

Resolving Management Glitches by Thiruvalluvar Tactics

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ABSTRACT: This paper explains the dimension of business ethics from ancient Indian times and methods to solve the business problems by applying the concepts from Thirukkural. The Thirukkural is a well-known treatise on ethics which was written by Thiruvalluvar in the second century BC. It is considered to be the first work which covers ethics at all departments in Indian (Tamil) literature. In presenting the business ethics from the Thirukkural, the authors employed hermeneutics, a qualitative methodology which is the interpretation of ancient or classical literatures. The findings reveal that Thirukkural advocates a consciousness and a spirit-centered approach to the subject of business ethics based on eternal values and moral principles that should govern the conduct of business leaders. The prospect of highlighting the Thirukkural in other areas like leadership can be considered for the near future.

Keywords: Indian ethics, business ethics, leadership, ancient wisdom, Thirukkural, Tamil literature.

1 Introduction

Thirukkural also known as the kural, is a classic of couplets or Kural's (1330 rhyming Tamil couplets) or aphorisms. It was authored by Thiruvalluvar, a poet who is said to have lived anytime between 2nd century BC and 5th century AD. Although the exact period of its composition is still disputed, scholars agree that it was produced in the late Tamil Sangam period. The Thirukkural expounds on various aspects of life and is one of the most important works in the Tamil language. This is reflected in some of the other names by which the text is known as Tamil marai (Tamil Vedas), poyyamozhi (words that never fail), and Daivanool (divine text).

SECTIONS

Thirukkural is structured into 133 chapters, each containing 10 couplets, thus a total of 1330 couplets. The 133 chapters are grouped into three sections

- Righteousness
- Wealth and
- Joy

OTHER NAMES

Thirukkural is praised with many names such as

- Uttaravedam - the post-Veda (uttara = later / post, veda = Veda)
- Poyyamozhi - Statements devoid of untruth
- Vayuraivazhthu - truthful utterances
- Deyvanool - the divine book
- Pothumarai - the common-man's Veda
- Muppai - threefold path
- Tamil marai - Tamil Veda

BUSINESS ETHICS

With globalization and the growth of world economy, business organizations are becoming more dominant with less of governmental control. Therefore, a greater need for ethical practices arises. The leaders in organizations are facing the problem of ethics, on the choice between good or bad, and do's or don'ts in making decisions. A business leader is just one whose behavior is considered to reflect all

those ethical qualities. The principle objective of ethics has always been to produce morally upright individual leaders with good and acceptable behavior. In business organization and also in the political context, ethics involve the application of moral principles of the conduct in governance or good governance. The principles of ethics should be an integral part of the organization for good governance and societal welfare. Business organizations are also increasingly concerned with ethical conduct of the duties and responsibilities, their relationship with the shareholders of the company and stakeholders' groups with the ultimate aim to provide value to shareholders and stakeholders. Business ethics are a part of general ethics. Ethical business values are part of the bigger topic of business values in general. Business ethics as a field of study examine the ethical principles and moral or ethical problems that arise in a business environment. Business ethics are a set of moral principles for arriving at a decision within the values of the organization. It covers to all aspects of business conduct and management functions, such as accounting, finance, purchasing, operation, marketing and human resources which are relevant to the conduct of business organizations as a whole. Business ethics are becoming increasingly necessary because, if unchecked due to lack of awareness, business can go unethical as there are plenty of evidences today on unethical business practices. Therefore, increasing number of organizations are trying to design and implement business ethics programs to address the legal, ethical, social responsibility and environmental issues they face. Samson and Daft argue that by addressing these issues in a systematic way, organizations can improve their own business performances, expand opportunities for growth, and contribute to the development of social capital in their countries and realize specific business benefits, such as

- Enhanced reputations and goodwill
- Reduced risks and costs
- Protection from their own employees and agents
- Stronger competitive positions
- Expanded access to capital, credit and foreign investment

- Increased profits
- Sustained long-term growth
- International respect for enterprises and emerging markets.

BUSINESS ETHICS FROM THE THIRUKKURAL

Ancient literature is always a source of wisdom. It inspires those who are open to it all the time and it is never exhausted by any one generation of interpreters, no one has said the last word on it. Thirukkural is an example of one such ancient literature. The Thirukkural is pregnant with lessons in several fields related to wealth, economics, politics, duty, pleasure, etc., besides ethics. For some Indians it may look strange that an ancient literature like the Thirukkural can say some things about business ethics in the modern context of leadership. The leaders are not even aware of their own tradition as most of them received western-based education, for example, from the authors' experience, not many Indians in Malaysia have a good knowledge of the ancient texts, such as the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Thirukkural although many have come across or heard about these texts. These ethical texts do not offer any attractive suggestions to those who are involved or interested in the process of quick acquisition of wealth. After all, wisdom itself cannot be obtained by academic degrees alone, but rather, by practicing a patient and meaningful way of living. Even to appreciate this wisdom literature, one needs a certain level of maturity, which comes gradually as life experiences unfold themselves. But it is the task of the elders in every generation to transmit these values in an intelligible and easily accessible manner to the younger generation. The strength or maturity of a tradition depends on the continuity of such wisdom pointers at all times. Sometimes the ancient values of a particular culture may not appear to influence the current thinking of people, yet simultaneously they never are completely eroded. Therefore, it is imperative that the principles of ethics from ancient text like the Thirukkural need to be reinforced to the Indian business leaders to be aware of code of business and to deal effectively with ethical dilemmas in making their daily business decision. This might look like a sermon but the lessons are likely to have a deep impact on business leadership and on those in the leadership position.

ETHICS IS THE ROAD TO WEALTH AND GOODWILL

The Thirukkural considers ethics as a road to wealth and goodwill (*Kural 31* –Thiruvalluvar highlighted *Cirappueenumcelvamumeenumarattinuunkucakkame vanouyirkku*). There is nothing in this world except ethics which would bring both reputation and wealth together; therefore, ethical principle in business is essential. The implication is not merely earthly but heavenly fulfillment as well. In business, the leaders must work hard and make it successful by not diverting their effort and concentration. The leaders must be honest, truthful, abide by the law and respect others and their properties. They should also live harmoniously with others to have a long-lasting business. In their business, leaders are required to treat others information, drawings and properties and confidential agreements with total respect and care and protection. They should not even attempt a small and simple cheat and fraud in their business, as this will destroy their big reputation and huge wealth. They must also not attempt to steal others products, or properties, or patent rights or commit any illegality and fraud in your business operations. They must also honor all their commitments and confidential agreements in their business. The Thirukkural also highlights the importance of transparency and truthfulness in all business transactions as it will bring respectable position in business. The business leaders are required not to do anything in your business which is of health hazard, environmental hazard, highly toxin, causing pollution problem or affecting the nature and harmony or likely to cause temporary or permanent problems to others.

ETHICAL LEADERSHIP BY EXAMPLE

Business leaders today are considered to be fortunate to obtain good education with many business leaders with at least a Bachelor's Degree or with Master's Degree or PhDs, but what is the use of that learning if they are not ethical in their undertaking, and that learning does not lead to the blessed feet of pure intelligence (*Kural 2* – *karratanalaapayanekol; valarivannarraltolaar rennin*). The purpose of education is to develop the intellect to distinguish between what is right and

what is wrong and cautioned by one's own conscience. A leader needs to be well behaved and set good examples for their followers. The Thirukkural clearly highlighted that the leader can be a highly qualified person. But any of leader's unethical practices will result in irreparable damage to their business. Therefore, they must do the right things first and continue to do the right things only. The leader's glamour and showoff in business will not serve any purpose, unless they gain the faith and confidence in the market as the reliable business. As a leader of reliable and reputed business, they must be always truthful, honest and follow ethics in all their business transaction. Even for millions of dollars of profits, they should not attempt in doing anything unethical and illegal in their business, as this will destroy the hard-built reputation of their business. It is known that customers will throng to the business with your established high reputation, product and service reliability in the market. Therefore, leading with sound principles of ethics is essential for every leader. These leaders will be seen to 'walk the talk' and also 'talk the walk'. It is often said that a man who is full of words, but not deeds is like a garden full of weeds. People will work 'with' leaders with ethical principles and not 'for' them. The leaders will be considered to be honest, trustworthy and have a very high level of integrity, and will deliver their promises to their people or subordinates. On principles of ethics, in Thirukkural, Thiruvalluvar guides not only the business leaders but also all humanity to live an ethical life and virtues. In the organizational context today, what was said by Thiruvalluvar for a king applies to business leaders in organizations. An organizational leader who is virtuous and acts according to the principles of ethics will not only bring good name and reputation but will also enrich one's wealth. Therefore, good business ethical practices provide leaders, employees with the guidance and information they need for effective, efficient and responsible choices and actions. The goodness of a leader's behavior itself is the root cause of all other goodness. This is clearly asserted by Thiruvalluvar as the only goodness of the leader is that of their goodness; all other goodness is not to be included among any goodness (*Kural 982* – *Gunanalamsaandroarnalanaypiranalamyennalathuvu llathoomandru*).

ETHICAL LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION

Thiruvalluvar had even mentioned about the need for leaders to communicate ethically. A leader should ascertain the capacity of the receiver before speaking to one as this is capable of bringing good results. While communicating, the leader should be clear about the effectiveness of the words used and also the ability of the receiver to understand. The choice of words must not be harsh even in disciplining others, as using harsh words instead of kind ones is like going in for raw fruits, when ripe ones are available (Kural 100 - *IniyaulavaakainnaathakooralKaniyiruppakkaaikavar nthattru*). When leaders know that kind words bring joy and happiness to their people, why should they resort to harsh words? (Kural 99 - *Insolinitheenralkaanpaanevankolovansolvalanguvath u*). Foul words will never come from lips of righteous men even by slip (Kural 139 - *OzhukkamudayavarkkuollaavetheeyaVazhukkiyumva ayaarsolal*).

TIME MANAGEMENT CONCEPTS

1. *A crow will conquer owl in broad daylight; the king that foes would crush, needs fitting time to fight.*

Meaning of the Quote: A crow will overcome an owl in the day time; so the king who would conquer his enemy must have (a suitable) time.

2. *The bond binds fortune fast is ordered effort made, Strictly observant still of favoring season's aid.*

Meaning of the Quote: Acting at the right season, is a cord that will immovably bind success (to a king).

3. *Can any work be hard in very fact, If men use fitting means in timely act?*

Meaning of the Quote: Is there anything difficult for him to do, who acts, with (the right) instruments at the right time?

4. *The pendant world's dominion may be won, in fitting time and place by action done.*

Meaning of the Quote: Though (a man) should meditate (the conquest of) the world, he may accomplish it if he acts in the right time, and at the right place.

5. *Who think the pendant world itself to subjugate, with mind unruffled for the fitting time must wait.*

Meaning of the Quote: They who thoughtfully consider and wait for the (right) time (for action),

may successfully meditate (the conquest of) the world.

6. *The men of mighty power their hidden energies repress, As fighting ram recoils to rush on foe with heavier stress.*

Meaning of the Quote: The self-restraint of the energetic (while waiting for a suitable opportunity), is like the drawing back of a fighting-ram in order to butt.

7. *The glorious once of wrath enkindled make no outward show, At once; they bide their time, while hidden fires within them glow.*

Meaning of the Quote: The wise will not immediately and hastily show out their anger; they will watch their time, and restrain it within.

8. *If foes' detested form they see, with patience let them bear; When fateful hour at last they spy- the head lies there.*

Meaning of the Quote: If one meets his enemy, let him show him all respect, until the time for his destruction is come; when that is come, his head will be easily brought low.

9. *When hardest gain of opportunity at last is won, with promptitude let hardest deed be done.*

Meaning of the Quote: If a rare opportunity occurs, while it lasts, let a man do that which is rarely to be accomplished (but for such an opportunity).

10. *As heron stands with folded wing, so wait in waiting hour; As heron snaps its prey, when fortune smiles, put forth your power.*

Meaning of the Quote: At the time when one should use self-control, let him restrain himself like a heron; and, let him like it, strike, when there is a favorable opportunity.

CONCLUSION

The above paper clearly shows that Thirukkural provide many thoughts related to the management concept. Except that it also provides so many necessary thoughts which require for both our personal and business life. So we should follow the traditional and most respectable epic THIRUKKURAL.

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