The present study deals with the survey of naturopathic treatment, particularly through diet / herbal therapy, of 29 chronic diseases. From the results, it is observed that the *Diabetes mellitus* is the dominant disease represented by 21% (3325 number of patients treated) per year followed by the other diseases such as arthritis (16 % with 2592 number of patients), hypertension (13 % with 2005 number of patients), obesity (12 % with 1814 number of patients), piles (9 % with 1440 number of patients), Acid Peptic Disease (8 % with 1238 number of patients), asthma (7 % with 1152 number of patients), headache (6 % with 1008 number of patients), menstrual disorders (5 % with 720 number of patients) and cardiovascular disease (3 % with 526 number of patients) respectively.

Totally 142 plant species /125 genera under 52 families have been recorded for the naturopathic practices in Southern Districts of Tamil Nadu (Table 39). For each and every disease, among several plants used, top ten species were identified and altogether (29 x 10 = 290) fall under only 57 species (Table 40). Interestingly when all the species of all the diseases are considered, the dominant groups are the medicinal herbs 51 (36%), fruits 25 (18%) and vegetables 20 (14%), altogether comprising a total of 68%. In contrast when the top ten species of each disease are considered, there are 57 species with herbs, fruits and vegetables in 29%, 35% and 17% respectively. Thus the present survey shows the
importance of common fruits like *Carica papaya*, *Citrus limon*, *C. aurantium*, *Vitis vinifera*, *Musa paradisiaca*, etc play an important role in keeping general health of the body and in preventing various diseases.

As far as diabetes is concerned, people in the age group 51-55 years are commonly affected. The major food items for diabetes include mainly cereals (flakes, porridges, boiled grains/flours), fruits (*Carica papaya*, *Vitis vinifera* and *Musa paradisiaca*) and vegetables (*Daucus carata*, *Momordica charantia* and *Luffa acutangula*) along with important antidiabetic herbs like *Cynodon dactylon*, *Gymnema sylvestre*, *Terminalia chebula*.

In general naturopathic practitioners prefer to use treatment approaches that they consider to be the most natural and least invasive, relying on methods other than standard medications and surgery. They focus on changes in diet and lifestyle and on preventing disease, together with other alternative therapies. Naturopathy emphasizes prevention, treatment and the promotion of optimal health through the use of therapeutic methods and modalities which encourage the self-healing process – *the vis medicatrix naturae* (WHO, 2008). Naturopathy attempts to help the body heal itself, and naturopaths consider a person’s physical, emotional, genetic, environmental, and social circumstances when evaluating treatment. Naturopathic medicine is of greatest interest as it is a whole-system of CAM most closely resembling conventional primary care in scope of practice, but
with greater delivery of healthy lifestyle counseling (Oberg et al., 2011). All the treatment methods of the present study include common foods, fruits and vegetables along with some common/uncommon medicinal herbs without any artificial medicine or pure chemicals. The perusal of literature shows that the food items or medicinal herbs used to treat each and every disease have pharmacological evidences to treat that particular disease as discussed under each disease.

While it is clear that individuals with immune responses significantly below ‘normal’ are more susceptible to infectious agents and exhibit increased infectious morbidity and mortality, it is not clear how the variation in immune function among healthy individuals relates to variation in susceptibility to infection. Nutrient status is an important factor contributing to immune competence: under-nutrition impairs the immune system, suppressing immune functions that are fundamental to host protection. Under-nutrition leading to impairment of immune function can be due to insufficient intake of energy and macronutrients and/or due to deficiencies in specific micronutrients. Often these occur in combination. Nutrients that have been demonstrated (in either animal or human studies) to be required for the immune system to function efficiently include essential amino acids, the essential fatty acid linoleic acid, vitamin A, folic acid, vitamin B6, vitamin B12, vitamin C, vitamin E, Zn, Cu, Fe and Se. Practically all forms of immunity may be affected by deficiencies in one or more
of these nutrients. Animal and human studies have demonstrated that adding the deficient nutrient back to the diet can restore immune function and resistance to infection. Among the nutrients studied most in this regard are vitamin E and Zn. Increasing intakes of some nutrients above habitual and recommended levels can enhance some aspects of immune function. However, excess amounts of some nutrients also impair immune function. There is increasing evidence that probiotic bacteria improve host immune function. The effect of enhancing immune function on host resistance to infection in healthy individuals is not clear (Calder & Kew, 2002).

Deficiency of total energy or of one or more essential nutrients impairs immune function and increases susceptibility to infectious pathogens. This is most likely because these nutrients are involved in the molecular and cellular responses to challenge of the immune system. Providing these nutrients to deficient individuals restores immune function and improves resistance to infection. For some nutrients (e.g. vitamin E) the dietary intakes that result in greatest enhancement of immune function are greater than recommended intakes. However, excess intake of some nutrients (e.g. vitamin E, Zn) also impairs immune responses. Thus, four potential general relationships appear to exist between the intake of a nutrient and immune function. All patterns of relationship between nutrient supply and immune function assume that a deficiency of the nutrient impairs the immune response.
Functional foods (specific nutrient and/or food components) should beneficially affect one or more target functions in the body. The use of functional foods as a form of preventive medicine has been the subject of much research over the last two decades. It is well known that nutrition plays a vital role in chronic diseases, but it is only recently that data relating to the effects of specific nutrients or foods on the immune system have become available. This chapter aims to summarize the effects of some functional foods (e.g., prebiotics and micronutrients) on the immune system. It should be noted, however, that studies into the role of functional foods with regard to the human immune system are still in their infancy and a great deal of controversy surrounds the health claims attributed to some functional foods. Consequently, thorough studies are required in human and animal systems if we are to move towards developing a functional diet that provides maximal health benefits (Hoyles & Vulevic, 2008).

Just under 10 million children under 5 years of age continue to die unnecessarily in countries of the developing world. Under-nutrition is the direct cause of at least a third of these deaths. Although there has been a reduction in the numbers and proportion dying, and progress toward the child survival millennium development goal (MDG4) is positive in many countries, clearly this is an unacceptable figure especially when compared with what is possible from the single digit figures of more affluent countries. Progress toward the goals for maternal health (MDG5) and the elimination of poverty and hunger and under-
nutrition (MDG1) is doing even less well. Under-nutrition contributes to over 3.5 million child deaths and micronutrient deficiencies (vitamin A and zinc deficiencies) have been estimated to account for 1 million of these deaths per year or 9% of global childhood burden of disease (under 5 years), while iron deficiency is a risk factor for maternal mortality, responsible for 115,000 deaths per year, or 20% of global maternal deaths (Darnton-Hill & Ahmed, 2010). Key Points of Darnton-Hill & Ahmed (2010) include:

• Deficiencies of micronutrients (vitamins, minerals and trace elements) are common—up to a third of people in low-income countries are affected.

• Women and children, especially those living in poverty, are those most at risk because of increased metabolic demands of growth, pregnancy and lactation and repeated infections.

• A vicious cycle of under-nutrition leads to reduced immunity that increases disease risk and then the disease itself causes further under-nutrition and so on.

• Immune systems are impacted by micronutrient deficiencies:
  – vitamin A deficiency impairs innate, cell-mediated and humoral antibody responses but probably not viral infection
  – zinc deficiency affects both innate and cell-mediated immunity but effects of supplementation on antibody production in humans are less clear than in animals
  – iron deficiency and overload impair both innate and cell-mediated immunity, with no effect on humoral antibody production
– vitamin C deficiency in humans impairs leukocyte functions and decreases overall NK cell activity and lymphocyte proliferation
– vitamins B6, B12, folate and E deficiencies impair Th1 cytokine-mediated immune response through insufficient production of pro-inflammatory cytokines, shifting to an anti-inflammatory Th2 cell-mediated immune response, thus increasing the risk of extracellular infections
– supplementation with micronutrients generally reverses these impaired immune responses

• Micronutrient deficiencies can also be addressed by dietary improvement (if available and accessible), and by fortification. It is important to also address other interventions such as immunization, water and sanitation, breastfeeding and the reduction of social inequities.

Thus nutritional and dietary therapies are necessary to maintain general body health with more immunity and thus preventing numerous diseases.

With the concept of prevention is better than curing, naturopathy plays an important role in each and every human. So the demand for naturopathic services in rural areas may have strong underlying cultural and social drivers. Given the apparent affinity for and increasingly large role played by CAM services, including naturopathic medicine, in rural areas it is imperative that naturopathic medicine and the CAM sector more broadly become a core focus of rural health research (Wardle et al., 2010).
All the naturopathic treatments, in general, show the uses of common fruits, vegetables, cereals and pulses along with some medicinal herbs. From the present survey it is clear that the general formula is to give fruits and vegetables having antioxidant properties and several nutrients including vitamins and minerals. Each and every therapy will also include at least one or few medicinal herb(s) with particular pharmacological property. Another important secret found in naturopathy, based on present survey, is the use of coconut, universally in all the diet therapies. The reason behind this may be due to the fact that the cornerstone of naturopathy is the digestive system which should absorb available nutrients more efficiently. Several natural medicines and also allopathic medicines are of lipophilic substances which can be absorbed more efficiently with the presence of lipid substances like coconut. Another basic target in naturopathic treatment is to keep the body without the presence of any antioxidants, which are the root-causes of numerous diseases. So, each and every diet therapy of naturopathy includes several fruits and vegetables with strong antioxidant properties.

Thus it is very clear that there is a common medicine for all the diseases in naturopathy and there is an individual medicine for each and every disease in allopathic treatment. Allopathic treatment targets only the particular disease without bothering about the general body health and the root cause of that particular disease. In contrast, naturopathy always considers general body health, immunity, nutrient deficiency etc in a holistic approach by eliminating the root
cause for the particular disease. Without eliminating the root cause of particular problem and suppressing or hiding the effect of particular problem is similar to burning fragrant ‘Agar Pathies’ to suppress the unwanted rotten smell caused by some dead animals inside or outside the house without clearing the dead animal. As long as ‘Agar Pathies’ burn, the rotten smell may be suppressed, but once the ‘Agar Pathies’ stop burning, the rotten smell will automatically reappear. So, keep your body clean with all the required nutrients in a balanced level to live in healthy life. If there is any problem, it may mainly be due to the disturbance in the nutrient balance or due to the presence of morbid chemicals within the body and such problems can be rectified simply by diet therapy. “Foods are medicines and medicines are foods” and the best way to keep healthy life is by taking balanced diet without any medicines.

According to naturopathy, it is understood that disease will not come in to your body, and your body only invites the disease. So do not make your body to invite any disease by addicting to the modern life style which should definitely be changed to keep your body in healthy status.

On conservation of point of view also, naturopathy is important since it uses majority of common fruits and vegetables which are available to common man. The typical medicinal herbs used are very few. In this, context there is no danger for any useful plants due to naturopathic practice.
Based on the present study, it is concluded with the following statements:

"No Illness which can be treated by the diet should be treated by any other means." -Moses Maimonides.

"This illustrates the paradigm shift that is occurring in medicine. What was once scoffed at is now becoming generally accepted as an effective alternative. In fact, in most instances the naturopathic alternative offers significant benefit over standard medical practices. Undoubtedly in the future many of the concepts, philosophies, and practices of naturopathy will be vindicated. Certainly the future looks bright for naturopathic medicine." Michael Murray, N.D.

"The doctor of the future will give no medicine, but will interest his patients in the care of the human frame, in diet, and in the cause and prevention of disease." -Thomas Edison, Inventor.