

What are the Benefits of studying Thirukkural?

Have you ever wondered ‘How do I live my life?’ or ‘How do I decipher right from wrong’. Well, then you’re not alone. Almost everyone has asked themselves these questions at some point in their life and always seeks the answer in their family, their friends, or the internet. But does anyone ever think to look in the centuries old Tamil text written by Thiruvalluvar: the Thirukkural? Well, not really. But the truth is that this beautiful piece of literature that has influenced some of the most brilliant minds in history, like George Uglow Pope and Leo Tolstoy, addresses a variety of topics and delineates certain habits that we should implement to guarantee a prosperous life. From education and friendship to truthfulness and gratitude, the Thirukkural contains all the information we need to know to live, and it does so in a mere 1,330 couplets of seven words each. There are myriad benefits to studying and understanding the Thirukkural, which if understood, will prepare you for a lifetime of happiness and will ensure that you live your life to the fullest potential.

One of the most important benefits that you can gain from learning the Thirukkural is how to have a ‘good mind’, meaning a mind that is empty of evil thoughts and bad intentions. This truth is demonstrated in various couplets throughout this piece of literature, with one of the most notable ones being Kural #416 “எனைத்தானும் நல்லவை கேட்க அனைத்தானும் ஆன்ற பெருமை தரும்” (Listen to the good however little And gain that much). While these Kurals may seem quite short, in the grand scheme of things, they hold a lot of power and can be utilized in a variety of circumstances. Speaking from personal experience, I can definitely say that there is great power in these words. For instance, as a Senior in high school, there are a multitude of opportunities that come my way, and even more that are yet to come. After learning Kural #416 at the mere age of 7 years old, I started adopting a mindset where I took advantage of these opportunities no matter how little, so that I can utilize the good ideas and practices I gain in my life. These words have been relevant and useful many times in my life, but most recently, they rang true when my school offered a leadership conference to those who serve as leaders to their respective school clubs. My initial thought was that there was no possible way I could gain anything from such a short meeting, much less with it being on Zoom. However, this Kural immediately flashed in my mind, making me think: What harm could it do to take some time out of my day and attend an event that I might learn something from? Well, little did I know that this conference would end up radically changing the way I approached my extracurricular activities and make me think about leadership in a different light. At school, I am President of the clubs ‘Art from the Heart’ and ‘Breakfast with Books’, and I am a ‘Class Board’ representative. Since I serve so many leadership roles, going to this leadership conference gave me myriad ideas on how I could lead others to help achieve their own goals as well as maximize their experience in these clubs. One of the most pertinent ideas I picked up was to spotlight more of our own members and appreciate all the things they do to spread positivity during a difficult time. Upon suggesting it to my fellow peers, we immediately put this into action in Class Board and started posting the ‘Senior of the Week’ on our Instagram to highlight student’s achievements and motivate them as they near the end of high school. Immediately, we saw an increase in school morale and began receiving positive feedback from those whom we had spotlighted on our social media. It was at that moment that I realized that the words of the great Tamil poet and philosopher, Thiruvalluvar, would not only benefit me, but also allow others to benefit from my actions. This experience illustrates the wonderful advantages that this Kural gives you in approaching the opportunities that come your way. You will become more open to different experiences and reap the benefits of those various experiences, rather than spending your life thinking about ‘what could have been’.

Another significant benefit of the Thirukkural that can have a truly paramount effect on one’s life is its message that we should always help others with all of our hearts, a truth that will carry you all throughout your life and beyond. Although there are quite a few Kurals that illustrate this meaning (i.e., Kural #226: அற்றார் அழிபசி தீர்த்தல் அஃதொருவன் பெற்றான் பொருள்வைப் புழி), one specific Kural that I believe captures the true essence of Giving is Kural #72, which is “அன்பிலார் எல்லாம் தமக்குரியர் அன்புடையார் என்பும்

உரியர் பிறர்க்கு” (The loveless grasp all; while the loving with their very bones help others). This one couplet has been the epitome of my high school career as it has played a major role in driving my passion for helping others and giving back to my community. Having learned this Kural at an incredibly young age, I became very inspired as a kid to take every opportunity possible to help others, from guiding parents to their respective rooms during parent-teacher conferences to making handwritten Valentine messages for every single person at my school so that no one felt left out. These experiences instilled in me a passion for community service which led me to take part in numerous leadership roles throughout high school, such as Class Board. In this club, I have played a vital role in creating and implementing ideas for the annual Homecoming and Winterfest dances to give students the opportunity to have fun and socialize amidst the myriad exams and academic pressure. I was also able to bring people together with various unity projects such as Light It Up Blue (an autism awareness event), a Class of 2021 breakfast, and service projects for organizations like Fill A Heart for Kids, promoting engagement in the community and giving underprivileged youth positive experiences. Additionally, I was motivated to follow in the footsteps of my Freshman Mentors and become an FMP this past year, so that I could guide freshmen through the uncharted territory of high school and support them all throughout their four years, which was a truly rewarding experience. I’ve also had the wonderful opportunity to serve as President of Art from the Heart, where I organize weekly meetings for members to create art, like Motivational Cards for Hospitalized Kids and Origami Christmas Ornaments for Senior Homes, for local organizations. It was important to me that even during the Pandemic, my members and I would be able to positively contribute to someone else’s day, which is why I dedicated myself to organizing meaningful projects and working with our sponsor to ensure efficient delivery and drop off of materials. I attribute most of my growth as a student, a leader, and a citizen to this Kural as I have developed a great amount of empathy for people who are underprivileged and have also become incredibly dedicated to doing things in my life that will create meaningful positive change all over the world. Studying Thirukkural opens your eyes up to a whole new world and introduces you to people from various walks of life so that you can become more knowledgeable and impactful everyday. All in all, the benefits of Thirukkural are that it increases your overall happiness and gives you a purpose in life.

Now, there are still hundreds and hundreds more Kurals in the Thirukkural, however, I felt that these specific ones were the most powerful in demonstrating how beneficial the Thirukkural can actually be to one’s life. Reading the Thirukkural also teaches you to ‘live what you have learnt’ (Kural #391), ‘think before you speak’ (Kural #127), and ‘how to most effectively defeat your foes’ (Kural #481), and much, much more. But overall, I have learned that the main benefits of Thirukkural are developing characteristics that are valued and respected in life, such as gratitude, friendship, knowledge, and virtue. You will also finally understand that the true reason this ancient Tamil literature has stood the test of time is because no matter how much the world changes, the truths in the Thirukkural always remain relevant and you can always count on it to lead you the right way.