Preamble

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Leadership as Propounded in *Tirukkural* and *The Mahabharata*

Introduction: Objectives of the Study

Management is the youngest of the pursuits in humanities; its current concern is leadership quite distinct from just managing. This topic was chosen, prompted by the recent spate of titles on leadership. This thesis - 'Leadership as propounded in *Tirukkural* and *The Mahabharata*' - offers the study of leadership a mentoring package from ancient Indian wisdom.

The current trend is to evaluate CEOs, not as managers, but as leaders. Hence corporate literature churns out, since 2000 AD, more titles on Leadership than on Management. The paradigm shift, from manager to the leader, is in tune with the times, when educated employees wish to be rather led than managed. Modern corporate writers consider leadership the *sine qua non* for success.

There is a call to reinterpret ancient texts under didactics, biography, philosophy, and even war strategy. This thesis seeks to trace leadership tenets in the 2100-year-old Tamil didactic work *Tirukkural* and the much older epic, *The Mahabharata*. *Tirukkural* is normative and *The Mahabharata* is normative and illustrative. The norms deduced from them are grouped and analysed for adoption and inculcation in curriculum and the society.

Considering these factors this thesis seeks to establish that (i) the ancient, normative literary works lay emphasis on a value system for men, facilitating leadership evolution, could serve as universal resource books for students of any discipline, especially those of the management, and, (ii) the ancient Indian texts *Tirukkural* and *The Mahabharata*, as expositions of the intrinsic values of leadership, could serve as universal pedagogic sources for leaders and leader aspirants, to draw guidance and inspiration.
Basic Reference Texts for the Primary Sources

The following are the basic reference texts for the primary sources – *Tirukkural*, *The Mahabharata* and within that the *Bhagavad Gita*:

1. For reference to the Tamil text of *Tirukkural*
   *Tirukkural*: Satguru Sivaya Subramuniaswamy, New Delhi, Abhinav Publications, 2000

2. To get at the exact meaning of some Tamil words, as in vogue during the poet’s times, the reference book is
   *The Concordance of Tirukkural*  
   By N. Subrahmanian and R. Rajalakshmi  
   Ennes Publications, Madurai, 1984

3. For reference to the text of the *The Mahabharata*

3. For reference to the text of the *Bhagavad Gita* within *The Mahabharata*
   the consulted work is Jack Hawley’s English translation from Sanskrit
   *The Bhagavad Gita, A Walkthrough for Westerners - A Guidebook for the 21st Century Mind*  
   Chennai, East West Books, 2001

The researcher found reputed English versions of *Tirukkural* far from the poet’s intent. Most translators do not agree even on the meaning of some chapter headings. A few have rendered word for word translation, sometimes getting the word wrong; a few others, tempted to employ laboured rhymes, tagged their own words to the original. Hence the researcher, a translator himself, rendered the couplets in English, pinpointing each edict of the ethicist as a directive to leaders and leader aspirants.
A Note on Documentation

* *Tirukkural* couplets cited have been translated by the researcher.

* Quotes from *The Mahabharata* have been extracted from the English translation of Kisari Mohan Ganguli; wherever the word Ganguli figures, it is Kisari Mohan Ganguli, the translator.

* The full name of the author of the epic, *The Mahabharata* is Krishna Dwaipayana Vyasa, mentioned here in the shortened form Vyasa.

* The full name of the author of *Tirukkural* is Tiruvalluvar, mentioned here in the shortened form Valluvar.

* Arabic numerals in brackets in *Tirukkural* section refer to chapter numbers in the listing, couplet numbers in the analytical section.

* Roman-Arabic numerals in brackets in the *Bhagavad Gita* section refer to Chapter numbers and verse numbers respectively, as in Jack Hawley’s translation.

* The three stories of Bhishma given in Chapter V Section 3 are the summing up by the researcher from Ganguli’s translation.

* The opening section of the Appendices gives expansions of abbreviations of publishers relating to the sections Work Cited and Appendices on books.