

Munpanikkalam - A Literary Analysis On Adherence Of Seasonal Regime To Combat Chronic Diseases

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ABSTRACT

Siddha system of the medicine is the heritage of Dravidian culture. All the contributions of this race to the human kind are in Tamil language. Among these *Tholkappiam* is the very ancient treatise available so far. This is also a classical example for the antiquity of Siddha system. There are some quotations in this treatise to describe the influences of various seasons on human kind. Authors elaborated the characteristics and specialties of *Munpanikaalam* (Early winter season) and correlated the effects of this season on human beings, explained in terms of Siddha basic principles. The explanation concluded and proved that this season is apt for treating chronic illness successfully in a shorter duration by utilizing the effective process of digestion and absorption to enhance the bio-availability of the drugs. This article shall enlighten the Siddha physicians and the patients utilize Siddha treatment to gain more benefits available in this season naturally.

Keywords

Munpanikkalam, Pathiyam, Seasonal variation, Vali, Azhal, Iyyam, Tholkaapium, Nilamum kaalamum

AIM

Elaborate upon the justification of healthy practices during Munpanikaalam as described in *Noi Anuga Vidhi Ozhukkam*, an exclusive branch of Siddha science of preventing ailments and promoting a healthy life.

INTRODUCTION

A current census states that considerable percentage of Indians with moderate income is being brought below poverty line due to modern medical treatment for chronic illness. These hurdles can be easily overcome with the help of Siddha system of medicine, since the diagnostic and treatment methods are simple, cost effective and easy accessible. Siddha system of medicine emphasizes prevention of diseases by providing a way of life to encounter the sufferings rather than confronting them.

According to ancient Tamil literary treatise *Tholkaapiyam*, the importance of ⁵*Nilamum_Kaalumum* (Landscapes and seasons) has been explained with great emphasis on dietary regimen and healthy way of life. It elaborates six kind of seasonal variation such as *Kaarkalam* (Early Rainy season), *Koothirkalam* (Late Rainy Season), *Munpanikkalam* (Early Winter season), *Pinpanikalam* (Late Winter Season), *Illavenilkalam* (Early Summer Season) and *Mudhuvanilkalam* (Late Summer Season). The qualities of various seasons, how each season influences the functional vitiations of three humours (Life forces) in the body of human beings and the ways and means to overcome the illness caused by the vitiations of humours are also dealt with. Philosophically the ³three humours are responsible for the functional status of human body. They are ³*Vali* (*Generative force*), ³*Azhal* (*Operating force*) and ³*Iyyam* (*Destructive force*). When they function in the ⁴equilibrium of 1:1/2:1/4 respectively is called healthy status. Any vitiation in this equilibrium leads to the onset of a disease.

The article focuses on ¹*Munpanikkalam* (Early Winter season), in which the quality of climatic conditions brings the three humours (Life forces) into ¹normal ratio to facilitate healthy living.

DURATION OF MUNPANIKALAM

¹ The duration of the season is from December 15 to February 15 every year.

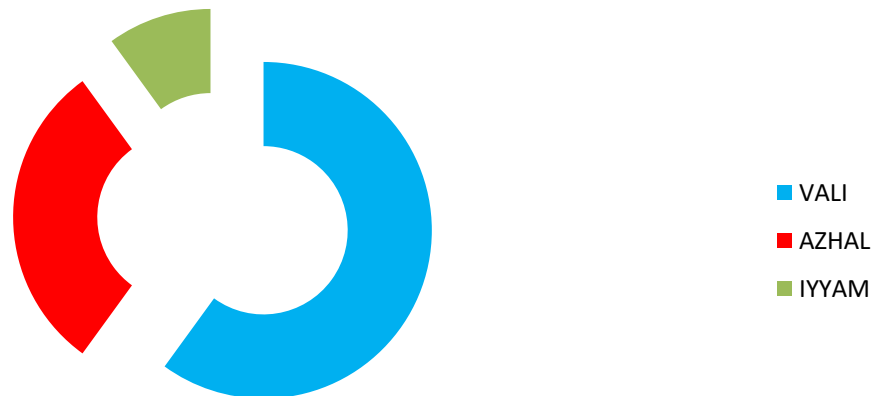
¹CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS SEASON

1. The length of the day is short and the length of the night is long.
2. The sky is filled with clouds throughout the day and night.
3. The sunlight will be less during the day time; therefore the amount of heat will be less.
4. Cold breeze from eastern side comes on this period.
5. This is the breeding season of Owl (*Anthai*) and Baya weaver (*Thookkanankuruvi*) bird
6. This is the flowering season of Mango (*Maa*) and Chamoline (*Sivanthi*) flowers

SPECIALITY OF THIS SEASON

¹In this ideal duration all the three humours (Life forces) come towards normal ratio naturally. Hence, medical treatment during this season facilitates speedy recovery.

⁴PHYSIOLOGICAL STATUS OF THREE HUMOURS

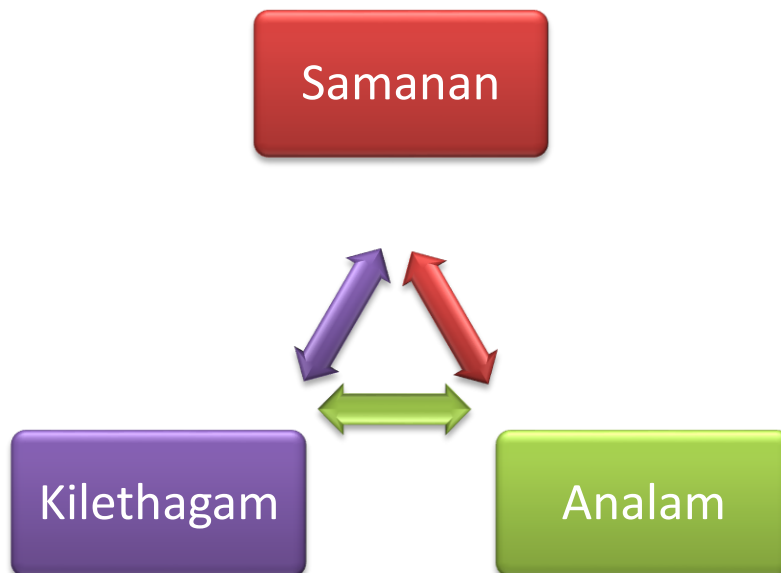


In observation to the characteristics of the *Munpanikaalam*, we can understand that the temperature on day and night will be less when compared to other seasons. Therefore as a protective mechanism the body heat increases. For this purpose, body has to burn out more calories; which will lead to increase in appetite and scientifically increases in basal metabolic rate leading to healthy functioning of body.

As per Siddha philosophical concepts, ⁶*Udal thee* (Digestive fire - Process of digestion and absorption) is maintained on the basis of the function of three components. They are *Samanan* (A component of *Vali*), *Analam* (A component of *Azhal*) and *Klethagam* (A component of *Iyyam*). They should function harmoniously in the equilibrium. The coldness in the external environment causes an increase in the natural protective mechanism of increasing body heat. Thereby burnout of calories increases naturally. It results with the

natural increase in the equilibrium function of digestive fire. In this mechanism, *Analam* ensures proper Digestion, *Klethagam* ensures absorption of ingested food and *Samanan*, takes up the function of distributing the absorbed nutrient fluid to all parts of the body and ensures proper functioning of *Vali* humour. This mechanism assures the effective functioning of digestion and absorption.

SIDDHA BASIC PRINCIPLES

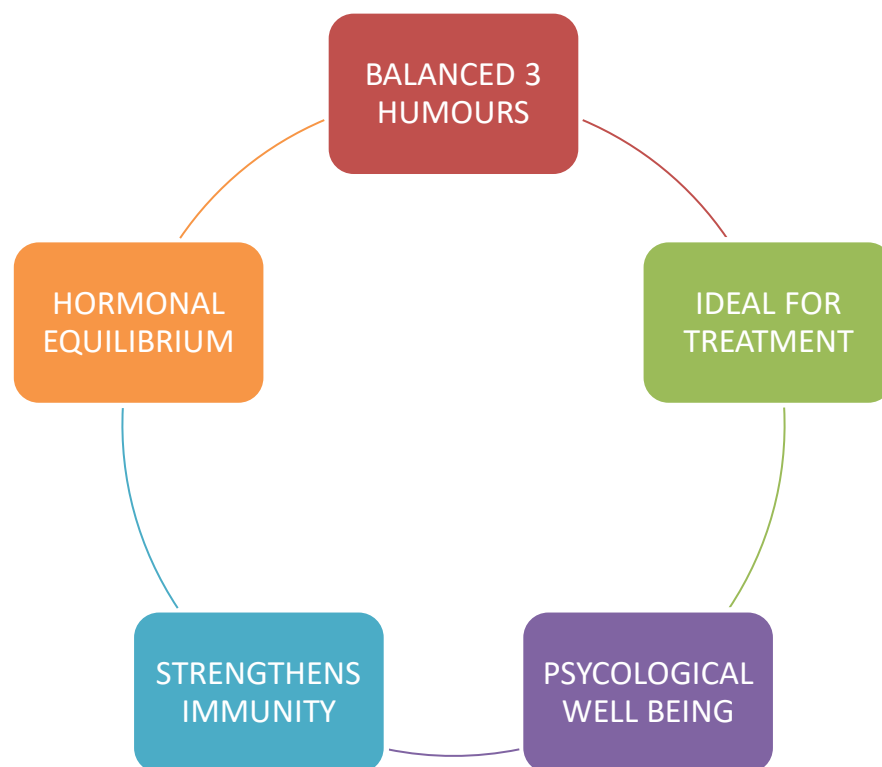


If the appetite is increased, we can understand that the collective function of *Samanan*, *Analam* and *Kiledhagam* is increased or strengthened. *Analam* is the Azhal principle; if it is strengthened the power of digestion will be increased. Therefore more quantity of food or any oily or ghee substance can be digested successfully. If *Kledhagam* is strengthened, successful absorption will be ensured. It leads to the improvement in the quality of blood; it will also increase the improvement in quality of all other ²physical constituents (Udal thathukkal) too. In the same time if *Samanan* is strengthened, it can neutralize all other *vayus* (*Life forces*), simultaneously it will ensure the normal functional status of all systems in the body. It means that the blood flow will be regulated to all parts of the body and all the physical constituents will be strengthened. Finally all systems including immune system will be toned up. Functions of all sense organs and higher intellectual functions will be increased. If treatment is provided in this season, due to the effect of strengthened digestion and absorption, ingested medicines in any form can easily be digested, absorbed and assimilated successfully. This will ensure the maximum bioavailability of therapeutic agents, which facilitate early cure of chronic diseases.

If all the three humours (Life forces) are brought into the normal ratio with the judicious administration of medicines and diet in this season, it will tone up all body structures including Joints and Cartilages. The skin complexion can also be improved. Collectively comprehensive health status can be ensured.

BENEFITS OF MUNPANIKKALAM

1. Chronic diseases can be successfully treated in this season in a shorter duration since all the three humours come to¹ normal naturally. The suitable medication will speed up the recovery process.
2. Natural tonics prepared with Ghee can be administered effectively in this season. Since the appetite is strengthened, those kinds of drugs can be ¹digested successfully.
3. Obesity can be successfully treated with suitable ¹diet regulations alone. The patients need not bear the burden of exercises and medicines. Since the burning out of calories is continuing as a protective mechanism, patients can be advised to consume low glycemic index diet like Millets, Dahl, Cereals, Milk and Green leafy vegetables. The excess fat can be burnt out.
4. This is the ideal duration for treating infertility cases too. ¹This is the breeding season of other species of plants and animals too. The functional status of sex hormones gets increased due to the pleasant attitude developing in the environment.



PRECAUTIONS

Excessive exposure to cold climate may cause dryness on the skin. ⁶Therefore applying oil on the body is advised to prevent the dryness and decreasing function of *Vali* humour. ¹Usage of blankets is advised to prevent increase of *Iyyam* humour and helps to maintain *Azhal* humour in the balance state to maintain normal appetite. It will also prevent the individual from developing anxiety, gastric ulcers and any infectious conditions in the upper respiratory tract.

SCOPE

1. Comparative study of treatment period required for treating chronic patients between *Munpanikalam* and other seasons can be executed.
2. Prognosis Assessment on treating patients in *Munpanikalam* can be studied.
3. Survey on Healthy status among patients can be done on various seasons and a comparative analysis can be derived.
4. Survey on Immune status of the patients can be done on various seasons and a comparative analysis can be derived.

DISCUSSION

The article details about the way of living pertaining to *Munpanikaalam* which gives positive health benefits. Moreover, it is ensured that *Munpanikaalam* is the apt season for Siddha treatment, assuring healthy living throughout. It is the duty of Siddha Physicians to propagate this information among the public at large to obtain speedy recovery from chronic illness. These will add up strength to our Siddha system of medicine.

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