

# A Comparative Study of Ayurveda and Siddha System of Medicine

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## **Abstract:**

*Ayurveda* and *Siddha* systems of medicine have taken their origin from the Vedic and post-Vedic medical wisdom. Initially both were united and gradually they included sight different angle of approach in treatment and is being practised separately for the last 1,500 years. *Siddha* has been mainly popular in Tamil Nadu and Kerala in comparison to nationwide popularity of *Ayurveda*. Though from various aspects both seem to be different systems but owing to their same origin they have sample number of similarities. Scientific and rational analysis of similarities and dissimilarities between the two systems is the main focus of this review.

**Keywords:** *Ayurveda, Siddha, Aryan, Dravidian, Tirumular, Astanga Ayurveda, Rasa, Gandhaka.*

## **Introduction:**

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 gradually has civilization advanced. The development of medicine is a continuous process. Any system of medicine is not a discovery of invention in the conventional meaning and sense, but a gradual evolution in successive period of history. It owes its progress to great savants of science in various periods and places and also to the society and civilization as a whole.

## **Origin:**

There are two ancient systems of medicine in India, the *Siddha* which flourish in the south and the *Ayurveda* which prevails in the whole India. Both of them are continuously practised even today. Literature in *Ayurveda* is in *Sanskrit* and *Siddha* literature in *Tamil*.<sup>[1]</sup> Instead of giving the name of any one individual as the founder of the system, our ancients wisely attributed its origin to divine beings *Siva* and *Brahma*. So the *Siddha* system<sup>[2]</sup> is *Saiva Sampradayam*. *Siva* taught it to *Parvathi*. Goddess *Parvathi* to *Nandideva* and he to *Agasthya* etc. Traditionally everything in *Tamil* is attributed to *Agasthya*, including the language and he is called *TamilRishi* whose permanent abode is in the hill "PUDIYA MALAI" near Madhurai. *Ayurvedic* origin<sup>[3]</sup> is attributed to *Brahma* and so it is called *Brahma Sampradaya*. Historically, *Punarvasu Atreyarishi* taught the

science to *Agnivesa* and others. The texts available are *Agnivesa Samhita* redacted later by *Charaka* and *Dridabala*.

*Siddhas* are those who attain '*Siddhi*' or perfection as a result of birth, drugs, mantras, austerities and *Samadi*. So, these *Siddhas* who were 18 in number have given in different period of history not only their knowledge of medicine but also their philosophy to their students and successors. A *Siddha* by name *Tirumular*, as given in *Tirumandiram*<sup>[4]</sup> a book of 3,000 verses, were in apart from other things, there is knowledge of embryology and medicine. This is according to research scholars about 3,000 years back. Most of the book on *Siddha* system, thought written in different periods is attributed to *Agasthya*.

## **Aims:**

The prevention and the cure of illness are the basic aims of all systems of medicine. The *Siddha* system has in addition to cure diseases, transcendental motivation, and a concern for what might be called the immortality of the body, as the soul also is immortal. The Hindu system of philosophy admits of two modes of salvation. The first one is, after living behind the mortal body, which is called *Videha Mukthi*. The second salvation, in this life itself with the body called *Jivana Mukthi*. The *Siddhas* aimed at *Jeevana Mukthi*; hence the ultimate aim of their system of medicine is to have a perfect body maintained by medicines to which they gave the name "*Kalpas*". Achievement of *Jeevana Mukthi* was possible according to them, by *Yoga* and *Aushada* (medication and meditation) the one being

complementary to the other. The liberation of the immortal soul in connection with the perishable body is a concept that will not easily commend itself to the rational mind, but it will be conducted, that it had the effect of setting the aims of medicine superlatively high.

The *Ayurveda*, though accept the body (*Sharira*), mind (*Mana*) and soul (*Atma*) as the tripod on which the man stands, confines itself to the treatment of the body and mind both in health and disease. The emphasis is more on the body and mind to keep them in working and healthy condition and if disease appear to cure them. They used to term (*Swasta- Atura-Prayanam*). *Ayurveda* has eight divisions (*Astanga*<sup>[7]</sup>) of medical treatment, *Kaya* (internal medicine), *Bala* (paediatrics), *Graha* (psychotherapy), *Shalya* (General Surgery), *Urdvanga* (treatment of special séances), *Damstra* (toxicology), *Jara* (Gereiatrics), *Vrisha* (Aphrodisiacs). To all branches, aetiology, symptomatology, pathology, and treatment are described.

### Materia Medica:

*Siddhas* in the search for medicine that could prevent the body from perishing were naturally attached to materials which would themselves not perish. The body cells perish everyday and they are being continuously replenished. If the waste could be arrested, there could be no need for re cleanshement. There are medicines claimed to have been found by the *Siddhas*, which could arrest the degeneration of the body cells. Naturally, they choose drugs which do not themselves perish. In *Ayurveda*, the Materia Medica consist largely of drugs of vegetable origin and in later days the system adopted metals and minerals, whereas, in the *Siddha system*, metals and minerals have been used to a greatest extent than drugs of vegetable origin. Indeed it could be asserted that the *Siddhas* were the pioneers in the use of metals and minerals in the treatment of diseases. The unique achievement of *Siddha* system has not received at the hands of historians, the recognition it deserves.

Alchemy was not the primary aim of the *Siddha* in their works on metals and minerals. They wanted to evolve drugs that would arrest the decay of the body and choose metals and minerals. Unlike drugs of vegetable origin, preparations from metals and minerals<sup>[5]</sup> do not lose their potency with lapse of time. They can be administered in small and convenient doses. They are available in all seasons and can be preserved indefinitely. Vegetable drugs like roots, barks and leaves have to be collected during particular seasons. Many annuals and seasonal shrubs become unavailable if the monsoon falls. In a country like India with its varying terrain and climate and unpredictable rains, it is not safe for the physician to depend on drugs of vegetable origin.

The treatment in *Ayurveda* is divided in two kinds, Palliative (*Shamana*) and radical (*Shodana*). The radical

treatment is again consisting of five kinds,<sup>[6]</sup> emetics (*Vemana*), purgative (*Virechana*), enemas (*Vastihi*), errishines (*Nasya*) and bloodletting (*Raktamokshana*) i.e., *Panchakarma*. Palliative consist only in administration of medicine, diet, fasting etc. to relieve the symptoms of the disease.

### Fundamental Relationship

As the universe is composed of five Mahabhutas, so also the drugs are made up of the Mahabhutas. The concept of the identity between the Macrocosm - Bramhanda and the Microcosm - Sukshamanda, which means that whatever is found in 'Anda' universe is also found in the 'Pinda', body equating the five elements both in the universe and in the body, guides the physician in his choice of the appropriate medicaments suited in each case. For example, if the Vata Dosha is weak in the body giving rise to typical symptoms, drugs that preponderate in the characteristics of Vata can be selected and administered to normalise the Dosha in the body. So also when Vata is preponderant in the body, drugs that posses opposite characteristics of properties of Prithvi (solid element) are to be selected and given.

Mercury and Sulphur (*Rasa* and *Gandhaka*) play a major role in the therapeutics in the medicine. There is a saying that if one could control mercury; poverty could administer from the work. The idea is that mercury could be used for the purpose converting base metals into gold. Mercury occupies a very high place in medicine. It could call the sheet anchor of therapeutics. It is used as catalytic agent in the preparation of many medicines. It is used as an alternative in the sense that whatever the condition, it alters the pathology. In constipation it could be given as a purgative and in diarrhoea it is given to arrest the motions. When mercury is used it is more often in combination with Sulphur. The addition of Sulphur is the control the fluidity of the mercury. As is known to student's chemistry, this converts mercury to mercuric Sulphide which is insoluble in mineral acids. In Hindu Alchemy this symbolises the union of *Shiva* and *Sakthi*. To emphasise this aspects, both in *Siddha* and in *Ayurveda*, mercury and sulphur are termed *Sivabeeja* and *Parvathibeeja* meaning that unless the seed and the egg unite, there will be no creation and there will be no therapeutic activity unless the two elements combine. In some preparation *Siddhas* use the sublimate of mercury *Rasapathanga*. In *Ayurveda* these are called *Viruddha Dravyas* in compatibles as milk and sour fruit.

### Diagnosis:

Diagnosis of the disease is an essential factor before combining the treatment, whatever may be the system of medicine. "Noei Nadal Noai Mudal Nadal" indicate the approach to the process off diagnosis of *Siddhas*. 'Noei Nadal' means to find the disease and 'Noai Mudal Nadal'

denotes the determination of the aetiology of the disease. In *Ayurvedic*, these are described under *Pancha Lakshana Nidanam*, meaning five essential to the diagnosis. They are aetiology (*Nidana*), Prodromal symptom (*Poorvarupa*), Symptomatology (*Lakshana*), treatment for diagnostic purpose in doubtful cases (*Upasaya*) and the entire Pathology (*Samprapti*).

In *Siddha* systems the diagnosis is based on the examination of eight entities<sup>5</sup>. The entities are pulse, eye, voice, touch, appearance, tongue, face and urine. In *Ayurveda* also these eight are mentioned in *Asthasthan Pariksha* in later texts. In earlier these are not found. Physical examination *Darshana* and *Sparshana* and *Prashna*<sup>7</sup> are the three things mentioned.

*Siddhas* were essentially yogis and secondarily physicians. *YogaSiddhi* is the result of profound concentration and to study the behaviour of pulse properly, concentration is necessary. The rate, volume and tension of pulse are even now read by the physicians of all systems. But, the *Siddha* physicians not only diagnose the disease, but also know the prognosis by the study of the pulse. The *Ida* and *Pingala* are two other *Nadis* which are one either side of *Sushanna*, there are ten important nerves mentioned these three being more important. These constitute the sympathetic nervous system in modern medicine.

Urine examination is another speciality of *Siddha* system both for diagnosis and prognosis. Urine is waste product i.e. *Mala*, which carries and throws out impurities from biological and metabolic activities in the body. So naturally, it is influenced by the health state of the individual. During urine examination generally the colour, smell, density, quantity, and froth of urine is noted. These are common to all systems of medicines. But in *Siddhas* system, in addition to these, the surface tension and the pattern of spread of the oil on the surface of urine gives valuable information to the physician like which *Doshas* and bodily organs are affected and the termination of the disease. For this study the urine is collected and put in basin and a drop of 'Gingelly oil' is put. The oil spreads and gives varied colours and patterns indicating the disease. It may also sink then the indication is different. Oil drop indicating bad prognosis are -

1. Rapid spread with froth.
2. The oil splits into several smaller drops and spreads rapidly.
3. Mixed with urine.
4. If the drops sinks or
5. The drops spread showing the pattern of an arrow, sword or spear.

### Main Treatment Principles:

The *Siddhas* have developed a discipline called *Kaya Kalpa*.<sup>[8]</sup> designed for longevity with complete freedom from

illness. It is similar to the *Rasayana*<sup>[9]</sup> treatment of the *Ayurveda* and Gerontology of the modern medicine. *Ayurvedic* texts say that a man gets free from *Rasayana* the following benefits- long life, memory, intelligence, freedom from illness, youthful feeling, lustre of complexion, strength to the physical body and sense organs, powerful speech and sex power. In short when one undergoes *Rasayana* treatment, it wards off the ill effects of ageing and retaining the youthful faculties of both the body and mind. The word *Kalpa* means 'able', competent or ability of the body and mind also. *Vajeekarana* or the science of Aphrodisiacs not mentioned separately in *Siddha* system. The explanation is that, when *Kaya Kalpa* treatment is undertaken, the vigour of the body and mind is restored and so there is no need for separate attention for *Vajeekarana* as in *Ayurveda*.

### Preventive Medicine:

More than medicine, it is discipline of life led by the individual who ensures longevity and freedom from illness. One of the measures recommended is keep breathing (*Pranayama*). *Tirumular* says that if the breathing could be controlled properly, the old would be young. Another aspect of *Kaya Kalpa* is the diet during the period of treatment *Tirumular* says - if the universe were to reduce itself, it is immaterial but if the body is reduced, it would become permanent.

### Conclusion:

It is not a question which of these two systems is more ancient. Each civilization, *Aryan* and *Dravidian* has developed its own systems of medicine and in the course of time, each has filled the lacuna of the other. Both have enough to give to humanity for the development of positive health and cure of diseases. *Yoga* and medicine had left their imprints deeply in the sands of time and those who are interested in the science of the systems will find a rich source of information in their literature for healthy living.

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