

International Multidisciplinary  
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RNI MAHMUL/2011/38595

ISSN No.2231-5063

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## REVITALISATION OF SIDDHA MEDICINE AND CONTRIBUTION OF VIRUDAI. SIVAGNANA YOGI IN COLONIAL TAMIL REGION



Kanagarathinam D.V.

Department of History , Pondicherry University , Senior Research Fellow (UGC)  
Puducherry .



### ABSTRACT

After advent of western medicine as a tool of colonisation with help of colonial government, indigenous medicines such as Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani were branded and disseminated as superstitious, irrational, unscientific and dangerous medicine. Western medical physicians' propaganda tried to marginalise indigenous systems from main platform of health service providers in the Indian society. Indigenous medical practitioners started to revitalise Indian medicines in the western lines such as Institutionalisation, Professionalization, opening new hospitals and dispensaries, producing medicine in a grant scale and publishing printed books and journals

etc. as a reaction to marginalisation process of western medicine and create space for their respective medicines in competitive milieu. This process of revitalisation of medicine is called as cultural nationalism by K.N. Panikkar. A present paper concentrates on revitalisation of Siddha medicine in colonial Tamil region during the early twentieth century and contribution of Virudai. Sivagnana Yogi who was a Siddha physician and prime protagonist in this process as well.

**KEYWORDS :** *Revitalisation, Indigenous Medicine, Siddha, Sivagnana Yogi.*

### INTRODUCTION :

*"The revitalization movement was an unmistakably tendency of confrontation with colonial medicine which would appear to be an expression of cultural nationalism, contesting colonial cultural hegemony in which establishing institutions, founding associations and also starting journals were essential components" - K.N. Panikkar*

Indigenous medicines of India such as Ayurveda and Siddha were being practised and evolved from time immemorial. Colonial medicine was introduced initially for the benefit of Europeans in India and later extended to Indian population was a 'tool' of empire. Gradually, it marginalized indigenous medicine with help of state power and colonized indigenous bodies which paved way to get cultural domination over colonised. After the advent of colonial medicine with help of colonial government, the indigenous medicines were not only marginalised but propagated as an irrational, unscientific and superstitious systems. Notwithstanding the fact that allopathic doctors criticised indigenous medicine

as superstitious and irrational, some of them were ready to collaborate with it because both medical 'systems' shared the same theory of disease causation during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. But after the development of bacteriological research and the new theory of disease causation based on microorganism, indigenous medicine was totally rejected as outdated and unscientific. Colonial medicine and medical professionals tried to marginalize and delegitimize the indigenous medicine and medical practitioners with backing of state power and collaboration of the westernised intellectuals. Reaction to it, indigenous physicians started to revitalise indigenous medicines in western lines like the opening of hospitals, dispensaries and educational institutions along with published medical books and journals. Revitalisation of Ayurveda marginalised vernacular medical traditions like Siddha and regional Ayurveda, which created tension within indigenous medical traditions. In Tamil region, physicians based on Tamil texts started to revitalise Siddha medicine during the early twentieth century in which Vaidya Virudai. Sivagnana Yogi played a prominent role.

## 2. BIOGRAPHY

Virudai. Sivagnana Yogi was born at Avanashi of Coimbatore district and learned school education in the city. He became a police officer and acted during Edward VII visited there. Later part of his life, he shifted to Koilpatti from Coimbatore. He had a very good reputation among zamindars and government officials due to his ability to cure diseases. He loved Tamil language and culture though he was well versed in Sanskrit language too. He participated eagerly in Dravidian movements and wrote a number of aspects of it. He was a stalwart champion of Tamil revivalism and cultural struggle. He started "TiruvidarKalagam" at Kuttralam and Koilpatti in 1908 which is different from later one. He was one of the important personalities of the Saiva Siddhanta Movement of Tamil region. He participated and presented his views in the Saiva Siddhanta conference held in Ramnad in 1910. He was also part of Theosophical Society. He was an active writer on various subjects like religion, music, but medicine in particular. He wrote a number of books on spirituality and medicine, both in Tamil and Sanskrit apart from translations. His religious books are VibuthiruthiratshataranaNirubanam, Devobasanam, Gita Amirthamanjari, SivagnanaVilakkam, VedagamaUnmai which dealt from Gita, Vedas to musics and keerthanas on various gods. His medical books are OusadaPrayogaChandrigai, OusadaNirnayaChandrigai and Siddha medical catalogues. OusadaPrayogaChandrigai explains 4000 diseases, its symptoms and medicines to the diseases. OusadaNirnayaChandrigai contains information about diseases, preparation of medicines, etc. Siddha medical catalogues carries details about medicines and its prices, which were produced in his manufacturing unit at Koilpatti. He toiled his whole life for the development of Siddhamedicine and Siddha physicians until his demise in 1939.

## 3. REVITALISATION OF SIDDHA MEDICINE

After marginalisation of indigenous medicines by western medicine, indigenous physicians revitalised Ayurveda and reconstructed new meanings and boundaries to Ayurveda. Now Ayurveda was a medical practices that based on Sanskrit texts only and vernacular medical texts and physicians based on that texts were propagated as quacks and illegitimate practitioners. Moreover, Indian National Congress accepted Ayurveda on the based on Sanskrit texts as a national medicine in its 1918 session. This indicates that vernacular texts and physicians based on these texts were doubly marginalised by western medicine and Ayurveda as well. In Tamil region, more than 10,000 physicians who were practising medicine on the basis of Tamil texts were marginalised and branded as quacks. So Tamil physicians started to revitalise Tamil medicine through forming associations, opening dispensaries, printing books and journals and organising conferences etc. virudai. Sivagnana yogi contributed a lot in constructing Siddha medicine and revitalising process.

### 3.1. Siddha Hospital and Pharmaceutical Industry

Virudai. Sivagnana Yogi opened a new Siddha hospital named as “Sivagnana Siddha Vaidya Salai” in Koilpatti where he provided free medical treatments and medicines to poor people during the time schedule of morning at 6 to 8 Am and Evening 5 to 6 pm. Besides, he rendered free consultation to those who sent their disease details through letters. To make the Siddha medical system equivalent with western medicine, he started Pharmaceutical industry at Koilpatti adjacent to the hospital to prepare efficacies Siddha medicine and made available in the market. He sent medicines by post to Siddha hospitals, dispensaries and even necessitated individuals. He prepared very effective medicines to epidemic diseases like plague, cholera. He marketed his medicines to hospitals and dispensaries of government municipalities and taluk boards.

### 3.2. Associations and Conferences

He was a founding member and vice president of Dravida Vaidya Mandal along with pandit. D. Gopalacharulu, which played important role in contesting against Koman Report that concluded allocating funds to indigenous medicines as waste one because indigenous medicines are irrelevant and unscientific. Dravida Vaidya Mandal prepared report with Madras Ayurveda Association about the scientific nature of indigenous medicines in which Sivagnana yogi toiled lot. After demise of Pandit. D. Gopalacharulu, Virudai. Sivagnana Yogi formed a new organisation to develop Siddha medicine named as “Tamil Siddha Vaidya Sangam” in 1921 at Koilpatti. He became a first secretary of Tamil Vaidya Sangam. Tamil Vaidya Sangam attracted physicians lived in and around Tirunelveli district. He organised three “Madras presidency Siddha conferences” in 1921, 1923 and 1927 in Tirunelveli, Chennai and Madurai respectively. Examining Siddha medicines, exhibiting Siddha medicines at conferences, providing medals to effective medicines and physicians, discussing medical theories and concepts were primary work of him. Very importantly, he provided new titles to the Siddha physicians in these conferences like Maruthuvan, Maruthuva Sironmani, Vaidyapathi and Vaidya Boopathi which gave good reputation to Siddha physicians among public. He constituted Siddha Medical Board which examines the drugs prepared by physicians and providing certificates of authentication helps to attract people towards Siddha medicines. Totally, he examined and issued certificate of authentication to 5046 drugs.

### 3.3. Siddha Medical Journal

Virudai. Sivagnana Yogi published Tamil Medical Journal “Tamil Vaidyam” for propagating positive aspects of Siddha medicine and contesting hegemony of western medicine. He wrote about the history of Siddha medicine as an unending evolution from Sangam period. He pointed out that Siddha medicine emerged 12,000 years back in Kumarikandam and it was practiced by Maruthuvan Damodaranar during the Sangam period. He disseminated knowledge of Siddha medicine and its special features through the journal. He helped to publish Siddha books and dictionaries about Siddhaparipasai. A book “Siddha Vaidya Agarathi” – dictionary of Siddhapaipasai written by Gurusamy Konar that was published and certified by him at the third Madras Presidency Siddha Vaidya Conference held in Madurai in 1927.

### 3.4. Usman Committee and his Work

After the formation of Justice party government in Madras presidency, the new government formed Usman Committee to report recognition and encouragement of indigenous systems of medicines in Madras presidency. Virudai. Sivagnana Yogi worked to make committee accept Siddha as a separate medicine coming from remote past in Tamil land. He toured and met Siddha physicians in Tamil region and prepared and circulated common answers to the questions of Usman committee because if

answers of physicians went wrong, the government would not accept Siddha system as a separate and worthy system which degraded Siddha system and Siddha physicians also. He wrote clear answers to the Usman committee enquiry apart from direct interview to it. His hard work along with other Siddha physicians such as S.S. Anandam, ShanmuganandaSwamigal, and C. MurugeshaMudaliarSiddha medicine was accepted as a valuable indigenous system of Tamil land coming from remote past and separate & different medicine from Ayurveda. The government allocated funds, appointing Siddha physicians in Taluk and municipal board hospitals and dispensaries. Very importantly, the Indian Medical School was opened in 1924 in Madras in which Siddha medicine was one of the systems along with Ayurveda and Unani.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Virudai. Sivagnana Yogi was a stalwart of Tamil culture and Siddha medicine. He contributed immensely in revitalising Siddha medicine during marginalisation by western medicine and Ayurveda. He worked hard along with other Siddha physicians to construct Siddha as a separate and valuable medicine of Tamil people through institutionalising, professionalising, publishing and producing Siddha medicine. We have Siddha medicine today as a legitimate system of Tamils because of the struggles of Siddha physicians during the early twentieth century in which contribution of Virudai. Sivagnana Yogi can't be erased.

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