

Influence of Tamil language on indigenous medicine in Sri Lanka

Peiris RM, Samaratunga U, Kaldera HPIJ, Wewalwala SL

Department of Ayurveda Basic Principles, Gampaha Wickramarachchi Ayurveda Institute, University of Kelaniya, Yakkala.

Abstract

The indigenous medicine of Sri Lanka claims an archaic practice tracing its roots back to pre-Aryan civilization with a cultural heritage comprised of indigenous wisdom, religious concepts of Buddhism, knowledge of Siddha medicine and Ayurveda. The absorption of Ayurveda and Siddha medicine into indigenous practice was itself a historical event. These systems were gifted from India along with several waves of culture that passed over to us. Authentic indigenous medical texts have proven that the foreign remedies have been absorbed into indigenous medicine through the various nations migrated to Sri Lanka. This study was carried out to find out the influence of Tamil language on indigenous medicine. *Vatikaprakarana*, *Ayurveda Pharmacopoeia*, the book series '*Talpate piliyam*', *Deshiya Paribhashika Shabdakoshaya*, *Deshiya Cikitsa Samgrahaya*, *Vanavasa Nigantu*, *Sarasvathi Nigandu* and *Vaidya Chinthamaniya* were used as the data sources in this study. The study revealed that the Southern Indian physicians who abided Sri Lanka between 17th and 18th century had written their remedies on Ola leaves in Sinhala language adhering to its pronunciation and some of them were written in their original Tamil form. Further, it was found that those words can be classified under different categories such as plant origin materials (*Kuppameniya*, *Nochchela*, *Kuringnan*), mineral origin materials (*Sinakkaran*, *Elimarindu*, *Wellapashanam*), diseases (*Visappu*, *Vadan*, *Sanni*), dosages (*Manchadi*, *Mukkal*, *Kal*) and preparations (*Kulambu*, *Kayam*). In addition, some *Mantras* used in traditional medicine also consisted of Tamil words. According to the study, it can be concluded that the findings mentioned in the studied indigenous texts explicate the influence of Tamil language on indigenous system of medicine in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Tamil language, indigenous medicine of Sri Lanka, Siddha medicine

Corresponding e-mail: rmpeiris@gmail.com