

PERSPECTIVES OF THIRUKKURAL TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND THE STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABILITY- A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY

Dr.D.Divya Prabha, Associate professor, Department of Management Sciences
PSG College of Arts& Science, Coimbatore.

S. Sabarisesan, Student, BA (Hons)IB, PSG Institute of Advanced Studies, Coimbatore.

S Rishika, Student, BA (Hons)IB, PSG Institute of Advanced Studies, Coimbatore.

Dr R. Parimalam, Assistant professor, Department of Tamil, PSG College of Arts & Science,
Coimbatore.

ABSTRACT

With the positive development of new technologies benefiting humanity, the negative impact of technological advancements has created a serious concern not only for the environment, but also for the present and future generation to live with dignity. To have a more sustainable future, the United Nations framed the 17 Sustainable development Goals, which the member nations are working to achieve by 2030. Even though the term of sustainable development has gained paramount significance in the recent days, the focus on sustainability and inclusive growth has been given due importance by our ancestors from times immemorial. This is well reflected in various Tamil literary works. Among the different literary works, Thirukkural is considered as a Universal masterpiece touching all walks of life. Therefore, this research paper focuses on the contributions of Thirukkural towards sustainable development and the strategies highlighted by Thiruvalluvar to achieve the 17 sustainable development goals.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Thirukkural, Environment and SDG 17

INTRODUCTION:

Sustainability can be understood as the capability to maintain the reliability of a unit over a period of time (Basiago, 1999). Sustainability can also be viewed as all the activities to uphold a vigorous socio-economic and ecological environment for the betterment of the humanity (Milne & Gray, 2013). Heading towards sustainability is considered as resourceful and unbiased sharing of resources with the future generations which requires the current generations to undertake socio-economic activities in a responsible manner within a finite ecosystem (Stoddart, et al., 2011). With increasing environmental and socio-economic problems, there is an imminent need to set universal goals and march forward with a holistic effort towards this

massive initiative. Therefore in 2015 the United nations General Assembly set up the 17 Sustainable development Goals to be achieved in 2030. The focus was on various parameters like No poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, Reduced Inequality, Sustainable Cities and Communities, Responsible Consumption and Production, Climate Action, Life Below Water, Life On Land, Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, Partnerships for the Goals (Jeffrey D. Sachs et al 2019). To create a better future, all the 193 member nations of the United nations signed and agreed to implement strategies to reach these SDG goals by 2030.

The concept of sustainable living and inclusive growth is not a new concept and has been dealt in several Tamil literature works including Tholkappiam (Shri Vaishali and S. Rukmini 2021), Thirupavai (U. Sumathy 2007), Purananaru (Kannan 2013) etc. Among the various literary works, Thirukkural one of the greatest literary works inseparable from Tamil Culture. It is a versatile contribution by the Deivapularvar Thiruvalluvar that is relevant not only for the present, but also for the future.

With 1330 Couplets, it is a treasure of worldly knowledge, providing elaborate knowledge about various dimensions of humanity. With its practical touch and universal code of ethics it is one of the greatest products praised for its applicability universally. Being one of the most admired ancient works in the Tamil language, it has been always cherished as a Universal guide for humanity for improving the quality of life by dwelling into the virtues of fine living. Apart from betterment of personal life, Thirukkural also focuses on societal wellbeing touching areas like environmental management, water conservation, rainwater management, corporate governance etc.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Jayendira P. Sankar (2021), in his article on Social responsibility of the corporate: Thirukkural perspective has identified that Thirukkural recommends a cognizance and ethical-based approach to the social responsibility of the corporate. Madhusudanan Sundaresan and Dr.R.Nalini, (2015), in their article on Indigenizing the Characteristics of Good Governance in Thirukkural Framework has identified that Thirukkural is linked, intertwined and superimposed with the definitions and explanations of the Good Governance characteristics given by UNESCO. Rajeswari (2020) in the article on analyzing the Thiruvalluvar's Concept of Cultural

Ecology has concluded that Tiruvalluvar has mentioned that the relationship between humans and nature depends on water i.e. is rain. Balakrishnan Muniapan and M. Rajantheran (2011), in their article on Thirukkural and business leadership reveal that Thirukkural advocates a consciousness and a spirit-centered approach to the subject of business ethics based on eternal values and moral principles that should govern the conduct of business leaders.

Dr. Alka Jain (2014), in his article on entrepreneurship in Thirukkural has highlighted that Tiruvalluvar promotes a more ethical and responsible management system to move towards the direction of restoring better world economy. Dr. K. Mooneegadoo (2020), has analysed the Thirukkural's perspective of relevance and application of virtue to the modern world. Kartheges Ponniah, Muniisvaran Kumar et al(2019) in the study on the teaching of Thirukkural based on HOTS among the students of Tamil primary schools in the state of Perak has identified that benefit educators and agencies involved in implementing the teaching and learning of Thirukkural effectively in fostering HOTS among students. Parthipan. A, and Thirupathi. S (2019) in the study on "Subjugation of Women In Thirukkural and The Holy Bible: A Comparative Study" has identified the partial treatment of women in religious and ethical texts respectively 'The Holy Bible' and 'Thirukkural'. Though these two texts have much insightful thoughts and teachings, yet their treatments towards women are to be reread.

Murukaiya Sathees (2022) in the study on "Justice Concepts Prescribed by Awwaiyaar and Valluvar: A Comparative Review on Thirukkural and Attisudi" has identified that the high justice concepts in these literatures are established in the society and more studies related to this should be carried out by the researchers in order to improve peaceful life.

The analysis of the various studies in Thirukkural reveals that different parameters have been considered for analysis by the authors. This research study focuses comprehensively on the views of Thirukkural about the sustainable development goals

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- ✓ To analyse the perspective of Thirukkural on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.
- ✓ To identify the strategies identified and highlighted to achieve the SDG goals

ANALYSIS:

Goal 1 – No Poverty:

SDG Goal 1 aims to eradicate poverty by focusing on all activities to reduce poverty at all levels.

The impact and the ill effects of poverty is well explained in Thirukkural. The following kural demonstrates as to why eradicating poverty is of utmost importance in today's context

Inmaiya Innaadhadhu Yaadhenin Inmaiya

Inmaiye Innaa Thadhu (Kural 1041)

What is more painful than poverty? The pain of poverty itself!

Inmai Enavoru Paavi Marumaiyum

Immaiya Indri Varum (Kural 1042)

The demon of poverty takes away the joys of this life and the next

Thunpangal Sendru Patum (Kural 1045)

That misery called poverty brings with it a diversity of sufferings

Neruppinul Thunjalum Aakum Nirappinul

Yaadhondrum Kanpaatu Aridhu (Kural 1049)

One may sleep even in the midst of fire, But by no means in the midst of poverty

Thus from the Kural on poverty, Thiruvalluvar makes it evident that poverty is a killer of humanity and therefore it has to be eradicated.

Goal 2 – Zero Hunger (No Hunger)

SDG 2 aims at ending hunger through increasing the agricultural productivity and promoting the sustainable food production practices.

Thiruvalluvar in his couplets has highlighted the importance of ending hunger and about the ways of improving the agricultural productivity. The following couplets talk about the importance of zero hunger

aatruvaar aatral pasiAtral appasiyai

maatruvaar aatralin pin (kural 225)

The power of those who perform penance is the power of enduring hunger. It is inferior to the power of those who remove the hunger (of others).

atraar azhipasi theerththal aqdhoruvan

petraan poruLvaip puzhi (kural 226)

The removal of the killing hunger of the poor is the place for one to lay up his wealth.

Goal 3 – Good Health and Wellbeing:

Sustainable living highly depends on good health and wellbeing at all ages. SDG 3 aims at improving the physical and mental health, thereby ensuring a healthy world population.

Thiruvalluvar focus both on physical health and mental health. As a part of physical health, he focuses on the right food eating habits and also on the importance of being mentally healthy through the following couplets.

uramoruvaRku uLLa veRukkaiiaq thillaar
marammakka Laadhale vaeRu (Kural 600)

Energy is mental wealth; those men who are destitute of it are only trees in the form of men.
Atraal aRavaRindhu uNka aqdhutambu petraan netidhuykkum aaRu (kural 943)

If (one's food has been) digested let one eat with moderation; (for) that is the way to prolong the life of an embodied soul.

Goal 4 – Quality Education:

SDG goal 4 aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life long learning opportunities for all, by focusing on upgrading the education infrastructure.

The importance of having proper education is highlighted in thirukkural through various couplets. Some of them include

KaNNutaiyar enpavar katroar mukaththirandu
puNNutaiyar kallaa thavar (kural 393)

The learned are said to have eyes, but the unlearned have (merely) two sores in their face.
thottanaith thooRum maNaRkaeNi maandharkkuk

katranaith thooRum aRivu (kural 396)

Water will flow from a well in the sand in proportion to the depth to which it is dug, and knowledge will flow from a man in proportion to his learning.

kaetil vizhuchchelvam kalvi yoruvaRku
maadalla matrai yavai (kural 400)

Learning is the true imperishable riches; all other things are not riches.

Goal 5 – Gender Equality:

Gender equality is important for economic prosperity, Societies that value women and men as equal are safe, healthier and more sustainable and goal 5 focuses on this. The importance of equality has been well highlighted in Thirukkural in the following couplets

piRappokkum ellaa uyirkkum siRappovvaa
seydhozhil vaetrumai yaan (Kural 972)

All human beings are equal as regards their birth but differ as regards their characteristics, because of the different qualities of their actions.

Goal 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation:

Goal 6 aims to ensure the sustainable availability and management of water and sanitation.

The Kural 298 focuses both on clean water and sanitation

PuRaLthooimai neeraan amaiyum aganthooimai

vaaimaiyaal kaaNap padum (kural; 298)

Purity of body is produced by water and purity of mind by truthfulness.

Goal 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy:

The dwindling non-renewable resources, goal 7 aims to ensure access to affordable reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. Thirukkural even though does not directly focus on clean energy, the importance of wind and sun has been highlighted

The teeming earth's vast realm, round which the wild winds blow,

Is witness, men of 'grace' no woeful want shall know (kural 245)

This great rich earth over which the wind blows, is a witness that sorrow never comes upon the kind-hearted.

Enbi ladhanai veyilpoalak kaayumae

anpi ladhanai aRam (kural 77)

As sun's fierce ray dries up the boneless things,

So loveless beings virtue's power to nothing brings

Goal 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth:

As the economic growth of nations depends on right employment opportunities, SDG 8 aims to promote sustainable economic growth through offering full and productive employment for all.

Goal 8 also focuses on empowering employees for decent work. Thirukkural focus on those aspects which have to be focussed on to improve employee productivity. For example Kural 515 focuses on the importance of developing Knowledge and diligence for better work performance.

Arindhaatrich Cheykirpaarku Allaal Vinaidhaan

Sirandhaanendru Evarpaar Randru (Kural 515)

Where knowledge and diligence are required, Don't entrust tasks on personal loyalty.

Goal 9 – Industry Innovation and Infrastructure:

Building resilient infrastructure promotes inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation and Goal 9 focuses on this aspect. Thirukkural focuses on the aspect of innovation in Kural 26 and on the aspect of a country's infrastructure (Kural 738)

seyarKariya seyvaar periyar siRiyar

seyarKariya seykalaa thaar (Kural 26)

The great will do those things which is difficult to be done; but the mean cannot do them
piNiyinmai selvam vilaivinpam Emam

aNiyenpa naattiv vaindhu (Kural 738)

Unfailing health, Fertility, and joy, a sure defence, and wealth are the five important ornaments of a kingdom.

Goal 10 – Reduced Inequality:

Goal 10 aims to promote social, economic and political inclusion all levels to ensure equal opportunities and end discrimination. Thirukkural has also emphasised on equality through the following Kurals.

Pirappokkum Ellaa Uyirkkum Sirappovvaa

Seydhozhil Vetrumai Yaan (Kural 972)

All men that live are one in circumstances of birth; Diversities of works give each his special worth.

Uruvukandu Ellaamai Vaendum Urulperundhaerkku

Achchaani Annaar Udaiththu (Kural 667)

Let none be despised for (their) size; (for) the world has those who resemble the linch-pin of the big rolling car.

Goal 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities:

To meet the increased future demand of the population, it is necessary to make the cities and human settlement more inclusive safe resilient and sustainable

The different aspects which contribute to developing sustainable communities include better natural resources, no poverty, better agricultural produce, happiness index of people. All these aspects are highlighted by Thiruvalluvar vividly in the following kurals.

piNiyinmai selvam vilaivinpam Emam
aNiyenpa naattiv vaindhu (Kural 738)

Freedom from epidemics, wealth, produce, happiness and protection (to subjects); these five, the learned, say, are the ornaments of a kingdom.

irupunalum vaaindha malaiyum varupunalum
vallaraNum naattiRku uRuppu (Kural 737)

The constituents of a kingdom are the two waters (from above and below), well situated hills and an undestructible fort.

Goal 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production:

Sustainable consumption and production patterns are important to reduce global carbon emissions. Goal 12 focuses on effective use of nature resources along with reducing the global food waste.

Thirukkural indirectly focus on sustainable consumption by mentioning the ways of consumption more responsible.

aLavaRinthu vaazhaadhaan vaazhkkai uLapoala
illaakith thoandraak kedum (Kural 479)

The prosperity of him who lives without knowing the measure (of his property), will perish, even while it seems to continue.

Goal 13 – Climate Change:

There is an urgent need to combat climate change by regulating emissions and promoting the use of renewable energy. Goal 13 focuses on reducing global warming.

Even though climate change is not mentioned directly, he talks about the importance of trees and rain which plays an importance role in climate change

payanmaram uLLoop pazhuththatraal selvam
nayanutai yaan-kaN patin (kural 216)

The wealth of a man (possessed of the virtue) of benevolence is like the ripening of a fruitful tree in the midst of a town.

ViN indru Poippin Virineer Viyanulakaththu
uLnhin Rudatrum pasi (Kural 13)

If the cloud, withholding rain, deceive (our hopes) hunger will long distress the sea-girt spacious world

Goal 14 – Life below Water:

It is important to conserve and sustainably use the ocean, sea and marine resources for sustainable development and goal 14 focuses on this.

nedungatalum thanneermai kundrum thatindhezhili
thaannalkaa thaaki vitin (kural 17)

Even the wealth of the wide sea will be diminished, if the cloud that has drawn (its waters) up gives them not back again (in rain)

Goal 15 – Life on Land:

SDG 15 focuses on protecting restoring and promoting the use of terrestrial ecosystems manage forest and reverse land degradation. Thirukkural 742 stresses on the importance of forests as an important resource for a better life of land

maNinheerum maNNum malaiyum aNinhizhaR
kaadum udaiya tharaN (kural 742)

A fort is that which has everlasting water, plains, mountains and cool shady forests.

Goal 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong institutions:

Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies and providing access to justice to all at all levels is the main focus of goal 16. Thirukkural has well focused on peace and justice through its couplets

sutraththaal sutrap padaozhukal selvandhaan
petraththaal petra payan(kural 524)

To live surrounded by relatives, is the advantage to be derived from the acquisition of wealth.

takuti enavonru nanrē pakutiyāl
pārpaṭṭu oḷukap perin. (Kural 111)

Justice may be called good only when it acts impartially Regardless of the class of men.

Goal 17 – Partnership for the goals:

Goal 17 aims to strengthen and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development. Even though the term partnership is not used, directly, the word friendship has been used in Thirukkural and Thiruvalluvar has stressed on the importance of partnership through highlighting the benefits.

alivi navainikki aruyttu alivinkan
allal ulappatam natpu. (Kural 787)

Friendship saves from ruin, guides towards right, And shares the pain of distress.

natpirku virirukkai yatenin kotpinri
ollumvay unrum nilai. (Kural 789)

What is the throne of friendship? It is that resolve of unfailing support given at all time.

Strategies for sustainability highlighted in Thirukkural

Strategy to reduce poverty (SDG 1)

Thotippuzhudhi Kaqsa Unakkin Pitiththeruvum
Ventaadhu Saalap Patum (Kural 1037)

If ploughed and dried to quarter its size, the soil yields plenty sans even handful manure.

Erinum Nandraal Eruvitudhal Kattapin
Neerinum Nandradhan Kaappu (Kural 1038)

Manuring is crucial than ploughing. After weeding, Protection is crucial than watering.

If no poverty state has to be established, then the countries have to focus on agricultural production and Thiruvalluvar has rightly identified the strategies to increase the yield contributing to better output which inturn reduces poverty.

Strategy to achieve zero hunger (SDG2)

Atraar Azhipasi Theerththal Aqdhoruvan
Petraan Porulvaip Puzhi. (Kural 226)

Wiping out the hunger of the have-nots, Is the treasury the haves have deposited their wealth.

One of the best strategies for achieving zero hunger in the world is rightly highlighted by Thiruvalluvar (i.e) sharing. When the wealthy nations and people start supporting the needy, hunger can be eradicated easily from the world.

Strategy for good health and well being (SDG3)

Utravan Theerppaan Marundhuzhaich Chelvaanendru
AppaalNaar Kootre Marundhu (Kural 950)

Any treatment involves these four orders: The patient, doctor, medicine and the nurse.

With disrupted health services in many underdeveloped countries, Thiruvalluvar in his Kural has identified the importance of having doctors, the right medicine and nurses to ensure healthy lives and wellbeing

Strategy for clean water and sanitation (SDG6)

Vaannindru Ulakam Vazhangil Varudhalaal

Thaanamizhdham Endrunarar Paatru (Kural 11)

Rain is deemed a nectar of life as its unfailing fall sustains the world.

With rapid increase in the requirement for drinking water due to rapid increase in population, Thiruvalluvar in his adhigaram on the excellence of rain has rightly pointed on the importance of rain water and the sufferings that mankind will face if rains fail.

Strategy for decent work and economic growth (SDG8)

Piniyinmai Selvam Vilaivinpam Emam

Aniyenpa Naattiv Vaindhu (Kural 738)

A country's jewels are these five: Unfailing health, Fertility, joy, security and wealth.

The economic growth of a nation as identified by Thiruvalluvar is also dependent on healthy, happy and wealthy citizens and abundant resources. When these aspects are focused it will be directly contributing to the economic growth of the nation

Conclusion:

Thirukkural, the finest ethical work that has stood the test of time, continues to be relevant even today. Thiruvalluvar's focus on practical ethics and morality in everyday life, rather than on religious beliefs and rituals, makes Thirukkural a unique and valuable contribution to world literature. Its emphasis on virtues such as kindness, honesty, and self-control, as well as its insights into politics, education, and human relationships, make it a valuable guide for anyone seeking to live a meaningful and fulfilling life. With the world moving towards sustainability and the 17 Sustainable development goals, recently, this remarkable literary work which was written more than 2000 years ago has touched on all aspects dealt in the sustainable development goals identified by the United Nations in the 21st Century. With its powerful messages, this timeless masterpiece will inspire and guide societies and nations in their march towards a sustainable ecosystem.

References

1. The importance of the Sustainable Development Goals (no date) Ntu.eu. Available at: <https://www.ntu.edu/news-archive/the-importance-of-the-sustainable-development-goals/>
2. World Bank group and the 2030 agenda World Bank. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/sdgs-2030-agenda>

3. Basiago, A. D. (1999). Economic, social, and environmental sustainability in development theory and urban planning practice: The environmentalist. Boston Kluwer Academic Publishers.
4. Milne, M. J., & Gray, R. (2013). W(h)ither ecology? The triple bottom line, the global reporting initiative, and corporate sustainability reporting. *Journal of Business Ethics* (118(1)), pp. 13-29.
5. Stoddart, H., Schneeberger, K., Dodds, F., Shaw, A., Bottero, M., Cornforth, J., & White, R. (2011). A pocket guide to sustainable development governance. Stakeholder Forum 2011.
6. Jeffrey D. Sachs, Guido Schmidt-Traub, Mariana Mazzucato, Dirk Messner, Nebojsa Nakicenovic & Johan Rockström (2019), Six Transformations to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, *Nature Sustainability* volume 2, pages805–814 (2019).
7. D.Kannan(2013), Modern Environmental Sciences Mentioned in ancient Tamil Literature.
8. V Shri Vaishali & Dr. S. Rukmini (2021), Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By: The Ecolinguistics of Tholkappiyam, *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* Vol. 13, No. 4, 2021. 1-16.
9. U. Sumathy (2007), The Nature-Culture Interface in Andal's "Thiruppavai" Indian Literature Vol. 51, No. 6 (242), Golden Jubilee Issue (November-December 2007), pp. 187-190.
10. Jayendra P. Sankar (2021), in his article on Social responsibility of the corporate: Thirukkural perspective, *International Journal of Indian Culture and Business Management*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 2021.
11. Madhusudanan Sundaresan and Dr.R.Nalini, (2015), Indigenizing the Characteristics of Good Governance in Thirukural Framework, Volume 5, Issue 9, 2015.
12. Rajeswari G (2020),Thiruvalluvar's Concept of Cultural Ecology, *International Research Journal of Tamil* , July, 2(3):202-210.
13. Balakrishnan Muniapan and M. Rajantheran (2011), Ethics (business ethics) from the Thirukkural and its relevance for contemporary business leadership in the Indian context , *Int. J. Indian Culture and Business Management*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 2011 .

14. Dr. Alka Jain (2014), Rediscovering Six Factor Entrepreneurial Decision Making (EDM) Model in Thirukkural, International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR), Volume 3 Issue 11, November.
15. Dr. K. Moonegadoo (2020), Language in India, ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 20:3 March 2020
16. Kartheges Ponniah, Muniisvaran Kumar, Sasigaran Moneyam, Ilangkumaran Sivanadhan (2019), International Journal of Advanced and Applied Sciences, 6(2) 2019, Pages: 94-101
17. Parthipan. A, and Thirupathi. S (2019), “Subjugation of Women In Thirukkural and The Holy Bible: A Comparative Study”, THINK INDIA (Quarterly Journal), ISSN:0971 1260, Vol 22, Issue 4, October – December 2019.
18. Murukaiya Sathees (2022), Justice Concepts Prescribed by Awwaiyaar and Valluvar: A Comparative Review on Thirukkural and Attisudi, Journal of Tamil Peraivu, Vol 11, No 1.