

Indigenous Medical Systems, Its Present Structure and Services

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Our indigenous medical system is an integration of several systems. It is a combination of the North Indian indigenous medical system, South Indian "Siddha" medical system, "Unani" medical system of the Arabia and the traditional indigenous medical system of our country. It is possible that the Ayurvedic Medical System originated in Sri Lanka with the advent of King Vijaya and the arrival of the retinue of Bhikkuni Sanghamitha. Due to several reasons (such as the close association with the people of the South Indian states, Sinhala kings marrying princesses from the South Indian states and the invasion) "Siddha" medical system became deeply rooted in the Jaffna area and was gradually integrated with the indigenous medical system of the country. According to the Ayurvedic Act, Ayurvedic medical system, "Unani" medical system, "Siddha" medical system, indigenous medical systems of other Asian countries and the indigenous medical system of our country are all referred to as the Ayurvedic Medical System.

The traditional indigenous medical system of the country is based on the basic theories of the Ayurvedic medical system and has been broadly divided into different branches and special areas. It involves a classical literature which uses verse to describe various ailments, varieties of medicines and combination of medicinal preparations. Special features of the indigenous medical system are treatment for the fracture of bones, treatment for rabies, treatment for children's diseases, treatment for malnutrition, treatment for mental ailments and disorders, treatment for eye diseases and treatment for burns and Kem methods. Even the World Health Organization (WHO) has accepted that 65% of the

people in our country resort to indigenous medical systems. Furthermore, treatment for animals is widely spread in the rural areas of Sri Lanka.

Ayurvedic Medical System consists of systematically developed basic principles. Further it describes in detail the causes of illnesses, signs of good health, how to maintain one's health, symptoms of various diseases and their remedies. This system also describes the good and the bad effects of various herbs and ways and means of using them in medicinal preparations. Not only herbs, but also minerals such as gold, silver and precious stones, animal parts such as horns and skins are used in preparing medicines.

All Governments have stated that this system should be preserved and accordingly steps were taken to develop it further. As far back as 1929, the State Indigenous Medical Institute was established and in the same year Pandit Wickramarachchi "Siddha" Ayurvedic College was inaugurated. Two years prior to this in 1927, the "Siddha" Ayurvedic College was started in Jaffna. The Ayurvedic Development Department was established in 1982 and later a separate Minister in charge of the Ayurveda was appointed within the Health Ministry. At present, it is conducted as a Project Ministry within the Ministry of Health.

The Ayurvedic Department and the Ayurvedic Drugs Corporation comes under the Ministry of Health while Ayurvedic Hospitals, Teaching Hospital Borella, Bandaranaike Memorial Ayurvedic Research Institute and herbal gardens are administered by the Ayurvedic Department. There are 34 hospitals, 79 dispensaries and 17 herbal gardens

coming under the Ayurvedic Department. In addition there are 4 important committees i.e. Ayurvedic Medical Council, Educational and Hospital Board, Research Board and Formulary Committee.

The Ayurvedic Medical Council is a council constituted on a vote and the position held. It is a supreme body that safeguards the rights and the trade union rights and handles, disciplinary and other allied matters. The educational and Medical Committee is made up of members who have been elected and appointed by the vote of doctors and deals with matters pertaining to Ayurvedic education and hospitals.

The Formulary Research Committee is appointed by the Hon. Minister of Health and basic steps for all research activities are taken by this committee.

The committee is responsible for examining the preparations of medicines, by both the state sector and the private sector.

At present the indigenous Medical Institute affiliated to the University of Colombo conducts a 5 year degree programme. At the end of the degree programme, the students, are also given a training for another one year at the Institute. Subjects pertaining to Ayurvedic and "Unani" medical systems are taught in this Institute while the "Siddha" Ayurveda Institute which is affiliated to the University of Jaffna provides a training on the "Siddha" medical system. The Siddha Ayurveda College is now referred to as the Wickramarachchi Ayurveda College and steps have been taken to develop it to the level of a University in the near future. The initiation of a three year programme named "Ayurveda shastree" is another measure taken to preserve the traditional medical system. Those who complete this course can register as Ayurvedic physicians. The courses are conducted by several private colleges.

Bandaranaike Memorial Ayurvedic Research Institute was inaugurated in 1962 by the then Indian Prime Minister Sri Jawaharlal Neru. The Institute undertakes research with regard to three main areas i.e. literature, medicine and clinical research. The Institute is also engaged in publishing books related to various sub-

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ject areas of Ayurvedic literature, translation of relevant documents, standardization of medicine, providing, seeds and herbs for cultivation and dissemination of research findings to the general public. Further more clinical research is carried out with a view to identify remedies for several illnesses. Research is done on the following diseases with the assistance of the World Health Organization.

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| 1. Diabetes | 7. Hydro cephalous |
| 2. Rheumatism | 8. Enlargement of prostate glands |
| 3. Asthma | 9. Scabies |
| 4. Epilepsy | 10. Treatment for drug addicts |
| 5. Fistula | 11. Malaria. |
| 6. Head aches | |

Experimental treatment is carried out on various diseases by this Institute and special clinics are also conducted daily. Steps have been taken to obtain the services of the traditional Ayurvedic physicians to teach and train the new physicians who graduate from the Ayurvedic Colleges. Those who visits the Nawinna Research Institute can see how the traditional Ayurvedic physicians and the new graduates who pass out from the Ayurvedic Colleges work in cooperation and exchange their ideas in order to render a better service to the general public .

Herbal gardens are grown in different zones such as Haldummula in Mahaweli "C" area and Pattipola in the Nuwara Eliya district. The main objectives of growing herbal gardens are, to stop the flow of foreign exchange spent on importing herbs through encouraging the villages to grow medicinal herbs and to supply necessary medicinal plants to promote their growth.

Ayurvedic Drugs Corporation produces medicines according to required standards and distributes them to Ayurvedic hospitals and dispensaries. These medicines can be obtained from Yatinuwara Street, Kandy and Wijerama, Gango-dawila. The Ayurvedic Drugs Corporation has prepared a casket of medicine which contains medicines required for day to day use and, it is made available to the general public at a very reasonable price. Another important function of the Ayurvedic Drugs Corporation is to import rare medicines which are not imported by any private traders and distribute them to the Ayurvedic Physicians.

In addition a satisfactory service is rendered to the general public by the 307 dispensaries which comes under the authority of local Government Institutions.