

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



**Dr. C. SWAMINATHAN**

Former Vice Chancellor of Bharathiar University,  
Coimbatore; Periyar University, Salem, Tamil Nadu, India

### 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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, Subramania Bharathi said

“கீழை-ஈ ஸ்ரீமதே காவியம் உருவாகி  
நீயே காவியம் உருவாகி”

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

Though Silambu focuses on

“ஸ்ரீமதே காவியம் உருவாகி ஸ்ரீமதே காவியம் உருவாகி”

அவ்வாறு காவியம் உருவாகி ஸ்ரீமதே காவியம் உருவாகி”

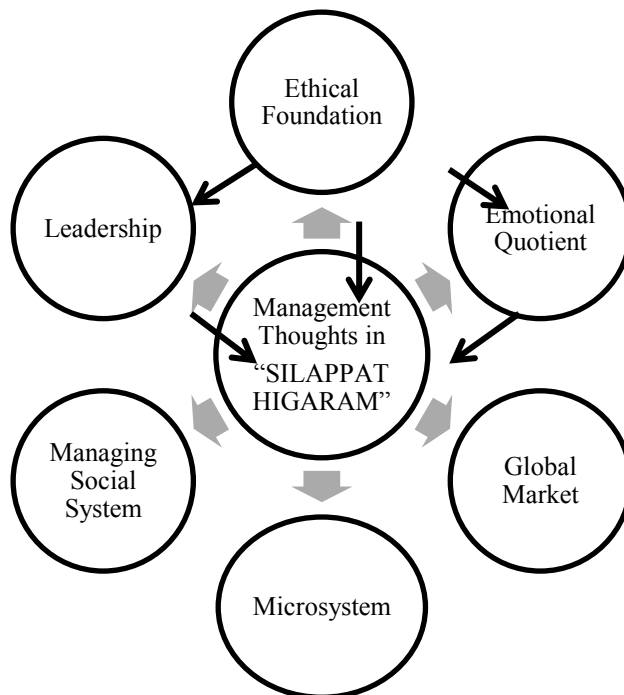
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It also indicates that even in those days religious tolerance was very much found. The co-existence of Jainism, Buddhism and Hinduism was there and they respected each other by recognizing their special features (After the death of Kovalan it is told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

இதழ்முதல் பதிவுகளைத் தீர்மானிப்பதற்கு; இதை உயர்ந்த;  
 எதிர்வினை இதை «எதிர்வினைகளை எதிர்வினைகளை - நினைவாக  
 இதைத் தீர்மானிப்பதற்கு இதைத் தீர்மானிப்பதற்கு; இதைத்  
 இதைத் தீர்மானிப்பதற்கு இதைத் தீர்மானிப்பதற்கு.

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 (òĕèĕ-è ĭa-òòĕĕ||)
- The wealth will disappear (ªêôĕõĕĕ ĭaôĕôĕĕ||)
- The youth hood will vanish (þ÷-ñ ĭaôĕôĕĕ||)

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

"Üðèçè÷ «õ÷çêà °éòçò£¶ ò£éçèµñç ñøèçè÷ «õ÷çõà °éòç«õ£òç Ýòà¬ù"  
 (ĩ'èòçè£¬î 131-132)

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

ሆኖ(ወጪዎች ስታገኙ)ና፣ ሆኖኛ ልዩኛ ስላገኙ  
 'ወጪዎች' (ገንዘብ) ስላገኙ 'ገንዘብ' ስላገኙ  
 ሆኖ(ወጪዎች ስታገኙ)ና፣ ሆኖኛ ልዩኛ ስላገኙ

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.

[illegible]

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.

[illegible]



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

[illegible]

## 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 ((«è£@ðòÛ´è¸èàò °è£jiaè¸ °ð¸-ð))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

[illegible]

So, in construction of Stage, ElangoAdigal indicated upon the measurements by stating that “àð° ð¼ðáóðž Ü÷¾ á¼ «èðž” àù ºèíç´ Üöéçèñù¶ 7 «èðž Üëòðñç, 8 «èðž ¶ | ÷ºñç à-ìò¶ àùçÁ °øaðçðàìçìóç.

In one more place to eradicate evil activities of people ElangoAdigal imagines about four different platforms to remedy social evils (ṁā'āḥēṁ? °ōḥòḡ °ēḥòḡōḥē!°ṁéḡĀḥē!°ḍāḣòḡ ṅ-ùḍā-ò ḍā'āḡḍḥē!). 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 Ṗīḡāóḍāōḥ áóḡ ā'ṙḡ èḥ-ṙ.

The five elements that make the ideal social system are

- A system that corrects theft and robbery (ṛōḍḍaḥ nūḥḥoḥ)

- A system free from people with physical disabilities (பொதுமக்கள் இல்லாதது)
- A system that provides remedy for disease and sickness (ரீதியான மருத்துவம்)
- A system that identifies the people with dishonesty and misconduct (இதழ்வுகூர்ந்தவர்களை அடையாளம் காணும்)
- A system that reveals the misrule of the king to the people (இளவரசரின் தவறான நடவடிக்கைகளை வெளியிடும்)

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 (பொதுமக்கள் இல்லாதது)
- 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 (சரியான காரணத்திற்காகப் போராடு)

## Conclusion

Elango Adigal 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.

## References

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