



THE HINDU

Madras University's Tamil translation of PG programme draws flak

Activist flays University of Madras' translation of a term for persons with disabilities in degree certificates

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THE HINDU BUREAU



University of Madras. File | Photo Credit: B. Velankanni Raj

The University of Madras has received backlash for the nomenclature used in translating degree certificates of students. The bone of contention is the varsity's translation of a term in a postgraduate programme offered by the Madras School of Social Work.

In 2021, MSSW, affiliated with the university, started a PG programme, 'Master of Social Work in Disability and Empowerment', and its first batch graduated recently. The university, as per its norm, had translated the name of the programme in Tamil as '*iyalaamai mattrum adhigaramalithai*' in the degree certificates it had issued to the students.

It is the term '*iyalaamai*', which translates as disability, that has caused consternation to disability rights activist and founder of Nethrodaya, C. Govindakrishnan. In a letter to the Higher Education Minister, he complained that the institution "wilfully degraded the differently abled community" in the Tamil translation of the degree certificate.

Mr. Govindakrishnan said former Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi had introduced the term '*maatruthiranaligal*' (differently abled) to refer to the community and had established an exclusive department in 2010. The word was now the official terminology across all departments, including universities, he said.

According to him, the use of the term '*iyalaamai*' was an insensitive act on the part of the university's officials, besides being a "serious violation of Rights to Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016." He appealed to the department to "issue appropriate directions/orders" to the university authorities to issue fresh degree certificates with "the proper Tamil translation."