



HEALTH CONCEPTS IN TIRUKKURAL AND THEIR RELEVANCE TO PHYSICAL EDUCATION

C. Kurinji*, K. Jagathis Babu, A. Prem Edwin***, I. Diravia Gladina****, G. Mahalakshmi*****, K. Ivin Jabakumar***** & M. Suresh Kumar*******

* Assistant Professor, Department of Tamil, Ganesar College of Arts and Science, Ponnamaravathy, Tamil Nadu, India

** Associate Professor & Head, Department of Physical Education, J.J College of Arts and Science, Pudukkottai, Tamil Nadu, India

*** Director of Physical Education, St. Joseph's College (Autonomous), Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, India

**** Director of Physical Education, Holy Cross College (Autonomous), Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, India

***** Director of Physical Education, Government Arts and Science College, Tirupattur, Tamil Nadu, India

***** Director of Physical Education, TUK Arts College, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, India

***** Director of Physical Education, Ganesar College of Arts and Science, Ponnamaravathy, Tamil Nadu, India

Cite This Article: C. Kurinji, K. Jagathis Babu, A. Prem Edwin, I. Diravia Gladina, G. Mahalakshmi, K. Ivin Jabakumar & M. Suresh Kumar, "Health Concepts in Tirukkural and their Relevance to Physical Education", *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research in Arts and Humanities*, Volume 11, Issue 1, January - June, Page Number 116-117, 2026.

Copy Right: © DV Publication, 2026 (All Rights Reserved). This is an Open Access Article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium provided the original work is properly cited.

Type of Review: Peer Reviewed as per |C|O|P|E| Guidance.

Disclaimer: The scholarly papers reviewed and published by DV Publication, India, reflect the views and opinions of their respective authors and do not necessarily represent the views or opinions of DV Publication. The publisher disclaims any responsibility for any harm, loss, or damage resulting from the use of the published content by any party.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20935302>

Abstract:

Tirukkural, authored by the renowned Tamil poet-saint Thiruvalluvar, is one of the greatest works of Tamil literature and provides timeless guidance on ethical living, health, discipline, and human well-being. Although primarily regarded as a moral and philosophical text, Tirukkural contains valuable insights related to physical health, self-discipline, nutrition, moderation, and preventive healthcare. These concepts closely align with the objectives of modern Physical Education, which emphasizes physical fitness, healthy lifestyles, and holistic development. The present paper explores the health-related concepts found in Tirukkural and examines their relevance to contemporary Physical Education.

Key Words: Tirukkural, Health, Physical Education, Wellness, Nutrition, Physical Fitness, Thiruvalluvar

Introduction:

An ancient understanding is that health is a basic prerequisite for an active and meaningful life. In the contemporary society, Physical Education enhances physical fitness, mental well-being, healthy lifestyle practices, and well-rounded personal formation. Most importantly, many of these concepts were crystallized over two millennia ago in the Tirukkural, one of the major works of classical Tamil literature written by Thiruvalluvar. Tirukkural consists of 1,330 couplets which are divided into three parts about virtue, wealth, and love, and has been renowned for overall universal and pragmatic knowledge. Thiruvalluvar had insisted that health is more than the lack of disease, but a condition for which one could live by the exercise of disciplined living, moderation, moral rectitude, and self-restraint. He taught lessons on food and eating habits, preventive measures in healthcare, emotion regulation, and self-discipline that still hold true in modern Physical Education and health promotion. The holistic approach encouraged by the Tirukkural is in line with contemporary ideas of physical, mental, social, and emotional well-being.

Health and Preventive Care in Tirukkural:

The Tirukkural probably has the most impressive contribution of all towards preventive health. As we discussed later in this chapter called Marunthu (Medicine) we should focus very deeply that we have to stay healthy and well by having good healthy habits and not only getting treated after we feel sick. Thiruvalluvar proposes that those who master their lifestyle and eating habits prevent many diseases. It has its roots in the premise the general knowledge which underpins modern preventive medicine which focuses on promoting health, disease prevention, and good ways of behaving. Prevention as a concept of Physical Education can be very important. Regular exercise, physical activity, and fitness programs aim not solely to enhance performance but also to curb obesity, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and other lifestyle-related conditions. Therefore the preventive measures recommended by Thiruvalluvar are very pertinent for today's health education.

Nutrition and Food Habits:

Nutrition is a central element of health and a philosophy central to the Tirukkural. Thiruvalluvar repeatedly urges moderation in food consumption and cautions against overeating. You should eat food after getting the digestion of the food you ate. The advice is indicative of the way we comprehend, metabolically, digestion and nutritional balance. Healthy eating habits will be part of PE and sports training. Athletes and people undergoing exercise need balanced food for energy and growth, recovery, and optimal performance. Modern nutritionists push portioning, mealtime, and moderate nutrition, principles that mirror those on the Tirukkural, by the way. The lesson of these teachings is more relevant than ever at the time of our unhealthy eating behaviour and rising lifestyle diseases.

"You need no medications to eat because one cannot digest whatever had just been eaten." In practice this principle underlies food science today and advocates for healthy eating habits and right meal timing in order to prevent lifestyle diseases. In Physical Education, adequate diet is a well-known cornerstone for energy production, good physical performance, physical

recovery, and general well-being. The focus put by Thiruvalluvar on eating as moderation makes sense based on the latest advice for eating healthily.

Discipline and Health:

Self-discipline is the most recurring theme of Tirukkural. Thiruvalluvar has argued that the greatest virtue that can be achieved in life is personal discipline. The importance of personal discipline in maintaining regular habits is stressed by him. He suggested controlling one's inclinations to act, sticking with the same thing time after time and avoidance of actions which have no advantage from either a mental or physical standpoint. The teachings from the chapters dealing with conduct and moral discipline and self-restraint stress how important it is to control one's behavior and control emotions! Fitness goals and athletic prowess is a result of adherence to physical education subject, and physical education is determined by discipline itself. Compliance, adherence to the training protocol as well as regular participation in training plans for exercise, healthful behavior patterns, and adherence to training programs, which will be self-imposed on you requires a significant amount of discipline. They stand as guiding principles for students, athletes and health professionals alike: The ideals articulated by Thiruvalluvar will echo throughout the years.

Mental Health and Emotions, Well-Being, and Mental Health in Recent Times:

Mental health is recognized as a core component of overall well being in contemporary health science. Back before the rise of psychology, Thiruvalluvar believed that emotional control, patience and resistance to anger were essential traits. Unrestrained emotions to him were impediments to happiness on self-improvement and social order. Patience self-control and anger avoidance; the chapters are great tools for emotional intelligence and psychological resilience. Physical Education increasingly includes yoga, meditation, de-stressing exercises/relaxation, and recreational sports to stimulate minds. Thiruvalluvar's focus on emotional balance harmonizes with these modern practices. He teaches that the mental and physical are interlinked and can only be improved when developed together.

Management of Holistic Health and Lifestyle and Life in Totality:

The Tirukkural encourages such holistic lifestyle, where physical health is interdependent with mental health, mental stability, moral behavior, moral behaviour, and social and ethical duty, with a holistic approach, which integrates well-being. Thiruvalluvar believed that good health could not be attained only through physical means but moral, self-control, and living is what is needed, he thought to promote the principles were ethical in formality, so that you never leave on the side of the road of living in vain. This holistic view of health strikingly resembles how we envisage contemporary wellness as a concept including the physical, emotional, social, psychological, intellectual, and spiritual aspects. The aims of Physical Education have extended beyond fitness into healthy lifestyles and the development of good habits and skills. As such, the instruction in the Tirukkural plays a crucial philosophical role in modern health education programming.

Conclusion:

The health concepts contained in Tirukkural illustrate Thiruvalluvar's advanced appreciation of human well-being as experienced at a higher plane of comprehension than we might wish to think. Thiruvalluvar's healthy eating, preventive health care, self restraint, moderation in action, moderation of feeling still resonate today. These ideas are quite in line with the objectives and principles of today's Physical Education movement and with physical activity, mental fitness, and healthy lifestyles. But Tirukkural's literary art is more than just an artwork, it's a rich source of health education as the study notes. Bringing this universal understanding to Physical Education will help build healthier, more responsible and disciplined people.

References:

1. Babu, K. J., Edwin, A. P., Gladina, I. D., Mahalakshmi, G., Jabakumar, K. I., & Suresh Kumar, M. (2026). Effect of micro-breaks on attention, mental fatigue, and cognitive performance among college students. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Modern Education*, 12(1), 40-42.
2. Gladina, I. D., Edwin, A. P., Mahalakshmi, G., Jabakumar, K. I., & Suresh Kumar, M. (2025). Analysis of stress level among football players at various playing positions. *International Journal of Engineering Research and Modern Education*, 10(2), 156-158.
3. Kurinji, C. (2015). Kootrainnavaru Vilakakalir. *Tamil Pozhil*, 89(6), 211-214.
4. Kurinji, C. (2018). Iyarkai Igandha Nigalvugal. *Kapiya Nokil Silambu*, 1(1), 112.
5. Kurinji, C. (2022). *Tirunavukkarasu Devarathil Nangu Nerigal*. Raja Publications.
6. Kurinji, C. (2023). Ki Ra vin Andhaman Naicker Pudhinathil Samudhaya Nilai. *Pudhu Punal*, 14(9), 90-91.
7. Kurinji, C. (2025). Tirunavukkarasu Devarathil Saiva Sithantha Koorugal. *Journal of Classical Thamizh*, 13(2), 73-78.
8. Kurinji, C. K. Jagathis Babu, I. Diravia Gladina, A. Prem Edwin, G. Mahalakshmi & M. Suresh Kumar, "Jallikattu as a Symbol of Physical Courage and Cultural Identity", *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Modern Education*, Volume 12, Issue 1, January - June, Page Number 90-91, 2026.
9. Pope, G. U. (2013). *The sacred Kural of Tiruvalluva Nayanar* (Reprint ed.). Asian Educational Services.
10. Rajaram, M. (2009). *Thirukkural: Pearls of inspiration*. Rupa Publications.
11. Rajaram, M. (2015). *Glory of Thirukkural*. International Institute of Tamil Studies.