

## A Surevey of Traditional Health care practices of the Tribals of Dindori District, Madhya Pradesh

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### ABSTRACT

This study has been conducted among Baiga primitive tribals of Anuppur District, Madhya Pradesh. Ethnomedicine has long been recognized as an important field of medicinal research. Ethnomedicinal study of disease and illness from ecological and epidemiological points of view to understand the distribution of diseases and their relationship with socio-cultural and environmental factors, have helped in the emergence of several ideas and formulations of present day ethnobotany. In every society, particularly in tribal societies, the people are found to have certain cultural practices to keep their health in good condition. The primitive man must have used things which he was able to procure most easily as therapeutic agents and remedial measures. In ancient times, the health disorders were interpreted in a cosmological and botanical perspective. Medicine was dominated by magical and religious beliefs which were an integral part of the ancient cultures and civilizations. The concept of disease, in which the ancient man believed, is known as the supernatural theory of disease.

The present paper deals with species of plants used by the said tribals in the treatment of malaria (*Andrographis paniculata*); Fractured bones (*Vitis quadrangularis*); Lactation deficiency (*Asparagus racemosus*); fever (*Tinospora cordifolia*); cough & cold (*Terminalia chebula*); Stomachache (*Operculina trurpethum*); bronchial problems (*Zingiber officinale*); diarrhoea and dysentery (*Acacia nilotica*); and toothache (*Calotropis gigantea*). Mode of administration has also been dealt with in brief.

**Key words :** Ethnomedicine, Baiga Malaria, stomachache.

**H**ealth and disease are a continuous process and are interlinked with the health seeking behavior of the community. There is no single simple answer to the most difficult question, as to why one falls sick and when a number of people residing in the same geographical, socio-cultural environment become sick, only a few of them seek medical advice.

The sociologists, anthropologists and medical scientists approach to this baffling question differently. The present study is an attempt to describe ethnomedical practices and some common disease from which the tribals usually suffer.

Dindori district is located in the central part of Indai. It is lying between 80°12" to 23°12" N Latitude and 80°18" to 81°51" E Longitude and total area to 8771 sqm. Extends to Dindori. The district has average rainfall 1400 mm. and temperature 45°C Maximum in June and 02°C Minimum in December.

India has 72 primitive tribal groups and one of them is Baiga residing in Anuppur district of Madhya Pradesh. The Baiga are the members of a very widespread tribe called as nature son and some other tribes like the Panika, . They are scattered in the low land division and parts of the Anuppur plateau of Madhya Pradesh. The economy of the Baiga is not based on their production system but on the natural resources. The forest has been the traditional home of the Baiga and the source of their livelihood. Forests are the major economic source for the Baiga community as the non timber forest produce play an essential role in the lives of Baiga people. The specific roles of Baiga women in the economic, social, ritual and religious spheres are considered very important.

The data has been collected from Baiga dominated villages of Anuppur District of Madhya Pradesh. The present study has been carried out among 120 adult individuals, through structure scheduled, simultaneous group discussion and informal interview method.

As the lifestyles of the tribal people, their habitat, habits, beliefs, customs and values, as all of these are likely to influence and predict the way the people would behave

in a particular situation it is essential to have a broad idea about the tribe. The high influence of these above aspects is found in primitive tribal societies.

#### *Causes of disease :*

The tribal belief of causation of disease can be broadly categorized into two areas<sup>6</sup>. They are:

- a) Supernatural, and
- b) Physical Causes

The supernatural causes as described by Clements<sup>8</sup> can further be modified to the following categories. They are:

- a) Soul loss
- b) Breach of Taboo
- c) Sorcery
- d) Ghosts of ancestors
- e) Ancestral spirits and supernatural powers.
- f) Evil eye, Evil mouth
- g) Manna
- h) Fetish

The physical causes include:

- a) Effect of weather
- b) Effect of wrong food
- c) Accidents and natural calamities

Tribal people are strong believers of natural theory of diseases. According to them, a man when falls out of harmony with the nature. Hence, the first thing is to restore balance and harmony with nature through rituals. This would have positive healing effect on the body.

#### *Concept of medicinal plants :*

Human ecology is concerned with the broad setting of man in his environment. Human beings have been in close interactions

Table-1. Traditional medicine used by the tribals of Dindori district Baiga tribals

S. No.	Name of disease	Local name	Botanical names	Usable part	Mode of administration
1	Malaria	Bhujneem	<i>Andrographis paniculata</i> Nees	Leaf root	Dried part is ground and mixed with sugar, It is taken in the form of tablets.
2	Fracture	Hadjuri	<i>Vitis quadrangularis</i> Wall.	Leaves	Ground leaves are applied on the fractured bone.
3	Inadequate supply of milk	Sattawar	<i>Asparagus racemosus</i> Willd.	Dry root	Dry root of <i>Satawar</i> is ground and given with a glass of water or milk.
4	Fever	Gumil	<i>Tinospora cordifolia</i> (Willd.) Miers.	Branch	Juice is taken orally.
5	Cough & cold	Harra	<i>Terminalia chebula</i> Retz.	Fruit	<i>Harra</i> is made in the form of chocolate and chewed.
6	Stomach pain	Nichuth	<i>Operculina turepethum</i> (Linn.) Silva Mansa	Root	Ground and taken orally.
7	Respiratory problem	Ginger	<i>Zingiber officinale</i> Rosc.	Tuber	Fresh or dry roots are grinded and mixed with honey in equal quantity.
8	Dysentery and Diarrhoea	Kikar	<i>Acacia nilotica</i> L.	Bark	Bark of plant dipped in water overnight and at morning given to relieve in gonorrhoea. Gum is also used in diarrhoea & dysentery
9	Toothache	Madar	<i>Calotropis gigantea</i> (Linn.) R.Br. ex Ait.	Latex	Milky latex of stem is applied on the affected teeth

with nature from the very early period of their existence. With many different kinds of pursuits man has to look up to nature even today. The symbiotic relationship between plants and human beings at various levels is not only an age old feature but it also provides us an easy understanding of socio-economic and cultural bondage that exists between them. Man has been using plants since the time immemorial. The importance and uses of plants vary from time to time and from society to society.

There are a number of studies<sup>1,6,8</sup> which give methods of herbal treatment for various diseases. The treatments vary according to the availability of plants in the neighboring surrounding. Each plant has its own quality in curing the disease. Table-1 shows common ailments *i.e.*, malaria, fracture, inadequate supply of milk, fever, cough and cold, stomach pain, respiratory problem, dysentery and diarrhoea and toothache *etc.*, along with various medicinal plants used by the Baiga for healing purpose.

Every country has its own list of traditional remedies and countries need to document these after observing local people and their practices. This is important because this information is often the foundation of larger discoveries and inventions and since this information is passed down by word of mouth, it is likely to be lost forever. It is important to engage botanist, foresters and NGOs working in an area to prepare lists of such tribal, folk and village remedies. Traditional medicine can play an important role in the health system of a country if the system and its medicaments have been prepared in a manner that inspires confidence in the quality.

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