The Siddha System of Medicine

HE SIDDHA system of medicine is one of the ancient systems of medicine found in South India near Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu. The term siddha means achievements and Siddhars are those who have achieved perfection in the medicine. Eighteen Siddhars are said to have contributed towards the systematic development of this system and recorded their experience in Tamil language.

The Siddha system of medicine emphasizes on the patient, environment, age, sex, race, habits, mental frame work, habitat diet, appetite, physical condition, physiological constitution of the disease for its treatment which is individualistic in nature. Diagnosis of the disease is done through examination of pulse (ratio of Vatham, Pitham, Kapam etc), urine, eyes, study of voice, colour of the body, tongue and status of the digestion of individual patient. System has unique treasure for the conversion of metals and minerals as drug and many infective disease are treated with the medicines containg specially processed mercury, silver, arsenic, lead and sulphur without any side effects.

The strength of the Siddha system lies in providing very effective therapy for Psoriasis, Rheumatic disorders, Chronic liver disorders, benign prostate hypertrophy, bleeding piles, peptic ulcer including various kind of dermatological disorders of non-psoriatic nature.

Varman (Pressure Manipulating therapy) is special kind of treatment in Siddha system and specific points being manipulated by pressure with the figure and the pain is relieved and the restricted movement becomes free and active.

Thokkanam is another type of treatment which includes applying oil on the area of swelling and pain and massaging so that the neuromuscular and musculoskeletal pain and swelling is relieved.

The Siddha system of medicine is very popular in Tamil Nadu and most of the Primary Health Centres and Government Hospitals are having Siddha wing and this system of medicine to be utilized throughout India by opening Siddha Wing throughout the country.

During the last six decades, there has been continuous development in Siddha medical education and this has led to the establishment of the National Institute of Siddha at Chennai as apex institute having six specialities in post graduate teaching leading to the award of M.D. (S) Degree. These are Maruthuvam
(General Medicine), Sirappu Maruthuvam (Special Medicine), Kuzanthai Maruthuvam (Paediatrics), Gunapadam (Pharmacology), Noi Nadal (Pathology) and Nanju Nool & Maruthuvam Neethinool (Toxicology).

For the development of focused research in Siddha system of medicine, Govt. has constituted Central Council for Research in Siddha (CCRS), an autonomous body under the Ministry of AYUSH, Govt. of India.

Education

Siddha like all other traditional medical systems gave way to biomedicine some 300 years back. Revival happened and institutionalized education started in the middle of the twentieth century. Diplomas were awarded in the Presidency of Madras and medical registration based on hereditary training was awarded.

An integrated course along with allopathic training was in vogue till 1960. Subsequently an exclusive college affiliated to university of Madras was started at Palayamkottai in Thirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu in 1964. Medical degree Bachelor of Indian Medicine (BIM-Siddha) with five and half years duration was awarded. This college now conducts post-graduate courses with three years duration in five branches. The other college at Chennai also conducts both graduate and postgraduate courses leading to Bachelor of Siddha Medicine and Surgery and Doctor of Medicine. (Siddha). Two colleges are run by the government of Tamil Nadu and are affiliated to The Tamil Nadu Dr. M.G.R. Medical University, Chennai. There are five private siddha colleges in Tamil Nadu and one in Kerala. The National Institute of Siddha imparts postgraduate training. Around three hundred Graduates and 100 Post graduates pass out every year.

More Specialty branches like external therapies including Varmam (Sirappumaruthuvam), Pathology (Noi Nadal), Toxicology, (Nanj Maruthuvam) and Pediatrics (Kuzanthai Maruthuvam), were established in Post graduation of Siddha medicine. The curriculum is based on the one laid down by the Central Council of Indian Medicine, New Delhi. (An autonomous body formed under the I.M.C.C. ACT 1970.) University of Jaffna in Sri Lanka also imparts graduate training in Siddha medicine.

Govt. of India strictly implements the qualifying norms for new colleges and new specialization with the objective of improving teaching standards and also broad based review of curriculum and syllabus which includes modern sciences like Micro biology, Medical Biochemistry,

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Pharmacology, Toxicology and Modern medicine. New diploma course in integrated ISM pharmacy and Nursing therapists to provide well trained Para-medics for treatment centers both in public and private sector has been started in Tamil Nadu. Currently, Internees are posted to primary health centers to enable them in delivering primary care after completion and train them to work in rural environment.

Ministry of AYUSH provides financial support for conducting Continuing Medical Education program for teachers and for Govt. Physicians. Young physicians undergo Training under Guru-Sishya programme.

To start new Siddha Medical College where Siddha Medical College is not available, the Ministry of AYUSH is sanctioning the college and giving 10 crores for construction of the college. Taking this opportunity, the private management and the state governments may start new Siddha medical colleges in their areas.

Research

An apex body for research was formed exclusively for Siddha, Central Council of research in Siddha which was earlier apart of CCRAS. This autonomous council has one central research institute for siddha and regional Research institutes and two units like survey of medicinal plants unit and Clinical research units.

Research is focused on clinical research, literary research, drug development and standardization and Fundamental research. Apart from central council the state dept has also established centers for Research in diseases like AIDS, Cancer, Diabetes, Asthma, Infertility. Multi–Disciplinary research are being carried out inidentifying new health benefits for known drugs and known benefits from so far unknown drugs. Dermatological and Neuro-skeletal muscular Disorders have Been effectively treated. Clinical research shows the Efficacy of various Siddha formulations in Anti-natal care/Post natalcare, Anemia, HIV, Diabetes, Rheumatoid arthritis, Psoriasis, cancer, Polycystic ovarian disease and fibroid uterus.

Research organizations currently focusing on child survival to reduce the infant mortality, Safety profile of Herbomineral drugs,
Drug standardization, Endangered Siddha plants conservation and multiplication, Literary research and survey and documentation of Traditional knowledge. Research organizations in India which carry out research are the Central Research Institute for Siddha, three Post- graduate colleges of Siddha, Private universities with grants from Dept of AYUSH, Department of Bio- Technology and Department of Science and Technology.

NGOs in different regions of country carry out field based research and other university departments on medicinal plants, Phyto-chemistry, Pharmacology, and State public health Department also carry out field based research activities to promote the Siddha system.

Manufacture

As many as six hundred units mostly in the tiny sector and a few in small scale sector are engaged in the manufacture of Siddha medicine. Government of Tamil Nadu pharmacies at Chennai and Thirunelveli manufacture medicine for the requirement of government hospitals. The major Siddha Industries in Tamil Nadu are Indian Medical Practitioners Cooperative Pharmacy and Stores (IMPCOPS), SKM Siddha and Siddha Pharmaceuticals, Lakshmi Seva Sangh and Tamil Nadu Medicinal Plants Corporation Limited (TAMPCOL) has consistently paid.

Each one of the above industry has increased their production / packaging capacity. Most of them have excess capacity for future growth. Rest of them are in the process of improving capacity. Interestingly most of them are manufacturers of Classical formulations and increase the number of Retail outlets and also sales. Good manufacturing. Practice (GMP) was implemented in 2002 and is mandatory for all AYUSH drug manufacturing units. Sophisticated Instrumentation Labs for analysis are being established by companies. There are four independent Third party labs for testing quality standards with expertise in Siddha.

Formulation Testing

GMP education is carried out for continuous quality improvement both by Govt. bodies and Manufacturers Association. Manufacture and sale of Siddha medicine are regulated by the state licensing authority–ISM and technical inputs for the formulations are given by a competent authority of the state directorate of Indian medicine. The Drug and Cosmetics Act of 1940 with various amendments to it with specific reference to Siddha is applicable to it.

Siddha in Global Context

Siddha system of medicine is also patronized extensively, more particularly in Tamil speaking countries like Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, Mauritius and some parts of Indonesia. The internet, Social media and electronic media particularly the Tamil Television channels have created an awareness among the Tamil diaspora.

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Cost Effectiveness

The Cost of drug and treatment procedures are much less and are affordable to vast majority of the people of the developing countries where universal health insurance or public health delivery is in adequate.

Yet strength of the Siddha system is in the area of diagnosis, particularly the pulse diagnosis which is predominantly dependant on the clinical acumen of the practitioner and could be carried out in any location and precise. It does not require a great clinical laboratory or costly instruments.

Most of the drugs based on food ingredients, spices and plants are proven to be safe in general. And even in case of inorganic such as coral, pearl oyster, conch shell cowrie shells and processed calcinated copper, zinc are safe in the micro particulate state and dose levels.

Patenting of Procedures

There are certain unique external therapy procedures in Siddha medicine like Varma which is slowly gaining national attention. There is a need to validate, standardize these procedures before they are patented. Like some postures of yoga asanas being patented there is every chance that these procedures are also patented. So the CCRS is taking special interest in standardizing and patenting.

Crosspathy : Issues and Challenges

There is a felt need among siddha physicians who run clinics in remote
locations as well as the ones who man major hospitals that they should be allowed to use some of the bio-medicine. Since many patients come to Siddha treatment once they find no alternative or in terminal illness, siddha physicians feel it is their responsibility to provide pain relief, protect patients from acute distress and prevent sudden death. Now many cardiologists themselves recommend high risk individuals to keep certain medications in their pockets and use to prevent damage in ischemic heart disease. The argument of these doctors arise from the fact that they are taught in Human anatomy, physiology, Biochemistry, Microbiology and pharmacology in their Siddha course and also trained in Teaching hospitals in obstetrics. They are not seeking complete use of bio-medicine. Moreover in Tamilnadu, Allopathy and siddha are collocated in Primary health Centres. In centres where there are only one Allopath and one Siddha physician, on days allopath is either on leave or on field work, Siddha physicians are forced to attend patients who seek bio-medicine. Since in remote hilly regions Allopath’s hesitate to work siddha physicians are forced to use bio-medicine. In most medium sized hospitals even in metros there is a scarcity of biomedicine trained physicians for night calls and siddha physicians do the role. This challenge could be overcome by bridge course for Siddha physicians.

**Government Efforts**

Both the Government of India and Tamil Nadu State Government have a policy to promote Siddha medicine and are taking efforts to mainstream this system in public health delivery. Various Institutions have been established by the government and regulations are in place for ensuring better quality of health care. WHO on its part has initiated lot of efforts for strengthening various components of system. Through Central Sector Scheme and Centrally Sponsored Scheme, Public Health initiative Scheme of Government of India, Ministry of AYUSH Siddha Projects are carried out throughout India.

In central Government, Siddha physician are selected through UPSC and posted in Central Government Health Scheme Wellness Centre throughout India.

**Increasing Popularity Abroad**

Siddha System of Medicine is more popular in Sri Lanka where Siddha Medical Colleges and Hospitals are available. The system is also popular in Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand where Siddha Hereditary Physicians and Qualified Physicians are Practicing and doing noble services.

Realising the above value of Siddha system of medicine, the noble system should be utilized further nationally and internationally for the welfare of the human beings.

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