

Hello Learners,

In this session let us discuss on the Traditional Medicine and Herbal Healing Practices in India

Traditional Medicine

- Do you all know what is traditional medicine
- Are we using any herbal medicine in the present day
- Do we know the origin and development of medicine in India

Rig-Veda, considered as one of the oldest treatises of human knowledge which was created during 4500 BC to 1600 BC. It is supposed as the ancient repository that stated about therapeutic usages of plants of the Indian subcontinent

Introduction

India has a rich traditional knowledge and heritage of herbal medicine.

India is the largest producer of medicinal herbs and is called as botanical garden of the world.

But due to easy availability and fast action conventional allopathic medicines are used in large scale, the significance of traditional medicines went down.

In recent times due to side effects and growing cost of allopathic medicine, people are now looking for alternative medicines, herbal medicines being one of them.

Summary of Literature

Traditional medicine particularly herbal medicine considered as a major healthcare provider around the globe particularly in rural and remote areas. A large section of people depends on such medicine for their primary healthcare. Indian traditional medicine or medicinal plants are also considered as a vital source of new drug. Mainstreaming of such medicine is important for the people. Several steps have been taken in India to promote such medicine and to integrate them with the modern medicine.

- Evidence of ancient medicinal systems in India were traced back at the time of the Indus valley civilization. Archeological evidence of Harappa and Mohanjodaro suggested the presence of a traditional medicinal system at that time. It was interpreted that use of plants, animals and mineral based drugs were done by Indus people.
- The contribution of plants, as raw material for making medical formulations, is significant in the Indian systems of medicine, and over 6,500 species of plants are known to occur in India those are used by various streams of traditional health care practitioners.
- The traditional system of medicine in India functions through two major streams – the local health tradition and the classical scientific system of medicine. The carriers of local health care system are millions of people who cure diseases at home as a birth attendant, bonesetters, and practitioners of snake bite treatment, jaundice treatment etc. The classical scientific system of medicine has evolved with the philosophical

explanation and is expressed in various manuscripts. Such system of medicine exists in the name of Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha and Tibetan

Ayurvedic system of medicine

- The Ayurvedic system of medicine is an age-old system of therapy, which is associated with the Vedic civilization in India. The oldest existing literature on this form of treatment is mentioned in Rigveda around 4500-1600 B.C. Ayurveda is a holistic system of treatment, which is amalgamation of use of food, medicine and other measures like exercise and behavior (Kala, 2006a; Katiyar, 2006). Life in Ayurveda is conceived as the union of body, senses, mind and soul. Ayurveda regards human body is a composition of five basic elements namely, earth, water, fire, air and vacuum (ether), and any illness is considered the result of absence of a balanced state of the total body matrix. The disease is diagnosed by examining the general physical condition of the patient and pulse reading, along with examining urine, excreta, eyes, tongue, skin, and auditory functions. Once disease is diagnosed, the treatment measures involve use of medicines, specific diet and prescribed routine activity

Unani system of medicine

- The Unani system of medicine was originated in Greece and later introduced in India by Arab and Persians. Like Ayurvedic system, the Unani system of medicine prescribes daily diet quantity to patient and also depends on whole drug therapy in which the active principle of drug is not isolated (Ansari, 2006). Unani medicine assumes that the drugs possess their own temperament to act. They may be hot, cold, moist and dry. Similarly, each individual possesses his own temperament, physical structure, self-defense mechanism and reaction to environmental factors. The medicine is thus prescribed based on such factors of the person undergoing the treatment (Rais, 1986; Ahmad, 1992).

Siddha medical system

- The Siddha medical system is originated in southern India during 10th to 15th century and like most of the traditional systems of medicine it follows pulse reading to diagnose the ailments (Daniel, 1984). In Siddha, like Ayurveda, any ailment in human body is thought a result of imbalance of three humors – bile (pitta), wind (vayu) and phlegm (kaph). This system of medicine has developed and accumulated a rich treasure of therapeutic knowledge in which use of metals and minerals is often prescribed (<http://indianmedicine.nic.in/>). It also emphasizes on individualistic approach of treatment as it takes into account the age, sex, habitat, appetite, mental frame, physical condition and surrounding environmental of the patient.

Tibetan medical system

- Tibetan medical system is flourished in the trans-Himalayan region, especially in Tibet, Ladakh and Lahaul-Spiti where the earlier inhabitants used to practice shamanism under the name Ban (Dash, 1994; Kala, 2003). In due course of time, Bauddha Bhiksus (monks) introduced the knowledge of Ayurveda, and propagated it among their disciples in Ladakh, Lahaul-Spiti, Tibet and wherever they preached. This system of medicine follows the procedure of pulse reading, and the number of

pulse beats during one respiratory cycle indicates the status of health. Plant forms major ingredient in Tibetan medicine, besides animal products, minerals and salts (Kala, 2005, 2006b).

Role of plants in ISM

- Wide arrays of plant species are used in traditional system of health care in India. Over 6,500 species of plants are known to occur in India those are used by various streams of traditional health care practitioners. Approximately 2000 medicinal plant species are used alone in Ayurvedic system of medicine, which is followed by Siddha (1121), Unani (751), Homeopathy (482) and Tibetan (337).
- The number of people involved in the traditional health care system is quite impressive in India. About 7,00,000 practitioners of Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani, Yoga, Naturopathy and Homeopathy are registered in the Indian Systems of Medicine. And a sizeable number of practitioners in rural and far-flung areas are not yet registered.
- Family traditions and cultural preferences also make people to own, decide and prefer various health care systems. In India, medicinal plants have strong acceptance in religious activities, where the plants are worshiped in the form of various gods, goddesses and local deities
- Different parts of medicinal plants were used as medicine by the local traditional healers. Among the different plant parts, the leaves were most frequently used for the treatment of diseases followed by whole plant parts, fruit, stem, root, stem and root bark, seed, flower and latex. The methods of preparation fall into four categories, viz.: plant parts applied as a paste (38%), juice extracted from the fresh plant parts (24%), powder made from fresh or dried plant parts (20%), some fresh plant parts (6%), and decoction (12%). External applications (mostly for skin diseases, snake bites and wounds) and internal consumption of the preparations were involved in the treatment of diseases.