

## A Historical study on Thirukural with special reference to Economic and Management concepts, issues and challenges

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### Key Words:

**Sangam Literature, Thiruvalluvar and his philosophy, Palm Leaf Manuscript, Economic and management in Thirukural.**

### Introduction:

**Thiruvalluvar's Thirukural** has today come to be documented as a classic in the literature of the entire world. In Tamil "**Thiru**" means "**holy**" or "**sacred**," and "**Kural**" means a short poem. Thirukural is in a couplet form and each Kural is composed of 7 words spread across 2 lines (4 & 3 words). In fact, it is the shortest form of poetry in the Tamil language.

Thirukkural was written by Thiruvalluvar, who is believed to have born years before Jesus Christ. The Tamil Calendar is dated from that period and referred as Thiruvalluvar Aandu (Year). We find Thiruvalluvar as a moral philosopher, political scientist and master of public administration in the first two parts of Thirukkural. We find him to be a creative artist in the third part, depicting the fascinating aspects of lovers. Thirukkural's immortality and universality are unquestionable. Its ethics and values are applicable to all religions, countries and time. It has been translated in over 60 languages of the world. This paper attempts to throw light on these fundamental concepts and bring the Indian thought on the relationship among supply, demand and price, Wealth, Education, HRM, Finance from Thirukkural which is more than 2000 years old

but yet relevant even to this day! It also proposes four basic economic laws from Thirukkural.

### Sangam Literature:

Thirukural is a discourse on the art of living, a set of healthy principles of the guidance's for the variety of segments of the civilization for a pleasant-sounding combined living. Thirukural belonged to the epoch of Sangam literature. Tamil Sangam was a 'court of the congregation of poets held under the patronage of a King. The poems belonging to the Sangam literature were composed by Tamil poets, both men and women, from various professions and classes of society. This literature creates by these assemblies was accumulated in the period straddling over 600 AD.

### Thirukkural:

Thirukural, the treasures of knowledge, wisdom, and beauty which are enclosed in her literature, philosophy, art, and synchronized life are too valued to be lost. Mankind needs to use them, if he/she is to be a cultured person of modern society. In fact, it is the shortest form of poetry in the Tamil language. The work on knowledge is separated into three major chapters - those that speak about Virtue, **Wealth** and **Love**. The first part deals with Aram (Virtue), the moral value of human life. It has 38 chapters. The second part is on Porul (Wealth), the socio economic values of men in a civilized society. It has 70 chapters. The third part is on Kamam or Inbam

(Love), the psychological values of life. It has 25 chapters. Each chapter in this book elucidates a different aspect of human virtue or human fault. *Thirukkural* is a *cir* formed by combining the two words *Thiru* and *Kural*, i.e. *Thiru* + *Kural* = *Thirukkural*.

**Thiruvalluvar and His Philosophy:**



There is certain likeness between Valluvar's thought and those of **Buddha, Mahaveera, Plato, Confucius, Kautalya** and **Vatsayna**, these are only justifiable absorptions by a subsequent thinker of ideas, of which he approves from among those that have preceded him and are available to him, or natural similarities in the working of great minds. But there are also basic differences and substantial originality of thought and expression for ahead of his times, particularly in respect of his treatment of Godliness, casteless society, importance of agriculture, taxation with peoples' consent and enabling of physical love.

That is the reason why Thiruvalluvar's *Thirukural* has continued to attract the best minds of the world down the ages. This Holy Book is indicated in some of the other names by which the text is known: **Tamil marai** (Tamil Veda); **Poyya mozhi** (word that does not lie); and **Teyva nool** (divine book), '**Muppal** (Three fold path)', **Pothu Marai** (the common Veda or Creed) etc.

**Palm Leaf Manuscript:**



Palm leaf is the paper of ancient world. Manuscripts made out of dried palm leaves were served as the paper of the ancient world in parts of Asia as far back as the fifteenth century BC. The significance of this is that the greatness of a work is realized on the basis of not the weight of its manuscript (written on Palm leaves) but the divine qualities of the work which forced the plank to stay afloat. It is said that to the amazement of the critics, the Sangam Plank shrunk itself in size to hold only the *Kural* manuscript and in the process throwing out the rest.

**Economics and Management in Thirukural:**

Western world has published a lot on history of economics...how it all started with Adam Smith, went on with Ricardo to age of John Maynard Keynes , Milton Freidman and presently Paul Krugman. We Indians also have been a good follower of Lord Macaulay's system of education and rarely look into what has happened to India before that period. 1800 years earlier (than Adam Smith) a bearded man from Mylapore (in Chennai) has spoken about the basic tenets of life which includes economics. He dedicated a whole set of 700 two-liners talking about wealth in simple ways.

All economic problems take their reason to the basic economic variables namely demand and supply of products/services. Thus the first laws in

modern economics become the Law of Demand and the Law of Supply along with the Say's Law. Conceptual clarity is essential for solving economy's problems.

This focuses on

1. Economics and political ideas in Thirukural (Good Governance)
2. Cost Benefit Analysis
3. Employment
4. Education
5. Rules of Law
6. Management Techniques and Decision Making Process
7. Prosperity of a country
8. Removal of poverty
9. Treatise on Wealth
10. Agriculture
11. Water Management

**Economics and Political Ideas (Good Governance):**

The economic as well as political ideas of Thiruvalluvar are found in Part II of Thirukkural, which is on Wealth (*Porul*). An attempt is made to understand and appreciate Thiruvalluvar's socio-economic and political ideas under fifteen topics and discover their relevance and application to our time.

• **He is a true king who sticks to virtue,**

**Removes evils, and is spotless in valour.**

"A king is one who possesses the following six things: an army, a people, wealth, ministers, friends and a fortress; he never fails in the following four qualities: fearlessness, liberty, wisdom and energy; he is a man of modesty and virtues, and refrains from all vices"

This section is a lesson on **good governance**. There are three sources of income to the king: unclaimed wealth, taxes which subjects pay, and customs collection from foreigners. In Valuvar's

world, there were three channels of equitable distribution of wealth: Defence; Public works and Social service. These three cover the legitimate public expenditure for distribution.

**Cost Benefit Analysis:**

Cost Benefit Analysis is a systematic process for calculating and comparing benefits and costs of a project, decision or government policy. This concept is discussed by Thiruvalluvar in his *Versa* 478

– **No harm if income is narrow if outgoing are not broad.**

It is an excellent principle of public finance and financial administration: "*If the revenue of the State are limited, the king should keep the expenditure within bounds*". Our failure in economic development in India reflects our inefficient planning, administration and implementation at different levels.

**Employment:**

Employment is a contract between two parties, one being the employer and the other being the employee. The concept of employment is discussed in *versa* 513

– **Loyalty, wisdom, a clear head and contentment**  
– **These four well-possessed are the right qualification.**

Valluvar speaks of right man for right job. Those who are employed should have: pleasing nature to do good; ability to enlarge the resources, increase wealth and prevent calamities. They must be men of wisdom and endurance; their conduct must be examined daily by the king, because their conduct influences the world "if they act crookedly, the world will also act crookedly.

**Education:**

He discuss the importance of education in Chapter-40 & Chapter- 43

– **Learn well what should be learnt, and then Live your learning**

Here Thiruvalluvar emphasized that Let a man learn thoroughly whatever he may learn, and let his conduct be worthy of his learning.

- **Those who have wisdom have all Fools with all have nothing.**

Those who possess wisdom possess everything; those who do not have wisdom, whatever they may possess, have nothing.

#### Rules of Law:

In this he explains as to how the king should rule the country. In (559)

- **Where a king is unjust Rains are withheld.**

Valluvar emphasized the Rule of Law. *“When there is rain, the world enjoys prosperity; when the king rules with justice, his subjects prosper”*

In other words *“ As is the world without rain, so is the country with unjust government”*. If the king and his rule ensure “just government”, his kingdom will surely be blessed with seasonal rains and rich harvest, which never fail .

#### Management Technique and Decision Making Process:

Decision making process is one of the important functions of the entrepreneur. In Chapter-68

- **The end of deliberation is decision: To decide and dawdle is bad**

After considerable thought, planning and analysis, one arrives at a decision. Once a decision is taken, any hesitation or delay is suicidal.

#### Prosperity of a Country:

If a country wants to attain prosperity, three factors play a important role land, capital and labour. This concept was explained by Thiruvalluvar in Chapter 74

- **Tireless farmers, learned men and honest traders**

#### Constitute a country.

Three factors are indispensable: farmers (Land), merchants (Capital) and virtuous people (Labour). Valluvar’s economic thought includes what later economic thinkers like Adam Smith (1776) and Alfred Marshal (1880) proposed as factors of production – Land, Labour, Capital and Organization.

#### Removal of Poverty:

One of the important hindrance of an economy is poverty. Thiruvalluvar discussed this in Chapter 74 & Chapter 105.

- **An ideal land is free of hunger Pestilence and war.**

Valluvar also speaks of the vital need of **freedom from hunger and disease** (“Garibi Hatao”), and **from foreign invasions**. A prosperous nation is one in which there is plentiful harvest, industrial productivity with agricultural inputs, and consequent abundance of production and wealth.

- **There is nothing like poverty But poverty.**

The evils of poverty are personified in kuralas as a sinner and a demon. When the demon takes possession of a person, the latter loses all joy in life. *“Poverty is cruel; it afflicts people; “one may sleep in the midst of fire; but by no means in the midst of poverty”*.

- **The misery of poverty attracts and includes Various miseries.**

We are living in a very challenging environment. 20% of People enjoying 80% of income and vice versa. Besides the critical global problem of poverty, the demographic disequilibrium is another challenge to be faced now.

#### Wealth:

In Chapter 76 he discussed the concept of wealth

- **There is nothing like wealth To make the worthless worthy**

This chapter is a treatise on wealth, which reminds us of Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nation." According to Valluvar wealth is productive of the joys of this world. "*Wealth makes people important*".

*Wealth acquired with proper means will yield virtues and happiness; All despise the poor, but all praise the rich; All honor the poor man when he become rich; Wealth like taxes belong to the government; There is no sharper weapon than wealth to destroy the arrogance of one's enemies.*

– **The hoarder deluded that wealth was all  
Haunts it as a ghost when dead.**

*"He who hoards wealth and does not enjoy it or utilize it to benefit others, is as good as dead and his wealth is a waste".*

**Agriculture:**

One of the important occupations of India is Agriculture. At present 52% of people in India is depending on agriculture sector.

– **Ploughmen are the earth's axle-pin;  
They carry the entire world**

Valluvar says that the **world depends on agriculture**. "*Though laborious, agriculture is the best form of craft that sustains all on earth and is the worthiest of crafts. Farmers are the lynchpin of the world; they alone are independent citizens, others are dependent on them.*

**Water Management:**

**Water management** is the activity of planning, developing, distributing and managing the optimum use of water resources. In an ideal world, water management planning has regard to all the competing demands for water and seeks to allocate water on an equitable basis to satisfy all uses and demands. This is rarely possible in practice. Valluvar explained this in Chapter 104.

– **Manure more than plough, and after weeding  
Guard more than water**

" *Valluvar has emphasized the importance of agriculture and its primacy over all other occupations.* One can also find in the Kurals the elements of "Green Revolution" except high yielding variety of seeds: extent of ploughing, manure and fertilizers, water-management, weeding at the right time, and protection against pests and diseases.

**Conclusion:**

From the above study, it can be appreciated that Thirukkural is one of the finest and fantastic piece of poetical literature ever written. "Thirukkural has been acclaimed as one of the most precious jewels in world literature. The lofty ideals enshrined in Thirukkural transcend the barriers of race, creed, country and time. It carries with it the comprehensive philosophy of life for all ages. It covers almost every aspect of life in short poems. This literary marvel written by Sage Thiruvalluvar containing of 1330 couplets is noted for its brevity, rich meaning, breadth of vision and choice of diction, all at once noble and elevating.

Erudite contemporary Poets and the great Kings of those days acknowledged the literary greatness of this masterpiece imparting Self- Development Skills, Communication and Public Speaking Skills, Family Management and Parenting Skills, Right Attitudes towards Work, Wealth, Friends and Enemies, Managerial Skills and Good Governance and the skills to make one an ethical and reputed person.

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