

# THE EARLY TAMILIAN THOUGHTS ON MENTAL HEALTH

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## *Introduction*

World history of psychology is incomplete without a reference to Tamilian thoughts on mental health. The early Tamilian literature is full of wisdom concerning different aspects of human cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. The Tamilian poets and saints had a genius for introspective meditation. The mystic experience of saints and yogis throws light on the inquiry of mind. While most of the psychology in the west accept only normal and abnormal levels, the Tamilian saints distinguished between normal and super normal. The supernormal phenomena such as mystic experiences and intuitions form the ultimate goals of Tamilian thoughts on mental health.

## *Tamilian Methods of Psychology*

Observation and Introspection are the important methods used in the Tamilian psychology. A variety of observations have been illustrated in the Tamilian literary words. When a particular individual observes his own mental experiences, the method is called Introspection. Hymns of the saints contain a galaxy of their mental and emotional experiences. The saints also accept the superiority of the soul.

*The following direct literary evidences are identified in early Tamil literature in mental health*

01. Men of self esteem  
(நிறை மொழி மாந்தர்) - Tol. Sey. 178
02. Types of emotions - (மெய்ப்பாடு)  
Tol. Mei. 251
03. Symptoms of maladjusted love  
(பசலை) Nat: 28: 5 - 7
04. Problems of old age  
(தொடித்தலை விழுத்தண்டுன்றல்)  
Puram: 243
05. Persons without any disease  
(நோயின்றி இயன்ற யாக்கையர்)  
Thirumurugu Artupadai 183.

06. Persons without any mental and physical problems  
(நுரையிலவாதல்) Puram :91
07. Persons without fear  
(பயக்குறை இல்லை) Puram : 188.
08. Auto suggestion  
(தன்னோய்க்குத் தானே மருந்து) Kural 1102.
09. Self regulation and affliction  
(தன்னெஞ்சே தன்னைச் சுடும்)  
Kura; 293
10. Control of emotions  
(சினம் காக்க) Kural 305
11. Mind without any stress  
(மனத்துக் கண் மாசிலம்) Kural 34.
12. Stability of Mind  
(கோணாமனம்) Tirumantram - 588
13. Meditation for Mental health  
(மன் மனத்துள்ளே மகிழ்ந்திருத்தல்)  
Tirumantram - 620
14. Healthy mind in a healthy body  
(உடம்பை வளர்த்து உயிர் வளர்த்தல்)  
Tirumantram - 724
15. Take care for the body for the betterment of soul  
(ஆன்மாவின் மேம்பாட்டிற்கு உடம்பினை ஓம்புதல்)  
Tirumantram - 725 1/2

Tamilian literary traditions are ancient and largely unbroken and its texts are a magnificent complex. Early tamil poems provide vivid descriptions of mental life of the people and tell us a about material, social and psychological conditions of the people.

### *Study of Emotions*

There is close relationship between mental health and emotions. Fear, anger, joy, wonder, disgust, love, hate are some of the emotions which affect the body and mind and create conditions for mental health. Tolkapiam has given a detailed

study of human emotions. (Tol: Mei:251) Emotions are caused by the motion in the sense perception, brain & blood. Emotions exhibit the conditions of mind and body and find their expression.

Emotions are undoubtedly important for life, but their extremely excited conditions can be harmful. Techniques of controlling emotions have been given in Tamilian art and literature.

Ancient Tamils analysed and explained the mental process as sensation, perception, consciousness and super consciousness. They also explained the part played by the nervous system and sense organs in the development of emotions. We find these concepts in Thevarams and Thiruvagam.

Analysis of human experience became the first step in explaining the mental health in Tamilian psychology. A detailed account of the psychology of child, adolescence, adults, oldage, love making dreaming is found in the sangam literature under 'Agam' and 'Puram' Classifications.

The Tamilian psychology believes that interaction between individual and environment is the sole determinant to mental health. When this and interaction takes place, various emotions erupt.

The first dimension of emotion is pleasant or unpleasant. The second dimension is relaxation tension. The third dimension is rest or excitement. All these dimensions are revealed in the early Tamilian dance forms.

### ***Concept of Mind***

According to the Tamil saints body and mind are two distinct elements. The important psychological topics discussed in the Thevaram and Thiruvachakam are the nature of sense organs, nature of motor organs, nature of mind, methods of self-control and the maintenance of mental health. they analysed the various forms of consciousness, cognition, perception, ignorance and knowledge. According to Tamilian psychology the structure of mental health includes five sense organs. But mind and self preside over these sense organs. Realisation of this structure leads to the knowledge of self illumination and mental health. 2 (Tirumantram:2122). The concept of healthy mind in a healthy body has been emphasised by Thirumular in his Tirumantram. (Tirumantram:724)

In addition to sensory knowledge, and intellectual knowledge, the mind has the dimensions of intuitions and super consciousness, Eternal truths and experiences are grasped only by intuitions and superconsciousness. Knowledge of this

kind was exhibited by the saints with extra ordinary powers. This can be seen in the works of Tirumoolar.

### ***Mental health through education***

According to the Tamilian thought, education must help every person to achieve his / her mental ability. (Kural:140 ) Thiruvalluvar demands education for all and at all ages.(Kural:397) Education promotes self understanding and the understanding of the society which in turn creates better social adjustment and personal development. The Tamilian education aims at all round development of human beings, and that it should not merely be book-centred but also character centred. The purpose of education according to Thirukkural is to enable a man attain the four ideals of Aram, Porul, Inpam and Veedu. Aram means leading a righteous life. The education must enable a man to earn wealth by righteous means. According to Valluvar mental health cannot be achieved without wealth ( Kural:248)

But wealth must be earned by righteous means. Such a wealth will fetch the proper mental satisfaction (Kural: 754)

The concept of "inpam" deals with an emphasis on family values helps a person to lead a happy married life.

According to the Tamilian thought education serves as an instrument of happiness in the world. It raises the status of man in society. Kural declares that the educated person will be considered as a person with bright eyes while the others will be deemed to possess only two sirens, (Kural : 393) Education always enlightens a person and enables him to see the internal thought process and view the external world in proper perspectives.

### ***Ethical education***

One of the aims of ethical education is the development of mental health and personality. According to Kural, the evil behaviours like jealousy, desire, anger, harsh words etc should be avoided for the development of personal qualities. The ethical education helps to broaden subjective and objective outlook of the individual, which in turn promotes inner harmony. Ethical education promotes the internal correction of the mind, when people attempted to do unjust.

According to Kural every act of giving to under privileged in this world is a source of mental happiness while selfishness can lead to untold misery. The learned becomes ignorant when he fails to regulate his life in accordance with the social

principles.

The Tamilian thinkers have placed special emphasis upon the spiritual aspect of education. The aim of education is to unveil the miner talents of the individual and the development of moral qualities. Ethical education discusses the ultimate good and explains the moral duties and promotes mental harmony. It influences both personal and social aspects of human life.

The society is a web of social relationships. These relationships are found in different institutions such as family, marriage, and in several associations. All these are influenced by the ethical education. The Tamilian ideology of moral education casts an important role on the teacher. The teacher has to impart ethical values through theory and practice.

### *Medicine*

The Tamilian medicine, otherwise known as Siddha system of medicine, considered the mind of an individual as the basis for overall health. The standard literatures on Tamil medicine of the eighteen Siddhars who were men of very high erdudition and intellect consists of serveral thousands of verses by each on different subjects under medicine. (Madhavan : 1983 : 23) They were familier with the wonderful properties of rare drugs in both physiological and psychological aspects. The Siddhars have used the application of psychology (Manolayam) for the curing of mental diseases.

### *The Concept of Destiny*

The Concept of it (Flate) plays an important role in the Tamilian psychology. The fate is associated with birth, education, friendship, employment, wealth, marriage, disease, well -being etc. ( Kailasapathy : 1986: 136- 146) Destiny implies in that a divine dispensation controls our life. The beauty of the concept of destiny lies in the fact that even the mighty person paid the price. In general it is amusing that when things go wrong people blame it on destiny but when sucess comes, they claim it their own achievement. The Tamilian thoughts in mental health say that true happiness is the result of continued activity.

### *Analysis of Dream*

Analysis of dream is another subject in the Tamilian psychology. According psycho-analysis, dream is one of the suitable means of the expression of the unconscious desires. The most common, most dominant and most frustrated desires

- (b) Social environment
- (c) Personal factors
- (d) Economic factors
- (e) Inter personal relations

Tamilian grammar of life is based on love and affection. They show these needs for love and affection account for much of the unhappiness and frustration. Tamilian innermost truth is revealed as Love (Meenakshi Sundram: 1961:35)

Tamils have chosen to deal in their works the following four themes.

#### Virtue, wealth, Happiness and Salvation

The following translation of poem said by tradition to have been composed by Auvaiyar (Emmons E White: 1975: 6 - 7).

Virtue consists of giving Wealth is that which  
 is secured without wrong - doing Happiness results  
 when man and wife, sustained and sustaining, Are  
 one in love.  
 To renounce these three goods, with hart fixed  
 on God, Is to experience  
 The bliss of Heaven.

#### **Conclusion**

Today, Psychology has become an organised discipline. Ideas, Concepts, Postulates, methodology, theories and content of psychology are undergoing several changes. With the emergence of new ideas and theories the scope of psychology and mental health tends to become more precise, In ancient times thoughts on psychology and mental hygiene have been expressed in literature Review of early Tamil literature throws light on several concepts in mental health. Tamil is one of the languages which contains rich thoughts on mental health. The works of Sangam age, the wide and illustrating Kural and the impassioned literature of Saints are great contributions of early thoughts on behavioural and medical psychology.

According to the Tamilian thought a true harmony is not a harmony of ideas or thoughts but a harmony of desires. The realisation of inner truth promotes mental health and harmony.

The need for further academic exercise pertaining to research on the Tamilian behavioural psychology is extremely warranted.

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