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THE UNIVERSITY OF TRANS-DISCIPLINARY HEALTH SCIENCES & TECHNOLOGY

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ODE TO INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM

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UNDERSTANDING THE SYSTEM

In Siddha, various psychological and physiological functions of the body are attributed to the combination of seven body tissues:

Pathya - Apathya is a list of dos and donts prescribed by the system to maintain a healthy diet and lifestyle.

VARMAM

Varma points practiced on a hemiplegic (abdomen)(© Christian Sebastia)

Varma points practiced on a hemiplegic (shoulder joint) (© Christian Sebastia)

- Varmam is a specialised branch of Siddha practised in pockets of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. It deals with stimulating specialised points and is used in cases of trauma, accidental injuries and internal injuries in which no immediate symptoms are visible.
- There are about 100 vital points in the body, which are either junctions of bones, tendons, ligaments or blood vessels, and they are called Varma points. Practitioners use the knowledge of these points to regulate bodily functions.

CONCEPT OF DRUGS

- The drugs used in Siddha are classified as Thavaram (herbal products), Thathu (inorganic substances) and Jangamam (animal products).
- They are classified on the basis of five properties: Suvai (Taste), Gunam (Character), Veeryam (Potency), Pirivu (Class) and Mahimai (Action)..
- According to their mode of application, Siddha medicines are categorized into two classes:
  - Internal medicine is administered through the oral route and further classified into 32 categories based on form, methods of preparation, shelf-life of the drug etc..
  - External medicine is also classified into 32 categories. It includes certain forms of drugs, specific applications (such as nasal, eye and ear drops) and certain procedures (such as leech application).

The Siddhas developed processes for converting minerals and toxic metals into medicines fit for consumption. Most texts on alchemy (dated 9th to 18th centuries CE) explain the systematic knowledge, procedures and practices relating to the use of metal and mineral substances as medicine.

Raw lingam (red sulphide of mercury) (© Christian Sebastia)

Mucuna atropurpurea (buchariya) (Photo courtesy FRLHT)

Commiphora berryi (priyangu) (Photo courtesy FRLHT)

Sweating box (© Christian Sebastia)

Raw material for kasayam (© Christian Sebastia)

Rasa: grinding of mercury with curanam (© Christian Sebastia)

Manuscripts (© Christian Sebastia)

TREATMENT

- The treatment in Siddha medicine is aimed at keeping the tridosha in equilibrium and maintenance of the seven elements.
- Treatment is classified into three categories:
  - Devamaruthuvum (divine method): medicines like parpam, chendooram, guru, kuligai made of mercury, sulfur and pashanams.
  - Manuda maruthuvum (rational method): medicines made of herbs like churanam, kudineer or vadagam.
  - Asura maruthuvum (surgical method): like incision, excision, heat application, blood-letting, leech application etc.