Abstract

India is a land of unique customs and tradition, also known for its best medicinal products and methods. Indian medicine forms are much admired for its active participation to overcome human medical maladies. Ayurveda, the traditional medicine form of India cures human ailments effectively as recorded in both medical and other related books. The aspects of this traditional method are abundant in many medical and non-medical treatises, such texts receive some attention, yet many parts of those treatises are to be explored. Thirukkural or Kural, the collection of couplets, is one such antique scripture of the Tamil literature. The book has gained importance, has been lauded with many translations and commentaries in almost all the major languages in the world. The present paper is an attempt to bring out various references to Ayurveda mentioned in the Thirukkural. The study further focuses on these aspects like causes of the disease, ideas on nutritional discipline, thoughts on treatment principles and importance of treatment.

Keywords: Ayurveda, food control, nutritional discipline, reasons for disease, and treatment process.

Introduction:

Ayurveda, one of the traditional medicine forms of India, popularly known for their effectiveness to overcome human ailments and recognised for much effective treatment. References for this medicine method were mentioned in many books which are both medicine and other related areas. A few of such references got attention but still most of the other are remain unexplored. The classical text of the Tamil literature Thirukkural estimated over two thousand years old has some references related to Ayurvedic medicine. There are a few pieces of research done in this area yet there is much to be done. The wide range of medicine and literature refer the Ayurveda concepts, to the surprise, the classical Kural recorded some concepts. Thirukkural universally acclaimed for its rich values and ethics. Thiruvalluvar an ascetic Tamil poet authored this didactic text dated second century A.D. Thirukkural text has gained much importance and honours. It has been translated into many languages and has many commentaries. The book has 133 chapters, containing ten couplets in each chapter, collectively
Ayurveda in a Nutshell:

As a term, Ayurveda denotes the knowledge or science of life. This medicine form exists from the long past and has emerged into an integrative medicinal form. It was said that the form medicinal form was given by Lord Brahma (the God of creation) to Dhanvantri (known to be as divine physicians/doctor of Gods). Further, the Ayurveda praised as Upaveda. The flourishing period of this medicine form ranges between 800 B.C. – 1000 A.D. Ashtanga Samgraha, Charaka Samhita, and Sushruta Samhita are the popular Ayurvedic treatises appeared in the aforementioned period. Different ideas, concepts, and terms of this particular medicine method are there in the couplets of Thirukkural. Medicine chapter (95) in the second part of the Kural talks about medicine in general, which are similar to the medicinal references of Ayurveda. The first couplet of the chapter talks about the causes of diseases. The following half-a-dozen couplets focus on health and food. Consecutive two couplets deal with the treatment method and concluding couplet underlines the process (four phases) of treatment. Albert Schweitzer opines that there is no book with these kind of maxims with such lofty wisdom. This statement of Albert shows the greatness of the Thirukkural.

Reasons for diseases:

“The learned books count three, with wind as first; of these,
As any one prevail, or fail; ‘twill cause disease” (kural 941)

While interpreting the causes of diseases three things are referred to as important and to be maintained in the right balance. These three things Vadam, Pitham, and Kabam are said to be life forces in every human body. The first one is responsible for the body movement, second force controls the digestion process and the last one meant for stability in the body. Thus, these are essential for the proper functioning of the human body. Any stagnation or imbalance of these forces will leads to sickness and diseases. This reference in the Thirukkural is similar to the Ayurvedic principle. In addition to those three factors, food is also a determining factor or the cause of disease. Irregular and improper food habits will end up in disease. Thiruvalluvar has given much importance to this and hence he allotted six couplets for that.

“No need of medicine to heal your body's pain,
If, what you ate before digested well, you eat again” (kural 942)
Prevention is better than cure. Couplet 942 supports this point; it says that one who consumes the next meal only after the digestion of the previous meal will never get any illness. Ayurveda form recommends three things to be governed to lead a better life. One among them is the Aharam (food). Ayurveda recommends food control in maintaining health; the lapse of food control will end in disease. Food control assures health to human life. Therefore it is important to have food control, healthy food, and proper diet. It preserves the body from health issues. This concept of food control or food regimen is there in the Thirukkural. “Who has a body gained may long the gift retain, If, food digested well, in measure due he eat again” (kural 943) If one wants to live a long and healthy life should take moderate food. Food should be taken after the digestion of the last taken food. The eatables should be measured well, in the sense, quantity, quality, essential internal components, time taken for the processes of digestion etc are to be analysed. In disease management, food plays a vital role. Healthy foods are recommended for the recovery from diseases. But those healthy foods should not cross the prescribed limit. The amount of the diet should never disturb the equilibrium of the body. The factors like quantity, time of a meal, the constitution of the body, age, appetite, etc should also be considered.

**Need for food control and nourishing discipline:**

Ayurveda recommends the need to have a structured food habit. It strongly recommends consuming the proper quantity of food at proper timings. Proper quantity also underlines that the food taken should not generate any sort of pressure in the abdomen, stomach, heart, and other organs. The food should not generate discomfort or affect normal activities like walking, sleeping, breathing, etc. The nourishment should comfort the senses, quench thirst and hunger. The concept of digestion (Jeeranam) and indigestion (Ajeeranam) in the Ayurveda emphasise on food control. Consuming proper diet at the proper time (after the digestion of previous food) and proper quantity promotes health. This will open the better circulation process in the body.

“With self-denial take the well-selected meal;

So shall thy frame no sudden sickness feel” (kural 945)

The couplet supports a point that one who is looking forward to a healthy life should take proper and suitable diet in proper quantity. Due consideration on all these things like quality of food, quantity, hunger, time in between the meals, lightness of the stomach, and processing time for digestion will retain assured health. Kural 947 emphasises on the quantity of food, if the quantity of food crosses the limits, appetite and digestion potential will face imbalances and leads to serious consequences. “Who largely feeds, nor measure of the fire within maintains, That thoughtless man shall feel unmeasured pains” “He will be afflicted with
numberless diseases, who eats immoderately, ignorant (of the rules of health)” (Kural 947). Nourishment discipline is to be maintained. It bestows health and enhances the self-control of an individual. The one who is having strict nutritional discipline will be free from diseases. The notes of Kural on the nourishment discipline are akin to the ideas of Ayurveda. Ayurveda recommends proper diet, elimination of wastages (Malam), and exercise for the healthy lifestyle and perfect living.

**Remedial for diseases:**

Ayurveda explains the treatment of diseases. It recommends three principles as essential factors to cure diseases. The three principles are hetu, linga, and ousadha. In which hetu refers to the aetiology (causes and manner of a disease), linga refers to the signs/symptoms, and ousadha denotes the drug. These three factors are to be analysed and plan should be devised before starting the treatment. Lack in any one of this will ends up in lose. Thirukkural couplet reciprocates this concept of Ayurveda. It registers that a medical practitioner who wants to treat a patient successfully should analyse the cause of disease, stage, effects, and effective curative. “Disease, its cause, what may abate the ill: Let leech examine these, then use his skill” “Let the physician enquire into the (nature of the) disease, its cause and its method of cure and treat it faithfully according to (medical rule)” (kural 948) Both Ayurveda and Thirukkural have registered that analysis and understanding the nature of the disease is more important than the remedy. Ayurveda addresses the examination of disease as Pariksha. To understand the diseases Ayurveda suggests carrying on three-fold, six, eight, and tenfold Pariksha. Understanding includes the nature of the ailment, strength of the infected, and season. Detailed analysis and interpretation are recommended to plan for a suitable remedial. “The habitudes of patient and disease, the crises of the ill; These must the learned leech think over well, then use his skill” “The learned (physician) should ascertain the condition of his patient; the nature of his disease, and the season (of the year) and (then) proceed (with his treatment).” (kural 949)

**Treatment process:**

“For patient, leech, and remedies, and him who waits by patient’s side,

The art of medicine must fourfold code of laws provide” (kural 950)

The couplet records that the medical science has four parts viz the patient, doctor, medicine and an attendant. Further, it has four sub-divisions. This concept of Kural is found similar in Ayurveda as four folds of treatment. It is also addressed as four pillars of treatment. The pivotal among these pillars is the physician. As a captain of the ship, the physician possesses control and presides over the whole process of treatment. A good physician should
be capable of needed technical skills, collective knowledge (scientific and medicinal) dexterity, purity, and psychological understanding. It is the physician who has to decide the drug for the treatment. Therefore, the drugs prescribed should be apt, with preferable quality, potency, a wide range of application, and better availability. Next to the doctor, the medicine provides inner support to overcome the ailment and to eradicate the same from the core. There should be an attendant who supports both the patient and the doctor. The attendant should support the patient by providing solace, comfort, and extends the required help. For the physician, the attendant hand-in-hand provides support in all the possible medical processes. Like that of a physician, the attendant should possess good knowledge in nursing, should possess technical skill, and should be caring, clean, and affectionate. Finally, the patient plays a remarkable role in the treatment process. The patient should be cooperative, by following the given instructions and medication. A patient must have patience. A patient should clearly describe the effects of the disease and the effects of medicine which was given for the healing. Thirukkural collectively refers to all these things as ‘the art of medicine’ ‘fourfold code’, Ayurveda refers to this as ‘four pillars’ of treatment.

**Conclusion:**

Considering the scope of the present article a few limited things have been discussed. To the surprise, great poet Thiruvalluvar encapsulates all these things within just two lines (within seven words!). The classical text *Thirukkural* has detailed various things related to the medicine which includes reasons for disease, food governance, treatment, and four-fold process of the treatment. Ayurveda medical concepts are similar to these aspects of the couplets. This similarity amid *Thirukkural* and Ayurveda is not limited to medicine but similarities are there in the moral code of conduct in living, sexual conduct, good personality, regimen, and related things. This similarity can be scope for further researches. These should be explored for the benefit of the people who know the Tamil language and *Thirukkural* as well as for the learned people in the world. It is quite amazing to bring out the different references of the Ayurveda concepts in the great Tamil classical text *Thirukkural*. *Thirukkural* is a concise book which fulfils the requirements of a great book. The length of the *Thirukkural* couplets is lesser than two lines; it is even lesser than that of Haiku poetry form. While considering these factors, it is apt to address *Thirukkural* as a rich legacy of the Tamil language.
References:


