

**SIGNIFICANCE OF MEDICINES IN KOLLIHILLS AT NAMAKKAL DISTRICT****P. Thamizhchelvi**

Assistant Professor, Department of History, Kandaswami Kandar's College, Velur, Namakkal, Tamilnadu



**Cite This Article:** P. Thamizhchelvi, "Significance of Medicines in Kollihills at Namakkal District", International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research in Arts and Humanities, Special Issue, December, Page Number 24-26, 2017.

**Introduction:**

Kollihills is one of the important hill stations in Tamil Nadu. Kollihills is formed in the shape of an open square, thus known as Chathuragiri, literally means square shaped hills, tucked away between the pachamalai and Kalvarayan hill ranges of the Eastern Ghats in South India. Unlike man made Ooty and Kodaikanal, Kollihills is a traditional hill country, the land of friendly tribes. According to the references in tamil sangam literature Kollihills was once ruled by the benevolent and most valiant King Valvil Ori, who lived sometime during 200 A.D. The region, consisting of 18 nadus (villages) including the present Rasipuram and Senthamangalam, were under his rule. In Kollihills the main town Solakkadu is just an overgrown village. Here viewpoint and weekly sandy are the important places. Next biggest village in the vicinity is Semmedu, which boast of a primary health centre, telephone exchange, a few shops, hotels and the Valvil Ori statue. Another village on the way is Vasaloorpatty, where the Government fruit farm is located. It is a beautiful place where paddy is cultivated in the valley and a variety of hybrid and native fruits such as Jackfruit, Oranges, Coffee, Pepper, and spices are grown on the slope here. There is a Tampcol medicinal farm at Valavanthi Nadu, run by the Tamil Nadu Government. The farm is surely worth seeing, as Kollihills is perhaps better known for its medicinal plants than anything else. A wide variety of medicinal plants and herbs used in Ayurvedic, sidha and Unani medicine are natured, gathered and sent from here. Even the most common medicinal plants acquire a special value when grown here, as the medicinal plants from Kollihills are generally considered to be more potent and effective. For example, the chitharathai an effective medicine for cold, Athimaduram, Keelanelli, Karpooravalli, Thuthuvalai, Tulasi and a host of other herbs besides a variety of spices are also cultivated here. Since ancient times Kollihills has always been famous for its medicinal plants. It is believed the siddhars (ancient medicinal men) used herbs in traditional medicine for several thousand years. The knowledge of medicinal plants has been accumulated in the course of many centuries based on different medicinal systems.

The siddhars lived, researched and meditated here in the caves inside the sacred groves. Many such sacred groves are believed to be found in the forests here (near the Agasagangai falls) even today, and the adventurous go on trekking expeditions, to the caves where the Siddhars to prepare their medicines and concoctions. The moss covering the inner walls of the Siddhars caves is believed to have unique healing properties. The sacred groves are guarded by the local temple deities, and the felling of trees is prohibited here.

Kolli Hills is thus a naturalists heaven a treasure trove of medicinal plants, and the native home of traditional hill country and people. But like eco-systems elsewhere, these hills too have been invaded by modern farming practices and invasive methods. Tapioca, cassava and hybrid varieties of rice, which were introduced in this region recently, have overtaken the traditional paddy varieties, minor millets, pulses and fruit farms in terms of profitability. The M. S Swaminathan Research Foundation has taken efforts to arrest this genetic erosion and rescue the traditional crop varieties. The local practice of burning the land after each yield has proven to be detrimental to the soil. The wiping out of traditional farmlands and orchards, has contributed to the near extinction of the mountain bees that produced the superior quality honey that Kolli Hills was once so famous for.

**Ethno Medicines:**

Plants have been used in traditional medicine for several thousand years [1]. The knowledge of medicinal plants has been accumulated in the course of many centuries based on different medicinal systems such as Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha. In India, it is reported that traditional healers use 2500 plant species and 100 species of plants serve as regular sources of medicine [2]. During the last few decades there has been an increasing interest in the study of medicinal plants and their traditional use in different parts of the world [3, 4, 5, 6 and 7]. Documenting the indigenous knowledge through ethno botanical studies is important for the conservation and utilization of biological resources. Today according to the World Health Organization (WHO), as many as 80% of the world's people depend on traditional medicine for their primary healthcare needs. There are considerable economic benefits in the development of indigenous medicines and in the use of medicinal plants for the treatment of various diseases [8]. Due to less communication means, poverty, ignorance and unavailability of modern health facilities, most people especially rural people are still forced to practice traditional medicines for their common day ailments. Most of these people form the poorest link in the trade of medicinal plants [9]. A vast knowledge of how to use the plants against different illness may be expected to have accumulated in areas where the use of plants is still of great importance [10].

There has been a resurgence in the consumption and demand for medicinal plants. These plants are finding use as pharmaceuticals, nutraceuticals, cosmetics and food supplements. Even as traditional source of medicines and they continue to play pivotal rule. Modern pharmacopoeia contains at least 25% drugs derived from plants. Many other are synthetic analogues built on prototypes compounds isolated from plants. Demand for medicinal plant is increasing in both developing and developed countries due to growing recognition of natural products, being non-toxic, having no side-effects, easily available at affordable prices. Medicinal plant sector has traditionally occupied an important position in the socio cultural, spiritual and medicinal arena of rural and tribal lives of Tamil Nadu. Millions of rural households use medicinal plants in a self-help mode. Over 20,000

**International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research in Arts and Humanities****Impact Factor 5.225, Special Issue, December - 2017****National Conference on Disseminating Knowledge on Preservation and Conservation of Ancient Monuments and Antiquities of India****On 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> December 2017 Organized By****PG & Research Department of Botany & Biotechnology & History, Bons Secours College for Women, Thanjavur, Tamilnadu**

practitioners of the Indian System of Medicine in the oral and codified streams use medicinal plants in preventive, promotive and curative applications in Tamil Nadu. There are estimated to be about 1000 manufacturing units in Tamil Nadu. In recent years, the growing demand for herbal product has led to a quantum jump in volume of plant materials traded within and across the countries.

A few ethnic tribes like the Irular, Kaanikkara, Karumpar, Palliyan, Paniyar, Sholagar, Thodar and others dwell in these ecosystems and still depend on naturally occurring or cultivated from the state (N.C. Nair & A.N Henry, Flora of Tamil Nadu, India, - Analysis – Vol. I, 1983, B.S.I., Coimbatore). Out of this, it is found that 1474 are medicinal plants. A total number are found to be used in Siddha system of medicine which is commonly practiced throughout the state. Tampcol has two medicinal farms, one in Chennai city at Arumbakkam and at Valavandinadu, Kolli hills, Namakkal district. In Chennai farm six varieties of medicinal plants are cultivated in five acres to meet the fresh herb requirements for the production of herbal hair tonic, other medicated oils and also supplied to pharmacy at Aringar Anna Govt. Hospital for Indian medicine and Homoeopathy, Chennai. Another 150 varieties of medicinal plants are maintained in the parts as reference material. The farm is also visited by the students of all systems of Indian Medicine. Leading practitioners of Indian Medicine also make use of this farm as their reference for medicinal plants. This farm is very popular and has contributed for herbal awareness in Chennai City. The farm participates in the exhibitions conducted by Educational Institutions. Trade fairs and seminars/conferences in the city. The public are also encouraged to buy the medicinal plants at low prices to enhance the importance and awareness of herbal medicines. The Kolli Hills medicinal farm is situated in Valavandhinadu at the altitude of 3600 ft. The land is undulating with rocky slopes. Out of 105 acres year marked, the corporation has developed 55 acres and cultivating a dozen species for medicinal plants on large scale and another 50 varieties which includes trees, climbers and perennials are cultivated on bunds, hedges, fence line etc. As per suitability of nursery in which seedlings / saplings / cuttings / graftings are raised for own cultivation and to supply to the government institutions concerned and also to progressive farmers in the state and outside.

**Siddha System of Medicine:**

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 advanced. It is therefore rather pointless to try to determine the exact point of time when any system of medicine was evolved and codified. A system of medicine is not a discovery but a gradual evolution during successive periods of history. It owes its progress to great men, who have not only enriched the science, but also society and civilization as a whole.

There are two ancient systems of medicine in India, the Siddha that flourished in the South and the Ayurveda prevalent in the North. Instead of giving the name of any one individual as the founder of either system, our ancients wisely attributed their origin to the Creator. According to tradition, it was Shiva who unfolded the knowledge of Siddha system of medicine to his consort, Paravati, who handed it down to Nandideva and he, to Siddhars. Therefore it is called 'Saiva Sampradayam' (tradition of Shiva), or 'Siddha Sampradayam'. In the case of Ayurveda it was Brahma, the Creator of the Universe, who taught the science to prajapati, he to Aswini Devatas and they, in their turn, to Atreya etc. So this tradition is called the Brahma or Arsha Sampradaya (the tradition of Rishis).

A civilized society must naturally have had a system of medicine which catered to the health needs of its people. This was the Siddha system. The term 'Siddhi' means 'achievement' and the Siddhars were men who achieved certain results in medicine, as well as in yoga or tapas. The results in medicine were achieved by the Siddhars through their mental powers, they bequeathed their experiences in medicine and yoga to posterity.

Siddha system is one of the ancient traditional systems of medicine in India. Siddhars the spiritual scientists of Tamil land are the founding fathers of this scientific system. According to Siddha System the human body is the replica of the universe so are the food and drugs irrespective of their origin. Siddha system believes that all objects in the universe including human body are composed of five basic primordial elements, namely earth, water, fire, air and space.

**Significance:**

The Siddha System is capable of treating all types of chronic diseases especially arthritis, skin problems, urinary tract disorders, infertility, degenerative disorders like osteoarthritis, Senile Dementia, disease of the liver, medicinally treatable Spinal disorders, general debility, diarrhoea and intractable allergic disorders. Aringar Anna Govt. Hospital of Indian Medicine, Arumbakkam, being the premier institute in Tamil Nadu for Indian Medicine and Homoeopathy treats both outpatient and inpatient.

**Ayurvedic System of Medicine:**

Ayurveda is an ancient system of medicine, which originated in northern India antiquity of which dates back to the period of Vedas and this is said to be born from Atharva Veda. This knowledge has been gathered due to constant observation of nature for long years by men since the advent of civilization and cannot be attributed to any stretch of imagination. Ayurveda is basically based on the predominance of three humours namely vatha, pittha and kapha in the human body. Balanced state of these doshas denotes health and their imbalance produces disease.

Preceptors like Charaka, Susrutha have been benevolent enough to compile these invaluable treasure troves of knowledge to be passed on to posterity. The fact that Ayurveda has stood the test of time bears ample testimony to its efficacy till date. It comprises of eight branches namely.

- ✓ Kaya Chikitsa (General Medicine)
- ✓ Kaumara Bhruthya (Paediatrics)
- ✓ Bhutha Vidhya (Psychiatry)

- ✓ Salakya (ENT and Ophthalmology and dentistry)
- ✓ Shalya (Surgery)
- ✓ Agada Tantra (Toxicology)
- ✓ Rasayana (Rejuvenation Therapy)
- ✓ Vajeeekarana (Aphrodisiac therapy)

Pancha Karma one of the areas of specialization, which has earned public acclaim in recent times, is also a part of the above branches. It enjoys popularity because of its being hands on therapy and is very relaxing to the fatigued body and tired mind [11].

#### **Naturopathy & Yoga System of Medicine:**

Naturopathy is not just a system of medicine but a way of life. It is often referred as drugless therapy. It is based mainly on the ancient practice of the application of the simple laws of nature. There are two schools of thought regarding the approach of Naturopathy. One group believes in the ancient Indian methods. The advocacy of Naturopathy pay particular attention to eating and living habits, adoption of purificatory measures, use of hydrotherapy, cold packs, mud packs, massage and a variety of measure based on their innovative talent.

A carefully supervised total fast or partial fast is advocated to clear the system of toxic accumulation. Water or dilute fruit juices are permitted. The Naturopathy has to keep a strict supervision lest the patient may develop physical and emotional untoward effects. The system believes that, if the way of life is properly organized, one can get the bounties of energy, health and happiness from the benevolent nature. What one has to do for prevention of disease, promotion of health and to get therapeutic advantages is to adopt natural means to living. Naturopathy is based on various treatments like magneto therapy, massage therapy, physiotherapy, psychotherapy, reflexology, chromotherapy, acupuncture, acupressure, yoga therapy and diet therapy [12 and 13].

#### **Conclusion:**

A noteworthy feature in ethno medicinal system is the use of medicinal as well as food plants as ingredients for drug preparation.

Scientific validation and pharmaceutical supervision for good, safe and consistence medicinal preparation from plants can minimize some of the criticism against herbal treatment. When medicinal plant products are subjected to the rigors of applied science, the experimentation reveals and clarifies the condition and the pharmaco dynamic basis for the use of such plants in medical practice. These reevaluations would provide a rationale for the use of those plants.

Herbal drugs are most suitable for the diseases requires long-term medication such as arthritis, hepato-biliary deficiency, spleen disease, etc, because most plant extracts are used in repeated low doses; and compared to the synthetic compounds herbal drugs have a reduced chance of acute toxicity and secondary drug effect.

The study of medicinal plants is also important because of the adverse effect sometimes observed with herbal drugs. Hence it is of immense clinical importance to determine the acute and chronic toxicity of therapeutically useful plant products and know whether or not they exhibit the pharmacological action.

The increase in the acceptance of the 'holistic' philosophy of therapy by medical profession, which the traditional systems exemplify, is a further indication that there will continue to be a growing demand for natural product based drugs derived from traditional medicine.

According to the World Health Organization the safety should be the overriding criterion in the selection of herbal medicines for use in healthcare. Proof of safety should therefore take precedence over establishing efficacy. There is no longer any doubt regarding the value of traditional remedies, but the difficult part of it is the conversion of these remedies into modern therapeutic agents in a sustainable and safe manner. It is generally recognized that accuracy of labeling the constituents of medicinal plant remedies is critical for their proper use, safety evaluation and drug control.

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