4.6 The Worth of a Fabric

Thiruvalluvar was a great Tamil Saint-poet, who lived more than two thousand years ago. 'Thirukkural' is the book of his teachings. It is greatly loved and respected even today.

Thiruvalluvar was a textile weaver. He wove beautiful fabrics and saris and sold them in the market. People said that he never got angry, never used bad words, never shouted at anyone.

In the same town, there lived a rich young man. He wasted most of his time roaming around with his friends. They often made fun of other people.

"I don't believe what people say about this Valluvar," said the young man one day. "I'm sure I can make him angry. Come on, let's have some fun today!"

So the arrogant young man approached Thiruvalluvar in the market and picked up a beautiful piece of fabric.

"How much does this whole fabric cost?" he asked.

"Eight coins," the saint named the price.

The young man unfolded the fabric and tore it into two.

"What's the price of this piece, now?"

"Four coins," the Saint answered politely.

The youth was taken aback. 'Why doesn't the man get angry?' he thought. He then tore the half pieces into half again.

"And now?"

"Two coins!" was the answer.

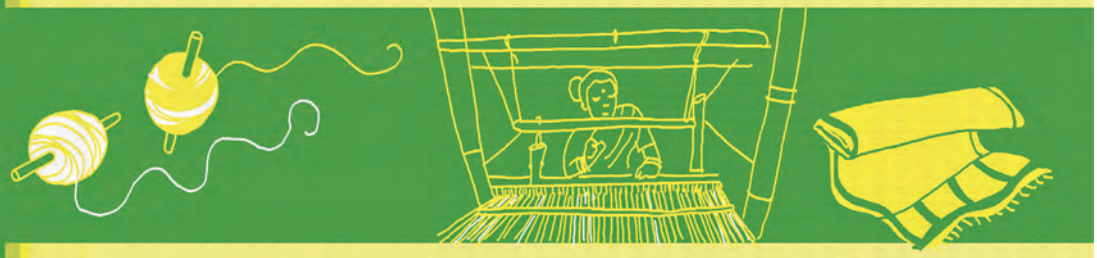
Now it was the young man who became impatient and agitated. He tore the pieces into half again and again, saying, "And now? What's the price now?"

Thiruvalluvar calmly went on reducing the price to half every time.

At last, the fabric was reduced to rags. So, Thiruvalluvar said in a quiet tone, "Now this fabric has become worthless. I will not name any price for these rags."

The young man did not know what to say. But he was proud of his riches. So he offered to pay eight coins to the Saint. For the first time, Thiruvalluvar smiled but he refused to take the money.

"Young man, now this fabric is of no use. It has become worthless. Why? Because no one will be able to wear it now."



"Do you know, the fabric was not made in a day. Many people have toiled to make it. The farmer who grew cotton in his field worked hard for months through sun and rain. He picked cotton from each boll and gave it for spinning. Then someone else carded the cotton and spun it into long, uniform threads. The threads were dyed carefully so that they took on these lovely colours. My wife and I wove the threads together, putting in beautiful designs. We thought, some day, someone will like this fabric, will be happy to

wear it. Then all our work would have been rewarded. When you destroyed the fabric, you destroyed all the love and labour that went into its making. Money cannot bring it back."

The softly spoken words touched the young man's heart. Now he was really ashamed of himself.

"And do you know," Thiruvalluvar went on to say, "I can weave another fabric like this, but our life is also like this fabric. If you tear it apart with hasty, thoughtless actions, it will be destroyed. And you will not get it back again."

Thiruvalluvar's words opened the young man's eyes. There and then he decided to give up his idleness and bad habits.

- **boll :** pod of the cotton plant
- **spinning :** process of making yarn or thread out of cotton wool
- **carded :** cleaned and combed cotton to remove seeds
- **spun :** past tense of 'spin'
- **rewarded :** when one is rewarded, one gets what he has worked for
- **idleness :** laziness

POINTERS

1. **Read the story silently.**
2. **Write a short note on Thiruvalluvar using the information given in the story.**
3. **Read aloud the speech in which Thiruvalluvar explains how the fabric was made. Present the process in the form of a chart.**
4. **Choose any one of the objects we use daily and find out how it is made. Present the information in the form of a chart.**
5. **Retell the story in your mother tongue.**
6. **Collect with the help of your teacher, stories about the lives and message of Saints that lived in Maharashtra.**