

Thirukkural - A Veritable Treatise on Leadership Nostrums

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Abstract

Thirukkural is one of the most consequential works in the realm of Tamil literature. Awashed in blistering insight and an unremitting fount of wisdom, Thirukkural is the most celebrated literature in Tamil. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to consider Thirukkural as a scripture that governs and guides people to lead a worthy life. Strung together as 1330 Couplets, Thirukkural contains 133 chapters each comprising 10 couplets. Each couplet of this classic is steeped in profound meaning and holds rich lessons for all aspects of life. Every chapter deals with a specific topic that expounds on the various facets of life. Undoubtedly, Thirukkural has stood the test of time for over 2000 years and serves as a moral compass for mankind to this day. There is hardly any area of human life that remains untouched by Thirukkural. Admittedly, Leadership themes are no exception. Many couplets in Thirukkural bristle with deep meaning that resonate with the modern-day concept of leadership. Thus, this paper shines more light on how the pithy aphorisms of Thirukkural can be applied to the context of leadership that will leave one rich with granular clarity and a profound understanding

Keywords: Thirukkural, leadership, Governance, Administration, Management Style

Introduction

What does it take to qualify something as "Classic"? For some, the term denotes age or antiquity. For many, the word implies the material that is invaluable. It defines and shapes what is to come in a later-day period. When literary scholars refer to classic literature, they essentially mean that this literature is unanimously recognized as having enduring or outstanding qualities. Italian author Italo Calvino, in his iconic essay in 1986 "Why read the classics" defined classics as those works people inexorably find worthy of re-reading. Classics have truly withstood the ravages of time. Classic is a staple read for readers of all stripes and ages- past, present, and future. Using that as a barometer, Thirukkural arguably qualifies to be deemed as a classic. To quote Dr. Albert Schweitzer, "There hardly exists in the literature of the world, a collection of maxims in which we find so much of lofty wisdom" unquote. Hailed as one of the seminal literature in Tamil, Thirukkural is deemed more as a scripture that governs and guides people to lead a worthy life. Admittedly, Thirukkural showered with the epithet "Ancient, yet modern" manifests the extent and depth of

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How to cite this article: Aravamudhan, N.R., & Supkar, A.C. (2023). Thirukkural - A Veritable Treatise on Leadership Nostrums. Purushartha, 15(2), 20-31.

Source of support: Nil

Conflict of interest: None

this veritable timeless classic. Thirukkural bristles with profound psychological and philosophical meaning that makes it truly universal and relevant to this day. Thirukkural is a book that contains a compendium of 1330 verses that conveys its core in two lines as couplets (Nagarajan, 2018). This timeless classic is authored by saint poet Thiruvalluvur. He is believed to have lived anywhere between the 2nd Century and 5th Century AD. Though the exact period of its composition is still a matter of debate, there is consensus amongst scholars that thirukkural was probably authored in the Tamil Sangam period. Various known as Tamil Marai (Tamil Veda) Poyyamozhi (words that never fail) and Daiva Nool (Divine text), Thirukkural is widely believed to have preceded other two timeless Tamil classics Manimekalai and Silapathikaram since they both have references about the Thirukkural.

S.No	Particulars	No. Of Chapters	No. of Couplets
1	Virtues (Arathupal)	1-38	370
2	Wealth (Porutpal)	39-108	710
3	Love (Inpathupal)	109-133	250
	Total	330	1330

Prosaically, Thirukkural denotes “Wealth and Success” in life. Strung together as 1330 couplets, Thirukkural contains 133 chapters each comprising 10 Couplets. The verses are steeped in rich rhythm, profound meaning, and dictions for all aspects of life. Thirukkural stands as a colossal testament to our ancient Indian civilization soaked in a rich heritage, tradition, and culture. Needless to say, Thirukkural has stood the test of time for over 2000 years and remains relevant as a moral compass for mankind to this day. Arguably, there is hardly any area of human life that remains untouched by Thirukkural. Management themes are no exception. There is a popular fallacy that contemporary management tropes have so far emanated from western thoughts. But the fact of the matter is most of the ancient Indian scriptures demonstrate a profound understanding of inscrutable management nostrums which otherwise remains subterranean unless efforts like the current one is made.

Setting the Stage

It may be quite instructive to know how Thiruvalluvar has laid out his iconic work. The author has cleaved all the 1330 couplets into three divisions listed below:

Thiruvalluvar has dedicated the first chapter to the service of the lord thereby providing a strong spiritual foundation for further chapters. There is no gainsaying the fact that Thiruvalluvar has been very thoughtful and prayed reverentially before writing the couplets. Upon closer scrutiny of the contents and the profound understanding he has demonstrated, it becomes unambiguously clear that Thiruvalluvar was a deep spiritualist at his heart and has presented this iconic work with such blistering insights

The very maiden couplet manifests the existence of God:

“A is the first of the alphabet; God is the primary

driving force of the universe”

In the second Couplet, Thiruvalluvar reveals

“What is the purpose of all learning if you cannot surrender yourself to the holy feet of the almighty”

Scratch the surface, it is quite clear Thiruvalluvar points to the real source of Knowledge and how a manager can attain them.

Simple and easy to understand, written in lucid language that reveals itself, the couplets deeply impacts every reader and act as a compass for conducting one's life righteously and successfully in the colosseum of life. Thirukkural is considered a crucible of profound wisdom and practical guidelines that are encapsulated into effective communication. Examined closely, the couplets are riddled with profound insights that would help readers understand how various leadership nostrums are woven into a seamless structured thoughts. It is instructive to note that many of these thoughts hold enduring relevance for contemporary social structures and organizational operatives even today. The practicing managers looking for broader views on such matters would find that these principles and thoughts have been outlined by Thiruvalluvar either subtly or directly. It is still surprising how this saint poet could understand many of these complex issues much early on and articulate home truths that are timeless and straddle over time and space. Needless to say, all these insights spring from the deep and perceptive understanding of the Tamil cultural milieu, transcending the narrow groove of language and spilling over to the continents across the globe. Little wonder, the book has earned the sobriquet of “Uлага marai” and has been practically translated into all known languages across the world.

Thiruvalluvar is well-regarded and is widely known as a saint poet. Undoubtedly, his genius borders on preternatural. Thirukkural attests to the fact that there is

no clear demarcation as to where the internal quotient ends and where the external quotient begins. Thiruvalluvar is a man of synthesis, not of dissection. Implicit is the meaning that Internal unction makes external brilliance a real possibility. The impact of man in a leader is paramount. The fall of a man in the leader, by natural corollary, is a fall in his leadership. Admittedly, what happens to a leader as an Individual makes a huge difference. The current paper locates the leadership concepts in Thirukkural against the backdrop of today's contemporary times

Leadership in the Western and Asian Context

The over-arching importance of leadership has manifested itself in the expositions of great leaders like Napoleon and other historical figures. Historically, Leadership has always been a subject matter of intense inquiry though the definitions of leadership have undergone many contortions depending on the vantage point of those who define it. Prosaically speaking, Leadership is a process through which one individual influences others towards meeting the organization's goals. Leadership primarily deals with the influence the leader exerts upon his followers. Though a leader draws his power to influence others through his formal position of authority, there are other factors in the mix that determines a leader's ability to exert his influence. Leadership occupies a pre-eminent position in the organization (Chang, Chiou, & Wang, 2007) and continues to be the oft-researched area of management and organization (Micic, 2015). It is not uncommon to find any research in leadership placing so much equity on leader's trait such as physical, mental and social attributes. Extant literature in leadership discourses revealed that the trait approach formed the basis of most of the research (Fleenor, 2006). As it became obvious that all leaders do not share the same traits, the focus of leadership research gravitated toward the behavior of leaders (Peters, 1987). These researchers postulated that the behaviors demonstrated by leaders are more significant than their emotional, physical, or mental attributes. There is also a situational leadership approach that helps managers in diagnosing the demands of their situation. which later became an area of extensive inquiry. The situation is most favorable when followers respect and trust the leader, tasks become highly structured and the leader has control

over reward and punishment (Hersey & Blanchard, 1973). Though all these three approaches have contributed in significant measure to our understanding of leadership, none of them provides a comprehensive and compelling explanation for recognizing and developing effectiveness in a leader. One school of thought argued that the whole notion of leadership is an evolutionary process as things are constantly in a state of flux. As far back as the 1970s, leadership research placed emphasis on the effectiveness of the leader's charisma. In fact, Leadership charisma continues to be one of the most researched topics in the remit of leadership (Baliga et al, 1988). To wit, there has been no single authority on leadership as the subject is far too complex to comprehend. Asian values radically diverge from the west. Asian notion of leadership is diametrically different from its western counterpart in terms of its orientation. Asian leadership puts a premium on spirituality. The notion of leadership can be viewed through the lens of a 'Walking behind them" trope. Implicit is the meaning that to steer the people, a leader must put himself behind them. Western reading of leadership is rather 'hands-on". It is all about leading from the front. However, the Asian notion of leadership is holistic *per se*. The concept of leadership varies from country to country depending on its socio-philosophical construct. Indian philosophical tradition, ranging from Vedic philosophy to Bagwad gita to Upanishad to Arthasasthra, is awashed in references relating to leadership and its various styles. Thirukkural, widely regarded as Tamil Veda (Tamizh Marai) is acclaimed and celebrated for its original Indian work on Management. The entire couplets of chapter 39 in Thirukkural deal with the leadership theory under the head of "Leadership Excellence". Thirukkural's leadership theory reflects the quintessence of trait theory, behavioral theory, social cognitive resource theory, and ethical theory.

Juxtaposing Thirukkural and Leadership

This paper traces the first two cantos of Thirukkural to examine the essential ingredients of Leadership. Of the 133 chapters in the Thirukkural, 25 of them deal with the qualities that are so necessary for a King. During the time of Thiruvalluvar, the Kings were the rulers (leaders) in a way the executive of the country today is the leader of the Government and the CEO is the leader of the corporate company. While Thiruvalluvar outlines

certain qualities to be very essential, there are certain traits that he considers very desirable if the King is to be venerated as an outstanding ruler (Jyanthi & Elango, 2016). Though the first two cantos-virtue and wealth deal with essential attributes of a successful ruler, the third canto of Thirukkural exerts considerable influence albeit in an indirect and oblique way in shaping a leader's personality by enhancing sensibilities as a spouse of marital fidelity.

Thirukkural and Leadership Qualities

References about leadership qualities in Thirukkural abound. Thiruvalluvar has identified certain basic qualities of rulers which is very much relevant to today's context of modern organization and leaders. It is worth visiting the Thirukkural from the chapter greatness of the King under the section “grandeur of King” to catch a glimpse of the qualities expected of a good leader.

S.No	Couplets Number	The Couplet and its meaning
1	381	<p>The military, citizenry, resources, advisers, friends, and fortresses : A ruler who owns these six is deemed a lion among kings.</p> <p>This couplet lionizes the King who possesses six things in his armory – An efficient army, Citizens, inexhaustible resources, sage ministers, enduring friendships, and an impregnable fortress.</p>
2	382	<p>Fearlessness, generosity, wisdom, and vitality: these four are the four enduring attributes expected of a king.</p> <p>Through this couplet, Thiruvalluvar sings paeans of the four important virtues of a leader namely doughtiness, generosity, sharpness of intelligence, and unflagging energy. It was not uncommon in the past for kings to engage in combat or battle with enemies within and outside of the country. The king should always stay mindful of the threat and never shy away from confronting his enemies. Thiruvalluvar advocates that courage is the most defining quality of a ruler. But he also cautions rulers to demonstrate courage tempered with a sense of discretion and realism. Thiruvalluvar believed that courage sans discretion is foolhardiness (Verse 428). An act of donating to charity is always seen as an act of nobility. It pays for a leader to be generous. Today, businesses are honing their reputation for munificence through corporate social responsibility. Thiruvalluvar exhorts rulers to practice Kindness. Serving the underprivileged without expecting anything in return is the true sign of a king. The ruler, with staggering resources at his command, is better poised to serve the people in need. True generosity is not a one-off event. It springs eternally from the heart of a leader and permeates every facet of his life. An insatiable quest for knowledge is a tell-all sign of a true leader. The more the leader learns, the better it is for the organization and employees. A leader should have the intuition to piece together different strands of information and make sense of it all. The more the leader gains information, the more he strengthens his knowledge bandwidth. Thiruvalluvar contended that learning and amassing the knowledge is very crucial for everyone. In this context, it is instructive to take a look at verse 396 for its deep import. Thiruvalluvar likens knowledge to a deeply dug well. He contended that the deeper the sand well is dug, the freer flow of water. So deeper the leader learns, the greater his knowledge</p>
3	383	<p>Vigilance, erudition, and boldness: these three never ditch a capable ruler</p> <p>Thiruvalluvar describes relentless vigilance, learning, and strong decisions as the hallmarks of a King. The King has to be ever vigilant as he faces aggression from within and outside his kingdom. Vigilance is a tool of a leader in the organization. The organization has to grapple with both internal dangers and external threats. It is the leader who steers the organization through tumultuous external and internal threats. The word vigilance, per se, tells a manager to be vigil and vigilant of the organization's resources and reputation. A leader must also be a learned man of high erudition. Relentless learning marks the apogee of excellence in a leader who becomes an asset. Though Thiruvalluvar is of the view that learning is important for</p>

S.No	Couplets Number	The Couplet and its meaning
		everyone, he implores that learning is an utmost important attribute of a king. In fact, he lampoons the uneducated ignorant people by observing “Animal amongst men can be likened to uneducated amongst the galaxy of scholars of erudition” (Couplet 410). Implicit is the meaning that the difference between learned and unlearned is as much as that of human and beasts.
4	384	<p>A ruler should not swerve from the path of righteousness and justice (Aram); and resist any violations. He should also acquire greatness and pride through courage</p> <p>Thiruvalluvar exhorts a king to be a paragon of virtue, someone who refrains from committing shenanigans, one who upholds his honor and pride and demonstrates exemplary courage. In nutshell, this verse also dwells upon governance provided by the leader. The verse highlights the fact that the unethical behavior demonstrated by a king is not governance but downright excesses. This verse speaks to the behavioral aspects of a leader in general and ethical aspects in particular</p>
5	385	<p>A government should do what it is capable of – Strategize, generate revenues, preserve and allocate resources</p> <p>This verse underscores the importance of the governance of a ruler. The verse points to producing, saving, guarding, regulating, and equitably sharing as a means of providing robust governance. The context can also be applied to a leader.</p> <p>The power of this wisdom can be better appreciated by those who find themselves in a spot of financial trouble. Most organizations fail big-time in managing their finances owing to a lack of balance in these factors mentioned above in the Thirukkural.</p>
6	386	<p>The world will praise a king who is accessible and refrains from being harsh in his speeches.</p> <p>Thiruvalluvar avers that the world will put only those leaders on exalted positions who are accessible and refrain from being brusque in their speech. This verse has an object lesson for leadership even today. Great leaders are highly accessible and approachable and recognize that good ideas can emanate from anywhere. Great leaders want their assumptions to be challenged and encourage the team to go all-out to look at better ways of doing things. They do not carry on the charade of ‘I-Know-Everything’ and are amenable to asking for assistance. In the same vein, Thiruvalluvar also extols the virtue of a King using less harsh words. He implores the kings to use words that is not brusque or harsh. This is truly a revelation for the leaders today. With the wide array of bad leadership behavior that exists, there is one behavior that can be hugely demoralizing – a leader’s words. The words can be bruited around like a weapon and can singe someone’s psyche</p>
7	387	<p>For those rulers, who are generous and guard their people, the world is how they wish it to be.</p> <p>Thiruvalluvar, in this verse, sings praises of a King who is generous and affable. The verse has implications for current-day leaders. To be an effective leader one will have to forge strong relationships. Relationships do not happen by chance. It takes a lot of effort to build one. Here is where leadership affability counts a lot. Being an affable leader is not tough. All it takes is just to treat people with respect and acknowledge their worth. Thiruvalluvar also eulogizes the generosity of the King which helps his subjects be more loyal to him. The generosity that Thiruvalluvar references has an object lesson in leadership even today. When it comes to generosity, our thoughts instinctively drift to gifting money to charity. In the context of leadership, there are gifts that are immeasurably priceless. It includes giving someone an opportunity and compelling reasons to do work for you. It also includes giving others latitude, the room to make mistakes and learn from them, giving fellow colleagues credit wherever it is due, and imbuing the team members with authority and responsibility. In sum, all of this pretty much translates into the generosity of spirit, a quality we truly have come to admire in a leader.</p>

S.No	Couplets Number	The Couplet and its meaning
		A leader will have to lead with generosity of spirit and nobility of mind. A leader's generosity has a positive ripple effect. Conversely, the lack of generosity may also have a negative spin-offs too.
8	388	<p>A righteous king who administers justice, and nurtures his people, will be celebrated as a powerful leader.</p> <p>Here, Thiruvalluvar puts on a high pedestal the king who performs his duties conscientiously and protects his subjects zealously. The current verse has implications for modern-day leadership and speaks to the duty of the leader and his responsibility towards the team. A dutiful leader exerts pretty hard to create workplace actualization and foster a positive condition for his team members to chase their full potential. To create a congenial and positive mindset, the duty of the leadership is to develop a culture that is engaging, caring and purposeful. At a higher plane, the leader will have to align the purpose of his team with that of the organization. The leader has the role to bring out the best in his team</p> <p>The duty of the leader is to create a huge amount of trust, collaboration, and relatedness. The bedrock of any leadership is to rekindle the fire of employees' passion and creativity and unleash it. Admittedly, passion and purpose drive results. The true mettle of the leadership is rooted in duty and not in power</p>
9	389	<p>The leader who listens to unfiltered advice that stings the ear, will have the world rest under his umbrella.</p> <p>Loosely translated, this verse means that the leader who listens to stinging criticism stoically will have the world rest under his umbrella. This verse has huge implications for the leader. Like it or lump it, handling criticism is a part of life. More so for leaders. How a leader deals with criticism can point to the trajectory of his/her achievement. Rather than take criticism dismissively real leaders look for meaning. They understand how emotions work and dig deeper for real reasons. Great leaders take criticism sportively and constructively. They look for areas to improve, learn from their past mistakes and turn all emotions-positive/negative into strong drive and action to reach their goals</p>
10	390	<p>Charity, love, justice, and protecting the people- A person : who has these four attributes is the leading light for all leaders.</p> <p>Roughly translated, this verse means the King is a ruler who is endowed with four attributes- generosity, graciousness, justice, and care for the people. All these four attributes of the king discussed in this verse have implications for leaders today. A very gracious leader creates more result-driven followers. The trust and gratitude the leader repose in followers make them feel better, When a leader makes people feel better about themselves people would do more of what they did to win his trust and gratitude. Justice is for all and more so for leaders since they assume responsibilities over their followers and organizations. Leaders are also responsible for the well-being of the whole group and of the much larger community. Leaders will also have to be concerned not only with the success of their company but also with the well-being of the employees. When the leader demonstrates that he/she deeply cares for others, it creates a selfless atmosphere where relationships and mutual acceptance just blossom. The application of equitable rules and regulation for all is at the core of justice administration which is the remit of a good leader</p>
11	448	<p>A ruler without a well-meaning companion who can admonish him, will face calamitous ruin without any external foes vanquishing him.</p> <p>A king without a sociable company of courageous counselors who will not hesitate to chide him will self-destruct even if he faces no external enemy</p> <p>More often than not, Kings or leaders are often surrounded by their acolytes and hangers-on who lavish false praise and seldom offer any pungent criticism. Getting swayed by the</p>

S.No	Couplets Number	The Couplet and its meaning
		sycophants and overlooking the advice of those who dared to criticize can prove to be a Kings' or leader's undoing. Thiruvalluvar reiterates that it is quite imperative for the King to listen to the advice of his counselors who can muster enough courage to offer a stinging criticism
12	123	<p>The greatness of one, who is wise and follows the right path by being restrained, will be hugely acknowledged and appreciated</p> <p>Roughly translated, this verse means that if a man should control himself in the prescribed course, such self-control will bring him a rare distinction among the pantheon of wise men. For all learning and wealth the leader has amassed, it is expected that he will be guarded and controlled in his speech and temperament. Thiruvalluvar implores that if a King exercises restraint in his thoughts, action, and deeds, he will be considered one of the good people of the world. Current research in the remit of leadership bears out these nostrums of Thiruvalluvar. Leaders with high self-control often demonstrate very effective leadership styles</p>
13	293	<p>Leaders should not lie consciously; once they lie, their own conscience will burn them.</p> <p>Loosely translated, this verse dribbles with a rather profound meaning. It means 'Let not a man wantonly tell a lie; for after he has told the lie, his mind will burn him with the memory of his guilt'. This verse speaks to the power of truthfulness. Thiruvalluvar makes a compelling argument for a King(or the leader) to speak and act in accordance with the truth. This verse has a strong resonance for leadership today. As a leader, your word is often treated as gospel. And it's usually the word that counts a lot. Like it or lump it, what you say – and do – is hugely important. Truthfulness may sound a tad bit highfalutin concept and not a business imperative. But truth be told, truth is perhaps the most powerful trait shared by the leaders Communication skills of a leader</p>
14	65, 100, 711	<p>The word manifests itself as a thought and justifies itself through deeds. Even in the remit of thought, words matter- be it spoken, written, or unspoken. In management parlance, the world of words is what one calls euphemistically communication. What Thiruvalluvar expound on communication is a subject by itself.</p> <p>In verse 100, Thiruvalluvar highlights the significance of communication by asking 'To say an unpleasant word when you can say a pleasant one is like tasting an unripened fruit when you have a ripened fruit to choose'. Loosely translated, it means "to say disagreeable things when agreeable are at hand is like eating unripe fruit when there is ripe". A leader who follows the etiquette of communication will always come in for fulsome praise. The leader who fumes and breathes fire will always breach all the known canons of etiquette. A leader with a soft-spoken demeanor will always have his way and will not be vulnerable to any shenanigans and vilifications. Kind and soft words are as important in communication as looks are in hospitality In the 65th chapter, Thiruvalluvar underlines the power of eloquence of a leader. The 65th verse "Utter a word such that no other word can surpass that word" drives home the importance of communication to leaders. Translated, the verse implies that leaders have to deliver their speech, after assuring themselves that no counter-speech can defeat their own. In verse 711, Thiruvalluvar exhorts the ruler to gauge the assemblage of the audience before uttering his words. The verse "Those who are well acquainted with the various ways of speech, know and gauge the audience before speaking" exhorts the rulers to judge the audience before shooting their mouths off. In the same vein, leaders should judge the audience before waxing rhapsodical Thiruvalluvar also exhorts kings to be devoted listeners. Listening is an art per se and is crucial to leadership Most erudite scholars equate listening with a wealth earned through ear and contend that it is an additional source of learning. To merely consider listening as a substitute for learning would be excessive</p>

S.No	Couplets Number	The Couplet and its meaning
		and overblown. Involved listening edifies the mind of even the learned. The ability to listen, to whomsoever they are, whatever their circumstances are, truly marks the hallmark of great leaders. Thiruvalluvar also highlights the significance of listening through his verse 411. The verse “Wealth of all the wealth is wealth acquired by ear” implies that the wealth gained by the ear is the wealth of all wealth and that wealth is the foremost of all wealth. To put it mildly, the couplet vouchsafe that the most precious wealth is one acquired through ears.

Few Critical Factors that Really Count for Rulers

Thiruvalluvar clearly enunciates a few critical factors that are imperative for any ruler who primarily deals with the realm of state administration. As a matter of fact, references to the management of public life abounds in the five sub-sections of Thirukkural namely King's art of governance (Chs.39-63), Art of administration by the minister(Chs.64-74), Management style(Chs-67) Allies (Friendship) (Chs.79-95) and Family (Chs.96-108) (Anand Amaladass, 2007). The focus of this presentation is primarily on matters relating to state administration

a. The fine art of governance by the ruler

There are 24 sections in relation to the realm of governance by the ruler. It starts by expounding on the six vital attributes of a king. A competent king must have devoted citizens, a disciplined army, a competent ministry, dependable allies, an impregnable fortress, and vast economic resources (Verse 381). The next verse touches upon the qualities of a good leader/King such as knowledge, generosity of spirit, valor, perseverance (Verse 382), canniness, gutsiness, edification (Verse 383) easy accessibility to citizens, and politeness in words (386), deliver justice in line with the provisions of law, ability to handle constructive criticism with utmost patience and fortitude(Verse 389) To cap it all, the king should exhibit four important attributes of a leader such as civility, bountifulness, fealty to justice, and consideration for citizen's welfare (Verse 390). Of all the four attributes, justice merits greater consideration. This attribute is expounded in verse 546 to a telling effect. The verse runs the whole gamut- be it dealing with hardened criminals being at the core of all religious and righteous living, being accessible to people, consult men of sage wisdom to deal with problems arising out of difficult matters. The verse avers that what bestows victory upon the king is

not his spear, a symbol of his might that he wields in his hands as a monarch but the way he carries as an apostle of justice (546)

b. The art of administration by the minister.

The next section deals with the matters of administration by the minister-in-charge. In 11 chapters, Thirukkural deals extensively with the duties and responsibilities of a minister. A competent minister is a statesman who has honed his reputation for executing projects, established means of performance, and timing and place of action. (Verse 631). The minister demonstrates five manifestly behavioral attributes such as courage, lineage, the art of statecraft, indefatigable energy, and care for the people. The verse in 632 clearly outlines a minister's modus operandi in guarding the kingdom zealously. The minister may guard the kingdom by driving wedge between the foes, firming up existing alliances, and rekindling old friendships. Thirukkural also expounds vastly on the defense structure in ten illuminating verses. Thiruvalluvar describes an impregnable fortress that should have a mote of clear water with an esplanade of land encircled by hills and dense woods of shady trees. Its walls must be high, long, strong, and less vulnerable to attack by foes. After waxing rhapsodic about the defense structures, Thiruvalluvar posits that even the strongest of the fort can crumble if the commander doesn't demonstrate ability in action. Thiruvalluvar then pirouettes to the vast economic resources, its deft management, and actualization of wealth. Thiruvalluvar supports wealth creation as something that is indispensable for the nation. In his 752 verse, Thiruvalluvar rues the ways of the world in which the rich are celebrated and the poor is reviled. Thiruvalluvar likens wealth creation to a luminous light that dispels darkness all around. Here, Thiruvalluvar adds a caveat. The wealth creation should be beyond reproach. Verse 755 implores that the ends and means of earning money should be without a trace of evil. In the next verse 756,

Thirukkural propagates that wealth must be collected from the people with the utmost compassion and deep love.

c Management style through the lens of Thirukkural

Thirukkural outlines the management styles that should be adopted by the ruler. The entire chapter of 68 speaks to the various management style in ten couplets. The entire chapter is riddled with homilies and home truths for a ruler. A decision must be taken after considerable deliberation. An inordinate delay caused in implementation is patently wrong (Verse 671) Things that can be done at leisure can be postponed for later. But never postpone things that require prompt and immediate action (Verse, 672) Whenever the course of action is very clear, act immediately. If it is not clear, it is prudent to follow a cautious approach (Verse, 673). The efforts and enemies, if left unfinished, are like smoldering sparks in an ember. It has the potential to envelop a careless man (Verse 674). Before contemplating any action, consider five important factors that include cost, means, time, place, and action itself (Verse 675). Before embarking on any action, it pays to discern the outcome, obstacles, and benefits and reflect upon completion (Verse 676). To decide how best a job can be accomplished, it makes abundant sense to tap into the resources of an expert in that task(Verse 677). It would be ingenuous to use one task as a way and means of accomplishing another just like the way one elephant is used to trap another(Verse 678). Instead of showering rewards or favors upon friends, it is more prudent to act swiftly and befriend your enemies (Verse 679). Wrestling with their inner apprehensions, Men of minor realms often kowtow to the mightier rulers, accepting terms(Verse 680)

d. Forging friendships and Nurturing Family

There is a section in Thirukkural titled Friendship which implores that it should be hardwired into the administrative structure. A king may have to live and deal with destructive forces within and outside of his realm. As a matter of fact, this chapter on friendship raises hard-hitting questions like how should one choose friends, and how to gauge an enemy's character and size up their strength. It is given that destructive and evil forces cannot be completely obliterated and one has

to deal with them in the shrewdest way possible. Though Thirukkural doles out these nostrums for kings or rulers in a nation, it also holds true for a company or organization where people converge and work together towards a shared goal. Hence this chapter on friendship finds resonance with modern organizations even today

It is instructive to note that friendship in this context is not just about holding each other in good esteem but also about providing constructive almost bordering on candid and ethical advice if need be. In a true friendship, there must be a space for course correction. The couplet 861 in Thirukkural throws light on how to deal with foes and assess their strength to decide on a future course of action. The Thirukkural (*Shun hostility with the strong; let loose your enmity on the weak failing to do so*) implores the King to be mindful enough to assess the weakness and strengths of his foe. If the King displays the sharpness of mind and canniness to turn foes into allies, his acumen and political judgment will receive fulsome praise from the whole world. This couplet 874 describes how the world benefits if the king has the acuity to convert foes into friends. The couplet 882 exhorts a king to be careful of the enemies from within who have dangerous portents. Thirukkural also abounds in sage advices given to the king on how to deal with his own wife, women of questionable character, and why to abstain from gambling and drinking. Debauchery, gambling, and heavy bouts of drinking have the potential to mar any good relationships. Fostering and nurturing good relations is the hallmark of an efficient king or an administrator. Interestingly, there is a section in Thirukkural that offers penetrative insights into the remit of medicine for the rulers. The section calls upon kings to consume food in moderation, adhere to the basic discipline regarding foods, and understand one's limitations After all, health is a wealth and a healthy mind is embedded in a healthy body

In any organization, success hinges on one's ability to perceive and exploit an opening ahead and stonewall possible oppositions or crises that are so inevitable. More so, this holds so much significance for the ruler. It is only natural that a chapter on wisdom or what it is to act wisely finds a mention here. Chapter 43 is riddled with homilies and advice given about men of astuteness and wisdom. Couplet 429 implies that men of wisdom

have the preternatural tendency to see what is coming and will not fear a calamity to fall on them in the event of any crisis. The men of wisdom are prepared for any eventuality(427). For a leader, to be able to see the truth, no matter where it springs from reflects the hallmark of true wisdom. Wisdom represents an indestructible defense against any kind of obliteration. The couplet 421 fairly encapsulates the essence of wisdom. The couplet observed that wisdom staves off any potential woes and symbolizes a fortress of strong inner resources that can withstand the enemy's attack. In the next couplet 422, Thiruvalluvar calls wisdom the most restraining force that controls the mind from wandering aimlessly.

e. The fine art of administration

The over-arching question that begs an answer is “Who

is the wise administrator? This idea is discussed at some length in the chapters that follow and touches upon aspects like honor, pursuing perfection, eminence, genteelness, humility, and sharing whatever one has. The people with such identifiable traits are called '*Sanror*'. This adjective, referring to a pious gentleman is exemplified by a) Compassion for all lives b) sensitivity to shameful conduct c) social cooperation d) accommodative stance towards others and their frailties e) upholding of growth. In the remit of management or public administration, it is not a bit too much to expect such a person to live amidst us. Thirukkural makes an attempt to define what is meant by wisdom and it is worthwhile revisiting the ten couplets of Chapter 43

421	Wisdom is the bulwark against suffering. It can be an impregnable fortress and indestructible for the enemies
422	It is truly the mark of wisdom to focus on what is good and sensible rather than letting the mind meander aimlessly
423	The true hallmark of wisdom is to discern the truth, no matter whichsoever source it may spring from
424	Wisdom is to express even the most profound of thoughts in the simplest terms but still comprehend the subtleties of what others has to say
425	Wisdom lies in embracing the world like it is and not being despaired or overjoyed
426	Wisdom lies in conforming to those the world conforms to
427	The men of wisdom know what is around the corner. Unwise are those who fail to see what is coming
428	Men of wisdom fear what ought to be feared. It is reckless not to fear that out to be feared
429	Men who are discerning are better poised to face any eventuality than be blighted by them
430	The wise have everything and the unwise have nothing in spite of all the worldly riches they may possess

Conclusion

To put it aptly, Thirukkural not only elucidates the concept of leadership but also stresses that leaders are not only born but can also be made. This concept is consistent with trait theory, behavior theory, social cognitive theory, and ethical theory of leadership of current times as well. The efficiency of the organization, be it at the micro level or country at the supra level hinges largely on how well the resources are harnessed, optimized, and utilized. The efficiency of human resources is also determined by the quality of leadership. Erudite scholars have studied the varied nuances of

leadership over a period of time and different strands of thoughts on leadership have emerged. Thirukkural represents a huge reservoir of wisdom in management and leadership. The leadership qualities recognized by Thirukkural cover the whole arc- relentlessness, courage, intelligence, generousness, ardor, zeal (Verse 382) swiftness, valor, conclusiveness, and education(Verse 383) delight in ethical behavior (Verse 384) benevolence and fair words (Verse 387) fair-mindedness, equitableness, disciplinarian (Verse 388) and tolerance (Verse 389). Thirukkural also places emphasis on the behavior of leaders such as

ethical conduct and shunning unscrupulous behavior (reflects concern for people)(Verse, 386) rewarding and providing motivational talks(people-driven) (Verse 386)safeguarding the interests of the followers (Verse,388), rewarding, nice-talk (people-oriented) (Verse -387), protecting the followers (Verse, 388), munificence, effective administration, concern for the welfare of the people(Verse, 390). The couplets referenced here reflect the leader's concern for the people. Thirukkural is also consistent with the ethical theory of leadership.

As a matter of fact, Thirukkural equates leadership behavior with ethical behavior. Thirukkural acknowledges the fact that a leader is just only one cause of the effectiveness of leadership and there are four other factors that enable robust leadership. They among other things include rewards, an able administration, charity, and protecting the welfare of the people. Thus, Thirukkural advocates the tenets of the social cognitive theory of leadership too.

Leadership is not a position per se. It is the onerous responsibility of steering the organization towards accomplishing the goal. A leader has to do the right things and make others follow the suit. The leader has to rise up and act decisively in the face of difficult circumstances and take hard decisions. A leader should also have the moral fiber and the physical courage to handle unforeseen troubles. In the days of yore, the kings proved their moxie on the battlefield face-to-face. But today, in the corporate sweepstakes, it is a battle of minds and wits to make all those crucial decisions. A leader will also have to be solicitous and considerate towards their subordinates. Leaders should handle all work-related concerns and issues of their employees with promptitude and tactfulness. A leader should be sufficiently generous while parceling out compensations and be accommodative while granting remissions. A leader should possess the innate sense and power to

motivate others at critical junctures and motivate himself through positive affirmations. A leader should also be discerningly alert. Mental acuity and physical strength will help plug many organizational loopholes.

The realm of economy, society, science, and technology has undergone profound changes in the last two millennia and reshaped the contours of the world. For instance, monarchies in many countries have given way to democracies. Theocracies have ceded ground to the secular government. The social mores of society have changed irreversibly. People have come to abhor the discrimination rooted in caste, race, religion, language, sex, and national origin. Science and technology have been pushing new frontiers and the major economies are converging like never before. In spite of all such far-reaching changes engulfing the world in the last two millennia, Thiruvalluvar's ideas on leadership remain enduring and relevant even today. Thiruvalluvar's nostrums on leadership bear testimony to his timeless genius, ageless wisdom, and universal relevance.

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