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## Leadership and Work-Life Balance of Tamil King Pāṇṭiya Neṭuñceḷiyaṅ – A View from Tamil Classical Literature Neṭunalvāṭai, Maturaikkāñci

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### Abstract

The Caṅka literary period (490 BC to 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD) is considered to be the Golden Era. In this period, Tamil kings are portrayed as ethical leaders by Tamil poets. On the contrary, studying the works of poets like Nakkīrar and Māṅkuṭi marutaṅār, considering their approaches to management, we find that they have portrayed Pāṇṭiya Neṭuñceḷiyaṅ as a charismatic leader. In the present study, Pāṇṭiya Neṭuñceḷiyaṅ's leadership model is explored through literary data *via.*, Neṭunalvāṭai and Maturaikkāñci. Hence, from the management point of view, he was unsuccessful to hold the balance between work and personal life.

**Keywords:** Leadership – Work-life balance – Ethical – Charismatic – Caṅka literature – Neṭunalvāṭa – Maturaikkāñci

### Introduction

Leadership is one of the factors that contribute to the growth and transformation in the society by its impact both positive and negative. In the 1980s, Japan was the world's largest producer of consumer goods. At the same time, other countries were lagging behind in consumer goods production (Daft, 2004). Ouchi developed the 'Theory Z' in 1981 in line with the principles of Mc Gregor and Japanese management. Based on this theory component, the people of Japan

were able to achieve greater productivity due to perfect work-life balance described in Theory Z. They uphold importance to the work environment, family, culture, and heritage (Ouchi, 1981).

The world is moving towards a sustainable society (Robinson J. B., 1996). The role of top-notch leadership is indispensable to develop a sustainable society. The Tamil society had given priority to ethical leadership since 490 BC, which is described in Caṅka literature. In 2015, the United Nations Assembly discussed and agreed to reach sustainable development goals by 2030 (Sustainable Development Goals, 2021). Therefore, leadership models and their styles play an important role to create a sustainable society. Leaders achieve the common goal through individual, team/group and organization/society (House, A 1976 Theory of Charismatic Leadership, 1976). Scholars have divided these leaders into ten different categories *viz.*, autocratic, collaborative, laissez-faire, strategic, transformational, transactional, coach-style, bureaucratic, compassionate and servant leadership (Yusra Kaleem, 2016).

The word charisma, which means "gift", is generally reserved for leaders who through their effect are capable of reason whereby they facilitate the followers to accomplish incredible feats (House, A 1976 Theory of Charismatic Leadership, 1976). Most writers note the origin of charisma or charismatic leadership began with Max Weber. He describes charismatic leaders as those who "... reveal a transcendent mission or course of action which may be in itself appealing to the potential followers, but which is acted on because the followers believe their leader is extraordinarily gifted" (Dow, 1969). In addition to Weber's concept, Robert House in 1977 developed charismatic leadership theory. Based on House's theory, researchers started to uncover the key characteristics of the charismatic leader. Jay A. Conger explains in his book Charismatic Leadership in Organization as the charismatic characteristics in four key aspects: Possessing and articulating a vision, willing to take a risk to achieve the vision, exhibiting sensitivity to followers' needs, and demonstrating novel behaviour (Timothy A. Judge, 2006). In sociological and political science, charisma refers to leaders who are able to compel their followers to follow them by using their abilities effectively (House, A 1976 Theory of Charismatic Leadership, 1976). These outcomes encompass commanding loyalty and devotion to the leaders and inspiring followers to simply accept and execute the desire of the leaders without hesitation or query or regard to one's self-interest.

Tamiḷ is one of the six classical languages (Tamiḷ, Sanskrit, Chinese, Hebrew, Latin, and Greek) in the world. According to Porunthal Excavation, the historical page of Tamiḷ society scientifically starts from 490 BC. The Mānkuḷam inscription dating back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC is outlined in the search for evidence of leadership in Tamiḷ society. Only the name of the king has been mentioned in the inscription, hence it is not possible to trace the style of leadership. The name of Pāṇṭiya Neṭuñceḷiyaṅ was spotted twice in the Mānkuḷam Tamiḷ Pirāmi inscription.

1. Charity to Nanta-siriKuvan, the kani. Behold! The hermitage was caused to be carved by KatalanValuti, the servant of Natuncaliyan (Mahadevan I. , 2003).

2. Charity (to) Nanta-siriKu(v)an, the Kani. Behold! The hermitage was made by Catikan, the father of Ilancatikan, the husband of the sister-in-law of Netincaliyan (Mahadevan I. , 2003).

The inscription indicates a message about Pāṇṭiya Neṭuñceḷiyaṅ's minister donating to the Jains to set up a school. Inscriptions dating to the same period are not available to define the chief characteristics of this king. Hence, Neṭunalvāṭai – Maturaikkāñci are considered to be the literary sources to identify the leadership of Pāṇṭiya Neṭuñceḷiyaṅ. It is a matter of urgency to draw the leadership model of Pāṇṭiya Neṭuñceḷiyaṅ from these descriptive works. Consequently, leadership styles that are already in the tradition should be brought into the curriculum for students. This curriculum will help them to know about the best type of leadership in their tradition. Tradition and leadership style will pave way for action towards a sustainable society.

### **Neṭunelvāṭai – Nakkīrar**

Caṅka writings are unique in world literature. There are in all 2381 poems in Caṅka literature. These poems in Caṅka literature are broadly classified under two topics; *viz.* Akam and Puṛam. Of this, 1862 poems fall under Akam and the remaining poems fall under Puṛam. Akam is concerning the various aspects of relationship (Love, Affection, Sex, Closeness, Sharing and Caring) between couples. Poems that portray charity and bravery comes under Puṛam. From the management perspective, this article views Akam as life, and Puṛam as work. The majority of the poets preferred to sing of life (Akam). Only a very few focused on work (Puṛam). Though, Caṅka literatures are classified into Akam and Puṛam, Neṭunalvāṭai cannot strictly fit into these two. Nacciṅārkkīṇiyar, a critic of 14<sup>th</sup> century remarks Neṭunalvāṭai as Akappuṛam poem. This controversial issue is still under debate among the Tamiḷ scholars. Caṅka literature ('the poetry of the noble ones') has been grouped as Eṭṭuttokai (Eight Anthologies) and Pāttupaṭṭu (Ten Idylls).

The Caṅka literature dates from 490 BC to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. The literature of Neṭunelvātai has been taken from Pāttupaṭṭu (Ten Idylls). During 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, Pāṇṭiyā Neṭuñceḷiyaṅ was the protagonist (The patron of a poem to whom it was addressed) of Neṭunelvātai mentioned in the Māṅkuḷam inscription. But, the leadership of Pāṇṭiyā Neṭuñceḷiyaṅ is not mentioned directly in Neṭunelvātai. From the management point of view (Leadership Theories), Pāṇṭiya Neṭuñceḷiyaṅ had the characteristics of charismatic leadership such as dominance, desire for influence, self-confidence and strong moral values. The Time-consciousness and commitment and dedication of Pāṇṭiyā Neṭuñceḷiyaṅ as a leader seem to be rather poor resulting in his inability to maintain work-life balance. Ethical Leadership is the best leadership considered in Tamiḷ society. Nakkīrar seeks to portray the protagonist of the poem Neṭunelvātai as a charismatic leader. Even though ethical leadership is considered to be the best, it is problem to create a leader of Neṭunelvātai with charismatic leadership style by the Nakkīrar.

### **Nakkīrar's picturization of Warriors' Shelter at the battlefield**

In the poem Neṭunelvātai Lines 181-183 describes that the Tamiḷ king Pāṇṭiya Neṭuñceḷiyaṅ, draped in a beautiful shawl that hung on his left side, placed his right hand on the shoulders of a strong warrior bearing a sword and looked at his wounded men with the soothing countenance. These lines depict the king on the warriors' shelter, where the king lays his right hand on the warrior's shoulder soothingly and comforts him. This clearly exhibits the king's charismatic leadership characteristics. Even though Pāṇṭiya Neṭuñceḷiyaṅ is known for his consolation and guidance to the soldiers, he has failed when it comes to work-life balance as he leaves to war abruptly, instead of not sticking around with his spouse which shows that he doesn't follow the work-life balance. The time when he leaves for war was the moment of coitus.

Under these circumstances, Nakkīrar notes that he contradicts with many people on war trade. Caṅka literary poets do not consider war to be a trade. However, there is sufficient evidence that Nakkīrar saw the war of Pāṇṭiya Neṭuñceḷiyaṅ as a trade. Therefore, Pāṇṭiya Neṭuñceḷiyaṅ can be considered to be a charismatic leader who has changed himself from ethical leadership. The proper provision of time and commitment for the family is the basic characteristic of ethical leadership. Work-life balance is properly managed by maintaining the time and commitment. That could cause no conflict in the family. However, for the leader in Neṭunelvātai, work life is not

balanced overall. On account of this, Nakkīrar has portrayed the leader of Neṭunelvātai as charismatic leader rather than an ethical leader.

### **Maturaikkāñci – Māṅkuṭi marutaṅār**

Maturaikkāñci is a 782 line long poem sung by **Māṅkuṭi marutaṅār** to Talaiyālkaḷattu Ceruvēntira Pāṅṭiya Neṭuñceḷiyaṅ, another name of Pāṅṭiya Neṭuñceḷiyaṅ which is subdivided into three parts based on three major themes. (Sudanandha, 2013)

They are;

1. Pāṅṭiya, what, during your life span, is equivalent to you? Maturaikkāñci lines 1-206.
2. In the past, the kings who lived and died victorious as you are outnumber the sands of the beach.
3. Therefore, you, in the famous Madurai live your destiny, offering rewards to those who deserve; drinking the beverages served by the beautiful women (Maturaikkāñci lines 670-782) was the recommendations given by the poet to the life of a king.

### **Māṅkuṭi marutaṅār's View**

Pāṅṭiya Neṭuñceḷiyaṅ stepped into leadership at a very young age. He heard that the other kings of the neighbouring kingdoms believed that Neṭuñceḷiyaṅ could be easily defeated in battle. So, he made a solemn promise to himself that he would defeat all the neighbouring kings. It is featured in an epic song. In the song, he swears that it is perfectly all right even if the poets led by Māṅkuṭi marutaṅār choose not to sing the praises of his kingdom or himself even if he is defeated by the other kings. Māṅkuṭi marutaṅār greets and instructs Neṭuñceḷiyaṅ through Maturaikkāñci only after Pāṅṭiya Neṭuñceḷiyaṅ has won many battles and finally elevated himself as an undisputed leader. So Maturaikkāñci is a literary treasure trove as far as Pāṅṭiya Neṭuñceḷiyaṅ is concerned. This is an example of how the kings could not buy the respect and services of ancient poets by their royal power alone. It is worth noting that it was during this same period that the Greek regarded their poets as superior beings. Pāṅṭiya Neṭuñceḷiyaṅ is a nobleman. The lyricism of his solemn oath has been evolved into an epic song.

### **Work-Life Balance of Tamil King Pāṅṭiya Neṭuñceḷiyaṅ**

The Caṅka society emphasized the importance of life and work separately. But Nakkīrar seeks life and work equally. Pāṅṭiya Neṭuñceḷiyaṅ gave priority to work because king has to safeguard his nation and people. Here war becomes trade instead of protection (Safeguarding

nation and people). Wealth brought by war can be used for the welfare of the kingdom. But according to Nakkīrar, Pāṇṭiya Neṭuñceliyaṅ used war not to safeguard the people and nation rather he used it for trade. The season when Pāṇṭiya Neṭuñceliyaṅ went to war was not the right time. It was the season for the intercourse of the couple. Nakkīrar has sung the leader who does not leave his wife even during the day (Akam 389: 8 - 9). He described the intercourse of the couple indubitably (Akam 93:13 – 16). The change of this situation and the reason behind the leader in Neṭunelvāṭais' separation from his wife are upsetting. That's the reason why Nakkīrar enforces work-life balance to Pāṇṭiya Neṭuñceliyaṅ. It is noteworthy that not only Nakkīrar but also Māṅkuṭi marutaṅār emphasized the same. Both great poets insisted on work-life balance not just for literary policy or strategy but also for a social need that transcended it. They never wrote about unethical leaders. However, their accusation is not that Pāṇṭiya Neṭuñceliyaṅ has no virtue. On the contrary, there is no denying that they exclaim that he does not have a work-life balance. Poets say through internal evidence that there must have been some background for the end of the empire of Pāṇṭiya Neṭuñceliyaṅ.

#### Caṅka Literature (Pāṇṭiya Neṭuñceliyaṅ) Vs 'Z' Theory

Area	Followers	Year	Work Environment		
			Family	Culture	Tradition
Tamiḷ Caṅka Literature	Pāṇṭiya Neṭuñceliyaṅ	2nd Century BC	X	✓	✓
Z Theory	Japan	20th Century AD	✓	✓	✓

#### Summary

- The Tamiḷ Caṅka literary tradition primarily focuses on ethical leadership. Inversely, Nakkīrar and Māṅkuṭi marutaṅār have created a leader Pāṇṭiya Neṭuñceliyaṅ as charismatic leader. It has been looked upon as a problem. These poets' projection of Pāṇṭiya Neṭuñceliyaṅ as a charismatic leader indirectly points to the fact that from the management perspective he does not follow work-life balance.
- Japanese theory Z is considered a Western philosophy and believed that only theory imbibes culture, family and tradition. It was emerged in 1980 by Dr. William Ouchi. But

Nedunalwadi and Maduraikkanchi propounded the same theory even two thousand years ago.

### **Recommendations**

There are more than five hundred institutions of higher education in Tamil Nadu that offers management studies. The majority of the curriculums involved in these colleges are based on western theories of leadership. There are no interdisciplinary approaches on Caṅka literature and leadership theory. This article is one of the model studies of interdisciplinary approach to Caṅka literature and leadership theory. Therefore, by creating a curriculum that incorporates the above-said principles, the curriculum structure of the school of management thought appropriate to the Tamil tradition can be brought into the light.

### **Conclusion**

The management principles of Tamil community functions are based on the ethical leadership. Leaders who have gone astray from ethical leadership have been boldly sung by poets. Nakkīrar and Māṅkuṭi marutaṅār align with these approaches. As a new strategy, it has been added to the policy of Tamil literature. When approaching it in terms of management, we find that poets point to changes in the leadership qualities that the leaders may have had. According to this perspective when Pāṅṭiya Neṭuñceliyaṅ portrayed as the protagonist leader of the poem have changes in his leadership qualities; that is, they point out that he did not give sufficient room for time and commitment needed for ethical leadership in the right way.

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