

ஆறாவது அனைத்துலக
திருக்குறள் மாநாடு

6TH INTERNATIONAL THIRUKKURAL CONFERENCE

THEME
THIRUKKURAL ON
GOVERNANCE

DATE

SEPTEMBER 19, 20, 21- 2025

HOSTING CITY AND COUNTRY

TORONTO, CANADA

Jointly organized by

Toronto Tamil Sangam, Toronto, Canada
Institute of Asian Studies, Chennai, India

with the support of University of Toronto Scarborough



To our dear Learned Friends,

It is indeed a matter of great joy and happiness for us to announce the sixth International conference on Thirukkural in Toronto, Canada in September 2025, after having organized very successfully the five world conferences on the same subject with different themes in Nagarkovil, in India, Liverpool in England, Sydney in Australia, New Delhi, the capital of India and the Chicago in US.

We have great pleasure in inviting you to the Sixth International conference on Thirukkural as the Book of the World to be held in Toronto in September 2025.

THE QUINTESSENTIAL TAMIL ANALECTS

Thirukkural, composed, some 2,000 years ago, in classical Tamil, has acquired over the ages the status of scriptural authority as a canon informing the behaviour of Tamils in their day-to-day interpersonal relations all over the world. Every Tamil can recite from memory at least few Kural-couplets appropriate to his/her situation. The Tamils do not dispute the pride of place Thirukkural occupies in their heart and esteem. Despite his humble origins, Thiruvalluvar the author of this text reigns supreme as the foremost poet and philosopher of the Tamils.

Thiruvalluvar's epigrammatic sayings relate a person's social, political and domestic life and duties. In this regard, Thirukkural ranks equal to Confucius' Analects or Seneca's Epistulae Morales. Thiruvalluvar drew his insights on human behavior from the prevailing contexts of his society. Today it represents the collective consciousness of the Tamils at that time and, to a great extent, to our present day. Hence, it still occupies among the didactic literature of the Tamils the most eminent place. It is rightfully hailed as a universal book of wisdom par excellence. It continues to offer ethical precepts for the development of character of all Tamils.

Therefore, it transcends claims by a particular religious group (e.g., Jains, Buddhists, Saivites, Vaishnavites, Christians and the like) and promotes peaceful co-existence.

THE IDEAL MAN: CĀṆRŌṆ, JŪNZI, L'ETRE SUPERIEUR

Scholars have compared the nature and teachings of Thirukkural with the biblical book on Proverbs, the ethical corpus of Greek traditions, the rich Confucian gnomic heritage and the holy texts of Buddhism and Jainism. The Thirukkural is almost in its entirety secular in nature, and it is not otherwise biased. It is noteworthy that this monumental legacy of humankind does not name any god or goddess.

Nevertheless, its author Thiruvalluvar was religious in his own way. He weaves his entire text around Cāṇrōṇ, a conceptual realisation of an ideal superman, who embodies five noble qualities such as love, truth, compassion, good judgment and the upholding of character devoid of blame. The god or goddess in the Thirukkural is the paragon of Virtue or Righteousness, popularly designated by the Tamil term Aram. Aram is the presiding deity in this great work and Cāṇrōṇ the sought-after être, the Jūnzi of the classical Chinese Canon of Change. As such, Thirukkural enjoys the reputation of being the only book on moral precepts expressed in felicitous words. When quoted in Tamil, its euphonic cadences and alliterative mnemonics stand out. Its tenets transcend ethnic, linguistic, religious, and national boundaries, and radiate a global appeal.

STURCTURE AND LITERARY CONVENTION

This enduring Tamil classical writing comprises 1330 couplets that are divided into 133 themes, each of which contains ten couplets and shows at least ten ways of elaborating the same theme. This work treats three major topics: the Aṟathuppāl (On Virtue, 380 couplets), Poruṭpāl (On Wealth Management in a Princely State, 700 couplets), and Kāmatthuppāl (On Pre-and-Post Marital Carnal Love, 250 couplets). Each couplet is composed in strict agreement with the classical Tamil prosodical meter known as kuṟaṭpā.

Thirukkural deals with the typical internal and external (akam and puṛam) aspects and modes of life in Tamil classical poetry, conventions especially en vogue during the early Sangam Period. The first section on aṛam concerns itself with the lives and duties of the householder and the ascetic.

Its second section treats responsibilities of human beings in their societal life, particularly in a princely kingdom. This realm belongs to the puram category. Its third section engages with kāmam and presents the emotional and/or sexual relationship between a man and a woman during their premarital and wedded phases. This section is an example for the akamtype.

GLOBAL APPEAL

The universal appeal of the Thirukkural has attracted Asian scholars and numerous European missionaries to our shores, and they have translated it into almost all the major languages of the world. While the German Lutheran missionary Ziegenbalg introduced this great classic to his patrons in Germany in 1708, the Italian Jesuit missionary Beschi has translated it into Latin in 1730. G.U. Pope translated it in its entirety into English first in 1886. Scholars of international repute, including the Nobel laureate Dr. Albert Schweitzer, and great leaders like Mahatma Gandhi have showered praise on this unique masterpiece. Dr. Albert Schweitzer wrote: “ There hardly exists in the literature of the world a collection of maxims in which we find so much of lofty wisdom”.

Mahatma Gandhi described it as “a text book of indispensable authority on moral life..... the maxims of Valluvar have touched my soul. There is none who has given such a treasure of wisdom like him”. Gandhiji, it might be worthwhile recalling, came to know about Thirukkural from Leo Tolstoy, who had said that the concept of “non-violence” was taken by him from a German version of the Kural. Monsieur Ariel calls it “ a masterpiece of Tamil literature, one of the highest and purest of expressions of human thought”. Subramaniya Bharathi, the gifted Tamil poet of Indian Independence struggle repute, considered the Kural as the foremost gift of the Tamil population to humanity at large.

OBJECTIVES of the CONFERENCE

With a view to studying the Thirukkural from an unbiased international perspective and to promoting rigorous academic research on this sacred opus majeur, we have decided to organize many national and International Conferences on Thirukkural with the participation of scholars from all over the world. We are happy to invite this great team to work for the Thirukkural Mission with the zeal and zest of a missionary.

First International Conference

With this vision, we started our Mission work from Kanyakumari (Nagarkovil), the Southernmost border of the Indian Peninsula, which is considered to be the birth place of the author of Thirukkural.

With the participation of representatives from more than 20 countries and with around 120 research papers the conference provided the initial impetus to declare Thirukkural as the ethical corpus of Universal appeal on the basis of authentic data and objective research. This conference on the above theme organised in the background of the confluence of the three seas and the gigantic statue of the author of Thirukkural was able to generate tremendous data for the universal appeal of Thirukkural from the study of outstanding scholars both from India and other parts of the globe.

Having established objectively the universal nature of this great Tamil heritage, we decided to study the migration of the ethical codes of Thirukkural to the other parts of the world crossing the frontiers of its native land, Tamilnadu.

Second International Conference

It is our strong conviction that this great book of the world started its travel to the eastern and western countries mainly through the Tamil traders, Tamil Buddhist monks as well as through the conquest of the later Cholas in Asia, especially in the countries of South and Southeast Asia. But since adequate research has not been done on the external history of the Tamils with active collaboration of scholars of various regions, we are not able to get the required tangible data on this area up to 16th C AD.

Consequently, the study of the impact of Thirukkural on Europe and Asia up to 16th C AD remain dormant owing to paucity of data.

After 16th century, Europe has become a potential region in internationalizing Tamil studies, especially the Thirukkural studies. Thirukkural was preserved in its native Tamil land in fragile palm-leaves for around 1800 years. Since palm-leaf could withstand the tropical South Indian climate for a maximum period of 350 years, the text of Thirukkural might have been copied down in new palm-leaves at least about five to six times. It should have been copied down atleast three to four times either by the Buddhist or Jain or by secular scholars or patrons who supported the views of Thirukkural on social inequalities.

This scenario changed after the very learned scholar of the Vaishnavite faith Parimelalakar wrote his celebrated commentary to this great book after the 14th C A.D. After this, Thirukkural has been gradually accepted as a sacred text by all major religious groups.

The text of Thirukkural was transferred to paper in the new era of technology and science and published in the present book form for the first time in 1812. But, before this, it was known to the 16th Century Portuguese missionaries who lived in Sri Lanka. In 1712, Bartholomew Zienganbalg introduced it to his German patrons by providing summary of certain portions of Thirukkural. In 1730 Fr. Beschi translated Thirukkural into Latin, one of the classical languages of the world. The French version by Ariel, the English versions starting from Kindersley and culminating in G.U. Pope's scholarly translation followed by different versions in almost all other European languages made Thirukkural studies an international phenomenon. It was translated into Polish, Russian and subsequently into the Asian languages, the languages of the Middle East and almost all other regional languages of India.

Keeping in mind the tremendous contributions of European scholars in internationalizing Thirukkural studies, we decided to organize the second international Conference in England where outstanding scholars of Tamil studies including G.U. Pope, Thomas Burrow and several others were born and brought up and grown as scholars of Tamilology with international reputation.

The theme of the above second international conference was Thirukkural beyond the frontiers of Tamil India and this international event was hosted at the very beautiful and enchanting campus of the reputed Liverpool Hope University of England. This conference has very good participation from around 20 countries including China, Russia, Poland, Germany France, Italy, US, Canada, Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, Mauritius and Sri Lanka. We could study not only the migration of Thirukkural to various countries but also the deep impact exerted by this great work on the literary and cultural heritages of these countries.

The Third and Fourth Conferences

The next phase of this study is about the relevance of this text composed in classical Tamil 2000 years back to the modern age of science and technology in which human life is tormented and torn into pieces both by various inner conflicts and different types of struggles - political, social, bureaucratic, internecine wars and other agents of deterioration, disintegration and decay.

Therefore, peace and harmony in a conflicting social order has become a powerful theme of any ethical work of international character. That peace and harmony were the cardinal themes in classical works is obvious from many important texts of yore in a very few languages. Among them Thirukkural can be deemed as the most outstanding contribution to mankind. Its clarion call against social inequality, and its stress on universal love as the cardinal principle of human life, its creation of peace-making and peace loving supermen like the cāṇṇon, place Thirukkural as the most prominent work in the galaxy of peace making literatures. "Blessed are the Peace-makers for they shall be considered as children of God" is one of the beatitudes of the teachings of Christ which is echoed and reechoed in Thirukkural. Peace flows abundantly like the waters of a river in Thirukkural to use one of the Biblical statements in the Hebraic Old Testament. Consequently, Peace and Harmony have become the theme for our two conferences organized in New Delhi, India and in Sydney, Australia.

The Fifth International conference

The title of the fifth conference was Thirukkural and World Ethics. Thirukkural is essentially a Book of the World. It deals with general human nature with all its various aspects and varieties crossing the barriers of region, language, religion and culture. The emotions it reveal, the ethics it preach, the experiences it share, the morals it inculcate – all are common to the human race. All peculiarities are reduced and brought it to the background. It is more over a book of this world – it preaches how to live in this world.- the art of leading a moral life, a life of virtue in this world. The author of this book is eclectic in his ethical approach. This aspect of Thirukkural is analysed deeply and established with well founded data drawn from multifarious sources. The Conference invited learned papers that seek to examine this particular dimension of Thirukkural, especially with a comparative perspective.

We commended the following as the focus areas in all our conference papers pertaining to Thirukkural.

1. Religious perspective
2. Literary perspective
3. Economic perspective
4. Political perspective
5. Gender perspective
6. Social perspective
7. Philosophical perspective
8. Ethical perspective
9. Historical perspective
10. Psychological perspective

Theme of the Sixth International Conference

The focal point of study in this conference to be held in Toronto shall be the second book of Thirukkural namely Poruṭpāl (பொருட்பால்) that deals mainly with material prosperities including good governance, ideal ruler, ideal state etc., This book forms the focal point of Thirukkural (70 chapters) under the following divisions namely Royalty, Ministers and State. The essentials of a State and the residuary.

TENTATIVE TOPICS

Keynote address – International Conference on Tirukkural series
Topics for Plenary Sessions on the governance from Porutpal

1. The qualities of a good leader enumerated in the early Tamil bardic literature.
2. Kingship as described in Tamil Sangam Classics.
3. Different kinds of revenues and the guidelines given to rulers by the earlier bards/poets.
4. Thirukkural and Bhagavat Gita from the perspective of Governance
5. Thirukkural and Arthasastra
6. Thirukkural and Manusmṛty
7. Thirukkural and Dammapada regarding Governance.
8. Thirukkural and Buddhist texts.
9. Thirukkural and Jaina works
10. Thirukkural and Holy Bible
11. Thirukkural and Christian views about kingship and administration
12. Thirukkural and Holy Quran.

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13. Thirukkural and Plato about Governance
 14. Thirukkural and Ajivakam texts
 15. Thirukkural and Aristotle
 16. Thirukkural and Stoic texts.
 17. Thirukkural and Lucretius
 18. Thirukkural and Immanuel Kant
 19. Thirukkural and Shakespeare
 20. Thirukkural and Leo Tolstoy
 21. Thirukkural and Seneca
 22. Thirukkural and Machiavelli
 23. Thirukkural and Confucius
 24. Thirukkural and Laocius
 25. Thirukkural and Mencius
 26. Thirukkural and Hesiod
 27. Thirukkural and Jainism
 28. Thirukkural and Babylonian writers
 29. Thirukkural and Egyptian writers
 30. Thirukkural and Persian writers
 31. Thirukkural and Marcus Aurelius
 32. Thirukkural and European Missionaries
 33. Thirukkural and Albert Switzer
 34. Thirukkural and Spinoza
 35. Contemporary leaders on Thirukkural on good governance
 36. Russian writers and Thirukkural
 37. Japanese, Korean writers and Thirukkural
 38. Thiruvalluvar and Francis Bacon
 39. International scholars on the theme of Governance in Thirukkural
 40. Thirukkural and Japanese Tetsugaku
 41. Thirukkural and Modern writers about Management
 42. The concept of superman (Carron) with the same theme in World Classics – As ideal leader
 43. Governance in Thirukkural and Saiva Siddhanta

44. Governance in Thirukural and Tamil Vainavam
45. Governance in Thirukural and Tamil Siddhar tradition
46. Governance in Thirukural and Twelve ThirumuRai
47. Governance in Thirukkural and Tolkappiyam
48. Observation on Thirukkural and its source text
49. Thirukural and its socio - political background
50. The impact of Thirukkural on the Tamil Cultural Traditions

PARTICIPATION IN THE CONFERENCE

We request you to kindly participate in this momentous event either as paper presenter or observer. Paper presenters need not confine their studies only to the tentative general topics listed above. They can also present papers on any other topics related to the main theme of the conference.

Paper presenters are expected to submit the abstract of their papers before May 10th, 2025. Their full paper should reach the organizers before the end of June 2025 at info@torontotamilsangam.ca/ info@instituteofasianstudies.com. The size of the research paper shall be from 15-25 pages in A4 size depending upon the availability of data and their interpretation. Papers should be sent by both hard and soft copies. The papers selected by the experts committee alone will be permitted to present in the conference.

We look forward to your active co-operation for the successful hosting of this significant Conference.

A NOTE ON TAMIL LANGUAGE

Tamil is not just the principal language spoken in Tamilnadu, nor is it a language confined within the Indian sub-continent; it can lay claim to the fact of being an international language enjoying official status in three different countries, namely: (the Tamilnadu of) India, Singapore and Sri Lanka. It is spoken by more than 25 million Tamil diaspora of Indian and Sri Lankan origin residing in more than 65 different countries all over the world, in addition to being the mother-tongue of a vast population of around 80 million people living both in Tamilnadu and Sri Lanka.

Registration Link

<https://secureca.imodules.com/s/731/form-blank/index.aspx?sid=731&gid=54&pgid=24988&cid=40604>

CONFERENCE SECRETARIAT

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