SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In order to document the knowledge of naturopathic practitioners in Southern districts of Tamil Nadu, 24 naturopathic practitioners from four districts, namely Virudhunagar, Tirunelveli, Tuticorin and Kanniyakumari, were interviewed to collect details about the naturopathic dietary practices to treat 29 selected chronic diseases.

Totally 142 plant species /125 genera under 52 families have been recorded for the naturopathic practices to treat 29 chronic diseases. The dominant groups are the medicinal herbs 51 (36%), fruits 25 (18%) and vegetables 20 (14%), altogether comprising a total of 68%. For each and every disease, top ten species were identified and altogether (29 x 10 = 290) fall under only 57 species.

The present survey shows the importance of common fruits like *Citrus limon*, *C. aurantium*, *Vitis vinifera*, *Musa paradisiaca*, *Carica papaya* etc play an important role in keeping general health of the body and in preventing various diseases.

In general, the present survey based on the above results, shows that there are almost common medicines for all the diseases simply by strengthening the general health and immunity along with the curing of particular disease.
A detailed study has also been made on the dominant disease diabetes, to know the impact of naturopathy in the treatment of diabetes (Type 2) by interviewing the patients who had undergone naturopathic treatment. In general, all the 40 selected patients showed major improvement in the blood sugar level and the related complications by following 40% to more than 80% naturopathic practices given by the naturopaths. It has also been observed that there is no much of difference between the patients who followed naturopathy along with allopathic medicines and patients who followed naturopathy alone. In adjunctive therapy, the naturopathic diet/medicines nullify the side effects produced by the allopathic medicines.

In general it clearly shows that the herbs like Aegle marmelos, Gymnema sylvestre and Terminalia chebula act as key medicines directly by enhancing insulin secretion and antioxidant activity while all other foods, particularly pulses, cereals, fruits, vegetables etc. provide balanced and nutrient rich diet which is suitable for diabetes.

The results of the present study in general and with particular reference to diabetes are in accordance with the hypothesis of Nettleton et al. (2008), i.e. the empirically derived dietary pattern characterized by high intake of whole grains, fruits, nuts/seeds, green leafy vegetables and low fat dairy product is associated with 15% lower diabetic risk.