

ETHICS IN ADMINISTRATION IN “SILAPPATHIGARAM”: A CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES FROM CLASSICAL LITERATURE

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Abstract

This evaluative study was based on old and new literatures taken from east and west, a unique attempt made by the researcher. Contemporary management perspectives were analysed and revealed that the thoughts of similar kind were well found in very old Kapiyam literature of Tamil society in India. In Tamil Nadu, even in 2nd B.C it had a well-developed administration system whereas during the same period the other part of the world was nascent in their administrative capabilities. The researcher made a humble attempt to extract administrative thoughts written in a Tamil Kapiyam “Silappathigaram” a classical Tamil literary work dated back to 100-300 A.D. an epic written on Kannagi, a legendary Tamil woman who forms its central character. On some aspects, an attempt has been made to include a comparison with modern management thought. It is a qualitative work, done with scholarly attitude.

Introduction

Silappathigaram is a first and foremost classical literature of Tamil. It is very old literary work written during 2nd BC and during that time no such literature had been developed in any other Indian or Foreign language. The special features in the work are that it analyses the social setup, their governance, and lifestyle and maturity level. It elaborates on the self-actualization of a common woman to godhood. In highlighting the uniqueness of this epic, SubramaniaBharathi said

“நெஞ்சை அள்ளும் சிலப்பதிகாரம் என்றொரு
மணி ஆரம் படைத்ததமிழ்நாடு”

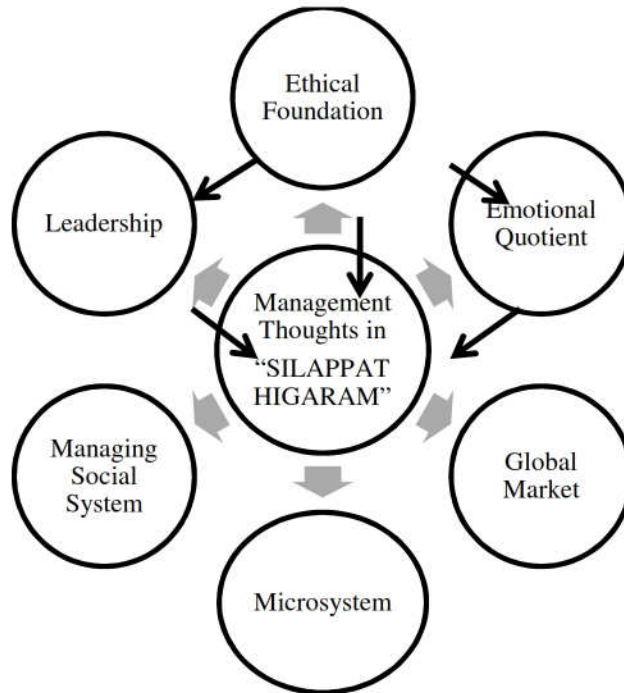
It is said that the Kapiyam is based on factual story that happened in Tamil Nadu. Though Silambu focuses on

“அரசியல் பிழைத்தோர்க்கு அறம் கூற்றுஆவதூஉம்
உரைசால் பத்தினியை உயர்ந்தோர் ஏத்தலும்
ஊழ்வினை உருத்து வந்து ஊட்டும் என்பதூஉம்”
என்று அறத்தையும், கற்பின் விளைபயனையும் போற்றினாலும்

It also indicates that even in those days religious tolerance was very much found. The co-existence of Jainism, Buddhism and Hinduism was there and they respected each other by recognizing their special features (After the death of Kovalan it is told that Manimegalai and Madhavi became saints of Buddhism).

Classification of Management Thought - An overview

In an attempt to understand the management thoughts embedded in the drama, the author for a meaning of discussion found that the thoughts could be classified into six pillars.



These six pillars of thoughts were found abundant in “Silapathigaram.” But, throughout the Kapiyam ethical issues were given with greater importance. Lots of emphasis was given on ethics and reinforcement of ethics as well as the dictates of destiny. It is understood that the ethical aspects was kept as the central pole for constructing the administrative system of a kingdom.

நண்ணும் இருவினையும் தண்ணுமின்கள்; நல் அறமே;
கண்ணகி தன் கோள்வன் காரணத்தால் - மண்ணில்
வளையாத செங்கோல் வளைந்ததே; பண்டை
விளைவாகி வந்த வினை.

The management thoughts should be viewed from broader perspectives. In those days management was applied by kings and rich people while executing significant

tasks for the benefit of the self and the society. But lessons from such thoughts might be applied with some alterations to suit the present circumstances, like what Obama had taken from the autobiography of Gandhiji.

Ethical Foundations of the Epic

The story of "Silappathigaram" was woven in ethical foundation and impermanency. According to ElangoAdigal, three things in earthly life were impermanent.

- The body is bound to wither away (யாக்கை நிலையாது)
- The wealth will disappear (செல்வம் நில்லாது)
- The youth hood will vanish (இளமை நில்லாது)

He chide and price Chera king for his indulgence in war and success.

“அறக்கள வேள்சி செய்யாது யாங்கணும் மறக்கள வேள்வி செய்வோய் ஆயினை”

(நடுகல்காதை 131-132)

The ethics were thought through school of ethics and social system namely

அறவோர் பள்ளியும், அறம் ஓங்கு படையும்
புறநிலைக் கோட்டத்துப் புண்ணியத்தானமும்
திறவோர் உரைக்கும் செயல் சிறந்து ஒருபால்

The Jain and Buddha school of thoughts were involved in improving the social ethics so that the saints who live in the state do charity by feeding poor people, offering help to destitute and much more social support activities were undertaken.

கரடி பாம்புறையும் கொடும் புற்றை தோண்டாது
ஓளி பொருந்திய கண்களையுடைய புலியும், மான்
இனத்தோடு பகை கொள்ளாது.எந்தவிலங்கும்
யாருக்கும் தீங்கு தராது செம்மையான செங்கோல்
காக்கும் பாண்டிநாடு என்றுஉரைக்கிறார்...

When the poet mentioned about Pandiya Nadu he interestingly explains that the people live happily in Pandiya Kingdom, in which part of this world you can find an act in which the Great King sacrifices his life for holding the flag of the truth high and subsequently the queen also leaves her physical body.

வழக்கு உரை காதையில்,
தாழ்ந்த குடையன்; தளர்ந்த செங்கோலன்
பொன்செய் கொல்லன் தன்சொல் கேட்ட
யானோ அரசன்? யானே கள்வன்
மன்பதைகாக்கும் தென்புலம் காவல்
என்முதல் பிழைத்தது; கெடுகென் ஆயுள் என
மன்னவன் மயங்கி வீழ்ந்தனளே தென்னவன்
கோப்பெரும் தேவி துலைந்தனள் நடுங்கி
கணவனைஇழந்தோர்க்கு காட்டுவது இல்அன்று
இணைஅடி தொழுது வீழ்ந்தனளே மடமொழி.

The modern management always analyse and research about loyalty issues among employees or workers and have ever thought about employer's loyalty but the above portion emphasizes on the vested truthfulness and loyalty of the emperor towards his citizens (i.e.) in today's context one should relate to the employer's loyalty towards the employees too.

The literature explains the freedom and rights enjoyed by the citizens of Pandiya kingdom. In organizations, a system called open door policy in which any employee can knock the doors of HR Head, or CEO's office to express his issues and this open door policy is not new to Tamil Soil which was practiced by Pandiya Kingdom that allowed Kannagi to straight away approach the King Pandia to tell the injustice. Only later the ministers come to know the event and death of their king and queen. It also indicates the empowerment of common citizen like today's employees' empowerment.

This way more and more of illustrations can be drawn to strongly represent the ethics in governance and ethical behaviors of people which becomes the inseparable part of this great epic.

F.W. Taylor, Father of Scientific Management (1856-1915) conducted many studies to confirm that group action, functional specialization, cooperation and hard work for maximum output. The practice of functional specialization was imbibed in many places by ElangoAdigal. From societal perspective, works have been undertaken by different groups of people from generation to generation that has created the expertise in the field the individual is assigned to work. Apprenticeship was also in practice that has given an edge to the practice of functional specialization across the society.

மறைநா ஓசை அல்லது யாவதும்
மணிநா ஓசை கேட்டதும் இலனே...

Emotional Quotient

Emotional decisions play havoc in the life of the hero of "Silappathigaram", the Kovalan. Kovalan was known for the irresponsible impulse act. Few of those weremeeting with Madhavi and deserting Kannagi in an irresponsible and impulsiveact,

“விடுதல் அறியா விருப்பினன் ஆயினன்
வடுநீங்கு சிறப்பின்தன் மனை அகம் மறந்தனன்”

(அறங்கேற்று காதை - 174 - 175)

Then again he developed misunderstanding with Madhavi that reveals his sensitivity (“மாயப்பொய் பலகூட்டும் மாயத்தாள் பாடினால் மாதவி”). The song of Madhavi created a situation of misunderstanding. Reunion with Kannagi again was an emotionally charged event. He also regrets for the emotional imbalance in his character and which causes enormous loss of wealth to him. Through these episodes it is explained

that how an emotionally bound decisions of an individual affect the family, his business and also the society and social systems of a nation.

தன் நிலை உணர்ந்த கோவலன்
 “சலம்புணர் கொள்கைச் சலதியோடு ஆடிக்
 குலம் தரு வான்பொருள் குன்றும் தொலைத்த
 இலம்பாடு நாணுந்தரும் எனக்கு என்ன”
 என்று உறைக்கிறான்.

(கனாத்திரம் உரைத்த காதை 67-71)

Global Market

ElangoAdigal portrays the market place of Puhar and Madurai, the capitals of Chola and Pandya kingdoms respectively. He narrates the different segments of markets and a variety of products and artisans. The micro system of production was highly refined and skill based.

The mountains of wealth exhibited everywhere referred as (கோடிபலஅடுக்கிய கொழுநிதிக் குப்பை) and also the presence of foreign trades in such markets reveal the global linkages those markets had in those days.

In the chapter thirty, in Kovalan's introduction, it is given that capital asset and liquid asset were the two assets, the traders handle. Moreover a portion of the liquid assets used to be kept for donations, were to be used for the development of the society and religious needs.

Microsystem

At micro level in creating the temporary auditorium for the dance performance of Madurai, using scales and measurements were in practice. It is said

“அணு எட்டு கொண்டது தேர்த்துகள்
 தேர்த்துகள் எட்டு கொண்டது இம்மி
 இம்மி எட்டு கொண்டது எள்ளு
 எள்ளுஎட்டு கொண்டது நெல்
 நெல்லு எட்டு கொண்டது பெருவிரல்” என்பார் ஆன்றோர்.

So, in construction of Stage, ElangoAdigal indicated upon the measurements by stating that “உழுகு பெருவிரல் அளவு ஒரு கோல்” என கொண்டு அரங்கமானது 7 கோல் அகலமும், 8 கோல் நீளமும் உடையது என்று குறிப்பிட்டார்.

In one more place to eradicate evil activities of people ElangoAdigal imagines about four different platforms to remedy social evils (திருடாதே? பொய் சொல்லாதே! புறங்கூறாதே! பிறர் மனைவியை விரும்பாதே!). Further to this he said that the severe punishments follow if any of the above sins are committed by the people of the country. This was well explained in இந்திரவிழா ஊர் எடுத்த காதை.

The five elements that make the ideal social system are

- A system that corrects theft and robbery (வெள்ளிடை மன்றம்)
- A system free from people with physical disabilities (இலஞ்சி மன்றம்)
- A system that provides remedy for disease and sickness (நெடும்சல் நின்றமன்றம்)
- A system that identifies the people with dishonesty and misconduct (பூதம் நிற்கும் பூதசதுக்கம்)
- A system that reveals the misrule of the king to the people (பாவை மன்றம்)

Any social system should address itself to the above five areas, which will enhance human welfare and happiness.

Leadership

The three major lessons of leadership are

- Those who fail to follow the righteous path are bound to be punished (அரசியல் பிழைத்தோர்க்கு அறங்கூற்றாவதும்)
- The Pandiya King who put Kovalan to death without proper investigation lost his life on realizing the mistake of his judgment.
- Those who lead have the responsibility to protect and safeguard the interests of their fellowmen.
- Fight for the right cause (சேரன் செங்குட்டுவனின் வீரமிகு போர்)

Conclusion

ElangoAdigal gave an eternal and universal message to the humanity in general and leaders in social, political and corporate systems in particular that the ethical behavior, righteous cause and fighting for the righteous cause with what may come attitude might help the governance (Kingdom) to bring happiness and peaceful environment to life.

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