-for-word, and to follow his teachings in their day-to-day living.
- He is best known as the author of *Tirukkural*, a collection of couplets on ethics, political and economical matters, and love.
- Little is known about the life of Thiruvalluvar except that he is believed to have lived in Mylapore near Chennai, Tamil Nadu with his wife, Vasuki.
- Birth place:
- The Shaivite Tamil Hindu text *Tiruvalluva Maalai* contains the earliest known textual reference to the legend of Valluvar, but it remains undated
- The diction and grammar of the *Tirukkural*, his indebtedness to some earlier Sanskrit sources, suggest that he lived after the “early Tamil bardic poets”, but before Tamil bhakti poets era
- He was probably a Jain ascetic of humble origins who worked as a weaver. Both Buddhists and Shaivites, however, claim him as their own, and he is especially revered by those of low caste.
- Thiruvalluvar in *Tirukkural* mentioned that “Adversity is nothing sinful, but / laziness is a disgrace”; “Wine cheers only when it is quaffed, but love / intoxicates at mere sight.”

- On caste system he stated that “One is not great because of one’s birth in a noble family; one is not low because of one’s low birth.”

### **Temples in his name:**

Valluvar is traditionally worshiped as a god and saint by various communities across the Southern region of India. Many communities, including those in Mylapore, and Tiruchuli, worship Valluvar as the 64th Nayanmar of the Saivite tradition. There are various temples exclusively dedicated to Valluvar across South India. The most famous of these is the temple at Mylapore, Chennai

### **His great work: Thirukkural**

- Tirukkural is considered an exceptional and widely cherished work of the Tamil literature.
- His work *Tirukkural* has been dated variously from 300 BCE to about the 6th century CE. According to traditional accounts, it was the last work of the third Sangam and was subjected to a divine test (which it passed)
- It contains 1330 couplets, which are divided into 133 sections of 10 couplets each.
  - The first 38 sections are on moral and cosmic order
  - The next 70 are about political and economic matters and
  - The remaining 25 are about pleasure
- Of the three sections, Valluvar’s second section (*porul*) is about twice the size of first section, and three times that of the third. In the 700 couplets on *porul* (53% of the text), Valluvar mostly discusses statecraft and warfare
- Valluvar’s work is a classic on realism and pragmatism, and it is not a mystic, purely philosophical document.
- Valluvar teachings are similar to those found in

*Arthasastra*, but differ in some important aspects. In Valluvar's theory of state, unlike Kautilya, the army (*patai*) is most important element

- He recommends that a well kept and well trained army (*patai*) led by an able commander and ready to go to war is necessary for a state.
- Valluvar presents his theory of state using six elements:
  - army (*patai*), subjects (*kuti*), treasure (*kul*), ministers (*amaiccu*), allies (*natpu*), and forts (*aran*)
- He also recommends forts and other infrastructure, supplies and food storage in preparation for siege

### **Recent excavation at Keeladi near Madurai**

The recent excavations at Keeladi near Madurai, the Tamil Nadu state archaeological department has unearthed evidence that pushes back the history of the Sangam Era, or Tamilagam, by at least 300 years from 300 BC to 600 BC. The findings at Keeladi have given Dravidian historians and politicians another weapon to assert their ancient past.