

Siddha



Siddha system is one of the oldest systems of medicine in India . The term Siddha means achievements and Siddhars were saintly persons who achieved results in medicine. Eighteen Siddhars were said to have contributed towards the development of this medical system. Siddha literature is in Tamil and it is practised largely in Tamil speaking part of India and abroad. The Siddha System is largely therapeutic in nature.

History :

The original Home allotted to mankind by the Creator was in the temperate and fertile region of the East and pointedly in India. It is from here that the human race began its culture and career. India may, therefore, be safely stated as that the first country from which human culture and civilization originated and spread. According to Indian history prior to Aryans migration, the Dravidian was the first inhabitant of India of whom the Tamilians were the most prominent. The Tamilians were not only the earliest civilized but also those who may more considerable progress in civilization than any other early people. The languages of India were divided into two great classes, the northern with Sanskrit as the pre-pondering element and the southern with Dravidian language as independent bases. The science of medicine is of fundamental importance to man's well being and his survival and so it must have originated with man and developed as civilization. It is, therefore rather pointless to try to determine the exact point of time to which the beginning of these systems could be traced They are eternal, they began with man and may end with him. The Siddha was flouriest in south and Ayurveda prevalent in the north. Instead of giving the name of any of individual as the founder of these systems our ancestors attributed their origin to the creator. According to the tradition it was Shiva who unfolded the knowledge of Siddha system of medicine to his consort Parvati who handed it down to Nandi Deva and he the Siddhars. The Siddhars were great scientists in ancient times.

According to tradition, the origin of Siddha system of medicine is attributed to the great Siddha Ayastiyar. Some of his works are still standard books of medicine and surgery in daily use among the Siddha Medical practitioners.

Basic Concepts

This principles and doctrines of this system, both fundamental and applied, have a close similarity to Ayurveda, with specialization in Iatro-chemistry. According to this system the human body is the replica of the universe and so are the food and drugs irrespective of their origin.

Like Ayurveda, this system believes that all objects in the universe including human body are composed of five basic elements namely, earth, water, fire, air and sky. The food, which the human body takes and the drugs it uses are all, made of these five elements. The proportion of the elements present in the drugs vary and their preponderance or otherwise is responsible for

certain actions and therapeutic results.

As in Ayurveda, This system also considers the human body as a conglomeration of three humours, seven basic tissues and the waste products of the body such as faeces, urine and sweat. The food is considered to be basic building material of human body which gets processed into humours, body tissues and waste products. The equilibrium of humours is considered as health and its disturbance or imbalance leads to disease or sickness.

This system also deals with the concept of salvation in life. The exponents of this system consider achievement of this state is possible by medicines and meditation.

Materia Medica

The system has developed a rich and unique treasure of drug knowledge in which use of metals and minerals is very much advocated. Some idea about the depth of knowledge the system possesses in the field of mineral, materia medica can be formed from the detailed drug classification, briefly described below:

There are 25 varieties of water-soluble inorganic compounds called 'UPPU. These are different types of alkalies and salts.

There are 64 varieties of mineral drugs that do not dissolve in water but emit, vapours when put in fire. Thirty-two of these are natural and remaining are artificial.

There are Seven drugs that do not dissolve in water but emit vapour on heating.

The system has classified separately classes of metals and alloys, which melt when, heated and solidifies on cooling. These include items like gold, silver, copper, tin, lead and iron. These are incinerated by special processes and used in medicine.

There is a group of drugs that exhibit sublimation on heating and includes mercury and its different forms like red sulphide of mercury, mercuric chloride and red oxide of mercury etc.

Sulphur, which is insoluble in water, finds a crucial place in Siddha materia medica along with mercury for use in therapeutics and in maintenance of health.

The above classification shows detailed knowledge and study of minerals that this system has evolved for treatment. In addition there are drugs obtained from animal sources. The system has published a hand-book on Siddha treatment for common diseases and ailments.

Chemistry in Siddha :

In Siddha system chemistry had been found well developed into a science auxiliary to medicine and alchemy. It was found useful in the preparation of medicine as well as in transmutation of basic metals into gold. The knowledge of plants and minerals were of very high order and they were fully acquainted with almost all the branches of science. The

Siddhars were also aware of several alchemical operations divided into several processes such as – calcinations, sublimation, distillation, fusion, separation conjunction or combination, congelation, cibation, fermentation, exaltation i.e. the action or process of refining gold, fixation i.e. bringing to the condition of being non-volatile i.e. to the state of resisting the action of fire, purification, incineration of metals, liquifaction, extraction and so on.

Even cupellation of gold and silver which is an essential process in Alchemy in which is claimed to have been discovered by the Arabs, was known to the Siddhars long long before.

They were even polypharmacists and as such were engaged in boiling, dissolving, precipitating and coagulating chemical substances. Some of their secret methods, especially those in fixing and consolidating certain volatile substances that could not resist the action of fire, such as Mercury, Sulphur, Orpiment, Vermilion, Arsenic etc. continue still a mystery.

Strength

The Siddha system is capable of treating all types of disease other than emergency cases. In general this system is effective in treating all types of skin problems particularly Psoriasis, STD, urinary tract infections, diseases of liver and gastro intestinal tract, general debility, postpartum anaemia, diarrhoea and general fevers in addition to arthritis and allergic disorders.

Diagnosis and Treatment

The diagnosis of diseases involve identifying it causes. Identification of causative factors is through the examination of pulse, urine, eyes, study of voice, colour of body, tongue and the status of the digestive system. The system has worked out details procedure of urine examination which includes study of it's colour, smell, density, quantity and oil drop spreading pattern. It holistic in approach and the diagnosis involves the study of person as a whole as well as his disease.

The Siddha System of Medicine emphasises that medical treatment is oriented not merely to disease but has to take into account the patient, environment, the meteorological consideration, age, sex, race, habits, mental frame, habitat, diet, appetite, physical condition, physiological constitution etc. This means the treatment has to be individualistic, which ensures that mistakes in diagnosis or treatment are minimal.

The Siddha System also deals with the problems affecting the women's health and a lot of formulations are available in the Siddha classics which can counter the problems for a better living. The care for women's health starts from the first day of the girl child. The Siddha System strongly advocates breast feeding upto the first three months of the life. The Siddha System believes in the principle of "Food itself is medicine" and during this nursing period, lactating mothers are advised to take the food rich in iron, protein and fibre so as to prevent any nutritional disorders both to the child as well as the mothers. Once in 15 days, the mothers are advised to take simple remedies for de-worming so that they may not land up in anaemic conditions.

For any diseases due to infection or otherwise, the treatment is individualistic on examination of that particular patient. Once the girl child attained menarche, the Siddha System has got a variety of preparations which can strengthen her reproductive system so as to deliver a healthy child in future. And also, effective treatments are available to take care of the menopausal syndromes, especially problems related to the hormonal imbalance.

The Siddha System is effective in treating chronic cases of liver, skin diseases especially "Psoriasis", rheumatic problems, anaemia, prostate enlargement, bleeding piles and peptic ulcer. The Siddha Medicines which contains mercury, silver, arsenic, lead and sulphur have been found to be effective in treating certain infectious diseases including venereal diseases. Practitioners have claimed that Siddha medicines are effective in reducing the highly debilitating problems that manifest themselves among patients of HIV/AIDS. More research into the efficacy of these medicines is presently in progress.