

effort among different Government departments on the one hand and different sections of the civil society on the other.

The most enduring steps towards decreasing child labour problem would be to improve the economic conditions of the families which supplies the child labourers into the work force. The provision of assistance in the form of income generating assets under different rural development and poverty eradication programmes needs to be provided to such families. An improvement in the economic condition of the families also brings about significant change in the attitude of families towards decreasing family size and sending the children to schools. Apart from legislative measures, there is an urgent need to give proper importance to the supportive measures for child labour.

9. Traditional Folk Medicines among the Tribals :

9.1 Introduction :

This topic presents some information on folk medicine practiced by three tribal communities inhabiting about 30 tribal Mauzas in the Hili Block, Dakshin Dinajpur, West Bengal. It has been widely recognized that most tribal communities over the years have accumulated a huge body of knowledge in utilizing locally available medicinal plants in the cure of specific diseases (Johannes, 1975; Mitra and Jain, 1991; Bhar gave, 1983). Currently there is a general trend in finding out and utilizing the wisdom of ethnic communities not only in curing diseases but also in storage of grains, and production of milk products and beverages. This account is a part of broader study on ecologic and socio-economic aspects of the Santals, Mundas and Oraons in the Hili Block.

9.2 Methods

Ethno botanical methods adopted by Schultes (1992). Mitra and Jain (1991) and Johannes (1975) were followed. Herbarium sheets of the medicinal plants were prepared which were identified by Prof. A.P. Das, Department of Botany, NBU. The tribal medicinemen were interviewed together information regarding use of the plant or parts there of in the preparation of the medicine for specific diseases, and the dose and frequency as per age of the patients. To begin with the ethnic medicinemen were reluctant to part with any information. However, on repeated assurance that the information obtained from them would be used for research and for the good of mankind in the long run, they cooperated. The patients were also interviewed separately to crosscheck the information provided by the medicine men and also the efficacy of the treatment.

9.3 Results and Discussion :

To Stop Bleeding -

- (a) Name of plant : common name-Red leaf; tribal name - Lal Pata ; scientific name *Aerua scandens* ; family Amaranthaceae.

Preparation and Dosage:

About 10grams of grinded fresh wet red leaf is to be applied in the cuts for remedy. Large sized cuts (2 inch long and ½ inch deep or more) are also heeled without any stitch with the application of this leaf.

- (b) Name of the plant : common name - Marigold ; tribal name - Khusbibaha ; scientific name *Togetes petula* ; family - Asteraceae.

Preparation and Dosage:

Grinded fresh wet marigold leaf about 10 grams is to be applied into the cut. The bleeding will stop soon.

(c) Name of the plant : common name - Durbagash ; tribal name - Dubi gash ; scientific name - *Cynodon dactylon* ; family - Poaceae.

Preparation and Dosage:

Durba gash is in use for small cuts. About 5 grams of fresh wet grinded durba grass is to be applied with their saliva in the cut.

Body pain, Headache and Fever -

(a) Name of the plant : common name - Patharkuchi ; tribal name- Hanuman thaba ; scientific name - *Kalanchoe pinnata*; Family - Crassulaceae.

Preparation and Dosage :

About 20 grams of wet patharkuchi leaves is to be grinded and applied on the forehead. It cures headache within a few minutes. But if there is fever along with headache, it is to be applied twice or thrice a day for two or three days, as necessary.

Abdominal Pain -

(a) Name of the plant : common name - Bonkola ; tribal name - Birkaira ; scientific name - *Rhaphidophora hookeri*. Family - Araceae.

Preparation and Dosage :

About 5 grams of fresh wet inflorescence is rendered into a paste by crushing with a quarter tea spoonful salt. The preparation is to be taken before meal once or twice according to necessity. This is a sure remedy for abdominal pain.

(b) Name of the Plant : common name - Kalomegh (creat) ; tribal name - Kalmegh ; scientific name - *Andrographis paniculata*; Family - Acanthaceae.

Preparation and Dosage:

About 3 grams of dried kalomegh leaves is to be grinded and taken before meal twice a day with water. Three grams of leaf preparation is to be taken once. It may be continued for 2-3 days if needed.

Pain in the Lumber Region -

(a) Name of the plant : common name - Bishjarak ; tribal name - Isaowar ; scientific name - *Ampelocissus sikkimensis*; Family - Vitaceae.

Preparation and Dosage:

About 50 grams of wet root of Bishjark is pulverized and strained. The filtrate is then heated with 100 grams of ghee. About 10 grams of warm preparation is to be applied in the painful portion twice a day for 7-8 days. Only warm ointment is to be applied.

Caugh and Chest Pain -

- (a) Name of the plant : i. common name - Kalozira ; scientific name - *Nigella sativa*. Family name – Ranunculaceae,
ii. Common name - Dry chilli ; tribal name - Rahar Marich ; scientific name - *Capsicum frutescence*; Family - Solanaceae.

Preparation and Dosage:

Ten grams of Kalozira and 3 grams dry chilli are fried in mustard oil and crushed to powder together. Then 2-3 grams of the powder is taken with salt, mustard oil (2ml) and little warm rice (about 100 grams) as meal. No vegetables or soups are to be taken twice a day for 3-4 days.

Toothache -

- (a) Name of the plant : i. common name - Akando ; tribal name - Akaona ; scientific name - *Calotropis gigantea*. Family name - Asclepiadaceae. ii. Common name - Batal ; tribal name - Chipchirip ; scientific name - *Sida rhombifolia* : Family - Malvaceae.

Preparation and Dosage:

A Suitable piece of Batal branch is used as toothbrush. Then the milk of Akando about (1ml) and quarter tea spoonful salt are mixed. The mixture is applied to the ached tooth with the help of a Batal branch. After application of this mixture, pus and blood may come out from this spot. It is to be applied according to necessity. If there is injury in the ached area, batal leaves are to be munched and applied. By this procedure toothache can be cured completely.

Blood Dysentery-

- (a) Name of the plant : common name - Tamarind ; tribal name - Jojo ; Scientific name – *Tamarindus indicus*; Family - Fabaceae.

Preparation and Dosage :

Three small balls are made by grinding 6-7 grams of fresh, tender and wet tamarind leaves. Then one ball and ½ teaspoonful salt is mixed in 200 ml of water the mixture is taken before meals thrice a day for three days.

Diarrhoea and Gastro-Intestinal Disturbance -

(a) Name of the plant : common name - Mango tree ; tribal name - Uldari ; scientific name - *Mangifera indica*. Family - Anacardiaceae.

Preparation and Dosage:

About 30 grams of wet rind of old mango tree is grinded and taken thrice a day (10gm each time) before meal. It may be taken one day more if necessary.

(b) Name of the plant : common name - Jambu tree ; tribal name - Koddari ; scientific name - *Syzygium cuminii*. Family - Myrtaceae.

Preparation and Dosage :

About 30 grams of wet rind of old Jambu tree is to be grinded and taken thrice a day before meal.

It may be noted that for diarrhoea or GI tract problem sometimes they take limewater thrice a day.

Jaundice -

(a) Name of the plant : common name - Seora tree ; tribal name - Sarhadari ; scientific name - *Streblus asper* ; Family - Moraceae.

Preparation and Dosage :

About 80-90 grams wet tender leaves of seora tree is boiled in 2 liter of water until the volume is reduced to half. Ten ml of clear extract is to be taken 4-5 times a day before meals for 15 days or more. If necessary the treatment may be continued for a month.

Asthma -

(a) Name of the plant : common name - Banyan (Bot) tree ; tribal name - Barhichepej ; scientific name - *Ficus bengalensis*; Family - Moraceae.

Preparation and Dosage :

About 5 grams of banyan fruits that are half consumed by bats are fried in mustard oil and taken thrice a day before meals for a month. The preparation is to be made fresh each day.

(b) Name of the plant : common name - Dumar ; (fig), tribal name - Loachepej ; scientific name - *Ficus carica*; Family - Moraceae.

Preparation and Dosage :

About 4-5 grams of Dumur fruits that are half consumed by bats is fried in mustard oil and taken once a day before meals for one month. The preparation is to be made fresh each day.

Tuberculosis -

(a) Name of the plant : common name - not known ; tribal name - Andhey Gendheri ; scientific name - *Amaranthus viridis*; Family - Amaranthaceae.

Preparation and Dosage :

About 40-50 grams of wet root of Andhey Gandhery is grinded and mixed with ½ liter water. Ten ml of preparation is to be taken four times a day before meals for 8-10 days. When blood coughing ceases then about 4-5 grams of wet Kanta Kachu is fried in mustard oil and taken thrice a day for 4-5 days before or after each meal.

Permanent Sterility for Women -

(a) Name of the plant : common name - Tamato tree ; tribal name - Kurche ; scientific name - *Lycopersicon esculentum*; Family - Solanaceae.

Preparation and Dosage :

About 100 grams of wet tomato root grinded and mixed with ½ liter of water is to be taken by the patient at a time on completion of her menstrual cycle before meal. The fallo-pian tubes are claimed to get wrinkled after taking this medicine. Thus the ovum cannot pass into the uterus and fertilization is stopped.

(b) Name of the plant : common name - not known ; tribal name - Varveri ; scientific name - *Ocimum basilicum*. Family - Lamiaceae.

Preparation and Dosage :

The wet sprout and leaves of Varveri is pulped into three balls of 40-50 grams each. Now one ball is blended in ½ liter of water, the preparation is taken by the patient on completion of her cycle at a time. The treatment is to be continued over three consecutive days following completion of cycle.

Augmenting Fertility for Women -

Name of the plant : common name - Kanta Kachu ; tribal name - Kanta Jara ; scientific name - *Lassia spinosa*. Family - Araceae.

Preparation and Dosage :

Approximately 50 grams of wet root of Palash tree is grinded mixed with ½ liter of water. The whole preparation is to be taken after the completion of the cycle before meal. The medicine is to be continued for three consecutive days and each time fresh preparation is to be used. Sexual intercourse is to be continued over the treatment period and afterwards.

Diabetes -

(a) Name of the plant : Common name - Ulat Kambal; tribal name - Ulat Kambal; scientific name - *Abroma augusta*; Family - Sterculiaceae.

Preparation and Dosage :

The wet root of Ulat Kambal, 20-25 grams is grinded and mixed with ½ liter of water. The preparation is taken once daily for seven days in empty stomach. It may be continued for some more days if necessary.

Common Goiter -

(a) Name of the plant : Common name - Dhutura, tribal name - Dotro; scientific name - *Datura metel*; Family - Solanaceae.

Preparation and Dosage :

Wet roots of Dhutura about 20-25 grams is grinded with little amount of water. The preparation is applied once a day on the affected area for 1½ -2 months. The amount of medicine will depend upon the size of the affected area.

In sum, it may be mentioned that as human population is continuing to increase unabated, more disease causing organisms are acquiring resistance to conventional drugs and at the same time new diseases are evolving : the necessity to find unconventional sources of medicine is becoming urgent. The observations described here are hoped to provide some such sources.



The Folk medicine man showing *Sida rhombifolia*, a medicinal plant used for toothache.



Streblus asper, a medicinal plant used for jaundice



Folk medicine man showing *Ocimum basilicum*, a medicinal plant used for permanent sterility for women.



Tamarindus indicus a medicinal plant used for blood dysentery



Lassia spinosa, a medicinal plant used for tuberculosis.



The santal medicine man showing a medicinal plant, *Abroma augusta* used to cure diabetes.