INTRODUCTION

It is well known that the ‘The greatest wealth is Health’. “Health of body and mind is a great blessing, if we can bear it” (John Henry Cardinal Newman). “Health is a state of complete harmony of the body, mind and spirit” (WHO). But, unlike our ancients, many people do not realize the value of health, unless they experience as quoted in Catalan proverb: “From the bitterness of disease man learns the sweetness of health”. In the mean time, just because you’re not sick doesn’t mean you’re healthy. To insure good health: eat lightly, breathe deeply, live moderately, cultivate cheerfulness, and maintain an interest in life" (William Londen). “The part can never be well unless the whole is well” (Plato). “If you don’t take care of your body, where are you going to live?” It should be remembered that, health is merely the slowest rate at which one can die. “Take care of your body. It’s the only place you have to live” (Jim Rohn). It all depends upon that what you eat. “The more you eat, the less flavor; the less you eat, the more flavor” (Chinese Proverb). Hippocrates says that “Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food”. So “The best and most efficient pharmacy is within your own system” (Robert C. Peale). “Health is a relationship between you and your body” (Terri Guillemets). “By cleansing your body on a regular basis and eliminating as many toxins as possible from your environment, your body can begin to heal itself, prevent disease, and become stronger and more resilient than you ever dreamed possible!” (Dr. Edward Group III).
The human body, like all the other living organisms, carries out unlimited number of both anabolic and catabolic pathways as routine and also as timing or emergency pathways which are all depends upon specific biocatalysts, enzymes, which in turn require several vitamins and minerals for proper function. They should be available in optimum/balanced level. Otherwise, under accumulation and over accumulation will lead to under-metabolism of over-metabolism respectively, resulting in different kinds of health problems. It is clear that the imbalance condition of our body i. e. Nutritional deficiencies and oxidative stress (accumulation of unwanted chemicals) are the root causes for almost all the common diseases. Once the body is revoked to a normal balanced condition by supplying the enough nutrients and by eliminating the unwanted chemicals, the disease will disappear and the body will function normally. This kind of practice is called ‘Naturopathy’. One of the founders of Naturopathic Medicine, Dr. Benedict Lust, summarized the philosophy of Naturopathy very succinctly in 1918: "The natural system for curing disease is based on a return to nature in regulating the diet, breathing, exercising, bathing and the employment of various forces to eliminate the poisonous products in the system, and so raise the vitality of the patient to a proper standard of health." Naturopathic healing principles recognize that each of your parts - your body, mind, emotions and spirit - are interconnected and constantly interact. Disharmony on any one of these levels can have adverse effects on your body, in other words, cause disease.
The philosophy of natural healing is that, given the right environment, the body has the capacity to heal itself. In India the healing force is called "prana," in China it is called "chi," and in America it is called "vital force" or "innate force" which works most effectively when stressors have been removed and the mind-body has been harmonized. "Health is the proper relationship between the microcosm (man) and the macrocosm (the universe) and the disruption of this relationship will lead to disease" (Dr. Yeshi Donden, physician to the Dalai Lama). According to Dr. Sushim Dubey, who taught the Students of M.A. (Yoga) Rani Durgavati University, Jabalpur and the Students of Diploma in Yoga Studies/Therapy of Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga, New Delhi, during 2005-2008, the basic principles of causes and naturopathic treatment of diseases are as follows.

Violation of Nature’s law and leads to: a) abnormal composition of blood and lymph, b) Lowered vitality and c) Accumulation of morbid matter in the body. When there is a faulty functioning of blood and lymph again for a prolonged period, the vitality or the life force of an individual is lowered considerably. It also favours the growth or multiplications of disease producing agents like germs/ bacteria/ virus etc. which are considered as secondary cause of the disease as per Naturopathy.
According to naturopathy, continuous suppression of any acute disease leads to variety of chronic diseases which are of immense and immediate health concern causing major death in the world. The modern system of medicine believes in specific cause for specific disease and the treatment is being administered accordingly. But in Naturopathy, there is only one cause for all the diseases i.e. accumulation of morbid matter and there is only one cure for all the diseases i.e. elimination of morbid matter. Naturopathy considers that many of the acute symptoms of disease are not the actual disease symptoms; they are the alarming signals to the person that the body is facing some problem and that needs correction. For example, Fever with raised level body temperature above normal due to the process of fermentation in the body due to the accumulation of morbid matter. Generally people would like to consume some anti-pyretics (temperature lowering drugs) and bring down the temperature. Although it gives temporary relief it doesn’t counteract the actual cause of fever i.e. the accumulation of morbid matter which needs to be eliminated. Moreover, by suppressing the fever with medicine, the internal fermentation process may take different shape and lead to some other problem, which may go unnoticed. This will / may create a grave danger to the body in the later days. Hence, according to Naturopathy fever should not be suppressed and instead efforts should be made to find out why there is a fever? Since fever is giving a warning to the body that there is danger ahead, it is considered as a friend.
Consuming medicine, according to Naturopathy, is a process of poisoning the body. So, naturopathy is purely a drugless system of medicine. Whatever the food we take that must act as medicine to our body; it means that the food should give proper nutrition and energy to the body and at the same time it has to assist in eliminating the unwanted material from the body. That’s why only such foods are recommended in Naturopathy which has these two basic properties. The selection of food varies from disease to disease. It is the intelligence of the Physician who treats that what food has to be prescribed to a particular patient and particular disease condition. The given food should be properly digested, absorbed and assimilated by the digestive system. It also eliminates the unwanted matter from the body. Since the digestive system is often affected primarily, the health of this system is utmost importance in naturopathy. The primary cause of disease – accumulation of morbid matter begins at digestive system and then spreads to other parts of the body. Almost all the treatments are focused mainly on the health of the digestive system, specially the eliminative treatments.

In Naturopathy, the role of Physician is less compare to any other system’s treatment. The patient has to put his efforts to bring back his/her living habits close to nature which is possible only by the will and wish of the patient. He/she also must withstand the healing efforts of the body and facilitate the same with his own efforts. The patient is also advised to lead a natural life, so that he can prevent any disease condition of the future and at the same time he can promote
his existing health status. The increasing strains placed on healthcare systems are primarily the result of a growing human population. But even with the presence of large population, there is possibility for cheap and best healthcare, through naturopathy without any medicine. But common people think that treatment without medicine will be of poor quality. But ass what medical ethicist Leonard J. Weber previously suggested that less expensive healthcare does not necessarily mean poorer quality healthcare. “The best doctor gives the least medicines” (Benjamin Franklin).

Health problem due to malnutrition in India is very high and the Government of India is taking some efforts to reduce such kind of problems (Kotecha, 2008). Prevalence of infectious diseases in developing countries and problems of AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) due to nutrition deficiency have been highlighted by Ambrus and Ambrus (2004). The rapid transition in dietary patterns in India—coupled with a sedentary lifestyle and specific socioeconomic pressures—has led to an increase in obesity and other diet-related noncommunicable diseases. Studies have shown that nutritional interventions significantly enhance metabolic control and weight loss (Joshi et al., 2012). Ongoing medical counseling in nutrition by a trained dietitian is important for better long-term metabolic control of diabetes (Al-Shookri et al., 2012). In general, specific diet schedule is followed for specific disease. Unlike in other systems of medicine where standard drugs are advised for a particular disease, in naturopathy there is no specific prescription of individual item for particular
disease. The basic secret of naturopathy is only by modifying the dietary habits by considering the natural laws which mainly depends upon the body condition of the patient. This kind of practice leads to the discovery of variety of diet therapy by each and every naturopath and large number of such valuable practices are available only as the knowledge source which are yet to be documented. With this background, the present study has been mainly aimed to explore the available hidden knowledge among the potential naturopaths from Southern districts of Tamil Nadu.

The major objectives of the present study are:

- To explore and document the dietary practices to treat general chronic diseases, with particular reference to diabetes (Type 2) by various traditional naturopaths in Southern districts of Tamil Nadu.

- To validate the successfulness of the naturopathic practices for diabetes (Type 2) by interviewing the patients who have undergone naturopathy treatment.

- To find out the top ten items of fruits, vegetables, cereals, pulses/nuts and medicinal herbs utilized for naturopathic treatment in the study area.