

THIRUKKURAL AND MENTAL HEALTH: A CONCEPTUAL GUIDANCE TO A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

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Manuscript received 28 March 2022

Manuscript accepted 15 July 2022

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Abstract

The current conceptual paper focuses on the mind and its relation to well-being from a conceptual perspective. Over the last decade, mental health issues in countries are in an distressing rate. Mental health defines as a productive condition in which internal stability allows the person to utilize their capacity to match society's values via basic cognitive and social skills, feeling expression, empathy, and flexibility. Thirukkural is known as a highly ethical text enlightening Tamil literature delivered by man to man more than 2000 years ago. For every human the mind is the basis of life, death, growth, decay, fame, fortune, feeling and passion. There are differences in opinion as to where mind resides, but there are no differences of opinion that the mind is the basis of thought, speech, and action. If the mind is pure, all activities of life will be pure, and act of morality will take place accordingly. This paper explains an overview of the mental framework using Tamil ancient scriptural text through a qualitative methodology of hermeneutics theory interpretation. Finding involves in-depth inquiry and analysis of Thirukkural, its practice and the literature in terms of its context and content for interpretation with regards to mind in a holistic manner. As a conclusion, future directions in integrative research are proposed based on the scriptural text of Thirukkural.

Keywords

Mind-body-soul; Thirukkural; Mental Health; integrated health; eastern context;

Introduction

Mental health issues in both developed and developing countries are rapidly increasing since the last decade. Mental health is defined as a productive condition wherein internal stability facilitates an individual utilising personal capacity in fulfilling societal values via fundamental cognitive capabilities, social skills, and emotional expressions, including empathy and flexibility (Galderisi et al., 2015). The internal equilibrium degree varies according to the individual harmonious state between the body and the mind. Meanwhile, ten categories of mental health disorders are identified, namely depression (Hasan et al., 2020), anxiety (Hasan et al., 2020), attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD; Pehlivanidis et al., 2020), bipolar disorder (McIntyre et al., 2020), schizophrenia (Geretsegger et al., 2017), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), insomnia, addiction and substance abuse, eating disorders (anorexia, bulimia, and binge-eating), and borderline personality disorder. Every illness associated with physical or mental aspects is

considered to be contributed by both psychological and spiritual components (Kang, 2010), which requires a pertinent treatment encompassing both physical and psychological aspects.

Thirukkural, Ancient Tamil Literature

Thirukkural is known as a highly ethical text (Muniapan & Rajantheran, 2011) enlightening Tamil literature delivered by man to man more than 2000 years ago. Thirukkural written by Thiruvalluvar, who also known as *Deivappulavar* or *Poyyappulavar*. The term *thiru* represents holy or sacred, and *Kural* means shortened or condensed (Chandran, 2017). This literature text contains 133 chapters with ten couplets or *kurals* in each chapter resulting in 1330 couplets. The categorization of sections and chapters in Thirukkural was done much later by other scholars after the emergence of Thirukkural. Based on the categorization, the couplet resembles a fourfold life goals composed of righteous living (*aram*), materials living (*porul*), love and passion (*inbam*), and release from the rebirth cycle (*veedu*) (Nagarajan, 2005). Thirukkural just narrated the first three goals since the fourth goal can be achieved by leading life based on the three highly ethical principles set by Thirukkural. All three parts of thirukkural emphasize every aspect of human life and provide ethical and moral content beyond boundaries.

Qualitative Interpretive Methodology

The Methodology implied here is the qualitative method as this is library research where text extraction is made and then it is interpreted. This is called the hermeneutics method. According to Oliver (2015), hermeneutics is a discipline that sets itself upon the task of specifying and justifying *a methodology of interpretation*, originally of texts, but by extension of many other interpretation It has also been called the science or art of interpretation. Dyer, (2010), mentioned that hermeneutics refers to the practice and theory of interpretation. It involves understanding and interpretation that could be justified. It describes a theory of understanding and explains diverse methodologies for interpreting texts, objects, and concepts.

Hermeneutics places its concerns in making data collected to be communicable and intelligible. Hermeneutics stretches up across from history epochs, methods and all the disciplines in the humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences (Oliver, 2015).

Thirukkural and Mental Illness

For every human the mind is the basis of life, death, growth, decay, fame, fortune, feeling and passion. There are differences in opinion as to where mind resides, but there are no differences of opinion that the mind is the basis of thought, speech and action. If the mind is pure, all the activities of the life will be pure, and act of morality will take place accordingly.

K- 341, where Thiruvalluvar explains that the mind is good for various developments of a human being. He has also clarified that by controlling the senses with mental energy, we can obtain various energies. Energies that ordinary people cannot obtain. If the mind stands in control of high ideas like truth, handwork, humanity, determination, elevation and acts accordingly, then it is said that the mind is in good state. If the mind deviates from the above or similar high norm as mentioned above, loses its control, seeks harm to themselves and causes harm to others, then it is said that the mind is diseased (Moganaraj 2005).

There are many causes/reasons for mental illnesses. The minds manifestations are many. From the manifestations many are the evils that results from them. Thiruvalluvar revealed to his best ability some of the solutions for mental illness.

Inferiority Complex

Many people have inferiority complex where they think that they are inferior in many ways compared to others (Mani, 2019). This is seen as a mental illness. People with this mental illness, get tired in life at all stages and levels of life. Inferiority complex due to lack of wealth is heart-breaking that will cause low esteem talks can tire and bring down on individual motivation.

Inferiority creates an environment in which no action can be performed perfectly through the individual gain. Though the individual gain respect and fame from the task performed, inferiority complex will not allow him to gain the necessary respect. This inferiority complex that exists in some people will also create a mindset to show themselves as big and powerful or boastful. Some try to coverup their inferiority complex by boasting about themselves. K-978 K-979 – this is an escape acting will not be permanent.

People with this mind set, are more advanced than others. They are reluctant to show others that they are academically inferior to others. They try to show off so that they don't lose. The struggle feeling of such people can be seen when their action is manifested in the opposite effects caused by the actions.

K- 844, K-845, K401, K 402. This is where outcome becomes the opposite of their actions.

Individuals with this mental status mentioned by the above kural. People with this temperament have a funny attitude (Kayalvizhy, 2021). For example, when a person who has not seen something says that he has seen it, reflex the inferiority in him as the individual reflexes a lowly person fearing that others will think him as inferior if he says that he did not see it. Hence, he will say that he saw it as well. K-849

Thiruvalluvar says it with a hint of humour, “sometimes people show low attitude if they see others superior to them in something. Thiruvalluvar mentioned that it has become natural for inferiority complex people to envy and live by blaming to envy other. K-1079 (Moganaraj, 2005). The power of ‘filthiness’ is to underline the dangers of such mentality. People with this mental illness will develop a condition that cannot be improved at any stage. Here, the person will undergo a plight of not being able to get glory or fame. In this situation, if someone points out their faults, instead of trying to correct it, they are engaging in insulting and harming those who point out the fault. This is mentioned in Kural K- 237.

Condescension can sometimes turn into violent expression. These individuals, when they see other people who have power in a field, they are unable to tolerate it. They tend to harass these people to an extent that they even try to eliminate them totally. However, in the end, this action will only harm the individual or themselves. This is explained clearly in K -894.

Solution to handle this mental health problem. This inferiority complex which is referred to as a mental issue can not be cured by medicines. It can only be fixed with the clarity of the mind. The individual has to develop a firm mind or belief that they can achieve any high level, high heights with their tireless work and efforts. This belief should be deep rooted gradually in their hearts.

K- 620, K-619, K-666. These kurals should sink in. deep into the hearts of the individuals. Through determination, the individual should work with himself and try to remove the deficiency in himself. Next the individual should clearly know what they are deficient in and gradually develop the maturity to accept the deficiency even in people who are inferior then them. K-m986 will be a match for these people as well. Individuals should understand that not everyone can improve in every field. One can only improve in few fields.

Doubtfulness

Some individuals are doubters. They are doubters of whatever they do. Some don't even in life in themselves. They are often doubt their thoughts, words and actions. To some people this state of mind is common. This is a mental illness according to Thiruvalluvar. This could be a great disaster. K-467. Before a task is being done, one should give it many times consideration. It should be thought about clearly several times on all aspects. Once the task or job has started, then it is very harmful to be thinking about it again with doubt (Pope 2005).

Similarly, individuals with this mental illness, is most likely to choose a few qualified and talented people for the task where the work will be entrusted to them. Once the task is given, these individuals with mental illness will start watching the professionals suspiciously with a doubt. To doubt someone after clearly selecting the person as a competent person and entrusting him with a task is the act of a mentally ill person who doubts anything and everything. This action will lead to great sufferings of the mentally ill individual. K-510.

Such doubts will destroy the relationship with whomever that was suspected. Therefore, there is also a possibility of industrial damage and material loss as well. K-519. People with such mental illness of doubting, will not even dare to leave his wife behind when he goes out due to his suspicions. Thiruvalluvar condemns this deadly act. K-57.

Fear

According to Thiruvalluvar, fear can be described into two categories.

- I. *Fear that has a psychic bent towards it. Following an action without fearing of consciousness.*
K- 428, K 88, K 201, K44, K325, K366, K464

The above Kurals reflects on how one has to be aware and fearful of their consciousness that governs mental health. This fear of consciousness will be a guide to lead a healthy life. – K 497, k 382, k 778, k647, k686, k585. According to Thiruvalluvar, these people should be able to live without fear in all walks of life as free as their consciousness. Fear is a mental illness. There are many people that often basically fear of everything. For some, this might be natural from childhood and for some, this illness could be due to some event in life that has gone wrong some time back (past trauma). There could be unforeseen events that a few may have had caused fear in that individual.

Non fearing action – Selfish people are accustomed to doing evil. In these individuals, fear of consciousness will not vanish in them. K -1075. Here it has been expressed that an evil way of doing things is to go against the control and do bad things onto the society with fear. For example, it is a social crime to mistake another person's wife as your rightful wife. Mistaking the rightful wife for another is a social crime. Furthermore, misbehaving against her is a bigger social crime.

It is described that by doing this even on the death bed the individual committing this crime will be affrid and regretthis as his consciousness will kill him. K -146. This Kural explains this clearly.

II. Fear that is seen as a mental illness.

Those who live like cowards do not care or bother about doing good deeds. By not doing good deed, they don't even bother that what others will blame them for their actions. However, when they see people who kick and give them two pieces of their mind, then these people will resume and give them what they ask for. K 1077. Those who pretend to be good and do evil are considered fake preachers. Fake preachers follow evil ways and earn money, promotions etc. They are those who like economically on evil practices such as weed smuggling are all in the same category. Everyday these fake preachers are afraid that someone will betray them and they fear when someone says they will betray them. If people with this mind set have enemies, those enemies can easily defeat them. K- 863, 869.

III. Fear of the environment and surrounding.

Many times it can be seen that many stumble because they are hesistant to take a point of view clearly in the withnessroom of many spectaters around them. The main reason for this is thjeir fear. Due to this fear of the surroundings it makes individuals unable to say what came to say in the first place. Though they are aware of many concepts, things and can contribute, but because of their fear, it becomes possible for one to think that the individual does not know anything. Such people achieve defame instead of fame. K-723, 729, 730.

People who wants to speak in an arena should be fearful if they come with potential knowledge without fully knowing about the topic of discussion. Such fear can be overcome if the individual gets the clear idea about what he wants to talk about and come to it.

Fantasy World Life

In human life, some people from time to time live in a fantasy world that they have created physically or created within themselves. Some people have always been like that. This is also a type of mental illness. Though there is not much in Thirukkural which refers to people as mentioned above, There are some Kurals about those who occasionally live in fantasy. K-836, 337, 849.

K-836 , Thiruvalluvar reveals that some people do not know how to live even for a moment. But when it comes to fantasy world, they are living within the fantasy, counting in billions. Such people are considered 'ignorant to live forever'. Some people in this category say they have seen it all even in reality they have not seen it all. These people live within the fantasy that they have seen it. People who live within their fantasy have his problem. K -849.

Consciousness and Paradox

Though there is a feel good factor often after knowledge gain through studies and education, When it come to practice, many of the individuals are unable to practice it. There seems to be a problem putting theory into practice. The knowledge gained through education has a purpose in to making man a higher character in every way. However, if the individual is not educated from the knowledge gained and does not walk through what he has acquired through the knowledge, then the knowledge is of no use to the individual and to others. According to Tiruvallur, some will have

a good grasp of academic knowledge, but will not be virtuous. These individuals as classified as 'wood' (maram). K-997

Those who have a wide and sharp knowledge, but do not follow the path the knowledge reflects, instead he decides to be greedy in acquiring other people's acquisition through wrongful deeds. There is no point in the knowledge gained by these individuals.

There is also another category among educated people who acquire knowledge in a clearly, widely and broadly manner. These people will know how to use their knowledge in practical life. They will realise the gained knowledges usefulness during practical moments. People with this skill is able to explain the knowledge gained to others and teach other of it. However, they will not walk through it at all. Thiruvalluvar calls these people as 'Genius of the Genius'. K-834. Not just with theoretical education but through experiences as well good virtues can be known to others. However, when it comes to practical of life (reality of life), one is unable to walk his thought to follow according to the knowledge gain. One is unable to follow the practice and tends to contradict themselves. For these individuals, Thiruvalluval conveys these to them K-318, K-99 (Moganaraj 2005).

These contradictions that one has within himself, Thiruvalluvar beliefs that one should gradually get rid of this contradictory state of such mental feeling and get rid of the contradiction themselves. This is because this state cannot be cured by medication. It can only be cured by gradual mental maturity. K-316 . One should not do to others anything that one finds to be painful. This maturity and mental state can not be implemented immediately. Rather, a gradual implementation through maturity is the key to this.

Conclusion

The researcher was currently involved in Thirukkural interpretation, with each Thirukkural couplet thoroughly checked for content accuracy while revealing hidden meanings on mental health issues. The sequel study to the present manuscript would focus on the connection between Thirukkural and mental health issues and develop a pertinent framework for resolving mental health issues from the study findings. Hence, the current study is an initial attempt to understand Thirukkural's connectivity with a healthy lifestyle.

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